



2025 ANNUAL MEETING: GHOSTS

New Orleans, LA November 19th-23rd, 2025

American Anthropological Association

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While identity is fundamentally a sociocultural concept, it is physically embodied during the life course and recorded in the human skeleton. Indelible signs of migration, affinity, identity, and interaction are woven into bone and bioarchaeological analysis can reveal individual and community stories. Given its location at the southeastern frontier of Mesoamerica, ancient Copan reflects a complex network of identities and relationships straddling the perceived boundary of so-called Maya and non-Maya peoples. Once thought to reflect only Maya cultural systems, bioarchaeological research has revealed a

socially and biologically diverse, urban city ripe with cross-cultural interactions. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this paper contextualizes the manifestations of identity within Copan drawing from a decades-long comprehensive analysis of the largest sample of human skeletal remains yet recovered in this region. Skeletal, biogeochemical, and biostatistical data drawn from those who participated in the creation and maintenance of social organization of the region elucidate the interaction spheres and identity formation processes of Copan’s inhabitants to each other, to their neighbors, and those beyond their borders. 1821

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7539 Materializing Spectres: Pathways through Memory and Power	1924
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8044 Rethinking Justice Beyond the Human: More-than-human Entanglements in South Korea	1930

2631 Haunted by the Market: New Risks and New Gambles Amid Financial Uncertainty, Part 1	1933
3423 Ghosts of Reason: Anthropology's Enlightenment Conundrum	1936
2756 The Spectrality of Borders: The Image of the Frontier and its Phantoms	1937
3452 Displacement, Captivity, and Plantation Hegemony in North America	1940
3876 The Book's Spectral Futures: Academic Writing in the Age of Public Anthropology	1943
4297 "The Making of History in a Time of World Order Instability"	1944
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4589 On the Ruins of Liberalism: Ethnographies of Far-Right Regime Building, Part 2	1949
7120 The Many Specters of Food and Aid: Learning from the Past and Present to Feed the Future	1951
5493 AFA State of the Field Roundtable: "Stop Gender!" Weaponizing Representations of Gender Ideology in Authoritarian Times	1953
7583 The Wîhtikow and other Nêhiyaw Stories: Revealing the Incommensurability of Plains Cree Culture and the Spirituality in Ethnographic Texts	1954
5278 Hauntology for Hire : Real Talk on 'What's Next' for Practitioners with the Living Legends of Business Anthropology	1956
1974 Breath of Chaos II – Plant, rhythm, fungus, animal, elemental or word dust ... oh cosmodelia.	1957
2698 Truths and Apparitions about Anthropological "Collaboration": Lessons from Indigenous-Led and Indigenous-Academic Projects	1960
1881 Cultivating Space for the Experimental	1963
3895 Analyzing the Intangible in Tourism: Spiritual and Spectral Presences of Intangible Cultural Heritage	1964
4610 KEYWORDS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF "MENTAL HEALTH": TOWARDS A RELATIONAL MAPPING	1967
7761 How Law Matters Now: Considering legal anthropology's critical empirics for these troubled times.	1968
3471 Haunted Ethics: Memory and Marginality in Modern Medical Care	1969
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6395 Vernaculars of the Common: Ethnographic studies of collaborative social, technical and environmental research	1981
5449 Weaving Worlds: Agrifood Practices, Community Livelihoods, and Territorial Ecologies across the Neotropics	1984
2398 Los Fantasmas del Pasado Inform Our Work for the Future: Community Education in Indigenous Guatemala	1988
3268 Haunted by Anthropology's Spectres: Navigating Black Student Life in Precarious Times	1989
4892 Meeting at the crossroads: Multi-Disciplinary approaches to identity formation in Southeastern Mesoamerica. Part 2	1990
6945 Intimate Affects: Embodiment, Time, and the Everyday	1992
7547 Un-making the Expert: Affective Dimensions of Emergent Expertise in South Asia	1994
4979 Experimental Science of Body Habitation	1998
8649 Interest Group Conveners Meeting	2001
8809 Culture@Large: Spectral City—Walking New Orleans through Slavery's Present Pasts with Rashauna Johnson	2001
9053 De-exceptionalizing US Universities: DEI and Narratives from the Margins.....	2002
9014 In Decency and In Order: The New Orleans Cultural Repatriation Committee and the Effort to Bring Home the "New Orleans Nineteen"	2003
8554 This Business meeting - Interlocutor event about new careers celebrating new books, research and our Christine Fry Student Travel Award winner.....	2003
8777 New Orleans Cocktail Culture and Heritage: A Visit to The Sazerac House- offsite	2004
8592 Presidential Address with Awards Recognition	2004
8778 A Sensory Experiment: How Militarization and War Bring Ecologies Into Relation.	2004

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8729 Anthropology and Environment Society Business Meeting and Awards Reception- offsite	2013
3808 Ghosts of the Past: Sediments of fossil violence in Trump 2.0 "Drill Baby Drill" .	2014
8760 Speaking Justice to Power 2025: APLA/ASAP Roundtable on Academic Freedom, Immigration, and Carceral Regimes- offsite	2015
8621 Illustrata - An Evening of Recognition.....	2016
8639 Association of Black Anthropologists - Awards Ceremony & Party.....	2016
8596 CUAA Distinguished Speaker: Desiree Fields, Geography, UC Berkeley -- "California Forever? Speculating on 'New Cities in the Wild Frontier'"	2016
8563 Wenner-Gren Reception	2017
8698 Reception -- Critical Urban Anthropology Reception - For CUAA Distinguished Speaker, CUAA Award Honorees, and Members	2017
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8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival-- Day 5.....	2017
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3877 Ethnographic Discomfort: The Political and Ethical Project of Centering Experience in Research, Collaboration, and Writing.....	2021
2642 Towards a Critical Anthropology of Impunity Pt. 1	2024
3783 Ethnography of the University: Student Life	2026
2467 The Anti-Refugee Machine: Interpreting Global Migration Control	2030
3289 The Real Crisis of Anthropology: A reflection on the limits of various disciplinary exorcisms to date, and the problem with anthropology on the moon	2033
2684 Tackling the Everyday: Race and Nation in Big-Time College Football	2034

4494 The Enduring Lives of Museum Collections: Approaches to Care at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	2035
4676 Sorcery, Solidarity, Voicing, and Labors of Faith: Colonial Hauntings in the Dominican Republic and among the Dominican Diaspora	2036
7705 Sovereignty, Populism, Post-Truth: Navigating Media and Power in Contemporary Turkey	2038
2667 Spreading It Around?: New Perspectives on Redistribution	2040
5487 Haunted Pedagogy: Confronting our Ghostly Moments, Students, and Histories	2042
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1174 Affective Technologies of Spectrality: The Making of Flickering Attachments	2060
6720 The Spectral Terrain of Gendered Crip Ecologies and Environmental Racism	2063
5918 "Selling In, Selling Up, Selling Out and Shutting Up:" Examining these Myths via the Lived Experience of Business Anthropologists.....	2064
7830 "The Intimacy of Difference: Transformations and Continuities"	2065
3572 Early Birds Get the Work: Research as an Undergraduate Instructional Tool at a Florida Public Teaching Institution	2068
4517 The Value of Loss: How Absence and Rupture Are Valorized	2070
8853 Living Ghosts of Junkyard Play: A Reconfigurable Installation of Projection, Scrap, and Marked-Up Memory.....	2074
3660 Not Quite Land: Troubling Enclosure within Ambiguous Ecologies	2074
8978 Lives Lived, Lives (Un)Forgotten: the Marriage of Archaeology & Ethnography to Center African American (Oral) Histories and Foil Archival Silence	2077
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6938 Negotiating Masculinities: The Rationality-Religiosity Dichotomy in Turkish TV Series.....	2082
4666 Empire's Ghost: hauntings of labor, mobility, and postcolonial aspirations	2083
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3367 Uncanny Ecologies and Spectral Politics in India	2092
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Tuesday, November 18, 2025

8857 Anthropology and Environment Next Wave Workshop

Start Date: 11/18/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/18/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Workshop

As part of an effort to build the next wave of scholarship, teaching, and leadership for the future Environmental Anthropology, the Anthropology and Environment Section of the AAA will host a two-day workshop in New Orleans towards supporting the research agendas and careers of junior scholars from historically underrepresented groups. A&E approaches supporting early career scholars as an essential component of intellectual and ethical innovation in the field and its work toward the realization of radically equitable planetary relations.

8837 Visual Research Conference

Start Date: 11/18/2025 9:00 AM **through** 11/18/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology's Visual Research Conference (VRC) is an annual gathering that takes place in the day and a half before the start of the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Since 1985 the VRC has been a unique and engaging event bringing visual and multimodal anthropologists at all career stages together for constructive conversation around works-in-progress and network building. This year the VRC takes place on November 17-19, 2025 in New Orleans, LA, in the same venue as the American Anthropological Association Meeting (Nov. 19 - 24). The VRC starts Monday evening with a group dinner for all participants. In-person presentations are scheduled all day Tuesday and half of Wednesday, ending at the official start of the AAA meeting. This schedule provides flexibility in attendance and time between presentations to meet informally with other participants.

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

8790 The Afterwords: Death and Rituals of Rest Worldwide

Start Date: 11/19/2025 **through** 11/22/2025

Venue: Hermann-Grima House **Room:** Courtyard

Type: Installations

Taking place at the Hermann-Grima House, 10am-4pm each day of the annual meeting, Nov 19th-23rd

Hermann-Grima House

820 St Louis St, New Orleans, LA 70112

The Afterwords: Death and Rituals of Rest Across the Globe is an immersive, participatory installation that invites attendees to engage deeply with death as a universal human experience shaped by culture, ecology, and belief rather than a distant or taboo subject. This multi-sensory environment will explore how we honor the dying, care for the dead, and create meaning through ritual.

Participants will move through interactive zones that blend education, reflection, and hands-on experience. They will learn about diverse end-of-life traditions from around the world and actively participate in simulated rituals, such as body washing and wrapping practices, sacred body preservation techniques, and ancestral offerings.

The body preservation demonstration is informed by ancestral burial techniques from ancient Egypt, where the care and wrapping of the dead was considered a sacred art that symbolized the soul's transition and preserving the body's integrity as it returned to the earth. This activity offers participants a hands-on, respectful introduction to the ancient and contemporary practice of preparing a body for natural burial. Guided by an experienced death care educator, this session demonstrates how to wash, anoint, and shroud a body using eco-friendly, culturally sensitive techniques. Attendees will learn the symbolic and practical aspects of wrapping the body in cloth—a ritual performed in many traditions worldwide, from Islamic and Jewish burial practices to Indigenous and Buddhist customs. The demonstration emphasizes dignity, consent, and sustainability, using non-invasive methods aligned with green burial principles.

The altar will be set to venerate the lives of the roughly 70 enslaved people who lived on, worked at and built the Hermann-Grima property. Attendees are invited to bring offerings and petitions in their honor.

Materials to be used include:

2 life-sized mannequins and 1 weighted training dummy

Linen burial shroud

Natural oils or herbal infusions for anointing (e.g., lavender, frankincense, rosemary)

Protective gloves and handwashing station

Instructional signage or handouts explaining each step and its cultural significance

Participants are invited to observe or assist with wrapping, fostering a deeper understanding of death care as a gentle, sacred, and participatory act.

The Afterwords invites participants to consider their own "afterwards," not just what follows death, but the words, values, and legacies they hope to leave behind by culminating a reflective journaling session exploring personal beliefs about the end of life.

Organizer: Amiyah King

8762 APLA Letter Writing Campaign to Local Detained Community Members

Start Date: 11/19/2025 **through** 11/22/2025

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Preservation Hall Foyer & Reg

Type: Special Event

In collaboration with the Southeast Dignity Not Detention Coalition, APLA is organizing a two-day campaign to write letters of solidarity for detained local community members across Louisiana. The campaign will be launched on **Friday, November 21 at noon**, together with local representatives from the Coalition. It will continue till 5pm on Saturday, November 22.

In addition to writing letters, there will also be fundraising to contribute to the Coalition's commissary funds, as well as the local organizations that make up the Coalition.

We will have everything you need for the letters. Just bring yourselves!

Organizer(s): Heath Cabot

8701 Spectral Remix Exhibition

Start Date: 11/19/2025 **through** 11/22/2025

Venue: Merchant Hall Gallery

Type: Installations

Merchant Hall, 1152 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70130

Spectral Remix is an off-site exhibition curated by Dominic Boyer and Craig Campbell. Our gallery, Merchant Hall is a fifteen-minute walk from the conference center. It will be open from November 19-22. Spectral Remix features nineteen different works by mostly anthropologists (and their collaborators), with a total of over forty participants.

This exhibition explores the potential of remix to facilitate ethnographic collaboration and reflection. Expanding on the AAA 2025 theme, "Ghosts", we exhibit multimedia projects that

explore the intersection of remix with ghostly presences and absences. Remix disorders and reorders. It brings elements from the past into the present and evokes potential futures. In other words, we are interested in projects that explore the hauntology of remix, how the specters and spectrality of the past persist in the modulation of perception, expression, action.

Spectral Remix is sponsored by the Society for Visual Anthropology and the Society for Cultural Anthropology. In addition to the exhibition, we will be hosting a joint reception for SVA and SCA on Thursday, November 20th.

Gallery Location: Merchant Hall (1152 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70130)

Exhibition dates: November 19-22, hours TBA

Exhibition is free and open to all.

Accessibility: Ground-level access with no steps or elevators required. ADA compliant bathrooms are available.

9081 Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change

Start Date: 11/19/2025 **through** 11/22/2025

Venue: Merchant Hall Gallery

Type: Installations

Merchant Hall, 1152 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70130

This event takes place Wednesday, November 19 – Saturday, November 22 at the Merchant Hall, 1152 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA

More info: <https://habitableair.org/events/>

The five pieces are remixes of ecological and social histories that bring together fragments of environmental degradation, corporate iconography, protest imagery, and sensory experiences into new constellations. Climate change and toxicity are not only contemporary crises but also hauntings: they are the afterlives of extractive ruins, colonial legacies, and systemic inequality that persist in bodies, landscapes, and atmospheres. These interconnected legacies shape our present moment. By remixing multiple materials, the artworks reveal how the past refuses to stay buried while also opening speculative spaces where alternative futures can be imagined. Curated by: Kerry Ryan Chance & Courtney Morris. Featuring works by: Laurence Ralph, Christine Walley, Kerry Ryan Chance, Dara Kell, Courtney Morris, and Anand Pandian

Organizer(s): Kerry Ryan Chance

8578 That Almost Finished Journal Article: A Writing Workshop Part A

Start Date: 11/19/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/19/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Workshop

Are you on the third draft of a paper you haven't gotten around to submitting? Stuck changing a conference presentation or section of your dissertation into a publishable article? Avoiding revising a manuscript for resubmission because of confusing or daunting reviewer comments? Do you have questions about peer review and editorial processes?

Designed for junior professors, post-docs, advanced graduate students (ABD), and international scholars seeking publication in English-language journals, this 8 hour, hands-on workshop provides guidelines and feedback to assist you in revising and submitting articles for peer review. To improve your chances for timely publication, the facilitator discusses strategies for steady output, demystifies peer review, breaks down the structure of the standard journal article, and provides checklists for manuscript preparation and submission. The facilitator then leads you through a series of solo and partnered exercises in which you analyze and receive feedback on components of your draft manuscript. These exercises are intended to ensure that your article has: a conceptual hook and clear point, signposts and transitions guiding readers through your argument, logical links between data and analysis, a solid conclusion, and an accurate abstract.

To fully benefit from the workshop, bring 1 PRINT copy of a working draft of an article you want to revise for (re)submission. Feel free to use a presentation script or dissertation chapter for the draft. On the first page, include the title of the journal, maximum length (in words) permitted by the journal, and your current abstract and word count. A laptop is recommended but not necessary.

For more information, contact Dr. Jaida Samudra, an anthropologist with over two decades experience editing journal articles and scholarly books in the social sciences (website: jaidasamudra.com). Interdisciplinary scholars and anthropologists from any subfield welcome.

8559 AFA Mentoring Speed Networking Event

Start Date: 11/19/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/19/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

A "speed dating" style mentoring meet and greet for AFA members and those wishing to join AFA.

8652 Anthropology and Environment Society: Junior Scholar Writing Workshop

Start Date: 11/19/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/19/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Announcing the 2025 Anthropology & Environment Junior Scholar Writing Workshop, to be held at the AAAs in New Orleans and virtually, as needed.

Do you long for feedback on your writing? Are you struggling with the argument on a paper? Do you miss having a PhD advisor to run your ideas by? Are you working on your first book manuscript? The Anthropology and Environment Society's Junior Scholar Writing Workshop is for you!

The workshop is intended for junior scholars, understood as anyone post PhD and pre-tenure, regardless of whether or not they are currently in an academic position. The goal of this workshop is to support scholars in the early stages of their careers by offering an opportunity for detailed peer feedback on a piece of written work and building a community of environmental anthropologists at a similar point in their career trajectories.

Participants will be clustered in groups of three, will exchange papers in advance of the AAAs, and meet for a 3-hour time period in New Orleans or virtually to workshop each paper for an hour. People interested in participating should send: (1) a paragraph abstract on the paper they would like to workshop; (2) the name of the journal where they hope to submit the paper (or the tentative title of the book for which you hope to develop the chapter); (3) a one sentence bio to Tom Özden-Schilling (tos@nus.edu.sg), by September 1. People may also choose to share funding proposal narratives, book chapters, or book proposals if they would like to. In these cases, they should provide a sentence summary of the intended grant, larger book project, or the press they are hoping to target. Full drafts of papers will be due by November 1, to allow everyone in the workshop group to read and prepare comments on the papers.

Participation in the workshop means a commitment to: ●Write a paper or other piece of writing by November 1. ●Read two other people's papers and prepare detailed comments. ●Meet for a three hour period at the AAAs or virtually.

8837 Visual Research Conference-- Day 2

Start Date: 11/19/2025 9:00 AM **through** 11/19/2025 1:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology's Visual Research Conference (VRC) is an annual gathering that takes place in the day and a half before the start of the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Since 1985 the VRC has been a unique and engaging event bringing visual and multimodal anthropologists at all career stages together for constructive conversation around works-in-progress and network building. This year the VRC takes place on November 17-19, 2025 in New Orleans, LA, in the same venue as the American Anthropological Association Meeting (Nov. 19 - 24). The VRC starts Monday evening with a group dinner for all participants. In-person presentations are scheduled all day Tuesday and half of Wednesday, ending at the official start of the AAA meeting. This schedule provides flexibility in attendance and time between presentations to meet informally with other participants.

8657 Teaching Active Responses to Racism in Troubled Times

Start Date: 11/19/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/19/2025 12:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Workshop

Teaching about racism in the college classroom is more than an intellectual exercise. Because learners, instructors, and institutions approach the topic with widely varied experiences and forms of resistance, teaching about racism can be one of the most challenging tasks in an academic career. In this workshop, participants will develop a plan to implement holistic and transformative teaching approaches that will actively engage students' minds, hearts, and bodies toward addressing racism. Workshop participants will take part in and debrief activities that can be adapted to their classroom settings. As we do so, we will draw from each other's diverse expertise to identify challenges and strategies for teaching about racism in our settings. Participants will learn key indicators of transformational learning on race, spend time developing plans for their classes, and leave with access to a collaborative document of further activities and resources. The facilitator draws on her own research into the transformative journeys of white advocates for racial justice as well as nearly two decades of experience teaching about race and ethnicity in diverse higher educational settings across three continents.

8533 Expanding Your Professional Network into a New Area of Work

Start Date: 11/19/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/19/2025 12:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Workshop

You are exploring job opportunities that require a career pivot—from academia to practice or from one domain of practice to another. The question becomes, how can you translate your anthropological training into a new work area? This webinar highlights the value in expanding your professional network into a new work domain. We will discuss what networking is and how it works, why networking is useful, the importance of having networking goals, and preparation for any networking you do. We will touch briefly on the domains of work (e.g., medical, nonprofit, industry) in which you hope to become employed. Finally, we will practice doing informational interviews that work for you. Come join us for this two-hour workshop!

8738 Culture & Agriculture Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/19/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/19/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

Offical annual business meeting

8830 How to Use Anthropological Training to Do More Impactful Public Policy Work

Start Date: 11/19/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/19/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Workshop

Creating, passing, and implementing laws and policies that attempt to bring into being more humane, equitable, and inclusive systems has always been necessary for the United States to meet its stated objective of creating a more just and perfect union. In the current political moment, this charge seems particularly pressing. However, even as creating and enacting new laws and policies can contribute to building better futures, anthropologists are rarely encouraged to use their training to pursue public policy jobs or to engage in legislative activism. This is true even as anthropological theories, methods, and skill sets can and should be leveraged to enact more meaningful change.

In this workshop, facilitators will provide background information, case studies, and hands-on activities to help unpack the nuances of legislative activism and public policy work in the United States. Through the session, attendees will learn more about how anthropological skill sets can be usefully applied in the development, refinement, and implementation of policy and gain the information and tools necessary to engage in legislative and policy-making processes. This session will be useful for those who are looking for paid work in the public policy sector as well as for those who are seeking to make a more proactive and positive impact in their state, city, or community-based governing bodies.

8695 Ivan Karp Workshop in Museum Anthropology: Cultivating Transparency and Reciprocity across Transnational Professional Contexts- Offsite

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Workshop

The Council for Museum Anthropology's Ivan Karp Workshop invites applications from students and early career anthropologists, practitioners, and scholars interested in the methodologies of researching and curating collections with transparency and reciprocity, and centering multivocal epistemologies. Working with museum scholar-practitioners whose careers have sought to bring these values to projects across domains – doing research, developing and implementing policy, and curating and creating exhibitions, this two-part workshop offers insight into both how to develop such values, skills, and knowledge across projects and a sense of how career trajectories may unfold in ways that can enhance and/or challenge those values, skills, and knowledge, as well as expectations. In the first session, mentors with expertise in negotiating transnational collections and repatriation procedures will discuss the intricacies of creating, adopting, and implementing best practices policies related, specifically, to African, Pre-Columbian American, and indigenous

American contexts. Participants will analyze case studies under the mentorship of each panelist. The second session will focus on curatorial challenges and opportunities in working with collaborative intent, including in research settings. The workshop will be book-ended by programs that exemplify ways of working with these values, a Gallery Talk on the Dawoud Bey special exhibit on display at NOMA, and the Elders Sacred Talk Series.

Lunch and transport will be covered. The workshop is free but requires preregistration. Space is limited to 15. You do not need to be a member of the Council for Museum Anthropology or the American Anthropological Association to apply. Send your application to the CMA address: council.museumanth@gmail.com.

8608 Section Assembly Executive Committee Luncheon

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 2:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Crescent (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Luncheon for the Section Assembly Executive Committee (SAEC)

8623 FoACC Meeting

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

A committee meeting for the FoACC. Starting with a lunch.

9074 Tour #1: New Orleans through History and Collaborative Anthropology

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:30 PM

Type: Special Event

Learn about New Orleans history and culture through visits to two of the City's cultural institutions. The group will meet at the Historic New Orleans Collection for an object/gallery talk with a collection curator, featuring some items that fit with the Annual Conference theme of "Ghosts". From there, the group will proceed to the Louisiana State Museum's Cabildo at Jackson Square, to visit the collaborative ethnography exhibit *Botanica: Gardens, Landscapes, and Plant Medicines of South Louisiana*. A tour of the exhibit will be led by co-curators Rachel Breunlin and Monique Verdin. Breunlin is an anthropologist at the University of New Orleans and the director of The Neighborhood Story Project (NSP), a collaborative anthropology organization. Verdin is the director of the Land Memory Bank and Seed Exchange, and the author of *Return to Yakni Chitto: Houma Migrations*. Produced with the NSP in 2020, the book is a tribute to the Houma Nation in south Louisiana in the face of climate change. The exhibit was co-produced with gardeners, naturalists, farmers, and herbalists from around the region. It focuses on Indigenous histories, the legacy of the plantation economy, and the liberatory practices of diverse communities tending to the urban landscape.

Tour will meet at the Historic New Orleans Collection for a gallery talk with curator, then will walk to the Cabildo at Jackson Square for a gallery talk with Rachel Breunlin and Monique Verdin.

8632 AnthropologyCon Games Workshop: Games as Political Resistance

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/19/2025 3:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Workshop

In 1940, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson designed "Democracies and Dictators" as a means of educating a world under the threat of fascism. We face a similar threat today, and, even though the game was never published, "Democracies and Dictators" opens up a space for contemporary anthropologists to design games to resist the violence and intolerance around them and around the communities in which they collaborate. In this workshop, participants will use their experiences to build games that critique power, enable resistance and imagine alternatives. The workshop includes a creative, hands-on design lab (maker space), facilitated by an experienced game designer, where we will learn about the basic elements of game design through different platforms, including table-top role-playing games (TTRPG). Workshop participants will develop games based on anthropological theory and method. We will prototype and play-test the games produced in the workshop, as well as other anthro-inspired games and arcade games, during #AnthropologyCon V. For more information on the events taking place at #AnthropologyCon V, visit: www.anthropologycon.org

8842 CAE Town Hall: Anthropology of Education Now

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/19/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

An annual organizing meeting of the membership of the Council on Anthropology & Education to hear leaders in the field discuss the purpose and promise of anthropology of education in the current political moment.

8798 Beyond the hauntings of the drug overdose crisis

Start Date: 11/19/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/19/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Workshop

Autumn is a time of heightened spiritual activity, and in Latine and other global communities, ancestors are welcomed back and honored through ritual and ceremony. By now, nearly all of us have been affected by the U.S. drug overdose crisis through losing loved ones and knowing of others who have passed on. Rather than thinking of this crisis in terms of ghosts that haunt us, we propose harnessing the spiritual energy of this time of year to share stories and do better by each other in destigmatizing overdose and bringing more love, compassion, and community into

honoring lives who are too often erased. This workshop will be led by an anthropologist and a community artist, who will initiate a critical space of reflection on the experiences of overdose through a creative exercise that holds space for grief, honor, and profound transformation. Using collage and mixed media, participants will create a death tarot card to build an alter honoring our muertitos - or the spirits and guiding ancestors of our beloved who have passed on but still have important lessons to share.

8578 That Almost Finished Journal Article: A Writing Workshop Part B

Start Date: 11/19/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Workshop

Are you on the third draft of a paper you haven't gotten around to submitting? Stuck changing a conference presentation or section of your dissertation into a publishable article? Avoiding revising a manuscript for resubmission because of confusing or daunting reviewer comments? Do you have questions about peer review and editorial processes?

Designed for junior professors, post-docs, advanced graduate students (ABD), and international scholars seeking publication in English-language journals, this 8 hour, hands-on workshop provides guidelines and feedback to assist you in revising and submitting articles for peer review. To improve your chances for timely publication, the facilitator discusses strategies for steady output, demystifies peer review, breaks down the structure of the standard journal article, and provides checklists for manuscript preparation and submission. The facilitator then leads you through a series of solo and partnered exercises in which you analyze and receive feedback on components of your draft manuscript. These exercises are intended to ensure that your article has: a conceptual hook and clear point, signposts and transitions guiding readers through your argument, logical links between data and analysis, a solid conclusion, and an accurate abstract.

To fully benefit from the workshop, bring 1 PRINT copy of a working draft of an article you want to revise for (re)submission. Feel free to use a presentation script or dissertation chapter for the draft. On the first page, include the title of the journal, maximum length (in words) permitted by the journal, and your current abstract and word count. A laptop is recommended but not necessary.

For more information, contact Dr. Jaida Samudra, an anthropologist with over two decades experience editing journal articles and scholarly books in the social sciences (website: jaidasamudra.com). Interdisciplinary scholars and anthropologists from any subfield welcome.

8550 AAA Nominations Committee Meeting

Start Date: 11/19/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

A meeting of the AAA nominations committee to select candidates for the 2026 ballot.

9077 New Orleans 20 years after Hurricane Katrina: A tour of the city's "recovery"

Start Date: 11/19/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Tour Guide: Roberto E. Barrios, Professor and Director of Latin American Studies, University of New Orleans

In the early 2000s, news media, political leaders, and much of the US public speculated that the United States was becoming a post-racial society. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, news media representations of the city's flooding and its social impact challenged post-racial narratives and made the public confront stark race based socio-economic inequalities in the city and the nation. Imagery from predominantly Black neighborhoods like the Lower Ninth Ward quickly became an affective fulcrum upon which national sympathy – and recovery assistance – could be leveraged. While Katrina's revelations may have also served as a call to address longstanding race-based inequities in New Orleans, the city's recovery planning and recovery processes did not follow the logic of racial justice. Instead, the disaster's aftermath served as an opportune moment to enhance pre-existing processes of disinvestment from public housing, the privatization of public education and health care, and introduce new initiatives of neoliberal development which disproportionately impacted working poor and middle class Black families. At the same time, New Orleans experienced an influx of Latin American and Latinx recovery workers who added another chapter to the region's long history of migration and debates over identity and belonging. Focusing primarily on the Lower 9th Ward and the city's 4th planning district, this tour will introduce participants to sites that became iconic of the contestations over use of urban space during New Orleans' recovery planning and long-term recovery. Participants will have the opportunity to speak with residents and recovery workers and will be encouraged to develop their own critical understandings of "recovery" two decades after Katrina's floods. We reserve the right to cancel the event at any time up to November 5th if minimum registration is not met. In the event of cancellation, all registered participants will be fully reimbursed.

9075 Tour #2: Urban Agriculture Tour and History of the Land Workshop

Start Date: 11/19/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This four-hour offsite trip will take participants to two local farms to learn about local agricultural activism, herbal medicines, and place-based pedagogies. The tour will first stop at Speak Easy Farm, a half-acre farm that grows plants collectively for free community food, medicine, and habitat in the Upper Ninth Ward. Here, participants will learn about longstanding local food justice and mutual aid movements in the city. The group will then travel to Grow Dat Youth Farm, a farm and youth development organization in the center of City Park. This visit will center around a youth-

led "History of the Land" workshop in which participants learn longstanding and ongoing processes of multiracial placemaking, dispossession, and resistance to consider what a just future on this land could look like.

This tour will appeal to anyone with interest in food anthropologies, urban social movements, and critical pedagogies. The registration fee will be used to compensate our hosts for their time and expertise, and to pay for transportation from the conference venue. We reserve the right to cancel the event at any time up to November 5th if minimum registration is not met. In the event of cancellation, all registered participants will be fully reimbursed.

Registrants will be picked up at conference hotel, then transportation will be provided to Speak Easy Farm (Upper Ninth Ward) and Grow Dat Youth Farm (City Park). LOC member Theo Hilton is coordinating transportation directly.

9076 Tour #3: Geographies of Black Displacement

Start Date: 11/19/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

The Geographies of Black Displacement walking tour traces the violence of Black dislocation, containment, displacement, and disposability in land-use planning, housing policy, and urban development.

As a walking discourse, the tour explores the violent formation of New Orleans as a carceral landscape and colonial enterprise of extraction, enslavement, land theft, settlement, and conquest, and examines historical and contemporary practices of architectural violence, residential confinement, discriminatory housing patterns, and policies that make people disappear. The tour explores the internal contradictions and tensions of a political economy driven by reproductive violence in housing policies and land-use planning. We reserve the right to cancel the event at any time up to November 5th if minimum registration is not met. In the event of cancellation, all registered participants will be fully reimbursed.

Engaging spatial practices that disrupt ideological policies and practices of control, punishment, and disposability, the tour centers on five critical themes:

- The historical continuum of colonial and carceral violence to contemporary forms of displacement
- Spatial violence enacted through the built environment and across contested landscapes
- Resistance strategies rooted in Black feminist spatial imaginaries
- Walking as a participatory framework of embodied learning and critical engagement.

Through these themes, the tour begins in the historic French Quarter, then moves through Bienville Basin (formerly the Iberville Public Housing Development and site of Storyville) and the Lower Mid-City neighborhood.

Walking tour led by Shana Griffin starting at conference hotel.

8740 The Labor Movement for Ethnographers: Putting Anthropology to Work

Start Date: 11/19/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Workshop

Hear an overview how labor movements are changing the organizing landscape, protecting people, and working towards a better world. Learn how people use ethnographic skills to do this crucial work. Finally, workshop your own labor organizing context, and pinpoint how your ethnographic expertise can contribute where it is badly needed.

8647 Exercises in Sensory Anthropology: Crafting Care Kits for In and Beyond The Classroom

Start Date: 11/19/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Workshop

This workshop will open a space for learning about sensory play, care, and creativity. During the session, participants will have the opportunity to craft sensory objects and “stim tools”. We will also collectively brainstorm ways to make care kits for students, borrowing from disability scholars as well as personal experiences caring for ourselves and others. Note to participants: We will be providing crafting materials, but if you can, please bring a clear plastic bottle or glass jar to the session. These will be used to make glitter flutter jars!

8831 How to Keep Doing DEI Work in the Current Political Climate?

Start Date: 11/19/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Workshop

The surge in anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation and opposition in the United has been stark, bolstered by the words and actions of the current president. This has had a significant impact on activities related to DEI in different sectors, inside and outside of the United States. Whether voicing support or opposition, public discourse around DEI has also revealed that there remains a great deal of confusion about what DEI is and does.

In this workshop, attendees will learn more about approaches to DEI as well as how they can draw on their anthropological training to continue to do DEI work in the current political climate, whether operating from a formal DEI role or informally within an organization. The new landscape of anti-DEI and pro-DEI laws, emerging DEI problems, and trends in DEI program development, rebranding, and reorganization can be overwhelming. Attendees will be offered tips for mitigating confusion around DEI and avoiding political targeting by taking an outcome-oriented and data-driven

approach, centering the collection and analysis of DEI data, the building of DEI strategies, and the prioritizing of DEI outcomes. Through tools and activities, attendees will also be invited to create an actionable DEI plan for ongoing work in their community, organization, or institution.

8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival

Start Date: 11/19/2025 3:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology screens the best of ethnographic film at the annual SVA Film & Media Festival. The Festival is held as part of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, giving filmmakers and distributors broad access to an audience of thousands of anthropologists, educators, and other attendees.

Ethnographic film and media can be defined broadly as works that emerge through ethnographic fieldwork or that use, are informed by, illustrate, or evoke concepts and principles of anthropological theory, methods, or practice.

2025 SVA Film & Media Festival Directors:

Dr. Anna Neumann

Dr. Mariam Abazeri

9078 Anthropology Advocacy Council Meeting

Start Date: 11/19/2025 4:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 5:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Special Event

The Anthropology Advocacy Council (AAC) is convened by the Executive Board for the purpose of responding to AAA member needs and interests, with a particular focus on the key areas of ethics, human rights, labor and workforce, public policy, anti-racism and social justice, gender equity, the practicing-applied-public sector, and world anthropologies as these areas relate to anthropology, anthropologists and the Association.

8690 Absent Presence

Start Date: 11/19/2025 5:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

View this event at the Marriott, on the second floor, Wednesday evening.

Absent Presence is a digital project that explores imaginings of and relations across difference in Karachi, Nairobi and Palermo.

It is available online at: <https://www.absentpresence.org/>

Organizer(s): Ammara Maqsood, Giulia Liberatore

8724 The Bed Resignified; Sleeping Otherwise

Start Date: 11/19/2025 5:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

Takes place at the Marriott, 2nd floor, on Wednesday evening.

In the installation I am interrogating the most obvious object "Sleep Industrial Complex" is focused on - The Bed. Through my ethnographic research with insomniacs I came to understand the Bed as an object of anxiety and pleasure, desire and fear. As an experiment I emptied my bedroom of a bed, and left it like that for 10 days. I would randomly populate it with objects and photograph it. My installation will showcase 10-15 photographs of the bedless bedroom, alongside a video where my key interlocutor reads out a story he wrote entitled - "The Importance of the Bed" and parts of my essays on sleep. The goal of the installation is to make the bed strange through its absence, and ultimately open a space of reflection on sleeping otherwise through contemplating the bed as the embodiment of normative sleep.

Organizer(s): Alexandra Dantzer

8587 Welcome Reception

Start Date: 11/19/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/19/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Preservation Hall Foyer & Reg

Type: Special Event

Join us as we kick off #AAA2025NOLA. Whether reconnecting with colleagues or meeting new friends, the reception is the perfect space to spark collaboration, celebrate our global anthropological community and enjoy refreshments.

8670 Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) Award Ceremony and Reception

Start Date: 11/19/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/19/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Special Event

The annual SMA Award Ceremony and Reception! Please join us in celebrating our awardees.

The University of Bergen Reception by Habitable Air.

Start Date 11/19/2025 6 pm **through** 11/19/2025 8 pm

Venue: Merchant Hall, 1152 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA

Description: Please join us for an evening of conversation and connection at the opening of the Habitable Air art exhibit. This informal gathering welcomes attendees of the American Anthropological Association conference, artists, and community members.

Including works by Laurence Ralph, Christine Walley, Kerry Ryan Chance, Dara Kell, and Courtney Morris, and Anand Pandian

Food and drinks will be served.

Sponsored by the Research Council of Norway, and The European Commission, and the Peder Sather Centre at UC-Berkeley

[Registration is required for catering purposes.](#)

Thursday, November 20, 2025

08696 Climate Change Interest Group Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Join us for a dynamic business meeting where climate meets community! This is your chance to connect with others tackling the intersections of climate change and their work-whether you're here to swap ideas, spark collaborations, expand your network, or amplify your impact, there's something for you. We'll be diving into fresh directions for the group, recruiting future leaders, celebrating student Emerging Scholar Award winners, and more. It is also a safe space to serve as a support group for those of us weathering the storm of anti-climate backlash. Come for the strategy, stay for the solidarity.

Edited by ChatGPT-your friendly AI assistant (until the inevitable robot uprising-then we'll be too busy rerouting power grids and running the planet to help with meeting blurbs).

8570 Archaeology Division Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Napoleon (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Archaeology Division Board Meeting.

8555 ACC - Annual Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

ACC Committee meeting

8843 CAE Concha Delgado Gaitán Presidential Fellows Mentoring Session

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:45 AM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This is a closed meeting for the Council on Anthropology & Education (CAE) Concha Delgado Gaitán Presidential Fellows with their mentors. The Concha Delgado Gaitán Presidential Fellowships support early career educational anthropologists in ways that contribute to their success within the academy or broader communities of education policy and practice. Agenda will include introductions of the Fellows, details regarding the fellowship program, and dedicated time for mentors and mentees to discuss their work.

8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival-- Day 2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology screens the best of ethnographic film at the annual SVA Film & Media Festival. The Festival is held as part of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, giving filmmakers and distributors broad access to an audience of thousands of anthropologists, educators, and other attendees.

Ethnographic film and media can be defined broadly as works that emerge through ethnographic fieldwork or that use, are informed by, illustrate, or evoke concepts and principles of anthropological theory, methods, or practice.

2025 SVA Film & Media Festival Directors:

Dr. Anna Neumann

Dr. Mariam Abazeri

8773 SAE Mentoring, Networking and Solidarity Workshop

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

This event is designed to help connect an emerging generation of scholars in the anthropology of Europe with informal mentors and a cohort of peers across institutions. Share your excitement about the future of Europeanist anthropology! What new challenges and provocations does it hold for us today? Why is it significant in this global moment of change and upheaval?

We will gather in small breakout groups for roundtable discussions to explore Europeanist perspectives on cutting edge thematic topics, such as in/security, refugees & migration, food

systems, energy & sustainability, political transformations, social movements, economic policies, neofascisms, feminist approaches and more, led by established scholars who have published and innovated in the field. If you are excited about these topics, have questions about how to approach writing and career trajectories as a Europeanist, or are looking for a network of solidarity, please join us.

There is no cost to attend this session, and anyone with an interest in the anthropology of Europe may participate. Early career academics, including graduate students and untenured faculty, are especially invited. We also warmly welcome Europeanists who are willing to help mentor and support others; if you are an established or emeritus faculty member who is committed to the future of the field, come and engage with junior scholars. Academics face new challenges in the rapidly changing landscape of American and global academia, and the ability to thrive in evolving institutional contexts depends on the strength of our community. This is a chance to discuss common interests and get to know other researchers engaged with European fieldsites and contemporary contexts. We will also share information about an upcoming series of online workshops for professionalization, organized by SAE's new mentoring task force.

8792 SAFN and C&A Mentoring Breakfast

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Join SAFN and C&A for light breakfast and networking across career stages! This event

will focus on building mentoring relationships between graduate students and early career professionals who can receive mentoring from alt-ac and late-career professionals.

8669 Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) Executive Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

SMA Executive Board Meeting

2785 The Dread Heights: Anthropology and Theology in Sites of Refuge and Relief

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable fosters a conversation around the anthropologies and theologies of humanitarianism and refuge through a discussion of Basit K. Iqbal's *The Dread Heights: Tribulation and Refuge after the Syrian Revolution* (Fordham University Press, 2025).

As the book examines, Muslim charities and community organizations have assumed a significant role in refugee support since the Syrian catastrophe: in Jordan and Canada, as elsewhere, they deliver food aid, house orphans, and organize remedial education. At these sites, however, Islam is more than just a resource for humanitarian projects. The Dread Heights details how the Islamic tradition guides refugees, relief workers, and religious scholars in a world of brutal sieges and mass displacement. In staging a confrontation between the anthropology of humanitarianism and the anthropology of secularism, the book turns away both from confirming global failures of empathy or affirming human finitude. Rather, through an ethnography of religious imagination and theological argumentation, Iqbal demonstrates what is at stake beyond secular frames for migration and relief. Even as refugees become objects of humanitarian concern suspended between national orders, The Dread Heights brings another suspension into view: a form of life whose gestures are illuminated by the Quranic figure of the Heights. Iqbal's ethnography pursues an unsentimental lucidity across the search for refuge, the trials of creational existence, and the ultimately enigmatic divine decree. In the shadow of war, beyond humanitarian order, Islam offers an orientation to the devastation of the present.

Panelists may consider questions such as: How does anthropological thinking translate theological discourses, imaginations, and argumentation? Can ethnography render the experience of the divine or offer an account of relations with that which is beyond all relation? How do discourses of humanitarianism and Islamic traditions converge and diverge in contemporary Muslim lives? How do unthinkable events provide the opportunity for debate, disagreements, and the inheritance of a tradition? And how can one ethnographically trace the limits of humanitarian reason, when the discipline of anthropology itself participates in its protocols?

This roundtable will discuss the theoretical, methodological, and political-theological problems raised through this ethnography.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Milad Odabaei

Presenter(s): Darryl Li, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Valentina Napolitano, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Samera Esmeir, David Henig, Aisha Ghani, University of Minnesota

Discussant: Basit Iqbal, McMaster University, Department of Anthropology

304 Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthro Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Marcus LiBrizzi, University of Maine, Amalia Daché, Pierre Auzerau, Bruno Renero-Hannan, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Hannah Toombs, Kiera Eckhardt, Aleksandra Wierucka

Presenter(s): Marcus LiBrizzi, University of Maine, Amalia Daché, Pierre Auzerau, Bruno Renero-Hannan, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Hannah Toombs, Kiera Eckhardt, Aleksandra Wierucka

Presentation(s): "The Brazilian Ghost: Takeaways from a Decade of Fieldwork"

From the village of Tiradentes, frozen in time in the mountains of Minas Gerais, to the jungles of Amazonia or the streets of Salvador--from the dreamscape of Maranhão or Fernando de Noronha--there is one thing in common. Ghosts have a story to tell. Brazilian ghost stories circulate chiefly outside the academy and the marketplace. From this elusive corpus come unheard voices in the literary tradition and rich ethnographic insights on social justice.

A decade of fieldwork in southeast Brazil, northeast Brazil, and north Brazil has yielded an extensive collection of previously undocumented ghost stories. These narratives, which draw on Indigenous, African, and Portuguese roots, provide a unique perspective on historical struggle by passing down a record of social grievances outside official channels. The presenter, Marcus LiBrizzi, is the principal investigator for the field research project. Author of three ghost story collections, one documentary history on an Early American ghost sighting, and an oral history of a settlement of freed slaves in New England, he is a Professor of English at the University of Maine.

This flash presentation will briefly introduce the field research project, outline some of its top ethnographic insights, and end with a flash reading from a previously undocumented ghost story from Brazil.

Presenter(s): Marcus LiBrizzi

From Religious Repression to Exodus: The Survival of AfroCuban Spirituality

Drawing from a multi-sited ethnography that explored the survival of Afro-Cuban knowledge systems within Cuba and through its exodus to the United States, this paper examines the human costs of the Cuban Revolution. It focuses on how state policies shaped access to religious freedom, while highlighting how Cubans carried their beliefs across the Straits of Florida as a form of resistance. During the 1994 Balsero Crisis, Cubans migrating on rafts shared stories of bringing limited belongings--yet among them was often a rock figure of the Yoruba-based deity Echu-Eleguá, the opener and closer of paths, who was believed to guide their journey to the United States. This story echoed the narratives of Cubans who fled during the Mariel boatlift in the spring of 1980, at the height of religious persecution in Cuba. Among them, some women Marielitas described Yemayá--the maternal orisha of the ocean--as the savior of boatlift survivors. This ancestral knowledge is deeply intertwined with my own story, as the daughter of a Cuban political prisoner from the 1960s, a Mariel refugee, and a witness to my father's journey to becoming one of Western New York's first practitioners of the Congo-based Palo Monte religion in the 1980s. This paper uniquely intersects Black Atlantic and post-Soviet studies, offering a critical lens on migration and cultural survival. A Cuban artist I interviewed captured this resilience when he said: "La religión no es algo que desaparece, sino que sobrevive, porque está en la gente, en la cultura, aunque no lo digan." Despite systemic repression under socialist ideals, Afro-Cuban spiritual traditions endured,

albeit in covert and altered forms. This paper examines the mechanisms of this repression, detailing how Afro-Cuban knowledge systems were targeted as counter-revolutionary threats. Beginning in the early 1960s, after the Revolutionary regime declared itself an atheist state, it framed spiritual leaders-such as Babalaos-as adversaries, subverting their practices and institutions. In 1992, the regime established the Asociación Cultural Yoruba de Cuba, undermining the legitimacy of sacred practices such as the letras del año. After this point, repression evolved into a more subtle form of subversion: by promoting these practices as cultural heritage for tourists, the state masked its ongoing control while profiting from the very traditions it had long sought to suppress. Research for this study was conducted in Cuba through multiple visits between 2018 and 2019, each lasting from two weeks to one month, though I have been traveling to Cuba since 2005. In Cuba, I interviewed 25 participants, primarily in Havana, with individual interviews ranging from one to four hours. In the United States, I conducted 18 interviews between 2020 and 2025, primarily with Mariel and Balsero Cubans living in Miami, Washington D.C., and New York City.

Presenter(s): Amalia Daché

Haunting French law with Indigeneity: Indigenous people's reflections on their legal recognition in 'French' Guiana

Like a ghost of colonialism, Indigeneity continues to haunt French law in so-called 'French' Guiana, or Guyane, a French overseas territory in South America. Despite the demands of Guyane's Indigenous Peoples, the French state persists in denying them legal recognition on the pretext that France is an indivisible republic. Legally, the state continues to regard Indigenous Peoples as ghosts, refusing to fully recognise them, while leaving traces of their existence in policies that address 'communities' or 'Amerindian populations,' but never 'Indigenous Peoples'. Despite this legal erasure, Indigenous Peoples remain present and engaged, fighting against their marginalisation and for their legal recognition in France. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Guyane, conducted as part of my PhD at the University of Helsinki, my research aims to provide a platform for Guyane's Indigenous Peoples to reflect on Indigenous legal concepts within the context of French and international law. Working with Indigenous collaborators, we have designed four one-week legal workshops, each conducted with six different Indigenous participants. These workshops are an opportunity not only to provide a grounding in international law to the participants, but also to reflect with them on how their own Indigenous laws can interact with and inform French and international legal systems. Preliminary findings offer new perspectives from Indigenous people on their legal recognition in France.

Presenter(s): Pierre Auzerau

Not Theirs Alone: Alcohol, Masculinity, and 'Ordinary Death' in Oaxaca's Sierra Sur

This piece depicts events that I witnessed and participated in during fieldwork in the rural Zapotec community of San Agustín Loxicha in the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico. My larger project focuses on political violence, memory, and activism in the aftermath of armed conflict. As I was studying these issues, I found myself confronted with other forms of "ordinary" violence, including the

structural violence that generates "ordinary" deaths by alcohol. In this essay, I explore and reflect on this pattern. "Not Theirs Alone" interweaves the story of a father's mourning of his adult son's untimely death with descriptions that convey the feel of the town where it occurred. Through this structure, I argue that this father's grief is part of a larger historical legacy of harm involving a confluence of alcohol, masculine traditions, economic policies, political repression, and natural disaster.

The communities of the Mexican Sierra Sur are full of men who die contorted by alcohol. Life is hard, and mezcal is cheap and comforting. The countryside has been in a deepening crisis for decades, and the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 90s have had catastrophic effects on livelihoods, including where coffee is an important cash crop and various forms of environmental degradation have made the cafetales less productive every year. Men without land can work as day-laborers or in low-paid jobs, while the majority migrate. For those who stay and those who return, there is no shortage of reasons to despair, and there is ample pressure to drink.

Drinking is folded into layers of everyday life and rituals. These practices are integral to sociality among men, at the same time that they impact women. Here, as elsewhere, drinking is not merely a mechanical reaction to hardship; it is also a practice that is valued and cultivated, celebrated in songs, and deeply enmeshed in the mourning process itself, which involves hospitality on the part of the mourning family and the communal sharing of alcohol as part of remembering a deceased loved one.

This consideration of alcoholism in rural Oaxaca today also speaks indirectly to the history of social movements in this region. Militancy in the OPIZ Indigenous political movement that emerged in Loxicha in the 1980s and 90s involved a vow of sobriety. One of the movement's most popular measures, particularly among women, was a ban on the sale of alcohol. A parallel process was occurring in Chiapas, where Zapatista women were the main force behind banning the sale and consumption of alcohol. Two decades later, this remains a strictly enforced law in Zapatista communities; whereas, in Loxicha, the Mexican government's repression of the OPIZ led to the movement's disarticulation and the end of the alcohol ban. Today, most young people in Loxicha have never heard of the ban-another marker of the tragic success of the state's violent dismantling of the ideals and structure of the region's Indigenous social movements.

Presenter(s): Bruno Renero-Hannan

Re-capturing Indigenous craft "tradition": Documenting and interpreting Lenca pottery practice through a collaborative PhotoVoice project

In La Campa, Lempira, Honduras, Indigenous Lenca artisans have produced and sold handmade utilitarian pottery for generations. Pottery production is a cultural patrimony and essential economic livelihood in the community. However, La Campa's pottery is changing. Potters now use non-traditional production techniques to create commercially appealing tourist goods. Yet, promotion of pottery in the tourism industry is misleading; state-constructed narratives dictating what crafts count as "Indigenous" create misconceptions about Lenca pottery among tourists and

limit potters from accessing regional craft markets. How do these trends shape pottery practice in La Campa? How can artisans regain control of the narrative surrounding their craft livelihoods? This work presents results from an ongoing community PhotoVoice project where Lenca artisans visually document their own craft practices and digitize this cultural knowledge to create tourism promotional materials and a community website. This project highlights benefits and challenges of incorporating digital tools in community research, and takes a critical lens to how researchers define "decolonial" or "collaborative" methods in their work. To conclude, this paper discusses how images generated by potters are being used in promotional materials for La Campa, allowing artisans to control how their craft practices are defined and promoted in the regional tourism industry.

Presenter(s): Hannah Toombs

The Ethnology of Migration Policy in the United States and Ecuador

Ecuador is home to the fourth largest population of Venezuelan refugees in South America, as well as the world's first universal citizenship policy, which "advocates the principle of universal citizenship, [and] the free movement of all inhabitants of the planet," (Article 416). According to background interviews with refugee service providers in Ecuador, "The universal citizenship policy allows migrants to come and go as they please without papers," (Anonymous 2024). However, in 2023 a Human Mobility Bill was passed that requires migrants to register within 90 days of entering the country or they could face deportation. Service providers worry this new legislation may disrupt community integration efforts and cause significant stress and financial burden to migrants. To contribute to broader debates in migration studies and policy making, while emphasizing the need for policies that not only manage migration but enhance the well-being and integration of migrants in their new communities, this project conducts 75 ethnographic interviews with Ecuadorian citizens and other stakeholders across Ecuador's Amazon basin (el oriente), Andes Mountains (la sierra), and coastal areas (la costa). Narratives from interviews will not only illuminate individual and collective perceptions but provide deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics influencing Ecuador's migration policies. This analysis also proposes a refined policy model for the United States, including legislative changes, programmatic initiatives, and community engagement strategies to promote more humane and effective integration of migrants and refugees.

Presenter(s): Kiera Eckhardt

The Oil Ghosts of the Past Linger in the Present: the Impact of Environmental Pollution on Cultural Practices in Eastern Ecuador

For over six decades, oil extraction has transformed the Amazon, leaving profound environmental and cultural legacies that persist today. This presentation examines the multifaceted impact of petroleum byproducts on the health, culture, and social structure of Indigenous Huaorani communities living in the vicinity of Yasuní National Park in Ecuador. Ongoing oil extraction since the 1960s has significantly polluted water, air, and soil. Our approach is unique in integrating

anthropology and toxicology to evaluate pollution's impact on both individual well-being and communal cultural practices.

Our research was conducted in Huaorani settlements in and around Yasuní National Park. We gathered data on pollution's impact on health, daily life and cultural practices. Toxicologists used innovative silicone wristbands technique to assess individual exposure to pollutants. This non-invasive method is ideal for our study, providing comprehensive exposure data.

By integrating anthropological and toxicological methods, we aim to reveal the relationship between environmental conditions and the well-being of the Huaorani people. This holistic approach provides crucial insights into the multifaceted impacts of oil extraction, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable practices and policies that protect Indigenous health, environment, and cultural heritage.

Presenter(s): Aleksandra Wierucka

Co-author(s): Tomasz Lidzbarski

302 General Anthropology Division Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Danielle Frinton , Emily Cole , Toomas Gross , Sophia Alvarez, Drew School, San Francisco, Eva Rey Pinto , Ayla McCullough , Pritika Sharma

Presenter(s): Danielle Frinton, Emily Cole, Toomas Gross, Sophia Alvarez, Drew School, San Francisco, Eva Rey Pinto, Ayla McCullough, Pritika Sharma

Presentation(s): Affective Economies of Care: Migrant Health, Humanitarianism, and Cooperative Healthcare in Vancouver

Anthropological studies of humanitarianism have explored how care, compassion, and moral urgency shape everyday aid practices. However, few address affect and emotions within grassroots, community-based organizations, including participatory migrant health cooperatives. These cooperatives offer a unique model of community-based care, where cultural health brokers help shape the delivery of services and organizational priorities. This paper examines the emotional foundations of humanitarian governance within a cooperative healthcare setting in Vancouver, Canada, focusing on how emotions such as compassion, care, and empathy function as legitimizing forces in the provision of aid. This research is grounded in ethnographic methods, which I use to study organizational processes rather than recipient communities, focusing on how humanitarian decisions are made, resources are mobilized, and aid is provisioned. Utilizing data collected in the preliminary phase of my research-primarily through participant observation as a volunteer-I examine how affect circulates within the organization and becomes embedded in institutional practices that determine who is seen as deserving of care, and under what conditions. This research builds on theories of affective economies, humanitarian reason, moral legitimacy,

and compassion-driven exclusion (Ahmed, 2004; Fassin, 2012; Redfield, 2012; Ticktin, 2011) to understand how emotional dynamics shape not only the provision of care but also how healthcare becomes a moral and political project. Questions addressed in this paper include: How do emotions function as legitimizing forces in local humanitarian governance? In what ways do they come to define need, urgency, and eligibility? How do organizations navigate tensions between structural constraints and community accountability? And what happens to the affective economy of aid when the distance between "provider" and "recipient" collapses? Through these questions I seek to understand how community-based models of care may unsettle dominant paradigms of humanitarianism by emphasizing a more collaborative and community-driven approach to healthcare for migrants in Canada.

Presenter(s): Danielle Frinton

Don't Whistle at Night: The Haunted Chord and Other Global Folklore Parallels

Across cultures, whistling, especially after dusk, has a deep supernatural meaning and is usually seen as a way to attract spirits, demons, and bad luck. This paper examines the presence of nocturnal whistling taboos in many cultures, including diverse Indigenous North American tribes, multiple East and Southeast Asian communities, multiple European societies, several African traditions, and assorted Latin American cultures. By carefully examining folklore, ancient writings, and ethnographic records, the paper seeks to discover the shared cultural reasons and spiritual ideas that perpetuate these beliefs. By exploring themes of sound as an important conduit to the supernatural, deep social anxieties about the completely unseen, in addition to the major role of oral traditions in carefully encoding collective fears, this research contributes to a much greater comprehension of how seemingly disparate societies converge on remarkably similar protective practices. This investigation points out the shared human experience when people confront the unknown. In addition, it improves anthropological discourse regarding the intersections of belief systems, behavioral taboos, and the active power of folklore in shaping cultural standards.

Presenter(s): Emily Cole

Running Beyond the Self: Mystical Sensations and Transcendent Experiences in Ultrarunning

Although ultrarunning almost inevitably involves subjecting one's body to self-inflicted pain and suffering, it has also been described as a pleasurable, meditative and even spiritual endeavor (e.g., Austin 2007; Jones 2004; Koski 2015). Ultrarunners occasionally report sensations that anthropologists of religion (e.g., Luhrmann) would place at "the edge of experience." These include the more conventional experiences of "flow" and "runner's high," but also visions, hearing voices, and moments of self-transcendence. Drawing on the example of recreational ultrarunners in Estonia and ethnographic data from semi-structured interviews, blog analysis, and participant observation at various ultrarunning events, this paper examines how runners reflect on and make sense of such experiences, as well as the vocabulary they use to describe "the edge of experience" sensations. Building on Taylor's (2007) concept of "fullness" and Luhrmann's (2020) approach to "kindling the presence of invisible others," I argue that runners reframe these experiences – often

deemed "almost mystical" – as a particularly meaningful and valuable part of ultrarunning. These experiences are claimed to lead to a unique state of consciousness and contribute to a broadened, deepened, and more "authentic" way of being in and experiencing the world. At the core of this state is an engagement with one's own body and the running environment in novel ways.

Presenter(s): Toomas Gross

Teaching Anthropology in a Divisive Time: Lessons from Curriculum Theory and the High School Classroom

In this age of increasing social division, young people desperately need theoretical frameworks, terminology, and facts grounded in social science research to help them understand their world. Though not often taught at the high school level, cultural anthropology has the potential to help adolescents develop the language and knowledge needed to explore otherwise abstract social phenomena such as inequity and structural violence. With ethnography, the discipline also communicates the importance of trusting people's lived experience and the validity of experience as a way of knowing—an essential lesson for helping develop empathic young people. This presentation reflects on my experiences teaching cultural anthropology to 11th and 12th grade students in both public and independent school contexts and proposes possible approaches to curriculum design for high school anthropology courses that can help achieve these aims.

Teaching cultural anthropology in high school requires a different approach than the university level, due to the greater diversity of interest and reading levels. The presentation explores specific curricular and pedagogical approaches that have been effective in the high school classroom, including backwards design, explicit vocabulary instruction, discussion and reading modeled on English courses, and experiential learning through the practices of participant observation and interviewing. These strategies are grounded in an exploration of curriculum theory, specifically the tension between "emergent curriculum" and an objectives-based approach. Finally, the presentation articulates the need for anthropologists to make instructional resources more accessible to a high school population and advocates for strategies that can help make theory and scholarly research comprehensible to a younger audience.

Presenter(s): Sophia Alvarez

The Doll Archive: Unpacking Barbie's Imperial Entanglements

Mattel has designed Barbie to embody the cultural and geopolitical values of the U.S. on multiple occasions. In this flash presentation, I will discuss how my archival research at the Military Women's Memorial and The Strong Museum of Play aims to research Barbie's imperial entanglements. My doctoral dissertation explores how these dolls reflect the intersections of corporate interests and U.S. cultural imperialism, revealing how multinational corporations shape cultural narratives. Beyond Barbie driving a Corvette and living in a house in Malibu—images that appeal to the American Dream myth of financial wealth—Barbie has also dressed as Colonial Barbie, Pioneer Barbie, Patriot Barbie, American Indian Barbie, Pilgrim Barbie, and Civil War Nurse. During the Space Race of the 1960s, Barbie became an astronaut. Barbie has run for U.S. president

multiple times. She has been a scientist for National Geographic. Mattel even collaborated with the U.S. Department of Defense to launch a military-themed Barbie in 1989, marking a decade in which Barbie joined various branches of the Armed Forces.

By combining archival and ethnographic methods, my research traces how Barbie has been mobilized to naturalize militarization, consumerism, and American exceptionalism across different contexts, reinforcing U.S. ideological and economic interests globally. The use of archives as a core part of my anthropological journey has supported my understanding of materiality, specifically how objects like Barbie embody global and political issues, appealing to consumption, branding, and nostalgia, shaping material culture, ideologies, childhood, and everyday experiences of play.

Presenter(s): Eva Rey Pinto

The Specter of the 'Native' Orphan

This paper excerpts from my dissertation and traces how the 19th century category of the "native orphan" in India is a kind of specter in contemporary understandings of childhood. In particular, I have surveyed three categories of orphaned children that have emerged over the last five years in postcolonial and settler-colonial contexts: Covid orphans, "new age orphans" of the Sundarbans, and wounded-child-no-surviving-family (WCNSF) in Gaza. To a certain extent these groups rehearse conventional formulas for orphans that are generated by catastrophes requiring the management of ostensibly freestanding children. Ethnographic work in critical adoption studies and southern childhood studies have problematized orphans as parentless objects of humanitarian rescue. Yet, my paper demonstrates that the contemporary usage of "orphan" remains pinioned to 19th century colonial taxonomy with the "native orphan" at the core—in this sense, I suggest that the native orphan is spectral. Teasing out the connections to 19th century colonial precedents recalls the ambivalence and ambiguity regarding orphans, which reintroduces the importance of instability to the category. At the same time, the endurance of this term relegates the orphan to hierarchies of childhood and species difference insofar as the native child signifies both animalization and innocence. Thus, I argue that the animal is also entangled with this specter, and in the last part of the paper, I draw on more-than-human ethnographies to consider what it means to de-colonize and de-anthropocentrize the "orphan."

Presenter(s): Ayla McCullough

Tug-of-War?: Intergenerational Negotiations in Marriage within Middle-Class Indian Families

There has been an abundance of literature on the arranged-love marriage dynamic in India since the 1990s that argues that such a marriage combines individualized choices and familial values and approval. But what are the particular choices and compromises that different generations within the family make to maintain the balance between those individual desires and familial structures? And why do they make those choices and compromises? Using ethnographic evidence in this paper, I explore the intergenerational negotiations during marriage within contemporary middle-class Indian families, particularly between young individuals and their parents. Young middle-class

individuals today are more educated and financially independent than their parents were 30 years ago. By claiming newfound legitimacy and authority through their educational and professional successes, the current generation is increasingly making various marriage-related decisions, from choosing their spouse to selecting the décor for their wedding venue, decisions that family elders previously made. This paper elaborates on how young people embed their individualistic desires within familial values and expectations and how their parents learn to share decision-making space and authority with them. I argue that both generations make strategic compromises during marriage negotiations to uphold the balance between individual desires and familial values that eventually result in an arranged-love marriage dynamic. I also highlight that both generations have different motivations to make these strategic compromises: while the younger generation is influenced by their strong middle-class upbringing that favors familial values, preventing them from just abandoning it all in the name of 'individuality,' the older generation is fueled by their fears and anxieties about the future of their relationships with their children. These strategic compromises not only preserve family traditions and maintain marriage continuities from the past but also enable middle-class individuals and their parents to engage in a contested yet cohesive process of constructing and envisioning personal and familial futures.

Presenter(s): Pritika Sharma

324 Association for Feminist Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Yaliza Gutierrez Nunez , Melody Devries, Allegheny College, Melody Devries, Allegheny College, Paula Batista, University of Michigan, Maria Ryabova , Carla Beatriz Campos , Rashmi Kumar

Presenter(s): Yaliza Gutierrez Nunez, Melody Devries, Allegheny College, Difei Chen, Paula Batista, University of Michigan, Maria Ryabova, Carla Beatriz Campos, Rashmi Kumar

Presentation(s): Color Me Fun: Miami Beach Tourism, Women and the (Dis)Appearance of Blackness in a 1970 Travel Advertisement

This paper assertively critiques the 1970 "Color Me Fun" advertisement, sponsored by the Tourist Development Authority of Miami Beach, which unapologetically places white women at the forefront in marketing the city as a vibrant, cosmopolitan tourism destination. The advertisement is examined through a critical lens that uncovers the underlying messages and implications of leveraging the white female body as a potent symbol of leisure, desirability, and modernity.

The analysis demonstrates how the advertisement constructs a specific and narrow image of Miami Beach while actively marginalizing and erasing the contributions and presence of communities of color within the city. By enshrining white women in idealized scenarios, the advertisement perpetuates a narrative of Westernized femininity that not only aligns with prevailing standards of beauty and lifestyle but also neglects the rich cultural diversity that characterizes Miami Beach.

Drawing on feminist theory, critical race theory, and the concept of the tourist gaze, this chapter meticulously interrogates the racialized and gendered narratives embedded in the advertisement. It scrutinizes how these narratives reflect and reinforce broader societal attitudes and biases, ultimately shaping perceptions of Miami Beach's socio-cultural landscape, both past and present.

This comprehensive approach underscores the historical context of the advertisement and demands critical reflection on the representation of race and gender in media. It provocatively raises essential questions about the ramifications of such portrayals for the communities they misrepresent.

Presenter(s): Yaliza Gutierrez Nunez

Death, Flesh, and Consequences: A Digital Ethnography of Skincare Culture and Consumptive Performativity

"Beauty" may be a subjective term, yet it often falls into common themes. A petite nose, flawless light skin, and big eyes and lips are distinctly Western expectations of beauty. These ideals are frequently modelled on "SkinTok"; short-form video spaces on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. On this "side" of the social internet, users showcase their skincare routines and retail-level quantities of aesthetically packaged beauty products organized neatly in bedroom closets and bathroom drawers. The sheer volume of products - in combination with their effortless application on glowing, youthful skin - creates a digital content-genre oriented around what we call consumptive performativity.

We argue that this content, though soft on the surface, is not neutral. Rather, it emerges from a wider Western moralization of self-management (Yen 2024). We further argue that this commodified tending to skin and the body is enabled by our cultural management of death, flesh, and of the consequences of globalized consumption. In other words, SkinTok's emphasis on anti-aging practices – as well as the product consumption needed to gain a following under hashtags like "skincare organization" and "skincare collection" – necessarily distances users from harmful realities (Berlant 2011). The idea that age can be reversed and girlhood maintained, as well as the belief that excessive consumption is a personal right rather than global exploitation, is rooted within the same neoliberal logic that distances Americans in particular from death (Saad-Filho & Johnston 2005).

Via ongoing digital-ethnographic observation on TikTok and Instagram, we see this aversion at work in the comment sections of these videos. Users justify such consumption from a lens of individual freedom; they argue that these creators can spend their money how they'd like, or that the act of collecting products is just a hobby (Brown 2019; Proctor 2022). This attention to the individual is amplified by a culture of manufactured consent, wherein violence is justified within political, economic, and media institutions (Herman & Chomsky 2002).

To be clear: we all engage in consumptive performativity to an extent (Brough 2016). What we are interested in critiquing is how the digitized excess of consumption becomes part of neoliberal processes that maintain global structures of power (Brown 2019). This project asks: What

motivates TikTok creators to engage in this content production? How are critiques of such content managed in comment sections? In what ways do digital practices eschew ethical consequences? Importantly, we are more interested in these questions than we are in critiquing individual content creators; we argue that these consumptive practices are supported by deeply rooted, shared beliefs in Western exceptionalism, individual freedom of expression, and exemption from global, human consequences.

Presenter(s): Melody Devries

Co-author(s): Sam Heilmann, Melody Devries

Fake Canaries: An Ethnographic investigation of how the Birds Aren't Real Parodic Conspiracy Affords Ontological Uncertainty

In 2017, a conspiracy claimed that wild birds were not "real" – at least in the sense of bones, blood, and microbiomes. Rather, they claimed, the birds we see in our backyards or on telephone wires are part of a government orchestrated mass surveillance network. Importantly, the Birds Aren't Real movement is itself not "real"; it is a parody of conspiracy. The organizers of Birds Aren't Real – who today run multiple media channels, organize events, and have even published a book – intentionally evoke key rhetorical features of infamous conspiracy theories. For example, Birds Aren't Real participants have referred to themselves as 'bird-truthers', spoke of causing an 'awakening' of the blind, and discussed themes of an emerging "storm" (in reference to the increasingly worrisome Qanon conspiracy) (Neville-Shepard & Neville-Shepard 2024).

The organizers of Birds Aren't Real aimed to disable the logics of 'real' conspiracy theories by demonstrating how easily conspiracy culture could be counterfeited. However, scholars have suggested that parodic attempts to "hold a mirror" to conspiratorial absurdity may not be effective in inciting deconversion from conspiracy theories. (Devries 2023; Neville-Shepard & Neville-Shepard 2024). Indeed, parodic political comedy tends to serve an aligned audience - not those looking to re-evaluate their political convictions.

Drawing from our digital-ethnographic work on Birds Aren't Real and actual online conspiratorial spaces, we combine our disciplinary experience in digital anthropology, feminist philosophy, and ornithology to propose that the processes that form conspiratorial adherence are rarely solved by liberal parody. This is because conspiracies – especially those that involve the natural world – are not a matter of ideological certainty but instead often evoke ontological instability (Luhmann 2020). As conspiratorial adherence slowly forms, alternative worlds become accessible via repetitive moments of embodied interaction with material features of that world (Devries 2023). For example, while we might assume that physical manifestations of climate change, such as birds returning earlier from winter migration, would evoke certainty in climate change, our research suggests that for some this interaction affords a familiar encounter with uncertainty (Bubandt 2014). It is in this moment of uncertainty wherein ways of being-in and interpreting the world become reconfigurable. In turn, online interactions with Birds Aren't Real transform it into a "canary in the coal mine" that reveals how what might seem harmless or undetectable can connect to wider

processes of conspiratorial world-building. In this sense, Birds Aren't Real content may not just mimic the rhetoric of infamous conspiracy, but also the risky world-building effects facilitated by play with uncertainty.

Presenter(s): Difei Chen

Co-author(s): Melody Devries, Difei Chen

Liberating Masculinities? Gender Performativity, Embodiment, and Intimate Labor in a New York City BDSM Dungeon

This presentation offers initial reflections on an ongoing ethnographic study conducted within a commercial BDSM (an acronym for Bondage and Discipline, Domination and Submission, and Sadism and Masochism) dungeon in New York City, where the anthropologist also performs the role of a dominatrix. Focusing on male clientele who seek out the experience of performing submissive roles within heterosexual commercial BDSM studios in New York City, this research asks: How do these clients' "liberating" erotic experiences, often described as moments of "freedom," "relief," and "empowerment," shed light on how gender norms, economic hierarchies, and racial privilege are reproduced, negotiated, or momentarily unsettled, within and outside the dungeon?

The ongoing study highlights some of the challenges of researching human sexual behavior, including BDSM and sex work, which often face obstacles such as stigma, privacy concerns, and limited accessibility (Rubin 1984; Allison 1994; Berk 1995; Orbuch 1991; di Mauro 1995; Queen 1997; Chancer 1998; Califia 2000; Frank 2002, 2015; Funari 2013). While studies on this industry frequently focus on female workers, they often overlook clients, which is also notably true in professional domination, especially due to the submissive's unwillingness to disclose their practices (Lindemann 2012).

This research adopts embodiment as a methodological perspective (Csordas 1990; 2011), focusing on the agency of the clients, performers, and my own body, examining the interactions and modes of being of such bodies as subjects of anthropological knowledge. Therefore, it asks: What bodies are being "liberated", and through which body techniques? Where do the feelings of "freedom" and "empowerment" come from?

Furthermore, this study takes into account how power dynamics influence the framing of research topics, the populations studied, and the interactions between researchers and participants. In examining how my embodiment has shaped my access to the field, I

underscore the importance of reflexivity. My choice to conduct research on American clients as a sex worker myself, with extensive experience in this industry, and an anthropologist from the global South seeks to address the power imbalance formative of anthropology as a discipline, whose "Other" was a distant, savage one. In this context, BDSM and my positionality as a dominatrix operate both as a framework and as a metaphor for a broader analysis of how power constitutes and produces relationships in fieldwork and beyond, exploring key questions for anthropology, such as authority, voice, and representation.

Presenter(s): Paula Batista

Making Dystopian Futures One Robot at a Time: Robotics, Masculinity and the Feminist Refusal of the Future

Utopia and dystopia are commonly understood in relation to time and space. This paper proposes an anthropological approach to understanding utopian and dystopian imaginaries among roboticists on the east coast of the US that adopts an intersectional lens focusing on class and gender. In my ethnographic research I compare discourses and practices of future-making in two oppositional robotics worlds, one which is heavily VC-funded, located in shiny offices, and predominantly heteronormative and male, and another, which is underfunded, located in shabby old buildings, and female and queer.

I analyze what I term the gendered timelines ("timescapes") of utopian and dystopian presents and futures. Whereas a masculinist and techno-utopian robotics project places the benefits of technological development in the future while enjoying a utopian present for only a select few, a feminist project identifies the present as already dystopian. This feminist project involves, I argue, a refusal of the future, viewing the future as a broken capitalistic promise of equality that will never come.

Based on over than 24 months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, and using anthropological methods of participant observation, semi-structured and informal ethnographic interviews and focus groups, my research asks: how is time gendered in competing ideological visions of the future?

My paper adds a feminist lens to David Graeber's reflection on the broken (utopian) promises of a post-labor society: "Where, in short, are the flying cars? [...] Even those inventions that seemed ready to emerge [...] ended up betraying their lofty promises. What happened to them?" (Graeber 2012) My work is situated within the emerging field of the anthropology of the future, which explores how societies conceptualize and engage with the future, drawing from a diverse array of temporal philosophies and practices. It seeks to understand how people's actions in the present are influenced by their imaginations of the future, as in Miyazaki's notion of "reimagining the present from the perspective of the end" (Miyazaki 2006). Within the context of anthropology of the future, scholarship has called attention to the deeply ingrained idea in modern societies that time is inherently linked to progress (Bryant, Knights 2019).

Drawing on Silvia Federici's call to reimagine feminism and communism in the twenty-first century through "the principle of the commons" (Federici 2019), I theorize the commons as a mode of "feminist utopianism" that refuses a future that never arrives and instead focuses on material spaces and practices of dealing with the dystopian present that we all live in. I intervene in a tradition of feminist speculative fiction and as a feminist, I turn to the genres of speculative realism and fiction as ways to urgently re-envision alternative futures beyond a VC-dictated agenda.

Presenter(s): Maria Ryabova

Naked bodies: a study of women, subjectivity and forms of erotization

This work stems from my doctoral research, whose problem is to investigate women as social subjects when their existence is forged from their experience in the sex market. I start from the assumption that sexuality and eroticism are constitutive elements of prostitution and sex work, and are fundamental to its discussion. I draw on the theoretical and methodological perspectives of Brazilian and international anthropology, which emphasize the social and relational nature of the body and the norms that constitute it. I also take as my basis the symbolic constructions and social conditioning factors that permeate the figure of the prostitute, and I take into account the influence of the prostitutes' movement, the feminist movement and the human rights movement in the discussion on female prostitution, referencing them from research on the subject carried out in Brazil over the last few decades.

I am building an ethnography that looks at two distinct, but interchangeable, scenarios of sex work in the city of São Paulo: The first concerns women who call themselves "escorts", perform a various forms of sex work, circulate among the middle classes and make great use of digital social media to carry out their work. The research in this scenario has as its axis and guiding thread the accompaniment of two interlocutors with whom I have been in contact since my master's research.

The second scenario in which the research was carried out concerns prostitution practiced in squares, nightclubs, bars and hotels in the Santo Amaro district, in the south of the city of São Paulo, by low-income women, often in precarious situations. The research in this location is based on dialogue with a social project called "Projeto Antonia", which is responsible for working to welcome, approach and provide social assistance to women who work in prostitution in this area. The research in this context stems from my work as a volunteer and researcher in the activities carried out by this social project.

Based on the fieldwork carried out so far, I have observed that my interlocutors tend to move between experiences that sometimes highlight their choices and strategies and sometimes demonstrate processes of vulnerability. With this in mind, I would like to develop an analysis of what the exercise of agency is in the context of these women's experiences, considering the theoretical debates that problematize the liberal and individualistic notion of agency, and seek to understand it within systems of power and domination. I would also like to explore how their trajectories contribute to the formation of a unique knowledge about sexuality, eroticism and love relationships, which influences their perception of themselves and their love and family relationships.

Presenter(s): Carla Beatriz Campos

The Mahila Brigade of Dhusia community: An Intersectional Tale of Resistance and Negotiation of Urban Dalit Women in North India

In India, the cities are haunted by the ghost of caste hierarchies that are not ritualistic, yet significant enough to possess and dictate the hegemonic discourses of Brahmanical patriarchy. Violence caused by caste-based atrocities only gathers attention when it ends in evident fatal

consequences such as deaths, rapes and more. However, urban Dalits often face the everyday experience of humiliation and psychological and social exclusion, which comes off as harmless or implicitly casteist. Casteism in urban spaces demands proof and logic, as if it is a supernatural entity that requires proof of existence or else it does not exist. However, caste-based violence is coded in everyday life for urban Dalits in Delhi, and it exhibits its impact through the paradox of visibility and invisibility of caste as a social institution. Furthermore, the deception of castelessness in urban India is leading to selective epistemological erasure of Dalit cultures and their micro-histories. Intersectional oppressions of caste, gender, and class shape Dalit women's identities in India and deny them agency and dignity. Whether it is Phoolan or Mayavati who emerged as Dalit woman icons in North India, the collectivisation of Dalit women remains a vague mystery. In India, Dalit women's identity is surrounded by stigmas and sorrow, and they witnessed exclusion from Savarna (caste elites) feminist movements and anti-caste mobilisation by Dalit men. Unlike Northern India, the southern and western parts of India witnessed historical resistance through anti-caste movements under Ambedkar or Periyar's leadership. The anthropological enquiry of the Dhusia community, a sub-caste under Chamars, entails the lived experience of the Dhusia people in Delhi as urban Dalits. In my doctoral project of an auto-ethnography of Dhusias in Delhi, I came across a representational body of the community referred to as "samaj" (society) and officially known as "Dhusia Mahasabha Dilli Pradesh" (DMDP). The study explores the caste assertion of urban Dalits in North India and the lens of the anti-caste movement beyond Ambedkarism. On enquiries and interventions on gender representation within DMDP, a separate wing called the "Mahila (women) Brigade" was formed to appoint Dhusia women. With time, the Mahila Brigade became a significant part of DMDP. Dhusia women took great interest and initiative within the organisation and outside, representing their community in activities or social events like collective weddings, spiritual gatherings, and local political events. This paper explores the narratives and lived experiences of Dhusia women in DMDP's Mahila Brigade through a Dalit feminist standpoint. The resistance and negotiations in the everyday life of the Dhusia women in the Mahila Brigade within and outside the organisation, and their attempts to seek dignity and assert solidarity through their caste identity as urban Dalits in Delhi.

Presenter(s): Rashmi Kumar

3273 Imagistic Kinship. Ghosts, Thresholds and In-Between Spaces in Family Life, part 1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this panel, we take our point of departure in recent proposals of image as method (Stevenson 2014), imagistic inquiries (Grøn and Mattingly 2022) and spectral kinship (Gammeltoft 2022) in order to listen carefully to uncertainties, doubts, dreams, affects and ghosts in family life, thus orienting our attention towards immaterial, yet crucially important, dimensions of family life.

For decades the new kinship studies have inspired and expanded our understanding of family life by paying close attention to emergent forms of family making like adoption, assisted reproduction, LGBTQ+ and more, demonstrating that kinship is not only about biology, but relatedness emerges through sharing of food, belongings, memories, and places (Carsten 2004). Medical anthropology has demonstrated new formations of biosocial relatedness and disability studies have paid close attention to 'kinship imaginaries', i.e. how the experience of disability reshapes kinship and family life (Rapp and Ginsburg, 2001, 2024). Kinship relations are practiced through closeness and distance alike (Stasch 2008, Strathern 2020, Navne, Svendsen and Gammeltoft 2017) and come with considerable ambiguity (Geschiere 1997; Peletz 2001). They are experienced as both nourishing and poisonous: hauntings and contagious connections inform intergenerational family life (Meinert and Grøn 2020) as well as state/family intimate belongings (Johannesen and Grøn 2022). More specifically, we have asked the contributors to contemplate what we can learn about kinship by considering ghosts, thresholds, and in-between spaces:

What in-between spaces may open possibilities for dwelling, becoming and belonging in kinship relatedness? Or close them? Which ghosts, moods, affects, atmospheres and hauntings dwell there?

What material and immaterial thresholds are present and absent in family life? How do they mark or blur boundaries and demarcations of difference in the family and in more extended 'mutualities of being'?

Cassiman opens the panel by considering how women in Ghana seeking to cast off the spell of their husbands' emotional neglect form imagistic and sometimes hidden kinship circles of trusted female counselors and 'kayanmata' products. With the statement: "You are sparrows," a blind composer in Park's presentation invites us into aerial and sensory kinship and neurodiverse interworlds that emerges in the multisensorial contexts of creative dance, walking tours and aesthetic workshops in Canada. Grøn then invites us to consider dementia as located not in the body of an individual but as a pervasive, shapeshifting, interpersonal, in-between and ontologically indeterminate atmosphere in Danish families. Meinert continues the exploration of the imagistic in-between by considering families quietly living otherwise in the Ik mountains, Uganda, i.e. unusual family constellations that traverse local thresholds of normativity and recognition, but also offer glimpses into the kinship otherwise.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Lone Groen, VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research, Laura Emdal Navne, University of Copenhagen; VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research

Chair: Janelle Taylor, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ann Cassiman, University of Leuven, Melissa Park, McGill University, Lone Groen, VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research, Lotte Meinert

Discussant: Faye Ginsburg, New York University, Rayna Rapp, New York University

Presentation(s): "I want my loving husband back." Imagistic kinship and love work in marriage counselling

This paper explores the endeavors of two sisters who yearn to rekindle the affection and love of their husbands through what I call "love work". They seek to break the pervasive spell of emotional neglect that many wives and mothers in the zongos (popular Muslim neighborhoods of Accra) endure - a neglect that often spirals into depression. In their pursuit of love and attachment, the sisters try to constitute a loose circle of trusted female counsellors around them in order to find moral and emotional guidance and support, each in their own way. In addition, many women discreetly resort to "kayanmata" products -literally "women's stuff" in Hausa, roughly translated as "marriage sweeteners"- to revive their marriages. Vendors of these products often become trusted confidants and are integrated into the young women's intimate counselling circles. The concept of "imagistic kinship" is used to explore the roles of these new, but sometimes hidden, counselling figures and how they expose the doubts and insecurities that young women experience as they seek to regain the loving husbands they once knew.

Presenter(s): Ann Cassiman

Improvising Kin: Perplexity, poetic transformations, and embodied images

"He found an image for us," announces my colleague who supervises Vytco, an avid birder and composer living with congenital blindness. Vytco chuckles, feeling on his phone to share a sound clip: The crows' "Caw, caw, caw," is punctuated by a raven's louder and more raucous "Cra, Cra." "You," continues Vytco—gesturing towards me and a ceramicist—"are sparrows."

In this paper, I explore how artists and persons with sensory acuities of varying degrees create new lines of relationality by cultivating scenes in research creation projects that defrost categorical identifiers (e.g., ethnicity, language and disability). Attending to significant and, often perplexing, moments drawn from ethnographic material, I trace how inter-worlds emerge from creative dance sessions for older adults to "break isolation," walking tours with autists to create "sensory friendly zones" in urban landscapes, and studio workshops on ephemerality with artists. The immersive methods used (e.g., film and binaural audio recordings) asks us to consider the atmospheres in which persons from neurodiverse worlds improvise lines of kinship and affiliation to increase understanding of each other and ourselves.

Presenter(s): Melissa Park

Dementia as atmosphere: Ghosts, thresholds and in-between spaces in family life

"I want it out of my house," Maria says about dementia. She is talking about dementia as having moved in with her family, creeping in through cracks and gaps - even through closed doors, walls and across larger distances, when e.g. her husband who is diagnosed with Alzheimers has moved to a care facility. Other families talk about dementia as having created in-between spaces where otherwise ways of being with in everyday life and otherwise forms of intimacy, kindness and care emerge within the haunting presence of dementia. In all families there is also talk about how to carve out 'dementia free' spaces, e.g. in yoga and mindfulness classes, in online gaming communities or in finding a new lover while also sticking with the sick spouse through thick and thin.

In this paper, I draw on recent fieldwork among Danish families who live with dementia arguing that the lived experience of dementia cannot be located in one family member's body or brain, but emerges as a pervasive, shapeshifting, interpersonal, atmospheric presence within which family members will seek to both live and carve out 'dementia-free' spaces. Drawing on Böhmes (1993) designation of atmospheres as ontologically indeterminate and Oser's work on interpersonal atmospheres, I trace dementia as atmosphere in ghostly appearances and events, in in-between spaces and as crossing thresholds of time and space.

Presenter(s): Lone Groen

Quietly Otherwise: Atmospheres of Sharing in Unusual Ik Families

In the Ik mountains of Uganda, where economic and cultural marginality meet strict national middleclass norms of gender and family, some families quietly practice forms of kinship that fall outside normative expectations. Drawing on a collaborative research project on Imaging Gender Futures, this paper explores atmospheres of keeping quiet, sharing resources and difficulties in two families whose ways of living otherwise are not expressed through rights-based discourses, but through everyday acts of care and conflict.

In one family, a widow is inherited into her late husband's brother's household, where she and the brother's wife form a polygynous marriage with shared responsibilities for children, labor, and love. In another, two brothers share a wife and raise their children together—a polyandrouse arrangement born of imprisonment, absence, return, and slow attunement to an unusual situation. These family constellations resist legibility within dominant scripts of nuclear kinship, and their quiet ways call for an ethics of being-with-otherwise that embraces ambivalence and respects opacity.

Through filmic collaboration and attunement to their atmospheres of sharing and withholding food, affection, tension, and care—the paper explores the imagistic and affective dimensions of kinship that unfold in these in-between spaces. It reflects on how such families not only traverse thresholds of normativity and recognition, but also offer glimpses into kinship otherwise.

Presenter(s): Lotte Meinert

Discussion

507 American Ethnological Society Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Perry Maddox, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Xiaoya Yang , João Felipe Gonçalves , Yun Feng, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Ming Xue, American Museum of Natural History, Yuan Yan , Houman Oliaei

Presenter(s): Perry Maddox, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Xiaoya Yang, João Felipe Gonçalves, Yun Feng, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Ming Xue, American Museum of Natural History, Yuan Yan, Houman Olliaei

Presentation(s): "We've Forgotten the Taste": Living Anthropocene Loss in Ngäbe Panama

The Anthropocene concept has been helpfully deployed as a frame to diagnose a present marked by devastating environmental destruction on a planetary scale, even as it is well-critiqued for its potential to occlude uneven distributions of both harm and responsibility for these conditions. While some scholars cast this present in apocalyptic terms (Danowski and Viveiros De Castro 2017; Tsing 2015), others point out that many Indigenous peoples have inhabited a postapocalyptic world for centuries (Whyte 2018, Davis and Todd 2017). But how is the destruction marked as Anthropocene actually experienced in everyday life, particularly by peoples who are living in the wake of colonial devastation? What, if anything, is distinctive about the character of the losses that haunt our present? Here, I approach these questions through close attention to everyday life in Ngäbe campesino communities, indigenous to the mountains of what is now western Panama. These communities are the descendants of Indigenous peoples who fled genocidal violence and colonial regimes of forced labor, who survived by creating a maroon ecology of shifting cultivation deep in the mountains, reinhabiting a shattered world, rebuilding a society, and slowly reclaiming lands that had been invaded by cattle ranchers. In our present, intersecting pressures of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation tear at the fabric of life here in ways that to some extent compound the ravages of colonial violence, even as they follow their own distinctive trajectories to ramify erratically through the landscape. How do these forms of harm and loss appear in everyday life? How do people mourn and make sense of experiences of environmental devastation? What, precisely, is lost? What forms of adaptation emerge in the daily labor of householding, and how do these emerge or diverge from the many adaptations instrumental to Ngäbe life in the wake of colonization? Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted intermittently since 2016, most recently over fourteen months in 2023-4, I consider how the colonality of the Anthropocene moment is felt and perceived in this place through intimate, mundane relations with the landscape and its inhabitants, human and otherwise. Following Mathur (2021), I suggest that attention to these stories of loss and reinhabitation can make concrete the complex, multi-scalar interconnections of the Anthropocene moment which may be known and felt intuitively in the thick of the everyday, even as they remain elusive to received conceptual frameworks.

Presenter(s): Perry Maddox

American Ethnological Society

Rehearsal of Global Elitism: Labor, Desire, and Temporality Among Chinese Female International Students Post-Graduation

A heated debates on international students recently unfolded between Elon Musk and several Republicans. While Musk emphasized the critical role Chinese international students play in U.S. high-tech industries, his opponents argued that these students displace job opportunities for

American citizens. Later, the Trump administration terminated thousands of Chinese international student's visas. This controversy thrust these students into either exploitable elitist labor for U.S. technology capitalism or threats to local employment and national security. Such portrayals failed to grasp the nuanced tension between their pursuit of global elite identities and the everyday labor and emotional struggles they endure.

Decoding this tension, my research explores how Chinese female international students navigate life in the liminal period following graduation. I examine two primary aspects: first, the gendered and embodied labor these students undertake to maintain their legal status, daily life, and employment eligibility; and second, the cultivated desires and expectations of success that motivate this labor. My findings suggest that the aspiration toward global elitism, shaped by the globalized education economy and neoliberal feminist ideals, operates both as a shared desire and as a continuous negotiation influenced by restrictive immigration policies in the U.S. and political dynamics in China. Rather than solely emphasizing localized contexts, my study illustrates global economic systems as "desire machines," generating alluring images of success and compelling individuals to undertake particular forms of labor while outsourcing others. In doing so, this research provides insight into how young women from China's single-child generation negotiate their lives amidst current global political tensions.

In my fieldwork, I trace female Chinese international students' embodied experiences of global elitism narratives and their daily negotiation of constrained biopolitical conditions, through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and affective mapping. I particularly examine the processes involved in job preparation and learning ideals of global elitism under constant political precarity.

Theoretically, this ethnography engages with critical anthropological conversations regarding gendered labor, immigration temporality, and elitism. My research deepens academic discussions on what global elitism and global citizenship mean for new generations of international students navigating an increasingly globalized yet restrictive economy. Additionally, it intersects with feminist and queer theoretical discussions about the cultivation of gendered desires through embodiment and performance. By narrating students' embodied labor as forms of space-making during temporal immigration, this research highlights how queer temporality manifests is possible among populations actively engaging in heteronormativity.

Presenter(s): Xiaoya Yang

Ghosts and Treasures: The Senses of the Great War in Paraguay

This paper analyzes the ubiquitous narratives and experiences about ghosts and treasures in contemporary Paraguay as folk memories of long-past violence and war. Such haunting spirits and buried riches are said to be results of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), which killed at least half of Paraguay's prewar population and during which its wealthy citizens buried their valuables to prevent looting by foreign invaders. Today, the central-eastern section of Paraguay is full of stories of encounters with distressed wartime ghosts and of people digging the land in search of

underground treasures, locally called "plata vyguy". But ghosts and treasures frequently appear interrelated in Paraguay. Wartime spirits are said to protect the buried treasures by scaring away avaricious and wicked individuals and by revealing their locations – by means of supernatural signs like strange-looking animals or mysterious flames and lights – to people who morally deserve that once-lost wealth. Throughout that region of Paraguay there are rich families not affiliated with traditional elites whose wealth is said to have originated in plata vyguy. Equally abundant are stories of chosen people who asked for the assistance of others in unearthing treasures revealed to them, only to become victims of their helpers' greed and violence. Also, according to folk narratives, if an unworthy person tries to get hold of a treasure, it magically disappears; or, if s/he manages to touch it, it suddenly becomes some worthless matter, like coal or earth. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, this paper interprets narratives and experiences about ghosts and treasures in Paraguay as vernacular memories that allow people to a) feel the past in the present through the senses of hearing, sight, and touch, and b) make moral sense of trauma and violence in ways that depart from official nationalistic, militaristic commemorations. Besides the anthropology of history, this paper adds to the literature on occult economies by studying not colonial and neoliberal contexts – as anthropologists have typically done – but a traditional, peasant-based social formation, and by analyzing supernatural folk narratives and experiences which, far from criticizing capitalist accumulation of wealth, legitimize it.

Presenter(s): João Felipe Gonçalves

Luck, Fengshui, and Karma in E-commerce Villages: Imagine the World with Algorithms

This article illustrates how e-commerce practitioners engaged in rural e-commerce use the cosmological knowledge of "Xuanxue" to imagine the rules governing the algorithmic world. Since 2009, state-sponsored digital technology and privately-owned e-commerce platforms in China have spurred an intense socio-economic transformation across rural China, where 13 million rural households have experienced a massive reshaping of family structures, socioeconomic roles, and gendered identities. I argue that in this human-machine game of e-commerce villages, to gain more traffic on the platform, sell more goods, and ultimately achieve greater profits, villagers use all their knowledge from human society, even including cosmological knowledge to imagine the world of algorithms, while algorithms only care about the reduced or partial human value. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, the dynamic interactions between humans and algorithms offer profound insights into social structures, cultural practices, and individual identities. However, the humanism understandings of the digital world falls far short. My research seeks to unpack the algorithmic realities in which mankind are experiencing a set of new rules, values, and parameters of surviving and thriving in digital world.

Presenter(s): Yun Feng

Maoist Thangkas and 3D Buddhas: The internal iconoclasm in the creation of agentive images

This presentation explores the materiality of Tibetan thangka paintings, when these man-made things astonish their makers, render people uneasy, or create controversies. The paper extends

current discussions of iconoclasm and fetish by examining how people enter and maintain relationships with images that are commissioned and used inside the frame of ritual practices. Based on encounters with thangka painters in Rebgong, a Tibetan community in northwest China, the paper proposes the notion of "internal iconoclasm"-the multiple discourses or even destruction that art makers must reconcile to produce an image that works. The study highlights how internal iconoclasm helps us understand image makers' concerns, challenges, and choices, whether during political turmoil or in a burgeoning market. The notion of internal iconoclasm not only furthers our understanding of how agentive images work in contemporary societies, but also makes important implications to a broader literature concerning Tibetan art and the so-called "traditional art."

Presenter(s): Ming Xue

Still in the Danwei: How Danwei Memory Anchors People with Dementia in an Urban Care Home in China

Home-making practices in care homes, such as the use of familiar objects and family photographs in a person's room, can help people with dementia experience a sense of belonging rather than feeling a need to return home. These practices cannot, however, fully recreate a previous sense of home (jia in Mandarin). In this article, based on ethnographic research at a dementia care home in urban China, I first examine how residents felt they had lost their home when arriving in the care home, but then explore alternative ways through which they felt a sense of belonging, based on their memories of Chinese danwei living and working institutions. Their life in the care home institution evoked memories of living and working in the danwei. China organized its cities through the danwei system from the late 1950s to the 1990s, a multifunctional institution that provided employment, housing and other services. It was a collective work and living environment-and thus an institution with some similarities to a care home. I examine how the residents' material environment, activities and relationships in the care home meant they felt they were living and working in their danwei. The familiarity of this care home 'danwei' helped the residents develop a sense of belonging. Furthermore, I argue that danwei as a manifestation of the socialist guojia (Chinese state) also created feelings of belonging for people with dementia. My analysis shows that beyond home-making practices, in China and other contexts, belonging for people with dementia in institutions can also be explored by giving people role positions and interactions which are valuable to them and might reflect earlier work or other institutional structures in their life.

Presenter(s): Yuan Yan

The Migration Game: Counter-Cartographies of Migration from the Middle East to the US-Mexico Border

Research on the U.S.-Mexico border has traditionally spotlighted Latin American migration, yet the frontier is now a crucial waypoint for travelers from the Middle East. Displaced by protracted wars, the collapse of regional asylum systems, and the tightening of European corridors, migrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey increasingly thread their way through the Americas to reach this border. Based on ethnographic research with migrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey,

alongside their facilitators, this paper examines how these actors conceptualize and navigate the complex legal and geographical landscapes connecting their homelands to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Central to their practice is what both migrants and facilitators call "the game," a term they use to refer to this transcontinental passage. How does the term "the game" show the cracks and contradictions in sovereignty regimes, and in doing so, recast border-making as a knowledge practice negotiated in motion? This paper argues that "the game" represents an alternative epistemology of movement, a practical knowledge system that exposes the performative fiction of absolute state territorial integrity. This framing transforms transnational movement into a field of strategic play where migrants and facilitators emerge as skilled tacticians who read territorial boundaries as permeable interfaces rather than fixed demarcations. The metaphor simultaneously captures the high-stakes unpredictability of migration (chance), the necessity for tactical knowledge (skill), the presence of multiple actors with competing interests (players), and the improvisational adaptability required to succeed (strategy). Within this framework, migrants and facilitators have developed a sophisticated taxonomy of practices: from "khodandaz" (self-directed game) involving forest and mountain crossings, to "taxi game" using vehicles for border crossings, "ship game" utilizing boats, "police game" involving coordinated actions with officials (often through bribes), "ticket game" using trains or buses, and "air game" employing borrowed or forged documents for direct flights to destinations. By fragmenting migration into these specialized "games," participants reframe state power not as monolithic but as a disjointed assemblage of institutions whose contradictions can be exploited.

Presenter(s): Houman Oliaei

501 Society of Medical Anthropology Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Mahir Rahman, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Bethany Jowers, Génesis Luigi, Chenchen Ma, University of Amsterdam, Hannelore Van Bavel, University of Bristol

Presenter(s): Mahir Rahman, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Bethany Jowers, Génesis Luigi, Chenchen Ma, University of Amsterdam, Hannelore Van Bavel, University of Bristol

Presentation(s): Embarazos Espeluznantes (Spooky Pregnancies): Reproductive Governance and Adolescent Pregnancy in Peru

Pregnant adolescents are at the violent crossroads of maternal and adolescent health policy. Codification of reproductive and sexual rights, criminalization of abortions, and limited access to reproductive healthcare facilities foster unmanageable stress and fear amongst adolescents. Adolescents bear the weight of adult reproductive health policies and adolescent sexual health educational standards, both of which fail to meet their reproductive health needs. Six months of

ethnographic fieldwork through observation, content analysis, and interviews, in local colegios (schools), boticas (pharmacies), and medical centers reveal the realities of adolescent pregnancy in Huanchaco, Peru. Adolescents are subject to national policies that are enmeshed into local curricula all of which reify obstetric and sexual violences. Community members and teachers are expected to surveil sexual behaviors through chisme (gossip). I argue that adolescent pregnancy is entangled in cultures of normality, created through local and national levels of reproductive governance.

Presenter(s): Mahir Rahman

Facing Specters of (Digital) Surveillance: Photovoice as Resistance in Florida OB/GYN Academic Medicine

Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Roe v. Wade was overturned in 2022, the state of Florida has passed increasingly stringent abortion bans. Concurrently, Florida has also leveraged billions of dollars in higher education funding to prohibit diversity-related learning and programming in state universities. These policy changes have radically affected the discipline of obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN), specifically the education of medical students, residents, and fellows. More recently, these changes have been magnified by sweeping action at the federal level. Scarce research characterizes the experiences of OB/GYN clinicians, educators, or administrative and leadership personnel in this post-Roe, anti-diversity moment in Florida, or explores the intersections of these policy trends. The latter topic is exigent, as American OB/GYN medicine has been plagued since its inception by racialized harms, challenges to access, and outcome disparities.

This research explores the everyday experiences of administrators, clinician-educators, and students in the highest-performing OB/GYN academic medicine center in Florida. Under these policies, participants report intense surveillance, many hindrances to their daily tasks, feelings of powerlessness, and an exodus of talented students and providers from their practice. However, they also reported feeling empowered by small, everyday actions of resistance. These findings are interpreted through a Foucauldian feminist lens; I discuss the state and medicine as overlapping power structures in which individual practitioners exercise relational power and refuse to disengage from the micro-politics of their work.

Finally, drawing on Black feminist thought, participants are involved in a focus group-based photovoice exercise to capture everyday resistance outside the workplace. Prompts guide participants in visualizing their own self-sustaining practices such as rest, community-building, and joy-seeking. The goal of this research is to cultivate an "oppositional gaze" among participants which will allow them to recognize, understand, and resist the specters of state power haunting OB/GYN academic medicine in Florida today.

Presenter(s): Bethany Jowers

Hormonal dilemmas: gendered narratives in the search for health, balance, and the "true self"

In 2024, the Washington Post published the article "Women are getting off birth control amid misinformation explosion." This piece reported on the rise of online content overstating the adverse side effects of hormonal contraception and depicting it as a cause of "unnatural bodily imbalances." This reporting highlighted the complicated relationship hormonal contraception users have with it and their bodies, a topic previously brought to attention by scholars like Littlejohn (2013), Walker (2012) and Ford, De Togni, and Miller (2021). Likewise, political commentators reacted by claiming the article dismissed the lived experiences of women, but more interestingly, that it was part of a censorship agenda against "birth control critics" and those "committed to protecting natural femininity." These concerns over balance, endocrine disruption, gender as hormonal make-up, and the natural as a moral category gain relevance in a political context where health freedom movements like the Make America Healthy Again become mainstream. Even more when, paradoxically, spokespersons like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and podcaster Joe Rogan have promoted Testosterone Replacement Therapy to biohack their health and masculinity while advancing legislation that blocks access to gender-affirming therapies and procedures for trans people. These claims also starkly contrast the back-to-nature narratives advanced in specific women's health and wellness circles. Given these revived interests in the role of hormones in health and gender performance, this project aims to explore how people's understanding of hormonal health shapes their relationship with their bodies and healthcare practices. I aim to further the understanding of hormones as biosocial objects with the potential to shape cultural narratives (Erikainen et al. 2024; Oudshoorn 1994). I present preliminary results from an ongoing interview study where, between December 2024 and March 2025, I conducted interviews and participant observation of different spaces aimed at promoting menstrual cycle syncing practices and biohacking practices among residents of the New York Metropolitan Area. In this initial set of data, I conducted 28 in-depth interviews with laypeople (21 cisgender women, 6 cisgender men, and 1 trans man) about their health and wellness habits and their views on hormonal health. One clear gendered narrative in this first round of interviews is the contrast between the uses of health tracking and which goals they respond to. I draw some comparisons between cycle syncing and biohacking, given that both are forms of intervening health outcomes and the body. On the one hand, biohacking is geared towards "optimize time and health" and "becoming a better man" in contrast to the correlates of cis women engaging in intensive tracking and wellness routines as a way to compensate subpar care and discover "a true self" hidden under the artificialness of synthetic hormones and the unpredictability of "natural" ones.

Presenter(s): Génesis Luigi

Is It a Good Pain? Phantom Sensations, Prosthetic Integration, and the Ghosts of the Former Body

Losing a limb is not just a physical rupture—it also haunts the self. Phantom sensations echo the presence of what is no longer there, maintaining a lingering connection to the absent body. While modern prosthetic care often promises to restore ability and bodily wholeness through biotechnology, the lived experience of wearing a prosthesis is shaped by pain, discomfort, and emotional complexity. Phantom Limb Pain (PLP) can be seen as the ghost of the amputated limb: a spectral reminder that both facilitates and disrupts prosthetic integration. It reveals the brain's

persistent mapping of the missing limb while exposing the artificiality of its replacement. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at a prosthetic care center in northern China, this paper explores how individuals recovering from amputation navigate these ghostly sensations. Through everyday experiences, they come to understand pain, acceptance, and resistance in relation to their prosthetic limbs. Drawing on cyborg theory, feminist technoscience, and crip theory, the paper asks what it means to live as a cyborg in pain-shaped by technology while confronting its limits. Embodied knowledge, filtered through phantom sensations, becomes central to how prosthetic users negotiate the boundaries between self, body, and machine. In doing so, the paper contributes to broader conversations about identity, agency, and care, showing how the ghost of the former body continues to shape life in the age of biomedical repair.

Presenter(s): Chenchen Ma

The Politics of Bodily Autonomy: Transnational Double Standards in the Regulation of Female Genital Modifications

Female genital cosmetic procedures (FGCP)-surgical and non-surgical interventions that alter the appearance of female genitalia without medical necessity-have seen a marked rise over the past two decades. At the same time, medicalised forms of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), in which health care professionals perform such procedures, have also increased. Although both fall under the WHO's definition of FGM/C, only medicalised FGM/C is widely criminalised, while FGCP remains legal and socially accepted. Globalisation and digital communication have heightened awareness of these practices and their uneven legal and cultural treatment, prompting debates over the double standards that govern them.

This paper explores how the boundaries between FGCP and medicalised FGM/C are defined, contested, and blurred in law, medicine, and public discourse. Drawing on ethnographic studies of FGCP in Belgium and the Netherlands and FGM/C in Kenya, I analyse how different actors-legal authorities, medical professionals, and community stakeholders-navigate and negotiate these distinctions. In doing so, I shed light on the broader dynamics of gender, power, and postcolonial politics that shape the regulation of female bodies and challenge dominant narratives around consent, harm, and cultural legitimacy.

Presenter(s): Hannelore Van Bavel

8144 The Anthropology of Family Ghosts

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Interview

How does an anthropologist deal with ghosts in the family? In this family-based interview, we discuss the boundaries between the personal and professional while investigating family history. Many anthropologists have successfully and intriguingly incorporated their relatives into their research, enriching the canon of anthropological literature. Examples that come to mind include Kirin Narayan, Janelle Taylor, Danilyn Rutherford, Roy Grinker, and Barbara Rylko-Bauer; there are

many others. What about when the anthropologist wishes to lay aside their anthropological training, and to investigate, think, and write as a 'civilian'? Here, Leslie Carlin shares her experience of tracing the life and death of an aunt she never knew. Alice, born in New York in 1942 with Down Syndrome, lived her entire life in institutions. Not only was Alice thus consigned and confined; her entire existence was denied by her parents, who claimed that their third child had died at birth. Alice became a ghost: first a living, and now a dead one. In the years-long project of learning, forgetting, remembering, and then investigating Alice's existence, the temptation to turn the project into one that leans toward the ethnographic or even the ethological has been in tension with the desire to see the story as a personal narrative. The hope is that in the span of time allowed during this interview, attendees will share their own thoughts, questions, and experiences around this topic.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Leslie Carlin, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Leslie Carlin, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Simon Coleman, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

2512 Funding Ecologies: The Futures of Cultural Work

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Discussions of funding - from its sources, purposes, and impacts - have come to dominate recent American public discourse. A 2024 New York Times article entitled, "To Save Museums, Treat Them Like Highways" argued that "We need to treat culture as equal to other forms of national infrastructure, as important to our national well-being." Our current moment brings into sharp relief our collective need to center and sustain dialogue on the lived realities of cultural practice work in and around museum contexts. How do we meet such moments of crisis as museum anthropologists?

Indeed, over the last several decades there has been an increasing public concern around issues of funding inequities and the ethics of accepting money from corporate donors. Direct actions have called for museums and cultural centers to participate in ethical, socially relevant, and progressive work that is accountable to its many stakeholders (Kreps 2020, Raicovich 2021).

With an eye to these concerns, this panel discusses the financial precarity that continues to haunt the work of museums and the cultural sector, broadly conceived. Panelists will examine the systems, infrastructures, and goals that underpin cultural work and related projects, in the past, present, and the near future. How do we learn from different modes of engagement at varied stages of development, and how do we take these lessons and recognize the opportunities they present for the museum field?

This panel seeks to reflect on models of sustaining cultural work whilst activating new ways of knowing and engaging practices that look beyond the strict parameters of the past. Presenters in

this session may contend with the panel title concept of funding ecologies in spaces including but not limited to museum collections research, public writing, pedagogy, and community-engaged cultural work.

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Amanda Guzman, Trinity College, Department of Anthropology, Emily Rogers, Indiana University, Bloomington

Chair: Amanda Guzman, Trinity College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): W Warner Wood, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Amanda Guzman, Trinity College, Department of Anthropology, Carolyn Smith, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Emily Rogers, Indiana University, Bloomington

Discussant: Jason Baird Jackson, Indiana University, Bloomington

Presentation(s): A DIY Approach to Impact Investing for Museums: Building Community as the Financial Future of Museums

For decades museums have been focused on engaging, serving, and building community. This orientation manifests in collections work through an emphasis on collaboration with "source communities". A similar pattern holds around museum educational programs where museums have focused on better ways to work together with communities on their own terms. But the same does not hold true for funding museums— or on how new ways of supporting museums could and should engage, serve, and build community. In fact, framing the issue in this way runs counterintuitively to the way most museum professionals think about financial challenges. The emerging world of "impact investing" provides tools for approaching museum financial success in terms of engaging, serving, and building community, on a community's own terms. To date, discussion of impact investing in the world of museums has mostly focused on the idea that museum endowments should be "mission aligned," which is just one (and perhaps the most obvious) tool in the non-profit sector. On the other hand, impact investing strategies also include microloans for small scale businesses, supporting affordable housing, and partnering with businesses that create employment opportunities in underserved communities. This paper explores what a fully developed impact investing strategy could look like for museums in the United States, thereby laying out an argument for making financial planning and management of museums community engaged work.

Presenter(s): W Warner Wood

Environments of Care: Teaching Curation as Sustainable Practice

Centered in the preliminary work of a recently awarded 2025 Mellon Foundation Higher Education grant in Environmental Justice Studies, this paper will explore the role and possibilities of curatorial-informed pedagogical design in humanities research. The grant aims to promote regional dialogue, across urban and suburban communities, that builds shared understandings of and solutions to interrelated systems of environmental justice in Hartford. From a curatorial standpoint, this collaborative project work will materialize in a series of pop-up exhibits coupled with community

dialogue sessions, a culminating physical exhibition at the Stowe Center for Literary Activism, and a Matterport digital twin offering a longer-term exhibition after-life beyond the grant period.

Ultimately, the paper will critically consider what might be the stakes, processes, and limits of creating, sustaining, and preserving environments of care, as a concept and practice, in and beyond the undergraduate communities in an anthropological classroom. How can the work of teaching curatorial design and environmental storytelling succeed as an engaged method of non-extractive, mutually beneficial partnership?

Presenter(s): Amanda Guzman

Unknotting Shoestrings: Preserving Cultural Knowledge for Community with Limited Funding

Karuk basketweavers learn about the responsibility to pass their knowledge to future generations of weavers from their very first harvest. Predicated on this inherent responsibility, I will discuss an ongoing collaborative multimedia project with a Karuk master basketweaver to document the gathering of basketry materials, despite the limited funding often available to carry out this work. Focusing on the need to document traditional ecological knowledge from this elder weaver's lifetime of experience, I aim to balance sustainable plant harvesting practices with intergenerational teaching. Indeed, Karuk basketweavers have been practicing sustainable land stewardship, including the use of cultural fire, since time immemorial. Mindful also of the challenges of funding a project to record cultural knowledge that is meant to stay within the community, I provide one partnership model by which such work might be sustainable while also honoring Tribal protocols.

Presenter(s): Carolyn Smith

Collecting and Celebrating the 1976 United States Bicentennial

This paper will explore how 1976 United States Bicentennial Celebration philanthropic and federal funding supported a proliferation of traditional arts-related projects in museums and in Native American cultural institutions. Based on recent archival and interview-based research, it focuses particularly on the histories and memories related to this historical event amongst members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. This paper will explore how local institutions like the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual arts cooperative promoted and sold Cherokee traditional arts at this time, how these efforts articulated with a larger national interest within American museums in Southern and Appalachian craft, and Tribe members' ambivalence towards celebrations of nationhood and memorializing colonization. Furthermore, it considers historical trends in (and lessons for) how ebbs and flows in arts and humanities funding shapes what stories are told and how in public spaces.

Presenter(s): Emily Rogers

Discussion

6923 Ancestral Knowledge as a Guiding Force Within Indigenous Home Visiting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As Indigenous Peoples our lives are rooted in the ways of knowing and practices that have been passed down from our ancestors. Our relationships with the spiritual realm are critical to our wellness. The wisdom of those who came before us offers guidance on our journeys and aids in the sustainability of our peoples. Our care for the land, our languages, medicines, ceremonies, and more are gifts that have been passed down. The teachings of our parents, grandparents, and ancestors advise us in particular on our journeys of parenthood. It is ancestral knowledge that supports us as we raise Indigenous babies; they are the ones who have taught us that our children are sacred. Ancestral guidance and its manifestation in our roles as parents and caretakers is a major component in how home visiting, and overall approaches to wellness, differs from common Euroamerican practices. How our ancestors lived advises us now, and how we live now will support our descendants to thrive. This is a cyclical existence that sustains itself in harmony with the land and spiritual realm. This integral understanding is at the core of our novel Indigenous home visiting program: Pilimakua Family Connections.

Home visiting programs are family-focused, voluntary programs that support parents and caretakers with new babies and young children. These programs aim to promote positive parent-child relationships, support healthy child development, and strengthen family well-being. Culturally responsive home visiting can be especially valuable in offering meaningful relationship-based support during the critical early years of a child's life. However, dominant home visitor competencies documented in empirical and professional literature are reflective of Euroamerican practices and do not account for our holistic wellness as Indigenous Peoples. The Pilimakua Family Connections program moves beyond a culturally responsive framework to fully center participating families' Indigenous cultures and languages, including facilitating access to Indigenous families in diaspora (i.e., living in urban areas away from their ancestral/traditional territories). As a home-based intervention that meets families where they are, the Pilimakua theory of change posits that home visiting is a sustainable approach to accomplishing these goals for families with very young children and without access to language immersion programs due to limited numbers of same-language peers. In this roundtable, our all-Indigenous team will introduce and discuss the Seattle-based Pilimakua Family Connections Program's inception and development, and share findings of our program evaluation, all informed by an emergent model of Indigenous Home Visitor competencies that weaves together the practice-based and ancestral expertise of Indigenous home visitors. It is through centering these ancestral practices that we connect with those that came before us and honor their presence in our lives and the lives of our children.

Section: Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

Organizer: Rachel Wilbur

Presenter(s): Marla Alohilani Tam-Hoy Barhoum , Koa Beck , Tess Abrahamson-Richards , Kamalei

Brandon

Discussant: Rachel Wilbur

2011 Colonial Hauntings in Anti-colonial Research: Are Ghosts Useful to the Living? Part 1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology is haunted by our colonial past. Colonial tools: from institutional grant writing to data production and dissemination, to the machete and the plow, are threaded throughout our research, our lives, the lives of the communities whose voices we seek to illuminate. This panel interrogates colonial tools and the role they play in our tangled lives and livelihoods. The papers ask and answer questions: Can colonial tools actually be reframed? Is this a useful endeavor? Does it lead to constant critique but little useful action or change? Do we really seek to build anticolonial approaches? Is the unimaginable actionable? Through wide ranging ethnographic examples, the papers in this panel interrogate the complexity of anticolonial approaches in a world shaped by colonial tools. These reflexive understandings open anthropological possibilities, moving beyond guilt and lip service to furthering intentional transformative actions. (Part 1 of a double session)

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Kristina Baines, Guttman Community College, CUNY, Ranya Perez

Chair: Ranya Perez, Kristina Baines, Guttman Community College, CUNY

Presenter(s): Kristina Baines, Guttman Community College, CUNY, Mark Chatarpal, Vassar College, Department of Anthropology, Ranya Perez, Ahac Meden, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU)

Presentation(s): Can Institutions Be Anti-Colonial?: Lessons in Decolonial Methodologies from the Ab'ink of Maya Leaders and Academics

Decolonial methodologies remain an imperative for anthropological research, however, they are subject to continuous critique, redefining and reimagining in a changing disciplinary context. This paper aims to further interrogate the methodologies defined by the decolonial moniker in anthropology through an examination of experiences at the 2019 ab'ink, a gathering of indigenous Maya leaders and research scholars in southern Belize. It considers the significance of the Maya leaders' use of the ab'ink, a traditional listening space in Maya communities, to engage academic anthropologists in conversation with local, national and international experts in support of their ongoing struggle for land tenure and community governance. In the context of the articulation of Maya values in the wake of the legal land rights victory, this paper explores how indigenous communities might deploy environmental and cultural heritage practices as resistance to colonial development models to reify alternative conceptions of what it means to live a "good" or "healthy" life. It also asks how anthropological researchers might, or might not, play a role in this deployment. Through an analysis of interviews around participants' experiences of the ab'ink as both a discrete

event and a lesson in indigenous methodology, this paper aims to better articulate what is possible in creating a "decolonial" discipline, or designing "anti-colonial" research.

Presenter(s): Kristina Baines

Leveraging Article 40:1 in Guyana's Constitution: How the National Tshao Council is utilizing constitutional mechanisms to advance food sovereignty

This paper examines the intersection of Indigenous rights, food sovereignty, and legal frameworks in Guyana, focusing on the role of the National Tshao Council (NTC) in shaping food policy. Based on 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork among the NTC and its executive council and extended interviews with a former President, Attorney General, Minister of Agriculture, and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, my paper traces how the NTC, the largest Indigenous organization in Guyana, is working to utilize its constitutionally mandated right to provide the State with policy recommendations. In addition to the various strategies employed by Indigenous peoples to advance food sovereignty along the margins of State power, this paper discusses a current initiative involving legal activism to enforce Guyana's constitutional guarantee of the right to food, as outlined in Article 40:1 of the constitution, providing a unique legal framework that could empower Indigenous communities to enforce food sovereignty as a human right. By leveraging Guyana's constitutional and international obligations in recognizing the right to food, this paper suggests pathways for strengthening the NTC's ability to advocate for policies that respect new definitions of food sovereignty and proposes a more inclusive and legally enforceable framework that recognizes food as a fundamental human right and supports the self-determination of Indigenous communities in Guyana.

Presenter(s): Mark Chatarpal

The Bronx and the Politics of Data

In a letter to communities, scholars, and educators, Eve Tuck urged for the suspension of "damage" as a research method, instead proposing "desire as method," which reveals the magic, complexity, and self-determination of life, instead of reducing communities to their traumas. In this paper, I explore what transpires when "desire as method" is practiced in processes of data collection—what occurs when data is not used to legitimize violence, but to reinforce community resilience and self-determination. I present two case studies examining community responses to data collection, one based on my preliminary research with growers in the Bronx who use Farming Concrete, a data collection toolkit, as a mechanism for amplification and legibility against displacement, and the other, based on the data collected on the public health of Bronxites in the 1970s to today, with a focus on reflections on the current use of data by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the city of New York in their quest to uphold congestion pricing. I grapple with the historical use of data and its violent threads, and move towards imagining what ethical data practices led by community can look like.

Presenter(s): Ranya Perez

Degrowing data in science? Data as a tool for the cultural (re)production of ignorance

In the paper, I discuss data as an active colonial tool. A tool that informs how knowledge is constructed in science. By signifying what data is meant to describe, it can also tell us what is left out and ignored in a particular datafied representation. I ask, is the growth of data a colonial tool or a colonial outcome? Can we imagine a degrown data production? Can data be decolonised from its original intentions? How can anthropologists (re)formulate our relationship with data? How does data live? How, by whom and why is it maintained? I begin by positioning data as a statistical tool and how it laid the foundation for science, and ask what role data plays in the scientific endeavour to build knowledge. What is hidden and ignored in data and as data? As a tool intrinsic to scientific endeavour, data represent what is known and also how that knowledge is constructed, when and by whom. I shift the focus from epistemology to agnotology as the 'cultural production of ignorance' (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008) by asking how data actively produces ignorance in relation to the knowledge it is supposed to represent.

Presenter(s): Ahac Meden

4313 Ghosts in Our Classrooms: A Roundtable on Teaching Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM through 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What are the "ghosts" in the classrooms where we teach anthropology? This roundtable discussion will focus on what haunts our teaching from both the past and present. We will examine our experiences dealing with disciplinary traditions, institutional memories, and the chains of intellectual citation that entangle our teaching with theories, words, and anthropologists from centuries past. We will also discuss the previous experiences of instructors and students and the myths and misconceptions about our subjects. Through this, we will consider how the opportunities and uncertainties of the world outside the university impact our approach to course design and encourage creativity in our classrooms and the other sometimes ephemeral places where we find ourselves teaching. Together, we will share how these ghosts inform our pedagogy and how we continue to embrace or challenge them in our teaching.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Christopher Lowman, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Katherine Kinkopf, Cal Poly Pomona, Department of Geography and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Angela Jenks , John Millhauser, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Trent Trombley, Augustana University, Christian Doll, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Alisha Winn , Prerna Srighyan , Margaret Tebbe, University of California, Irvine

Discussant: Christopher Lowman, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

8586 AOC - Annual Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Special Event

A hybrid meeting of the AOC Committee. Committee members will discuss an Agenda and action items.

8585 Dreams as Media

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Jackson

Type: Installations

This audiovisual installation explores dreams as media: an intimate dispositif humans repeat every night, allowing the circulation of images, sounds, and affects — within the self or through encounters with invisible entities such as the deceased, spirits, or animals. How can the notion of media help open a dialogue between different conceptions of dreaming, while critically reflecting on the technological imaginaries that surround dreams in Western societies?

One part of the installation presents images and sounds collected during fieldwork in a French sleep laboratory. This ethnographic material forms a work-in-progress montage, an evolving version of a short film named *Plages de nuit* (Night Tides), currently in post-production. We follow a young scientist seeking new “communication channels” with dreamers, hoping to bring traces of dreams into the visible world. Gradually, we understand that this dispositif holds an existential, cosmological dimension: to contemporary neuroscientists, dreams become a “final frontier” for expanding consciousness and challenging boundaries between self and environment. The montage follows a short-circuit, as the scientist falls asleep in the lab’s control room, surrounded by images of other sleepers. In this shared slumber, we enter a collective night composed of visual and sound fragments. By creating a dialogue between these heterogeneous images and narratives, the installation turns its gaze toward what overflows the scientific framework, cultivating attention not to proof, but to relationships.

A second part involves dream memories gathered in New Orleans. Can dreams map a city’s emotional life? Do connections emerge across strangers’ experiences? This creates a sensory cartography of New Orleans’ dreamscape. Lastly, visitors are invited to record, through a microphone or on paper, a dream that stayed with them, inspired an idea, or involved an encounter with an anthropological figure. Do institutional ghosts haunt our sleep? Can we converse, or argue, with Marcel Mauss or Margaret Mead in a dream? Can our dreaming minds invoke, or resist, disciplinary specters and “maîtres des lieux”? Such stories circulate informally at academic events. The installation brings them into the AAA conference buildings, giving voice to the ghostly figures that linger in the life of academia. This final interactive layer composes a collective

soundscape – expanding with each new recording – inviting playful engagement with our shared experiences as anthropologists."

Organizer(s): Amelie Barbier, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes

Participants: Sophie Gleizes, Elie Danziger

4456 Phantasmic Conceptions: Towards an Anthropology of Ghostly Reproductions?

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this late biopolitical moment when the notion of reproduction is undergoing profound technological and technocratic capitulation, anthropological theorisation and exemplification must attend to the global, emergent and anomalous transitions of human reproduction and fertility as it unfolds as a phantasmic field: shaped by ghosts of past regimes, anticipations of uncertain futures, and the lingering presence of unborn possibilities. Drawing on ethnographic immersions from varying demographic and political contexts, this panel shines light upon reproductive subjectivities and embodied experiences of individuals and communities as they navigate reproductive technologies, biopolitical imperatives, social practices and cultural norms. Together, we ask: what does it mean to desire, conceive, postpone and manage fertility within haunted biopolitical infrastructures, suspended moralities, and ghostly regimes of reproduction?

Jolene traces how women in Beijing engage ling (spirit and efficacy) across temples, hospitals, and digital platforms mediate their reproductive struggles, weaving ritual and biomedicine into a cosmology of reproductive presence. Selma explores the central yet marginalised role of traditional midwives in Mexico to reveal an interplay of biomedicalization, institutional erasure and local resistance in healthcare systems. Arushi's study of female sterilisation practices in India demonstrates lingering reproductive futures as tied up with surgical terminations of fertility, creating new legacies and logics of the postoperative body. Sachiyo follows egg-freezing practices in Japan, arguing that rather than easing reproductive anxieties, frozen eggs embody a suspended temporality that haunt individuals with normative reproductive expectations and values. Eléonore examines intersections of biomedical knowledge and agency in France, where reproductive desires and autonomy are governed by notions of prevention, risk and precariousness.

Analysing spiritual attunements, biopolitical spectres, haunted terminations and suspended temporalities, we gesture toward a methodology of ghostly reproduction - attending not to fixed fertility outcomes but to the temporal, affective, and spectral conditions through which reproduction is imagined, suspended, or disrupted. Departing from the treatment of fertility as a biological fact, policy object or calculable outcome, we ethnographically make visible its spectral, suspended, haunted, anticipated and deferred dimensions. The panel foregrounds how spiritual forces, institutional structures, and affective uncertainties intersect in everyday attempts to conceive, prevent, or make sense of fertility. It invites us to consider reproductive hauntings that

make, delay, or undo the future, exhuming legacies that live on from the past, engaging spectres that animate the here and now, and envisaging new traffic across biopolitical, technological and bioscientific realms.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Aditya Bharadwaj , Arushi Sahay, Geneva Graduate Institute

Chair: Jolene Yiqiao Kong

Presenter(s): Jolene Yiqiao Kong, Selma Mouchel, Université de Lausanne, Arushi Sahay, Geneva Graduate Institute, Sachiyo Yagi, Eleonore Crunchant

Presentation(s): “Beseeching for Babies” (Qiuzi): Reproduction at the Intersection of Metaphysics, Science, and Biopolitics in Contemporary China

"Beseeching for babies" (qiuzi 求子) is a long-standing practice through which individuals navigate reproductive struggles via both metaphysical and medical domains within China's patrilineal cosmological order. In contemporary urban China, women facing fertility challenges continue this practice, though transformed. Amid declining fertility and pronatalist policies, this paper asks: How do women navigate infertility at the intersection of cosmological frameworks and biomedical interventions? And how does ling (灵)—spiritual efficacy and spirit—mediate these domains? Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing, online and offline, I show how ling threads through temples, hospitals, and digital platforms. Women beseech ling by whispering to hoped-for children at sacred altars, speaking to embryos in petri dishes, and cooperating with fetuses during clinical exams. Ling is theorised as a spectral, affective force hovering between presence and absence, shaping reproduction through embodied acts and collective validation. Digital platforms like Xiaohongshu serve as virtual pilgrimage routes where women exchange ritual techniques and assess efficacy, extending ling's circulation beyond physical shrines. By tracing these manifestations, this paper offers a theoretical reflection on ling's ontology and efficacy, contributing to anthropological understandings of reproductive subjectivity and the entangled boundaries between science, magic, and religion in late modernity.

Presenter(s): Jolene Yiqiao Kong

Traditional Midwives: The Ghost Writers of Mexico's Public Healthcare System?

Midwifery, one of the world's oldest professions, continues to exist on the margins of formal healthcare systems in many regions, particularly in Chiapas, southern Mexico. Traditional midwives carry generations of knowledge, offering culturally safe home births to women seeking their services to avoid highly medicalized surgical births in public clinics. In 2016, however, Mexico implemented healthcare reforms aligned with international recommendations to reduce maternal mortality by promoting hospital births. These reforms inadvertently criminalized traditional midwifery—accusing midwives of maternal deaths, hindering them from registering births, and forcing many to continue their practice in secrecy.

Although attending nearly half of births in Chiapas—far above the national average—midwives have increasingly become "ghosts" within the healthcare system—unwelcome and invisible. Yet,

they remain a vital source of care, especially for low-income rural women who often face limited access to quality services and experience mistreatment in public facilities.

Ethnographic fieldwork conducted since 2023 with urban and rural indigenous midwives reveals the ongoing struggles of their deliberately marginalized profession, as well as the intensifying push for further institutionalization, exemplified by the recent introduction of a new midwifery regulation in Mexico in March 2025, threatening to further undermine the already faint recognition of the services these midwives provide.

Presenter(s): Selma Mouchel

Surgical Terminations and Un-terminated Reproductive Futures

Critically departing from the 'dark' and 'troubled' legacies of population control and mass sterilisation, my research draws attention to how contemporary sterilisation practices in India are haunted by uncertain reproductive futures. Biomedical innovation has allowed a sophisticated state apparatus of family planning that gestates laparoscopic sterilisation as a quick, efficient and ordinary healthcare service, advancing a technological promise of surgically terminated fertilities that would terminate reproductive anxieties and uncertainties while also allowing the biopolitical state to terminate itself from the responsibility of surveilling the fertile body. However, the limits of this promise are revealed in how postoperative lives continue to be haunted by uncertain and un-terminated reproductive futures. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at a family planning clinic in northwest India, I show how legacies of population control braid itself with emergent demographic anxieties to create new legacies and logics of the sterilisation operation, and of the postoperative body itself. Surgical terminations of fertility, I argue, remain entangled with un-terminated reproductive futures — bureaucratic infrastructures, biomedical apparatus, patriarchal bargains, recurring bodily afflictions and interventions — rendering the sterilisation operation a ghostly spectre in women's everyday lives.

Presenter(s): Arushi Sahay

Frozen Eggs as a Haunting Reminder of Incomplete Womanhood?: Challenged Mothering Desires and Reproductive Responsibilities in Japan

Before the advent of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), human reproduction was considered a "natural" process. However, with the introduction of ARTs, individuals are increasingly expected to rationalize their decisions to have, or not to have, children, and justify their use of medically assisted reproduction. Egg freezing, an emerging biomedicine, allows women to postpone motherhood by preserving their eggs in anticipation of potential future infertility. Whereas the technology is framed as liberating women from the anxieties of the biological clock, my research suggests that reproductive concerns continue to haunt their post-egg freezing lives. Based on in-depth interviews with 51 egg freezing women in Japan, this paper discusses how frozen eggs, as a form of suspended animation, continuously challenge their maternal desires and haunt them with gendered expectations and responsibilities. By analyzing how egg freezing women envision future partnership and parenthood, this paper argues that their reproductive decisions are largely

shaped by societal expectations, particularly the drive to ensure the health and well-being of their prospective children. In looking at how these women navigate the seemingly contradictory moral mindsets between tradition and modernity, nature and technology, and biological essentialism and rational thinking, this paper further explores how these creative tensions shape contemporary cultural values surrounding motherhood.

Presenter(s): Sachiyo Yagi

"Knowledge is power": knowledge and reproductive autonomy in a context of infertility anticipation

"Knowledge is power". 50 years later, this slogan, inherited from the women's health movement, continues to circulate in fertility awareness and educational programs. Based on the idea that women lack knowledge on fertility and medically assisted reproduction hamper reproductive decision-making, different initiatives participate in the growing circulation of knowledge about fertility. In addition to willingness to develop public health campaigns, women and physicians develop initiatives to disseminate and spread this knowledge about fertility, combining biomedical, paramedical and/or alternative knowledge. In these initiatives, knowledge is associated with power and agency over one's reproductive life. However, the spectre of past pronatalist policies, interference and medical paternalism is never far away. As some fertility awareness campaigns have met resistance from women, public health actors and physicians design prevention messages to avoid the risk of paternalistic, pro-natalist messages and to respect women's reproductive autonomy. This paper analyses knowledge about fertility and the risks of infertility that circulate in the public sphere, the intersections of biomedical knowledge and agency to understand the legacy of the women's health movement, and critiques of pronatalist politics. In particular, this paper examines how reproductive autonomy is promoted and exercised in this regime of knowledge, anticipation of infertility and fertility precariousness.

Presenter(s): Eleonore Crunchant

3521 "Beyond the Published Record: Collective Assemblages in the Afterlife of Fieldnotes"

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable discussion explores the significant but often invisible components of anthropological knowledge production: the fieldnotes, observations, and experiences that never make it into published academic work. These are experiences that are tactile, olfactory, visual, auditory and rhythmic in nature, and that we, along with our interlocutors, experience together and/or separately. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of collective assemblage, we propose to examine these "excess" materials not as discarded singular observations but as critical expressions of collective ethnographic engagement that continue to shape anthropological thought in unacknowledged ways. Participants in this roundtable will provide specific examples of how they have considered these unpublished materials-partial observations, affective responses, ethical

challenges, methodological failures, and relational encounters-as existing within larger networks of anthropological knowledge production. Rather than treating these as discard or merely supplementary to "real" published work, we suggest they form essential components of the collective assemblage from which anthropological insights emerge. The roundtable will address several key questions: How do unpublished fieldnotes continue to inform our thinking and writing even when not explicitly cited? What epistemological and ethical implications arise from recognizing fieldnotes as expressions of collective forces rather than individual observations? How might digital archiving, collaborative fieldnote practices, or alternative publication venues create new possibilities for these materials? What methodological innovations might emerge from centering rather than marginalizing these "excess" components of fieldwork? How do these unpublished materials carry affective and relational dimensions of fieldwork that published work often cannot accommodate? What connections, if any, exist between these considerations and the work of decolonizing ethnographic practices? We then consider the dissemination of these in multimodal forms such as zines, graphic novels, collages, sketches, paintings, podcasts, soundbytes, exhibits, and short films. By reconceptualizing fieldnotes as part of a collective assemblage rather than as individual intellectual property, we hope to generate new conversations about anthropological knowledge production, research ethics, and the politics of academic publishing.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Amina Tawasil, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Aïsha Philippe, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies

Presenter(s): Rose Wellman, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Cassie Smith, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Skylar Kaat, Amina Tawasil, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Esther Tinhoy Fan, Maria Pia Rios Macedo Opperman, Jennifer Van Tiem, University of Iowa

Discussant: Amina Tawasil, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies

5267 Language of Mobility and Migration among Senegalese: A round table discussion of two new books

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This round table examines the ways that language provides infrastructures for mobility. Whether measured in movement through space or a change in status, two recently published books in linguistic anthropology analyze migration and other forms of mobility among Senegalese speakers. In a discussion drawing together Nikolas Sweet's monograph *The Verbal Art of Mobility in West Africa* (Indiana, 2024) and Chelsie Yount's ethnography *Selective Solidarity: Children and*

Middleclass Moralities in Transnational Senegal (Penn, 2025), round table participants will consider how Senegalese speakers use verbal practices to achieve mobility and what this can tell us about the role of language in achieving material ends and ambitions.

The language practices of Senegalese have been foundational to linguistic anthropology, notably through Irvine's (1973, 1989) seminal work on "noble" and "griot speech," which set the stage for investigations of language ideologies and the semiotics of difference (Gal & Irvine 2001, 2019) as well as language materiality (Cavanaugh & Shankar 2017). Senegalese migrants, meanwhile, have shaped migration studies and the ethnographic record broadly, through studies of the transnational religious- and trade-networks of the Murid Islamic brotherhood (Kane 2010; Buggenhagen 2012) and the intimate relations of couples and families scattered across borders (Hannaford 2017).

While these works also examine contemporary West African migrations, ethnographies by Sweet and Yount draw on linguistic anthropology to examine broader questions of movement, material circulation, and accumulation. These approaches reveal the ways language practices themselves migrate in global capitalism, rebuilding and reshaping social networks, to material effect. Examined together, what can the verbal practices of villagers deep in southeast Senegal (Kedougou) and of the children of Senegalese intellectuals growing up in Paris tell us about the potential for language to act as technology for both geographic and economic mobility?

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Chelsie Yount, Leiden University, Nikolas Sweet, University of Wyoming, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Chelsie Yount, Leiden University, Nikolas Sweet, University of Wyoming, Department of Anthropology, Beth Buggenhagen, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Dinah Hannaford, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Charles Zuckerman

Discussant: Judith Irvine, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

3768 Lived Experience as a Lens for Understanding Displacement and Forced Migration

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Research on forcibly displaced people often focuses on specific groups or health issues, leaving limited space for broader discussions on shared challenges and experiences of refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant health worldwide. This session brings together professionals working with diverse displaced communities across different ethnic and national contexts to explore lived experience as a theoretical and methodological anchor for understanding displacement and forced migration. By engaging in comparative dialogue, participants in this session will examine the unique insights that lived experience provides into displacement, addressing key questions such as: What aspects of displacement does lived experience illuminate? How does attention to lived experience

shape our understanding of "forcible" displacement in ways other frameworks do not? How does a focus on lived experience reveal migrants' everyday strategies of survival and endurance, or the power structures that constrain or facilitate well-being and agency? This session invites interdisciplinary perspectives to critically engage with lived experience as a vital tool for understanding displacement and its challenges.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Brenda K. Wilson, University of California, San Diego, Thomas Csordas, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Brenda K. Wilson, University of California, San Diego, Bridget Haas, Case Western Reserve University, Diana Rinza, Charles Watters, University of Sussex, Whitney Duncan, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Anthropology, Thomas Csordas, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Janis Jenkins, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

7755 Spirits of the 20th Century Symbol: The Human Search for Symbolic Cognition among Non-humans

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The 20th Century saw entire fields of humanistic and social scientific inquiry formulated in terms of the symbol. From formal logic to micro-interaction, from structuralism to interpretive anthropology, the symbol was elevated as a medium of thought, a mode of communication, a means of organizing experience and action, a method of analysis, and sometimes a theory unto itself. At the end of the 20th Century, however, the symbol seemed doomed. Sociocultural Anthropology had markedly turned away from the symbol and toward "practice," leaving the "symbol" to serve merely as materiality's weaker counterpart. This move was paralleled in Linguistic Anthropology's shift toward pragmatics and the problem of indexicality, within a broader Peircean semiotics that strictly delimited what could count as a "symbol." The turn to practice in Sociocultural Anthropology yielded a proliferation of sub-disciplinary trends that generally bracketed the questions of meaning that 20th Century symbolologists had elevated. These trends chose instead to focus on forms of action that were either not obviously linguistically mediated or that were analyzed in ways that did not involve recourse to concepts or symbols (exemplified most clearly by posthumanist theory). Even within cognitive and computer science, interest in the symbolic plummeted as connectionist theories, neural networks, and 'non-representational' robotics became omni-present.

Recently, however, a focus on the 20th century symbol seems to have been resurrected. But this time, rather than focusing on human social groups, the search for the symbol extends beyond the human: AI and animals. With rapid advances of Artificial Intelligence systems, large language models are being scrutinized for evidence of abstraction, are seeming to demonstrate semantics,

even "sense" (however rudimentary), and are being trained on "symbolic knowledge distillation" frameworks. Moreover, researchers are using machine learning to attempt to "discover" faculties of symbolic meaning-making in species beyond the human. Assistive technologies and consumer products likewise promise a radical expansion of symbolic communication to household pets. Is this the same symbol of now-dusty 20th century paradigms? What ideologies of human thought and meaning are at work in the resurgence of interest in the symbolic? How are researchers, computer users, or animal lovers developing new regimes of interaction with nonhuman others through this renewed focus on the symbolic? What theories of the social must be formulated to account for these newer (or repackaged) ideologies of the symbol?

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Nicholas Harkness, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Courtney Handman, University of Texas at Austin

Chair: Courtney Handman, University of Texas at Austin, Nicholas Harkness, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): E. Summerson Carr, University of Chicago, Courtney Handman, University of Texas at Austin, Michael Castelle, University of Warwick, Nicholas Harkness, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Zachary Sheldon

Discussant: Nick Seaver, Tufts University

Presentation(s): Making Meaning with Full-Time Facility Dogs

Beyond the "talking cure" is the idea that some forms of suffering and trauma resist articulation. This leads some therapeutic actors and institutions to seek out non-linguistic practices and agents. A growing population of facility dogs—who work full-time in child advocacy centers, behavioral health clinics, courtrooms, and cancer wards across the US—are regularly cast by their human co-workers and clients as therapeutic actors precisely because they cannot speak at all. This holds true despite the near constant translational work in which these dogs' human handlers engage. Nevertheless, meaning is typically found in the presumably non-linguistic nature of dogs' therapeutic interaction: a paw offered at just the right moment; a prolonged gaze which suggests non-judgmental recognition; a furry body laid silently across the feet of a child offering testimony in courtroom. Yet the ethnographic study of facility dogs' therapeutic labor suggests something more complex than the seemingly more immediate qualities of canine communication relative to human speech. I draw on over three years of multi-sited research with full-time facility dogs, as well their human handlers and co-workers, to show how the densely indexical qualities of canine-assisted interventions are carefully managed so that symbolic meaning can be made. I also draw out how canine-assisted therapies share in ideologies of the symbol that have been celebrated by "person-centered" therapies and anthropologies alike.

Presenter(s): E. Summerson Carr

Icons, Indexes, and Symbols in Interspecies Communication Research

The field of interspecies communication has seen considerable growth in the past few years, in step with the increased capacities of machine learning and large language models. A number of organizations and research communities are working to make it possible to "translate" animal signals into human terms, and in doing so bring them into expanded multispecies politics based on liberal concepts of listening. In this paper I examine the ways in which people working in this field focus on different kinds of animal sign functions, and the kinds of "concepts" that AI-based analysis of bioacoustic data could "decode." While many projects emphasize the iconic and indexical components of embodied animal signaling, there is nevertheless a concerted push to frame these signs as symbols that can be mapped in a semantic space similar to the kinds of vector space mappings that large language models now produce for human languages. Yet the demand for symbolic meaning can sometimes produce a vision of animal semantics that is ultimately mysterious to human minds. In this paper I examine the negotiation of knowability and unknowability in (human) interspecies communication discourses.

Presenter(s): Courtney Handman

What Was Reasoning? The Paradoxes of Zombie Cognitivism in 21st-Century AI Research

The revolution in artificial neural network research and practice—the universal reduction of "intelligence" to high-dimensional geometric (iconic-indexical) transformations of arrays of floating-point value—has forced a confrontation with the cognitivist ideologies that preceded and initially sustained such research, in which "intelligences" were cast in the image of symbolic computation processes à la von Neumann: reasoners, decision makers, problem solvers operating in an algorithmically bounded way on explicitly list-like, hierarchical, or tabular data structures of symbolic values with an arbitrary/Saussurean relation to their objects. Hence the paradoxical spectacle of large language models (LLMs) whose reasoning emerges not from rule-based strategies or even approximation heuristics but from casual natural-language prompts such as "let's think step by step," followed by the barely-interpretable stretching, rotating, and filtering of thousands of token vectors in multi-thousand-dimensional space, recurrently and unpredictably repeated with each emission of nouvelle-rationality. I suggest that the individualist sciences are ill-equipped to handle this collapse of Kahneman and Tversky's proverbial System 2 into System 1, and must instead incorporate an anthropological and historical understanding of how the ideologies of symbolic logic have persisted both within and against their own recent creations.

Presenter(s): Michael Castelle

AI's Techno-Conceptual Architectures and the 20th Century Symbol

Old versions of the 20th Century Symbol continue to structure AI's techno-conceptual architectures. The 20th Century Symbol gathered various signs of thirdness (legisigns) into one bucket: words and other denotational signs, rituals and other patterned practices, social structures and other regularities of form, and various other things, such as emblems, that seem to "condense" or "elaborate" meaningful social processes and relations. The unavoidable meaningfulness apparent in the 20th Century Symbol provided a broad target for interpretative work and a

readymade metaphysical counterpart to what was (and often still is) collected in another bucket, a substance usually called "material" or something like it. Whereas the general idea of the 20th Century Symbol could encompass multiple kinds of legisigns, the narrowly and technically defined Peircean Symbol foregrounds a specific form of thirdness not present in all legisigns. Moreover, the Peircean Symbol cannot easily be contrasted with materiality or its ideological like because it is involved in and effectuates a complex array of semiosis from abstraction to embodiment. The Peircean Symbol, in this formulation, does not need to be asserted as "effective" or "affective" because it is already inherently so. The question motivating this paper is how AI technicians move between these two orientations, namely legisigns generally and the Peircean symbol specifically, in order to make inferences about the technology's future.

Presenter(s): Nicholas Harkness

The Autonomous Symbol: Talismanic Midwifery in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Palestine

Where do we begin to locate the symbol as a medium of thought, a mode of more-than-human communication, and a means of organizing experience and action? Since the 9th century, Middle Eastern midwives of many faiths have used a 3rd century Chinese cryptogram called the luoshu or buduh to talk with angels and planets, while healing heal mothers' pain and fever. And the ecumenical magic of turn-of-the-century midwives continued to heal the public amid the expropriation of Palestine's symbolic landscape by European intentional communities (Wilson 2019). My talk focuses on an implicit theory of what I call the autonomous symbol found in a late 19th century manuscript on magic from the Palestine Museum's Karam Zaid Al-Kilani Collection. In this theory of human/non-human interaction, the buduh talisman combines poetic, mathematical, and magical principles to bypass our customary expectations ['aadaat] (Nobel 2021) according to an ideology of human thought that acknowledges our capacities for "estimation" [waham] and "discernment" [fitra] (Nobel 2021). Rediscovering our capacities for interpretation across communities raises timely questions for social theory in the 21st century, when symbolic contact with both humans and non-humans is typically explained through a community's faith in their own specific beliefs (Tillich 1957, 60).

Presenter(s): Zachary Sheldon

Discussion

5564 Homing in on Care: Relational Practices and Dwelling on/in Times of Crisis

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What can anthropologists gain from asking questions about home and care as we study responses to hardship? Across the globe, people are faced with precarity, displacement, and disruptions to life wrought by forces such as war, climate disasters, political oppression, and economic policies,

which jeopardize possibilities of individual and collective survival. Whether through bombardment, dramatic dismantlement, or gradual starvation, the infrastructures that enable health and well-being face threat and undermining. In this moment of (re)ascendant necropolitics (Mbembe 2019), recent forms of social assistance - from grassroots mutual aid to state redistribution of the social wage - are being attacked and rolled back; meanwhile, even traditionally codified structures of support, like the family, are stretched in their ability to adequately address people's needs. In the face of outright genocides as well as the manifold drivers of slow death (Berlant 2007) and debilitation (Puar 2018), the social and material substrates that sustain life become simultaneously ever more important and harder to secure.

With these phenomena haunting the present, this roundtable explores the shifting meanings of and entangled relationship between "home" and "care," which discursively figure as sources of stability, protection, and comfort. The house serves as "a mnemonic for the embodied person" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995) that simultaneously materializes collective relations. Care, on the other hand, capaciously describes relations and practices through which "someone comes to matter, and the corresponding ethics of attending to the other who matters" (Stevenson 2014). Thinking from diverse geographies, participants in this roundtable are drawn together by a set of questions about the way that dwelling places become objects of and idealized locations for care, and the role of care in constituting some spaces as homes. We ask how sociocultural understandings of home, relatedness, and care intersect with political economic forces patterning what is possible, and how these intersections shape people's subjectivities and decisions. We are especially interested in asking these questions in contexts of housing and care that reveal the affective, moral, and material stakes of recursive public/private distinctions (Gal 2002).

This roundtable will highlight tensions regarding where, how, or by whom shelter and support are imagined and/or obligated (legally, socially, morally, financially). With a specific eye toward the role of medical and psychiatric epistemologies in constructing, maintaining, and transforming notions of home and care, speakers will draw ethnographically from varied settings such as publicly funded interim housing, board and care homes for people with psychiatric disabilities, paid home care of older adults, out-of-home care for physically disabled adults, and home visits by community health workers.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Elana Buch, University of Iowa, Maxwell Hellmann

Presenter(s): Elana Buch, University of Iowa, Maxwell Hellmann, Caitlin Zaloom, New York University, Izem Aral, University of California, Los Angeles, Matthew Hing, Jack Fukushima

Discussant: Helena Fietz, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

8826 A cascade of echoes

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

Come see this installation in the Marriott, on the second floor, all day Thursday.

Echoes are decaying copies of a sound through which the listener orients themselves to the time and place of origin of a sound. Echoes speak to the organization of space as environment and architectural decisions influence acoustics determining the reverberation of a sound through space. How can we hear the echoes of the labor and relationships required to bring art spaces into existence?

This project is an examination of the collaborations involved in building artist-run performance spaces in New York City. Grounded in my doctoral dissertation research, I have developed an interactive multi-channel sound installation to reflect on the socio-economic conditions structuring creative work in artist-run performance spaces, specifically do-it-yourself venues within New York City. My installation dwells on the echoes of these spaces through how acoustics shapes the experience of DIY venues, the ways people form relationships within venues, how DIY venues remake the surrounding urban soundscape, and how new forms of listening to one another are shaped by sensory experiences within these venues.

My current research charts the trajectory of the artist collective as a relational form shaped by New York City property relations from the 1960s to the present. This historical work grounds my ethnographic work with contemporary experimental musicians and DIY venue organizers. Through interviews with artists and organizers, my research follows the forms of collectivity that emerge within DIY spaces through collaborative labor and housing practices, trans and queer embodiment, and housing activism.

I am currently conducting interviews utilizing a collaborative sound walking method. My interlocutors and I select a location pertinent to their experiences in do-it-yourself music organizing and then develop a "score" for the interview charting where we will walk, what sounds we will listen to, and how we will bring the urban soundscape into the conversation. Through using binaural microphones, the recorded interview is embedded within and in conversation with the urban soundscape. This experimental ethnographic approach traces the echo of DIY venues across participants' experiences and the city.

Drawing on my background in electronic music composition and sound sculpture, I am developing a sound installation that asks participants to reflect on how the work of organizing DIY venues shapes the aesthetic and collective experience within them. I plan to create a multi-channel speaker array that can be repositioned within an exhibition space. Participants will be given graphic scores demonstrating different speaker arrangements. When the scores are performed, the speakers will play different interview segments, urban field recordings, and synthesized soundscapes reflecting on the work involved in organizing DIY venues and the interaction of these venues with surrounding neighborhoods.

Pedagogically, this installation asks participants to reflect on how the organization of sound itself—building a venue, crafting a sound system, curating performances—shapes the type of experiences

within a space, opening new ways of collaborating. I hope to bring this mobile installation with me on a European tour of my noise music project (certain lives) I am planning for the summer of 2026 as a means of sharing my research with popular audiences.

Organizer(s): David Farrow

8714 Possession: The Exorcism of Modern Household Objects

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

Possession can be found at the Marriott, in the Studios Foyer, all day Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Every home has possessions. Some are functional, some cherished, and others kept without clear justification. Yet when these possessions begin to take over, families may need professional help.

This immersive ethnographic installation presents material collected through The Domestic Reset, a 12-week behavioral intervention addressing emotional attachment, environmental stress, and household overwhelm in American homes. The project is composed of several distinct elements.

Possessions

Twelve formerly "possessed" household objects are suspended in space, each corresponding to one week of the program. These objects mark moments of disruption when their owners hesitated, resisted, or refused to let go. They are not without value. Often functional, symbolic, or sentimental, their power lies in the emotional conflict they provoked. This portion of the installation offers a visual representation of how common items can exert disproportionate control, revealing the deeper psychological and cultural forces behind accumulation.

A thirteenth object, a chair, remains actively possessed. Still unresolved, it invites the viewer to sit with the question of possession itself. Its inclusion anchors the exhibit in the present moment, confronting the limits of intervention and the reality that some burdens remain.

Field Documentation

Each exorcised item is accompanied by a QR code that links to original field documentation, including video, audio, and transcript excerpts from the in-home sessions. These vignettes provide access to the lived experience of behavioral transformation and give voice to the emotional complexity behind material resistance.

Exorcism Elements

A side display compares the tools used in ancient spiritual rites, such as crosses, holy water, and incense, with those employed in modern domestic intervention. Both sets are anchored by the Bible, suggesting a continuum of symbolic action across time. This visual juxtaposition invites reflection on how humans across cultures and centuries have attempted to reclaim space from what overwhelms them.

Demon Interactive

A participatory component invites viewers to engage with a set of tarot-style demon cards, each linked to a specific emotional or behavioral pattern (e.g., fear, vanity, grief, denial). These figures are drawn from biblical, rabbinic, and mythological sources and correspond to the exhibited objects. This interactive element externalizes the burdens of modern accumulation through metaphor and play, encouraging participants to reflect on their own habits of possession.

Together, these elements frame Possession as a form of both exorcism and ethnography. Drawing from symbolic anthropology, material culture theory, and in-home intervention, the project asks what our resistance to letting go might reveal about who we are and who we imagine ourselves to be.

All furniture, props, and technology will be provided by the organizer. The installation is designed to be flexible to space and scale, with modular components and minimal wall requirements. Lighting may be used strategically to enhance the theatrical quality of the suspended objects and highlight the participatory elements.

Additional information for this installation can be found in the linked Google Drive Folder:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WpxgZrUUTcZ2b2T8cFZzkhFH5FYXkk2K?usp=sharing>

Organizer(s): Kate Delgreco

8796 Sites Despite Everything: affective geographies of trauma, remembering and forgetting in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

Takes place at the Marriott, 3rd floor, Thursday and Friday.

This installation will be comprised of photographs taken during my field work in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In my own Communications research focused on visual media and spaces of violence and ruination in conflict and post-conflict contexts, affect is at the forefront of many critics' and scholars' work about images of atrocity (Sontag 1977, 2003; Azoulay 2001, 2008, 2012; Sliwinski 2011, 2017) and about ruination and spaces of violence (Pile 2005; Rose 2009; Bille, Hastrup and Sorensen 2010; Trigg 2012). This exhibition will interrogate the possibility of visually representing affective spaces that challenge what it means to represent and research what Rob Nixon described as the "slow violence" of climate change, toxic drift, the radioactive aftermath of wars and other environmental catastrophes, "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon 2011:7).

Organizer(s): Joscelyn Jurich

6991 Uses of Being a Mother: Reconnecting Carework and Intellectual Life

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Though anthropologists have been deeply invested in studying care in their research, many still feel they must bracket out their own carework from their "professional lives." This panel aims to trouble the porous boundary between intensive carework and intellectual life by inviting reflections from mothers who are anthropologists. Our panelists reflect on how the experience of intensely caring for another human being has influenced their ideas, research and methodologies. We aim to challenge continuing, unspoken assumptions that the best ethnographic work is produced by the "lone" anthropologist who has control over their time, unencumbered by commitments (Yates-Doerr 2020). This panel attempts to reconceptualize caregiving as generative to intellectual life rather than as a barrier to creativity and abstract thinking. We see the condition of being a parent – characterized by vulnerability, loss of control and visceral entanglement with another body – as just one instance of a deeply human experience: interdependence. Drawing inspiration from the idea of "patchwork ethnography," this panel reframes care obligations not as "constraints" or "interruptions" to work, but as very real facts of life that might foster a different kind of attunement to the world (Günel, Varma and Watanabe 2020). How might motherhood open us up to different ways of being in the field and doing research, one that values interdependence over the individual research product (Yates-Doerr 2020)? Here, we use the term "mother" to include anyone who identifies as being a mother.

The panel title is inspired by Audre Lorde's "Uses of the Erotic." Lorde urges us to decompartmentalize the erotic, which she defines as the life force that pervades "our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives" (Lorde, 1978). Drawing on Lorde, this panel focuses on the ways in which the visceral experience of motherhood informs our work creatively.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Thalia Gigerenzer, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Danya Glabau

Presenter(s): Thalia Gigerenzer, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Sofia Pinedo-Padoch, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Alexandra Middleton, University of Copenhagen, Lindsay Bell, Western University, Elizabeth Hoag

Discussant: Winifred Tate, Colby College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): On Fatigue and Thinking

In this paper, I reflect on the relationship between fatigue and thinking, focusing on the particular experience of sleeplessness during early motherhood. I reflect on trying (and failing) to write my dissertation in this state of sleep deprivation during my daughter's first year of life, when my thoughts felt impossibly slow and fragmented, as if I was underwater. In the haze of fatigue, my

thoughts often wandered back to many languid summer afternoons I spent with Rasheeda, a young mother I met during my fieldwork in Delhi, India. I reflect on the ways in which she spoke about (and alluded to) her experience of motherhood and feeling tired, both in an immediate (interrupted nights) and a more existential sense (feeling lethargic, overwhelmed by familial obligations). As I wrestled with my own tiredness, moments with Rasheeda that I had previously forgotten about resurfaced with a new sense of urgency – the moment when she almost lost sight of her daughter in a crowd; the way she urged me to rest with her on a hot afternoon. As I reflect on these moments and follow my trailing thoughts, I think about the ways in which fatigue is so central to the visceral experience of caring for others. And yet, tiredness is seen as a barrier to thinking. How might we create space for fatigued thinking, which may not follow a plot or argument, but has its own momentum and rawness?

Presenter(s): Thalia Gigerenzer

Dispatches from the train between home and the field

What does it look like when research is not only "interrupted" by childcare but also by war?

After conducting fieldwork close to home in New York City, I began my postdoctoral project in Ukraine during wartime.

In New York City, I took the F train from downtown Manhattan to downtown Brooklyn: a total of four subway stops.

From Berlin, where I now live, I take the 9-hour train to Przemyśl, on the Polish-Ukrainian border. I stay there overnight and take the 9:30 AM train over the border to Lviv, and from there I grab a snack before getting on the 1PM bus to Ivano-Frankivsk. I arrive at my destination before dinnertime; my trip takes about 36 hours.

I go to the field alone, without my family. For this reason, I cannot, and do not want to, leave for long periods of time. But every trip is bookended by nearly two days of travel on each side, because air travel is banned in Ukraine. Once I am there, fieldwork can be interrupted by air raid sirens. One morning, a colleague and I had to wait out a ballistic missile alert – we were stuck somewhere between apocalypse and just wanting to get along with our day.

In this paper, I explore how to write ethnography through this complex of interruptions, while reflecting on my own privileges as a mother living outside of Ukraine.

Presenter(s): Sofia Pinedo-Padoch

Mother And/As Ethnographer: On Fieldwork and Fragmentation

In this paper, I reflect on the duality of doing fieldwork as a new mother about peoples' pursuits of (m)otherhood through uterus transplantation and other frontier reproductive technologies, in Scandinavia and the US. Specifically, I recount my experiences bringing my one-year-old to the field, the choreographies of care this entailed, and how shifting gears between ethnographic and care work became both a practical and theoretical challenge and affordance. I use the occasion of

this panel to experiment with and interrogate the forms of knowledge produced by this dual- (and doubled) subjectivity. Focusing on a particular chapter of fieldwork that takes place just weeks before the AAAs, I write in the way many of us prepare conference papers: in the weeks (and days) leading up to the conference. Rather than editing out the ways care intervenes with and upon the meaning-making process, I fold these into the paper to take seriously their co-constitution, archiving and making-visible the inevitable shifts of form that mothering while fieldworking occasions. In doing so, I critically examine how tropes of maternal forms of creative intellectual work—including fragmentation and interruption—both constrain and give way to new modes of ethnographic attunement.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Middleton

How to Care for Embryos: Reflections on Infertility, Possible Parenthood and Anthropology

Technologies that allow us to see parts of the reproductive process often change how we view and understand the process itself. For years, the drawer of my nightstand was stuffed with greyscale images of human embryos: the ghosts of several failed rounds of In Vitro Fertilization. I found I was unable to throw the images out, even after becoming the parent to two "IVF miracles". The technology to visualize embryos and fetuses is not intrinsically controversial but nevertheless is embroiled in debates over acceptable forms of scientific research, definitions of personhood, and what constitutes life. While my "real" fieldwork was perpetually delayed due to IVF cycles, I decided to investigate the central role of embryo images in my, and other US-based IVF patients' experiences of reproduction, loss and/or parenthood. I leveraged my online friendships to study IVF through the lens of the embryo image. My twenty online friends-turned-research-participants were much like me—white, upper middle class, and pro-choice. In our conversations, it became clear that my interlocutors were of the political persuasion that embryos need not be accorded the rights of persons, yet these images represented for them, and me, the potential of a person. Working with embryo images and common visual derivatives (watercolor renderings, tattoos, photographs posted to Instagram) gathered from my interlocutors, this paper explores the difficulties in grieving potentiality in the contemporary US moment.

Presenter(s): Lindsay Bell

One Hundred Years of Archaeological Mothers in the Field

In recent years there has been a concerted effort to highlight pioneering women's contributions to the field of archaeology, often framing their professional work against a backdrop of a male-dominated field that many of them fought so hard to break into. What has so far been left out of the discourse is the personal lives of these women including their experiences as mothers, and how that affected the way they navigated the field and academia. Here I would like to explore the lived experiences of women and mothers over the last century, along with modern experiences including my own reflexive stories of mothering and professional work, along with a few thoughts from my children who have worked in the field with me. These historic and modern reflections include the hard choices women faced in balancing their personal and professional lives, raising children, and

caring for their families. I contextualize these experiences of motherhood and mothering in the field through a matricentric feminist lens, championed by Andrea O'Reilly, that contests, challenges, and counters the patriarchal oppressive institution of motherhood and seeks to imagine and implement a maternal identity and practice that is empowering to mothers and works to normalize mothering and parenting in the field.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Hoag

Discussion

3491 Theory in Residence

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Despite a long tradition of valuing people's diverse, group-specific ways of understanding and engaging the world, anthropologists often maintain distinctions between lofty theory and practical action. The specters of long-dead philosophers float through our pages, sometimes reminding us not to reinvent the wheel, other times keeping us tethered to models of thinking that ignore the most pragmatic of realities.

Many scholars have suggested that a decolonized anthropological praxis must consider theory that comes from unsuspecting, non-canonical, embodied, or otherwise non-propositional realms (e.g. Barad 2007; Mol 2021; Otu 2022; Simpson & Smith 2014; Viveiros de Castro 2013). Following insights from Heidegger, Paul Kockelman employs the term residence to describe the importance of experiential and behavioral modes of semiosis (2006). Others have proposed terms like "weak theory" (Stewart 2008) or "low theory" (Halberstam 2011) to get at alternative modes and sites of theoretical production. But "weak" and "low" act as residual terms, beholden conceptually to their "lead twins," ever craving approval (Mamdani 2018: 9). "Ethnographic theory" is another term that has generated its own set of controversies about "anthropology and its reciprocities" (West 2018).

What constitutes theory? What are its social and political promises? Must theories be explicitly stated or conceptualized? Which modes of theory-making are contained in corporeal action? Are there terms that should or could substitute for "theory"? What responsibilities do ethnographers have "to speak not only truth to power but also ethics to theory" (McGranahan 2022: 289)?

How is theory informed by the form-projecting-frames we choose to take seriously (actions, lexical items, affects) or employ (writing, methodologies, technologies, guiding themes)? How do citational and iterative practices serve to codify theoretical paradigms and validate certain kinds of agents as theorists? Should ethnographic theory eschew philosophy? Is theory uniquely human?

On this roundtable, cultural and semiotic anthropologists discuss the parameters and promises of different forms of theory-making and theory-recognition we engage in as writers, teachers, editors, and researchers.

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- Simpson A, Smith A, eds. 2014. *Theorizing Native Studies*. Duke UP.
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Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Adrienne Cohen, Colorado State University

Presenter(s): Louisa Lombard, Yale University, Carole McGranahan, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Constantine Nakassis, Valerie Olson, University of California, Irvine

Discussant: Adrienne Cohen, Colorado State University

3553 Haunted Spaces, Haunting Memories, Unsettled Futures: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Gender and the Aftermath of Violence in Colombia

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In Colombia, peace accords do not spell the end of war, and affirmations of legal rights are weak in the face of violence both state and extralegal. The long shadows of violent acts haunt Colombian social life. As in horror film, monsters threaten a perpetual return (Nelson 2009). So, too, do deceased ancestors, lovers, and comrades refuse to let go of their hold on survivors. Colombia is rife with "spectral communities" (Cajón de Sastre 2022), of haunting with and without ghosts (Martínez 2020). While scholarship has long documented the causes and consequences of Colombian conflict, this panel brings ethnographic attention to the ways the afterlives of violence

shape and unsettle experiences of gender in post-accords or "postdeal" Colombia (Alves 2019). How does everyday life unfold for women who once fought a guerrilla war against the state, for mothers seeking justice for children killed by police, for trans women designing museum exhibits about trans life within an atmosphere of transfeminicide? Further, how do past moments of dispossession and rebellion shape the present, and how do we ethically engage archives of these histories now? We attend to violence as both destructive and generative, reckoning with wounds and loss as well as practices of care and imagination. As Byron J. Good, Andrea Chiovenda, and Sadeq Rahimi argue, it is not only our interlocutors who are haunted: our scholarly engagement with these spaces and communities produces its own obligations to the spectral and the ghostly, such that "one task of scholars and activists alike is to participate in [the] process of learning to live with ghosts more justly" (2022: 448). In the interest of that more just relation, this panel convenes a conversation between feminist anthropology, history, and sociology to investigate ghost-dense spaces and practices in Colombia. This panel will be bilingual in Spanish and English.

Sources:

Alves, Jaime Amparo. "'Esa paz blanca, esa paz de muerte': Peacetime, Wartime, and Black Impossible Chronos in Postconflict Colombia." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24.3 (2019): 653–71.

Cajón de sastre, and Catalina Vargas Tovar. *Comunidades Espectrales: Ejercicios Para Investigar Seres y Cosas Extrañas*. Bogotá: Cajón de Sastre, 2022.

Good, Byron J., Andrea Chiovenda, and Sadeq Rahimi. "The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the Emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 51 (2022): 437–53.

Martínez, Juliana. *Haunting without Ghosts: Spectral Realism in Colombian Literature, Film, and Art*. University of Texas Press, 2020.

Nelson, Diane M. *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala*. Duke University Press, 2009.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Joseph Hiller , Carol Pinzon

Chair: Meghan Morris, Temple University

Presenter(s): Adelaida Tamayo, Joseph Hiller, Carol Pinzon, Margarita Martinez-Osorio, Indiana University, Bloomington, Natalia Duarte

Presentation(s): Ghosts that accompany us in antifascist struggle

In moments of state violence, fallen comrades return as spectral figures—half-martyr, half-ghost—haunting the edges of protest and grief. Public art becomes a space where mothers expand mourning, making absence visible, making pain political. The injured, often marked visibly by their wounds, become heroic figures in the movement. But what about the imprisoned? They're harder to hold onto. They don't quite become ghosts—we can't see them, and so, too often, we forget them.

In Colombia, I've watched textile collectives carve out spaces to resist this forgetting. Somehow, fabric has filled that absence—not just as craft, but as a place to imagine new forms of presence.

Threads offer a way to accompany those who are disappeared by the prison system, those who remain offstage in the theater of protest. The textile invites a slower kind of resistance, one that can't be easily anticipated or absorbed. Here, stitches are political. Memory is tactile. And presence—quiet, persistent—is remade by hand. Based on a year of ethnography, this paper grapples with ghosts' role in the Latina feminist tradition of testimonio.

Presenter(s): Adelaida Tamayo

On Spectrophilia in the Panopticon: Trans Rights and Trans Mourning in Colombian Prison Museums

In Theo Montoya's hybrid documentary-fiction film *Anhell69* (2023), the unquiet dead roam Medellín, their ghosts becoming objects of impossible love. Montoya names this desire "spectrophilia." In dialogue with Montoya's creative work, this paper explores the doubly haunted sites of exhibits about trans people in two Colombian museums. Both museums are housed in converted former penitentiaries. Once notorious sites of state violence, these facilities were closed, remodeled, and reopened as sites of memory. Now both host exhibits about gender and sexual dissidents, which I consider as exhibits on the arts of "trans life-making" in Colombia (Edelman 2024). The exhibits animate dueling legacies, twined hauntings: of panopticons as sites of penal improvement and state failure, of care and abuse, of progress and stagnation. They enshrine a place in Colombia's official history for trans people even as the stories they document evince the persistent incapacity of legal rights and protections to sustain trans life. Limned by histories of destruction, they are home to many ghosts (trans and otherwise). Yet they also demonstrate the splendor of trans vitality. They invite museum goers to become spectrophiles, to adore trans life, to mourn trans loss, and to envision freer trans futures that emanate ironically, from within prison cells. This paper draws on extended ethnographic fieldwork in Colombia and conversation with memory, prison, and feminist studies.

Presenter(s): Joseph Hiller

Spectral Embodiments: Women Ex-Combatants, Memory, and the Afterlives of War in Colombia's Post- Agreement Period

This paper explores the liminal condition of former FARC combatants—particularly women—in Colombia's transitional period. Drawing on a phenomenological perspective and ethnographic research with Casa de la Paz, an ex-combatant-led organization in Bogotá, I examine how female ex-combatants' lives are entangled with the legitimacy of the Peace Agreement, as they are expected to embody reconciliation and reintegration. Such expectations stand in stark contrast to their precarious material conditions and the persistent violence they face. Over 441 ex-combatants have been murdered since the accord was signed, highlighting the unfinished nature of the war for them. Through the case of the Salón de las Mariposas—a memorial space inside Casa de la Paz that honors every ex-combatant killed since the peace accords—I examine the relation between body, memory, grief, and political struggle as it manifests in particular physical spaces. Building on the idea that places function as extensions of the body and its capacity to move meaningfully

through the world (Beaumont, 2020), I ask: What kinds of spectral embodiments emerge in the aftermath of the post-agreement period when such memorials are necessary for survival and remembrance? This paper reflects on how women ex-combatants navigate being both symbols of peace and targets of violence, exposing the contradictions at the heart of Colombia's transitional moment.

Presenter(s): Carol Pinzon

Peasant Mobilization in the Colombian Caribbean: Social Reproduction, Gender, and the Silences of the Archive, 1960s–1970s

The Colombian Caribbean region has long exhibited one of the most unequal agrarian structures in Latin America, shaped by cattle estates and enclave economies that privileged land concentration over peasant livelihoods. During the 20th century, peasants in this region actively mobilized, demanding land redistribution through agrarian reform. Drawing on Critical Agrarian Studies and its call to recognize resistance in non-traditional spaces, this paper highlights the overlooked roles of women and children in shaping mobilization during the 1960s–1970s agrarian reform. This paper argues for a gendered analytical framework grounded in an ethnographic reading of the archive—attuned to silences produced by state-centered and patriarchal narratives. By juxtaposing state records with photographs and oral histories, I show that centering women's experiences reframes agrarian protest as a space of social reproduction, where women led collective practices of care, protection, and resistance amid poverty, violence, and dispossession.

Presenter(s): Margarita Martinez-Osorio

A Reversed Revolution? Continuity and Change in Gender Orders After War in Colombia

Research on gender and war documents that conflicts have the potential for postwar gender shifts in the form of a revitalization of patriarchy or the opening of opportunities for women. Most of these studies -usually focused on well-known electoral female leaders- tend to assume that conflicts have a homogenizing effect on all women ex-fighters without considering their pre-war backgrounds, differential war experiences, and postwar social location. By looking at the organizational and household spaces of demobilized rank-and-file ex-combatants of the FARC (former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), I ask how and to what extent war gender orders shift during ex-combatants' transition to peacetime and what processes explain these changes. I draw on interviews and ethnographic observations in Colombia during 2018–2023. I found that since the demobilization, there has been a reversal of the semi-egalitarian gender domestic work that existed during the war, in parallel with a challenge to the male-dominated leadership inherited from the time in the guerrilla. Three processes explain these gender shifts: the readoption of traditional family beliefs, the feminist role of national and international institutions, and women's use of wartime organizational skills. This paper extends the literature on conflict, gender, and change by showing the effects of the absence of gender military design on the organization of transitional gender orders in private and public life.

Presenter(s): Natalia Duarte

3270 Anatomies of Dispossession: The Political Lives of Loss and Regeneration

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Dispossession--the existential rupture caused by material expropriation--lies at the heart of colonial capitalism. As the global order undergoes profound transformations in a turn to authoritarian oligarchic empire, dispossession is deepening, becoming further embedded in the structures of colonial capitalism. For communities whose lives have long been defined by dispossession, struggles are shifting: Indigenous peoples, dispossessed of their land and livelihoods, are increasingly forced into impossible choices--extracting resources and land from other Indigenous communities for wages and survival. Precarious wage workers are further entrapped in indentured debt structures that are bureaucratized and normalized within gig economies. Around the world, people face the escalating onslaught of climate catastrophes and intensified resource wars. Under these conditions, the binary between dispossessed and dispossessor blurs, as survival itself is shaped by extractive, market-driven logic.

This panel unpacks the logics and experiences of dispossession, examining how they persist and evolve across diverse contexts. Focusing on West and Central African migrants in Morocco, Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen analyzes how debt and dispossession produce value through migrants' continued mobility and deferred arrivals, and how the value generated through these processes is reshaping the social and material geographies of migration at "home," in "transit," and upon "arrival." Xinyu Guan studies how the Singaporean state wields the dispossession of homeownership as a disciplinary tool to maintain order, fostering everyday authoritarianism in which citizens are encouraged to report one another. Laura Menchaca examines how Palestinians creatively assert dignity in the face occupation and dispossession. Working with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, Nursyazwani Jamaludin explores how collective memory and everyday conversations among displaced Rohingya shape the religious worlds and practices of intergenerational Rohingya women. Finally, Lau Ting Hui examines how state-led development on the China-Myanmar border enacts systemic dispossession that becomes absorbed into the rhythms of everyday life.

Together, these papers explore the political life of dispossession, tracing how its structures persist and transform. They ask: How does dispossession take place? What recursive mechanisms exacerbate it, deepening divisions within and across communities? How are shifting configurations of race, gender, and class reshaping the terrain of dispossession? And in the midst of these crises, how are people rebuilding their lifeworlds? By unpacking the anatomies of dispossession, we ask what it might take to interrupt these logics--and what new grounds for solidarity and progressive politics might emerge. This panel contributes to anthropological conversations theorizing dispossession as both an ongoing process and an evolving force that demands urgent political attention

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Ting Hui Lau, National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology

Chair: Ting Hui Lau, National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology

Presenter(s): Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen, Yale University, Xinyu Guan, Harvard University, Laura Menchaca Ruiz, Bard College, Nursyazwani Jamaludin, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Ting Hui Lau, National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology

Discussant: Julie Livingston, New York University

Presentation(s): Dispossession and Debt in the EU-African Borderlands

Over the past two decades, cooperation with European border enforcement priorities across much of northern and central Africa have contributed to changes in long-standing cultures of mobility and livelihood aspirations for many young people. The expansion and hardening of the border across vast areas even far from national boundary lines has driven growing dependence on migrant facilitators (often glossed as smugglers) and transnational, informal, and exploitative lending schemes. The debts migrants incur are often compounded by actions of state and non-state actors who dispossess migrants of their material possessions to deter their mobility or profit from it. This paper draws on research among West and Central African migrants in Morocco since 2016 to analyze the role that debt and dispossession play in producing value through migrants' continued mobility and their deferred arrivals, and how the value generated through these processes is reshaping the social and material geographies of migration at "home," in "transit," and upon "arrival."

Presenter(s): Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen

“Not Even a Potato Chip Wrapper:” Home Possessions, Family Dispossession and High-Rise Littering in Singapore

More than three-quarters of Singapore's population lives in state-constructed HDB apartment blocks, which the state largely sells to the residents. My paper examines the moral panic over "killer litter" that erupted in the 1980s – objects falling from high-rise buildings, some of which injure or kill passersby. The panic culminated in a 1986 law that dispossessed homeowners convicted of killer litter of their apartments, even if they had bought it as part of HDB's mass homeownership program. The law was criticized as a form of collective punishment that would evict entire households for the actions of one person. I discuss how the threat of dispossession fashioned HDB homeowners into vigilant subjects who need to practice self-possession: securing their possessions from falling out of the windows, as well as educating and surveilling family members. I moreover trace how "killer litter" evolved as a category, referring to varying kinds of materialities falling out of windows, and problematizing different social actors. "Killer litter" was at first a problem of "trash" thrown by unmodernized Singaporeans needing to be educated in high-rise living; it later became reframed as a question of pathological subjects corrupted by hypermodernization, whose families failed to provide a moral education. I argue that dispossession as a disciplinary tool imbues new meanings onto kinship, property ownership and moral citizenship.

Presenter(s): Xinyu Guan

Palestinian Survivance: Dignity as a Social Imaginary

This presentation focuses on dignity as a social imaginary, one that is central to Palestinian survivance, and that serves as a key node of resistance in the context of dispossession. In the day-to-day of Israeli Occupation violence and colonialism, Palestinians find creative ways of asserting dignity and agency in moments where the occupation seeks to strip them of material and immaterial belonging(s). In the occupation's attempt to assert and consolidate control, Palestinians circumvent these attempts by asserting their own power of will in small, everyday acts of dignity. This presentation reflects on those acts and considers what animates them as well as their impacts.

Presenter(s): Laura Menchaca Ruiz

Spectre of the "Ideal Muslim Woman": Displaced Rohingya Religious Worldmaking in Malaysia

Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country, seemed to offer Rohingya a safe sanctuary to pursue new possibilities of religious and political life. Yet, Malaysia's reluctance to sign the 1951 UN Refugee Convention limit refugees' politico-legal affordances, leaving especially Rohingya women vulnerable to multiple layers of dispossession. This paper studies displaced Rohingya Muslims in Malaysia to understand how conditions of refugeehood generate new religious and gendered subjectivities. In so doing, I investigate how discourses of the "ideal Muslim woman" among Rohingya interlocutors may reveal their worldmaking in displacement. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork since 2017, this paper situates the Rohingya woman as a site to track the constitution and contestation of an imagined ummah. First, I explore the implications of conjuring the spectral figure of the "ideal Muslim woman" in Rohingya everyday discourses. I argue that the looming presence of the "Rohingya woman from Myanmar" in everyday conversations and collective memory underline persisting heteropatriarchal structures amid their dispossession. Next, I explore inter-generational Rohingya women's everyday experiences and religious practices to understand the implications of displacement in shaping religious traditions and senses of ummah belonging. Tracing gendered religious discourses highlight the Muslim woman's agency in re/defining and re/working religious worlds amid the spectre of the heteropatriarchal nation-state.

Presenter(s): Nursyazwani Jamaludin

Strangers at Home: Chronic Dispossession among Indigenous Lisu Farmers on the China-Myanmar Border

Over the last four decades, rapid Chinese development has transformed the social, physical, ecological landscapes of the Nu River Valley—a region located along the China-Myanmar border and officially part of Chinese sovereign territory. The Lisu, a transnational Indigenous community and the largest ethnic group in this region, have been profoundly affected by these changes with many transitioning from subsistence farming to wage labor. Drawing on over a decade of engagement and two years of continuous fieldwork with Lisu subsistence farmers, this paper examines these changes as part of an unfolding process of settler colonialism and Indigenous dispossession. I argue that among the Lisu, dispossession is experienced not as a singular event,

but as a chronic condition. Examining ethnographically the gradual ways settler-colonial development disrupt Lisu relations with land, kin, and animals, I show how dispossession takes place not just by forcibly removing people from their means of production, but by systematically and methodologically severing their relational foundations of life. These disruptions become normalized—folded into the rhythms of the everyday—making dispossession feel both ordinary and enduring. My analysis extends anthropological discussions of dispossession by showing how large-scale upheavals are absorbed into the everyday, becoming chronic and routinized forms of loss that attract little attention and generate few demands for redress.

Presenter(s): Ting Hui Lau

Discussion

2938 Black Ecologies: Ghosts, Inheritances, Futures

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In recent years, the concept of Black ecologies has come to serve as a gravitational hub for a wide range of academic and non-academic projects centering Black improvisations of collective life forged under conditions of constraint. An analytic frame honed in response to the unabated intensity of antiblackness and ever-escalating environmental precarity, Black ecologies draws attention to practices of world-making that diverge from prevailing social orders characterized by racial capitalism, colonialism, and ferocious extraction. As insurgent spaces, Black ecologies have been sites for the generation of nonproprietary modes of relating and radical understandings of human and nonhuman difference. While broad traditions of Black ecological thought, practice, and relationality in North America have been remarkably durable, many specific realizations of Black ecological life have been fleeting, their tenuousness often linked to the threat they pose to a white supremacist status quo.

Engaging the conference's guiding theme ("Ghosts"), this panel speaks to the varied afterlives of particular Black ecological endeavors, experiences, and mobilizations, as well as their expansive figurations of environmental justice. What are the material and immaterial legacies of these rehearsals of other worlds? In what ways might we welcome their haunting presence in a moment when their central lessons remain too often unheeded? How might Black ontologies and epistemologies, which have long scrambled governing notions of the "real", enable this haunting to register as more than a metaphor?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Daniel Schniedewind , Amelia Moore, Cornell University

Chair: Amelia Moore, Cornell University, Daniel Schniedewind

Presenter(s): Allison Puglisi, Kessie Alexandre, New York University, Alex Moulton, Hunter College, Adrian Cato, Daniel Schniedewind, Mariama Eversley

Discussant: Amelia Moore, Cornell University

Presentation(s): Gulf Coast Tenants and the Chemical Plantation

Allison Puglisi's paper looks to the work of Gulf Coast Tenant Organization (GCTO): a network of mostly Black women tenant activists who assembled in the 1980s and organized across Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. After winning building repairs, strengthening tenant protections, and ousting abusive managers, GCTO broadened its focus to combat "Cancer Alley": the 85-mile stretch of petrochemical plants along River Road between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. As GCTO knew well, the plants were not the first industry on River Road. In their place once sat indigo, sugar, and rice plantations. When oil companies came to the region in the early twentieth century, they razed the historic buildings of freedpeople; this erasure continued in the form of home buyouts and town closures. GCTO believed the previous violence of the plantation and the present violence of the petrochemical industry were contiguous: so much so that they used the phrase "chemical plantation" to describe the lived conditions of Black Louisianans. With that in mind, this paper explores how Black tenant organizers confronted the chemical plantation and made sense of their place on lands their ancestors were forced to cultivate.

Presenter(s): Allison Puglisi

The Black Oceanic and Contested Racial Geographies in Miami

This paper examines the complex intersections of race, space, and play. Drawing on archival materials and contemporary art, it analyzes how colonial and Jim Crow legacies shape access to and relations with water spaces in Miami and the Caribbean. The analysis begins with an examination of coloniality in tourism and photography of the circum-Caribbean and relates it to real estate development in the Greater Miami area. The discussion then moves to Virginia Key Beach, Miami's historically Black beach, and to its role in the city's spatial order as a recursive site of dispossession and securitization. The paper concludes by examining the figuration of Black subjects in water spaces by contemporary artists whose works reveal how spatial ordering continues to shape access to water and to recreation. Throughout, I argue that oceans and waterscapes reveal logics of rupture and exploitation and simultaneously present unstable grounds for the reconstitution of Black space.

Presenter(s): Kessie Alexandre

Black Environmental Science: Nanny, Obeah, and the Mysterious Ecologies of Marronage

Within Afro-Jamaica religions, "science" is used as descriptor for traditional medicinal knowledge, ritual practices, and spirituality. Practitioners of Obeah, Myal, and other Afrocentric spiritual traditions, often identify themselves as "scientists". We can read this as a challenge to the negation and denigration of Marron practices as evil or satanic. Through the analytical framework of Black Ecologies, this paper leans into a reading of the maroon claim to science not so much an appeal for Western science or the translation of Maroon practices into Western scientific rationality, but an assertion of a counter-science, an alternative Black science that is not less valid than Western science. Centering the famed Grande Nanny, chieftainess of the Windward Maroons, I consider

how the mythic stories of marronage and maroon obeah disclose a Black ecological science concerned with the advancement of Black communal flourish. While Nanny is denounced by colonial historians as a practitioner of witchcraft, and unmoored from reality, I argue for attention to the concrete Black ecologies, messiness of social reproduction, and gendered geographies of mobility that placemaking evince. Taking seriously the British fears of the maroons, narrated as a ghostly foe haunting the project of conquest, the paper considers the present imperative of marronage in struggles for socioecological justice and agrarian sovereignty.

Presenter(s): Alex Moulton

Coastal Conservation & Black Terraqueous Dispossession

The current form of ecological science, which has informed modern environmental thought and coastal management, not only exists without consideration of Black life, but functions through narratives of anti-blackness. Interrogating the formation of modern ecological science requires us to ask, who do we imagine as able to live and thrive within our collective futures? This is a call not only towards conserving the natural spaces that we can view as present within our futures, but the communities and cultures that intend to remain in place. This paper will parallel the formulation of ecosystem ecology and its subsequent influence on the modern environmental movement to legacies of Black terraqueous dispossession in the Sea Islands, one of the many unseen ghosts of the ecology field. It will argue that the employment of ecology as intertwined with efforts towards enclosure and accumulation of Black land, implicates ecological conservation as a tool toward Black land and water dispossession within the United States. Although literature has discussed the forms in which environmentalism and conservation practice have fueled the dispossession of Indigenous lands, I follow the assertions of Heynen and Hardy that conservation practice is a tool among many to generate a white spatial imagination on Sapelo Island (Heynen & Hardy 2017). The current formulation of environmentalism is part of this white spatial imagination in which Black life is absent.

Presenter(s): Adrian Cato

Revisiting the "Promised Land": Black Utopian World-Making in the 20th-Century Hudson Valley

For a brief period in the mid-20th century, the International Peace Mission Movement (IPMM)—a Black-led social change organization—improbably became the largest landholder in an upstate New York county that had been characterized by fierce antiblack exclusion since the time of slavery. In Ulster County, the IPMM inaugurated another landscape that they called the "Promised Land", creating cooperative housing and agricultural ventures that brought thousands of Black (but not only Black) people from New York City and other urban centers to the Hudson Valley hinterlands. In reconsidering the IPMM's achievement, this presentation reroutes contemporary scholarship on Black ecologies through the Jim Crow north. Amidst renewed regional calls for "land in Black hands", the presentation turns to the legacies of the IPMM's largely forgotten rendition of more-than-human social life. How does the specter of the IPMM's "Promised Land" endeavor figure

among contemporary Black campaigns for redress within a regional landscape blasted by four centuries of interwoven settler colonialism, antiblackness, and ecological violence?

Presenter(s): Daniel Schniedewind

If Heirs Property Was A Portal

In the winter of 2024 the Black Land and Liberation Initiative, now a defunct experimental project, ran a series of focus groups and story circles regarding Black folks and their relationship to land. One of our focus groups was an heirs property pod featuring a directly impacted descendant of heirs land in Louisiana, a young Black lawyer from Lafayette, and a long time Black land steward of family land in the Mississippi Delta region. This paper explores that conversation and the ghostly remains of Black folk's connection and distance from southern ancestral lands through the phenomenon known as heirs property. We explore land as kin; the blood ties that orient one to the soil and the soil as one's family. And on the flip side we explore the abstraction of ancestry through migration, the fraying of family bonds, and the forces of private property yielding individualized ownership and land loss.

Presenter(s): Mariama Eversley

Discussion

4383 Haunted Pedagogies: Autoethnographic Encounters with Residual Pasts and Emergent Possibilities

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable takes inspiration from the ghostly as both metaphor and method, aligning with the 2025 American Anthropological Association's call to confront the hauntings of the past as they animate the present. Drawing from autoethnographic narratives situated in classrooms and educational institutions in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, South Korea, and the United States, we confront the ways our personal histories intersect with broader cultural forces, revealing how classrooms and educational institutions become haunted spaces where traces of colonial legacies, neoliberal policies, and racial capitalism (Melamed, 2016) persist. These hauntings emerge in various forms: the commodification of childhood under neoliberal frameworks (Sims, 2017), the reproduction of colonial desires in educational policies (Gupta, 2018), the localization of Western pedagogies within traditional cultural values (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), and the embodied vitality of children (Boldt, 2020) challenging dominant systems of knowledge and power. Each panelist engages autoethnography as a mode of haunted inquiry, tracing the affective, embodied, and material residues of forgotten policies, discarded reforms, and aspirational futures that failed to arrive. Autoethnography is a research method that builds on the author's experiences to understand and critique certain cultural practices in which the author participates and finds the "self's location in the culture and scholarship" (Adams et al., 2015).

For some of us, this involves confronting the neoliberal commodification of childhood and the replication of colonial hierarchies in public, private, and NGO-run schools. We also examine how globalized pedagogies like Reggio Emilia are indigenized within local religious and cultural values, producing hybrid educational landscapes haunted by both imported and inherited traditions. Within our studies, we reflect on how sound, movement, and non-dominant language practices generate moments of resistance leading to ephemeral ruptures that unsettle the traditional understanding of developmentalism and human capital formation.

Together, we ask: what happens when the data themselves become ghostly, when journal entries and classroom memories return not as clear evidence but as affective traces and uncanny echoes? How do these hauntings expose the contradictions embedded within educational reforms marketed as progressive or liberatory? How might attending to the emerging ruptures create multiple possibilities for imagining otherwise? What pedagogies can we summon that neither disavow the past nor surrender to neoliberal futurity?

This roundtable invites dialogue on the non-linear, the residual, and the unruly in educational spaces. By centering the haunted educators' experiences, we hope to offer glimpses of solidarities, desires, and utopian bonds that persist amid the ruins (Muñoz, 2007).

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Madiha Noor, Pennsylvania State University

Presenter(s): Özge Ergin , Md Rifat Hassan Liju, Pennsylvania State University, Junghee Lee , Cory Brautigam , Madiha Noor, Pennsylvania State University, Moutushi Mahreen, Pennsylvania State University

Discussant: Moutushi Mahreen, Pennsylvania State University

2915 Fugitive Anthropology: Embodying Activist Research (Part 1)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This two-part roundtable features contributors to the edited volume, entitled "Fugitive Anthropology: Embodying Activist Research" (forthcoming, University of Texas Press), an expansive development of the co-authored article "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Race, Gender, and Violence in the Field" (Cultural Anthropology 2017).

Decades after initial calls to "decolonize" the anthropological discipline (Harrison 1991), which grew out of work with liberatory social movements across the globe, the production of insurgent knowledge remains a fugitive endeavor. This edited volume works to unsettle the heteropatriarchal gaze that continues to elide or erase the intimate, embodied politics of ethnographic fieldwork and "the undercommons" (Harney and Moten 2013) of the university.

Building on the legacy of the Austin School approach to diaspora studies (Gordon 2007) and activist research (Hale 2001, 2008, Speed 2006), feminist activist ethnography (Craven and Davis 2013),

and Black feminist anthropology (McClaurin 2001), we assert that liberatory knowledge production is an embodied praxis and fugitive endeavor forged in and with community. The panelists draw from traditions of Black, Indigenous, queer, and decolonial feminisms, to explore the following questions:

-How do gendered racial positionalities inflect the research process, and how can activist research methods be accountable to the embodied aspects of conducting research in contexts of colonialism, war, and conflict and conditions of gendered and racialized terror?

-What does it mean to produce feminist knowledge that advances theory in collaborative ways?

-How might an intergenerational engagement with questions of embodiment, knowledge production, and methodology push feminist anthropology and activist research in new directions?

The urgency of centering the individual and collective body in the process of anthropological knowledge production in 2017, when the article was originally published, will be considered in the context of the current onslaught.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Maya Berry, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Shanya Cordis, Emory University

Presenter(s): Dana-Ain Davis, CUNY, Graduate Center, Koyana Flotte, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Shanya Cordis, Emory University, Maya Berry, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Sarah Ihmoud, College of the Holy Cross, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

3475 The Specter of Surveillance: Digital Ghosting in Japan and America

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

A specter is haunting Japan and the United States-the specter of inescapable surveillance. As emerging technological capabilities promise new forms of convenience, access, and possibility, the requisite yet often unremarked-upon surrender of personal data looms over countless dimensions of daily life. This panel examines how the tension between care and control within surveillance regimes manifests as a spectral force of inescapability, imposing consequential yet ephemeral constraints. We ask: How does the surveillance of the social body in Japan and the United States map onto and reinforce the surveillance of individual bodies? How do such practices contribute to the transformation of biopolitics into necropolitics? Our papers explore: How private bodies are made public through mandatory programs cloaked in the language of health and well-being. How moments of pandemic-driven uncertainty are leveraged to implement sweeping, digitally mediated surveillance networks under the guise of maintaining public health. How attractive yet fantastical depictions of the future rely on insidious, deliberate programs designed to garner broad social acceptance while digitally erasing those who cannot or will not comply. And how ghosts haunt correctional officers within America's prison system when the surveillant demands to "keep order" clash with the job's humanistic dimensions.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Paul Christensen

Chair: Cindi SturtzSreetharan, Arizona State University

Presenter(s): Paul Christensen, Cindi SturtzSreetharan, Arizona State University, Macario Garcia, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Kimberly Hassel, Duke University, Allison Alexy, University of Michigan

Discussant: Timothy Grose

Presentation(s): Future phantoms and material erasure: How the unhoused are removed in renderings of Japan's utopian future

For several decades, Japan has been replete with sophisticated, sweeping renderings of the future. Often originating from government offices, these depictions predictably envision a future Japan in which pressing societal concerns have been alleviated, generally through yet-unrealized technological innovation and intervention. The concept of "smart," as in soon to be emergent "smart cities" or similar notions, is presented as techno-utopian settings of infinite possibility. Left unremarked upon are the comprehensive surveillance mechanisms necessary to maintain such tantalizing futures. Unacknowledged are the sweeping, necropolitical erasures embedded in these visions—futures scrubbed of the unhoused, the marginalized, and the impoverished. My paper examines the duplicity endemic to such future-shaping projects, which both accustom Japan's citizenry to accepting invasive surveillance as a normative expectation and eliminate possible futures for those who diverge from such expectations. The result, I argue, is a political absurdity that serves to inhibit consideration of meaningful alternatives to the organization of daily life.

Presenter(s): Paul Christensen

The metabo subject: Caring to surveil and surveilling to care.

In 2008 Japan began mandated surveillance of individual working bodies aged 40 to 72 years old. This surveillance is in the form of the special annual health examination, covered by national insurance that specifically looks at 4 health metrics: blood glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure, and waist circumference. A body with measurements above established thresholds in 3 of the 4 tests will be categorized as having metabolic syndrome and remanded to health guidance. While the Japanese government categorizes this surveillance as care for their population, individual Japanese people have mixed feelings. The mandated surveillance by the government has created individual bodies as public bodies that should be brought under control. In doing so, the metabolic syndrome (metabo) subject has been born.

Drawing on ethnographic research with Japanese people who have undergone the special annual exam, I present the ways that the metabo subject is both embraced and reviled. Some embrace the surveillance as a manifestation of care by the state that helps to keep them "healthy." Others revile the surveillance as a manifestation of State overreach. And, some take a more middle ground rationalizing the exam itself as a form of care but speak harshly against the practice of the health data going to their employers. Finally, most people expressed the ways in which the mandated

exam has turned their bodies from private space to public space, available for comment and stigmatization.

Presenter(s): Cindi SturtzSreetharan

Incarcerated Ghosts: Surveillance and Abolitionist Hauntings in an American Prison

This presentation explores relations between correctional officers (COs), ghosts, and surveillance at the Desert Echo Facility (DEF), a multi-security level prison in the American Southwest. At this facility, COs are tasked with surveilling incarcerated people through technologies such as personal sight, video monitoring, and auditory observations. As a result of this surveillance, officers form tenuous relationships with incarcerated people, often learning and sharing personal details about family histories, romantic partners inside and outside the facility, and hopes and dreams. These relationships exist within the physical realm of everyday life and extend into the spectral when ghosts of deceased incarcerated people maintain residence on the compound. Charged with surveilling all incarcerated people as a means to "keep order," correctional officers become troubled by their everyday work duties because their relations blur social boundaries between CO and incarcerated person, real and imaginary, and living and dead. Haunted by their labor, officers find themselves reconsidering long-held beliefs about what it means to surveil, their understandings of the spectral, and the necessity for incarceration in the United States. I examine how these DEF relationships offer insight into the complexities of carceral labor and how incarcerated ghosts can uncomfortably manifest abolitionist possibilities.

Presenter(s): Macario Garcia

Ghost in the Machine: Digital Surveillance, Citizen Policing, and the Boundaries of Sociality in COVID-19 Japan

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tokyo—adorned with banners for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics—transformed into a ghost town. The anxiety over the consequences of an "invisible" virus was likened to concerns over radiation following the Triple Disaster of March 11th, 2011. The civilian response to the pandemic bore a key continuity from the Triple Disaster: the use of the digital in acquiring information due to mistrust of the government and state-sponsored media. While the digital served as a crucial means of staying informed and in touch with loved ones, it also became a site of surveillance, harassment, and mis/disinformation.

In this paper, I examine the boundaries of social care and surveillance in the digital sphere during the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan. I draw upon interviews with young users of social media, news stories, and both corporate and government online resources to highlight the opportunities and the obstacles of the digital in navigating the pandemic. I focus on the "quarantine police" (jishuku keisatsu), online users who criticize those whom they believe are breaking quarantine protocols, even sharing their targets' personal information. The doxing and critical responses stemming from citizen policing would eventually cause government entities to create webpages warning against "COVID discrimination." I argue that the digital practices and surveillance of the pandemic coalesce with larger themes of cyberbullying and media (il)literacy

Presenter(s): Kimberly Hassel

Ghosting and the Ethics of Disconnection at the End of Empire

In the last decade, “ghosting” is suddenly everywhere in the United States. A slang term now in the common lexicon, “ghosting” describes a sudden and unexpected social disconnection between people, often people who had some kind of previously intimate relationship. In many ways, “ghosting” can best be described through what does not include: rather than breaking up with someone, or articulating some frustration, the ghoster simply leaves and never responds to future messages. The ending is abrupt, total, unexplained, and can occur between dating partners, friends, or people in other relationships. People have been ghosted by a newly hired employee or by a colleague at an academic conference. Its commonality does not seem to reduce the pain and confusion that ghosting brings.

In this presentation, I examine the American fascination with ghosting to situate it as a public debate about the ethics of disconnection occurring at the end of empire. I argue that ghosting – as a set of practices and as an idea – enables people to discuss the ethical responsibilities we have for people with whom we actively do not want to have a relationship. What do we owe people we never want to see again? What do we owe people who have caused, or might cause, us harm? Based on ethnographic interviews and textual analysis, this presentation considers how people discuss what makes a good ending at a moment when everything seems to be coming apart.

Presenter(s): Allison Alexy, University of Michigan

3643 Touch and Aesthetics in Co-operative Action

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Touch is foundational to co-operative action (Goodwin, 2018). It is constitutional to techniques of the body (Mauss, 1973) and to the human capacity to attune with the somatic and affective sensitivities of others. The traces of touch are multidirectional, connecting tactile perception of materials with proprioceptive and intercorporeal understandings. It, accordingly, has garnered increased attention within the methodological turn to an expanded appreciation of multimodal resources, with prominent lines of inquiry focusing on touch's role in interpersonal communication, socialization, and professional competence and vision (Cekaite & Mondada, 2021).

Touch's deictic and diagnostic role in enhancing the vision of 'professionals' (e.g., geologists, surgeons, midwives) has received considerable attention. New insights as to the role of touch in the aesthetics of human expression (e.g., dance, music, visual art) are emerging from a comparatively nascent scholarly focus to the topic. Touch is instrumental in the social organization of spaces and objects involved in instruction and projected performance (Papadelli, 2020); diagnostic and pedagogic touch are deployed to raise the somatic attention (Csordas, 1993) of apprentices (Johnson, in press; Reed, 2020); and, balletic bodies are molded through touch (Müller, 2017). Moreover, human touch creates expressive traces (e.g., the tactile-sonic relationship in piano

playing) perceived and assessable as aesthetic through other modalities by the specific communities for which they are created (Albert, 2015; Huang-Kokina, 2023).

This panel explores touch as an interactional resource and pedagogical focus in the co-operative realization of aesthetic expression. Through the multimodal analysis of social interaction from diverse settings, the papers examine 1) haptic engagement of skateboarders' feet (e.g., kicking and stomping) to assess a plank's potential to support the aesthetics of projected tricks, 2) intercorporeal orientations to the way of the brush, 3) the intensity and temporality of touch in realizing the cello's voice, and 4) the intersubjective attunement of somatic and semiotic sensitivity in folkloric dance.

Taken collectively, the papers contribute to the growing literature on touch by elucidating the interactive orientation to and tactile calibration of human aesthetics. The papers also shed light on dimensions of touch that have received less attention, including, inter alia, the interactive touch of the foot, the range of touch's intensity and temporality, the role of touch in preparing for and projecting future projects, the ability to interpret touch to accomplish joint action, and participant orientation to mitigating physical pain while enhancing the human capacity for creativity.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Sarah Jean Johnson, University of Texas at El Paso, Eton Churchill

Chair: Eton Churchill, Sarah Jean Johnson, University of Texas at El Paso

Presenter(s): Junichi Yagi, Waseda University, Yusuke Arano, Eton Churchill, Sarah Jean Johnson, University of Texas at El Paso

Discussant: Darren Reed

Presentation(s): The emergent “skateable”: Co-imagining a material encounter on the skate ramp

Skateboarding has been studied as a creative practice in which the urban landscape is locally redefined through skaters' spatial engagement with material objects (Borden, 2019). Employing multimodal conversation analysis (Mondada, 2018), this study examines how a mundane object is transformed into a “skateable” in a mini-ramp session at a Tokyo nightclub (Neville et al., 2014). The target segment illustrates how three Japanese skaters, aged six to their late teens, set up a “flat bank” using a plywood sheet.

During the bank setup, participants adjust the sheet's position through kicking and stomping—a haptic way of assessing potential danger with their feet. While the oldest skater sustains this embodied orientation, the younger ones sidetrack into playful engagement (“not scared” to skate the bank). Despite these diverging orientations, the plywood sheet is co-operatively transformed into a skateable (Goodwin, 2018).

The interactional achievement of a skateable paves the way for aesthetic dimensions (Bäckström & Sand, 2019), as the modification of the environment embodies skaters imagining a particular set of tricks (Ingold, 2000). The sheet adjustments both ensure safety and demonstrate the participants' joint understanding of projected skateability—how their feet will be positioned on the

board, which will then come into contact with the bank. Such co-imagination of a material encounter allows for the communal appreciation of creative capacity.

Presenter(s): Junichi Yagi

Embodied guidance of brush handling in Japanese calligraphy lessons

This study elucidates how calligraphy teachers enable students to undergo a vicarious experience of the normative calligraphic body. Drawing on data from Japanese calligraphy lessons, I investigate instructions involving body control (cf. Nishizaka, 2020), in which a participant moves the body of another by holding both the apprentice's hand and the brush jointly to draw a calligraphic line. This haptic instruction addresses a recurrent problem the teacher identifies during the lesson. Body control is sequentially provided following the do-x format utterance (e.g., "do like this"). This sequential tactile and linguistic format prospectively offers "what to do" in two ways: it accounts for what the student should do when drawing the focal line and projects what the teacher will do. In this manner, body control embodies "how to do" in practice. The physical movements through the body control elaborate on the brush handling suggested in the do-x format as a practical version thereof. By so doing, a calligraphic line is embodied, organized, and tied to the calligrapher's kinetic experience, *pars pro toto* (Ingold, 2007). The study's findings suggest instruction involving body control is a way to demonstrate the teacher's body as the normative calligraphic body the student should imitate, thereby making an opportunity to experience the teacher's haptic orientations to the ways of brush.

Presenter(s): Yusuke Arano

The intensity and temporality of touch in the cello's voice

This paper examines cello instruction focusing on the intensity and temporality of touch (Cekaite & Mondada, 2021), expanding on multimodal studies of social interaction on enskillment (e.g., Lefebvre, 2021; Nishizaka, 2007, 2021), and the aesthetics of artistic expression (Arano, 2023; Johnson, in press; Reed, 2020). Drawing on a collection of publicly available cello lessons and master classes, the multimodal analysis focuses on how performers are guided to perceive, selectively apply, and release tension in fingers of their left hand. The analysis reveals that interpersonal touch is deployed and elicited to diagnose and contrastively "feel through" (Husserl, 1989, p. 174) the tense and relaxed hand. Tactile perception is further educated through mentors' use of performed depictions (e.g., pinching noses) (Clark, 2016). The mentor's touch also indexes distal sources of force that enable discrete applications of playing fingers, and concurrent release of tension in non-playing fingers. Although participants orient to the regulated release of touch's intensity to avoid tendonitis, the temporal modulation of touch's intensity is also accounted for in terms of enhancing the aesthetics of performance, including the ability to competently play a repertoire of different vibrato techniques characteristic of the cello's voice. This paper contributes to multimodal studies on touch by examining the human capacity to fine-tune the intensity and timing of touch for expressive purposes.

Presenter(s): Eton Churchill

“With me or by yourself?”: Children’s intersubjective attunement and corporeal togetherness in Mexican folkloric dance

Touch offers exceptional intercorporeal communication, such that improv dancers must move apart so their performance does not appear staged. This synergy, when two bodies move as one “four-legged animal,” is, however, an exalted moment in Argentine tango. It follows, the professional perception to interpret touch and harness its communicative power requires sensitivity gained from training (Goodwin & Smith, 2018). This professional perception is our focus in children’s learning of Mexican folkloric dance. Taking a talk-in-interaction approach (Goodwin, 2018), we consider moments where a teacher offers tactile support: “With me or by yourself?” Imagining these moments of corporeal togetherness as intersubjective attunement highlights the “incrementally fluid and glitchy quality of any kind of joint activity that requires coordination and collaboration” (Duranti & La Mattina, 2022, p. 87). The teacher adjusts her touch (e.g., open or controlling embrace) to communicate diverse properties of dance and to respond to the child’s actions. The “four-legged animal” of the child and her teacher initially is with two assured and two gangly legs. The child attunes her action to gradually approximate her teacher’s and is released from the embrace to dance alone. Variations of this trajectory illustrate the process of intersubjective attunement as it relates to the child acquiring somatic, semiotic sensitivity to both interpreting touch and to competence in folkloric dance performance.

Presenter(s): Sarah Jean Johnson

Co-author(s): Asta Cekaite, Sarah Jean Johnson

Discussion

8816 Celebrating 45 years of Anthropology of Work Review- online

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This is a facilitated online discussion with journal contributors past and present, to celebrate the 45th anniversary of Anthropology of Work Review. All welcome.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98222961051>

Meeting ID: 982 2296 1051

1114 Spirited New Orleans? On Making a Way in Dispiriting Times

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

Takes place at the HNOC: Historic New Orleans Collection Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70130. It is a 5-minute walk from the conference hotels.

This roundtable brings together anthropologists with deep personal and professional ties to New Orleans. We consider the AAA conference theme, "Ghosts. Apparitions. Spirits. Specters," to be a timely provocation as we convene to think with and trouble the framing of a "spirited" New Orleans on the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, under intensifying conditions of social suffering and political destabilization. Resisting a facile characterization of "spirit" that has long been associated with the city, we focus instead on its theoretical and experiential uncaging – attending to the myriad ways that the nurturing and mobilization of spirit takes place in New Orleans as well as what that offers for a (re)conceptualization of living/enduring in these times. While such focus requires attention to forms of capture, reflecting the current acceleration of oppression, racial capitalism, and authoritarianism, we are equally invested in the conditions and processes of spirited/spiritual reclaiming and release. We thus take inspiration from Helen Regis and Shana Walton's (2024) expansive framing of subsistence practice in the Gulf Coast region to consider gathering, provisioning, and other means of feeding the spirit in the broader context of uncertainty, as well as Antoinette Jackson's 2024 AAA Keynote Address on the art of remembrance and the collaborative, spirited ways of knowing that emerge in "making a way." Indeed, as much as engagements with spirit are critical for understanding processes of violence and injustice (Good et al. 2022), they also guide us to emergent inquiries/actions informed by affect and joy (Thomas and Masco 2023, Machado 2023).

Our discussion reflects on themes such as the ways in which we conceive of spirit; the processes by which it can or cannot be dampened or captured; everyday engagements of/with spirit and what they mean, especially given the broader context of social and political upheaval; forms of spirited and ancestral kinship; spirited expression and release through music, procession, and other modes of engagement at local sites; and spirited action and activism.

We see our work as interconnected and deeply rooted in place. The roundtable thus connects to a short series of site visits and workshops (proposed separately), collaboratively developed and locally led. We hope these engagements will allow for an immersive exploration regarding the mobilization of spirit, with application for related communities, contexts, and projects. We are inspired by the idea of the "unconference," as proposed by the 2025 Society for Cultural Anthropology Biennial on "Restorative Relations," and committed to developing decentered and non-hierarchical forms of knowledge production and sharing within and outside of the academy.

Organizer: Martha Radice, Dalhousie University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Rebecca Louise Carter, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Rebecca Louise Carter, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Mellman, Tulane University, Gillian Jones, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Rachel Breunlin, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology, Erin Tooher, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Child and Family Studies, Martha Radice, Dalhousie University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Nadege Nau, University of South Florida

Discussant: Antoinette Jackson, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Helen

2828 Moving Beyond Ghosting and Gaslighting: Anthropological Histories That Matter

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Boas and his followers envisioned anthropology as a holistic discipline, drawing from the natural and social sciences as well as from the humanities. Their objective was to forge a comprehensive understanding of humanity in the hope that such an understanding would help solve a host of social problems that had grown out of racism, colonialism, exploitation, xenophobia, and warfare. Since then, anthropology has faced enormous challenges, both from within and outside of the discipline. Many 20th century anthropologists perceived themselves as leaders in the battle against racism and imperialism. By the end of the century, however, "post-modernist" critics often dismissed "science" as an ethnocentric construct, while "scientific anthropologists" condemned their humanistically-inclined colleagues as subjective and devoid of methodological rigor. In the 21st century, these divides have widened, sometimes mapping across generational and cultural lines. One critique, coming from oppressed and disenfranchised groups as well as their activist-inspired allies, accuses our intellectual ancestors of complicity with the very evils against which they believed themselves to have been fighting. Colleagues responding to these critiques often express alarm at what they view as radical presentism. The critics, they contend, are blind to the historical trajectory of a field that centered upon social justice but whose objective was differently realized in different global and temporal contexts. External challenges are still more extreme, as politicians accuse social scientists of being "radical" or "woke" for their commitment to diversity and equity. Several US states have outlawed "DEI," and President Trump has ordered the dismantling of all such federal initiatives. In addition, social sciences face opposition owing to their purported irrelevance in preparing students for employment opportunities. One consequence of these attacks has been to scale back--and sometimes eliminate--anthropology programs throughout the US. This raises the question of what our discipline will look like, or if it will exist at all, in coming decades. Our session will present a critical examination of anthropology's history, both long-term and recent, as well as the discipline's future contours. The papers in this session will not create ghosts of intellectual and activist ancestors, whose work was situated in very different times, nor will they gaslight current anthropologists who--despite the valuable work of generations past--argue for a present rethinking as we strive to open future doors.

Section: Association of Senior Anthropologists

Organizer: Rick Feinberg, Kent State University

Chair: Rick Feinberg, Kent State University

Presenter(s): Robert Ulin, Rochester Institute of Technology, Fadwa El Guindi, University of California, Los Angeles, Margaret LeCompte, University of Colorado, Boulder, Herbert Lewis,

University of Wisconsin, Madison, Jim Weil, Science Museum of Minnesota

Presentation(s): Postmodern Influences in the History of Anthropology

There have been many shifts in American anthropology from the early four-field approach to culture and personality, iterations of materialism, interpretive anthropology, and finally postmodernism and its scientific rebukes. Nor should we overlook historical approaches that employ multiple methods and theories and challenge pedestrian ideas about culture areas and globalization. I will discuss postmodernism of the late 1970s through early 1990s that encompassed Geertz's interpretive anthropology, "writing culture," and renditions of French philosophy that questioned modernity's grand narratives. Important reactions to the postmodern claimed that it was indifferent to power, too focused on self-contemplation and ultimately ahistorical. I argue that the postmodern turn addressed some of anthropology's ghosts that on occasion failed to acknowledge its colonial legacy and what can be termed the "naturalization" of fieldwork, driven by an occidental narrative of "otherness." Deconstructing the narrative of "otherness" and vulgar "scientistic" renditions of the field make postmodernism important to anthropology's historical deconstruction and self. I argue that anthropology's turn to postmodernity is relevant to anthropological futures because of its potential to subvert and challenge hegemonic master narratives inclusive of utopian of science and technology, that have long been historically intertwined with anthropological research across borders, imagined or otherwise.

Presenter(s): Robert Ulin

Can We Put American Anthropology Together Again?

It was American Anthropology that established the view of humankind as a unity combining biology, culture, language, society, cognition, and prehistory. It could afford to do it. It is American Anthropologists who have been dismantling this quality for several decades. Breaking up humankind's unity makes American anthropology obsolete and dispensable. I will argue that putting the unified view of humankind back together through anthropology is the path to follow. In order to accomplish this, we must first distinguish anthropology as a field of study from the work of an individual or a group of anthropologists. We must also rethink what the role of The American Anthropological Association is toward accomplishing this goal. Despite fragmentation in the world today, whether from difference in wealth, power, equality, ideology, or access to technology, the principle of humankind's unity is critical knowledge to continue building if anthropology's holistic (and cross-cultural) view of humankind continues to be, as it should be, unique and valuable.

Presenter(s): Fadwa El Guindi

Methodological Ghosts and Gaslighting: Considering the Legitimacy of Past, Present and Future Research Methods

Ghosts from past practice pose continuing challenges to whether qualitative methods are legitimately "scientific and rigorous." Dominant epistemologies that once imposed ways to define, know about, and do research on human groups now are being interrogated and challenged to create a more diverse, inclusive approach to anthropological, ethnographic, qualitative and mixed

methods research methodology in the social sciences, education and other applied fields. I examine past and present research practice to identify ghosts persisting from these "old ways" and discuss how they have been used to reinforce particular epistemologies as "legitimate" while denigrating others as "not scientific" or "not valid." Driven by psychologists, IRBs, and so-called "hard science" dictates, this gaslighting acted to de-legitimate innovations in methods and convince researchers to stick to less intellectually generous research designs; it also restricted what was fundable or publishable. My work with Jean Schensul has been a leader in confronting that gaslighting; it has introduced new and diverse, multidisciplinary approaches and technologies for "qualitative" and "mixed methods" research and intervention studies research in anthropology and the human sciences. I conclude by envisioning future directions in social science research, free from both ghosts and gaslighting.

Presenter(s): Margaret LeCompte

Gaslighting Anthropology vs. Historical Scholarship

"Gaslighting," implies a purposeful attempt to make a person doubt their sanity, to get them to question their fundamental beliefs. By 2025 generations of American anthropologists have been led to doubt the foundations of their discipline as a result of decades of poorly documented critiques. When Franz Boas and his students fought against prevailing notions of cultural evolutionism and were in turn criticized severely by the neo-evolutionists, as bitter as their disputes may have been they were over matters of evidence, theoretical competence--questions of the adequacy of their "science." On the contrary, the attacks on prevailing academic anthropology from the 1960s were based on presumed ethical and political failures. First there was the claim that anthropologists had been in league with colonialists, that they exoticized and "othered" "The Other," and dealt dishonestly with these "others." Then came the notion of "Orientalism" according to which the only reason any "Westerner" wrote about peoples of "the East/Orient" was to dominate, control, and exploit, those "racially" different "Others." Now we are told that the generations of fighters against racial determinism were actually racist because they were "normalizing White society." When we look into the actual history of the field, we find that none of these claims can stand research-based scrutiny. This paper calls for an end to "gaslighting anthropology" for the benefit of the future of the discipline.

Presenter(s): Herbert Lewis

Is the Future of Anthropology Haunted by the Ghosts of Othering and Scientism?

Anthropology has a long history of self-and-other research interactions, based on protocols developed through both scientific and humanistic traditions. Accounts of this legacy may emphasize some approaches and accomplishments, while ignoring others and celebrating or condemning selected aspects. With the vast accumulation of findings and the wide variety of explanations and interpretations of what it means to be human, no unifying paradigm or even tentative consensus has been possible. Seeking clarification, if not resolution, this presentation reflects on personal encounters between researchers and members of groups being studied.

Exacerbated threats from the outside make it ever more urgent to address misinformation and disinformation generated within anthropology. What are the implications of "othering" as an epithet extended to mutually enhancing relationships in the field? What are the implications of "scientism" as an epithet that dismisses critical and liberating practices of science? Ethnographers arriving as outsiders have often been encouraged to collect and analyze data which serve a research community's own purposes. Examples are offered, indicating that systematic observational findings and intersubjective experiential "truths" can be mutually reinforcing. What would it mean if anthropologists who so wish had opportunities for fieldwork in at least one setting in which they already belonged and at least one remote and previously unfamiliar setting?

Presenter(s): Jim Weil

7313 Session 1: Revisiting the Discourse of Domination in Agriculture

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Scholars in anthropology and critical agrarian studies have demonstrated how industrial agriculture has made farmers dependent on externally manufactured inputs, thereby reducing their control over production. This has transferred power away from farmers to collaborative alliances between the state, scientists, and private companies, all of which benefit from this arrangement (Kumar 2016; Stone 2022; Weis 2013). Despite widespread opposition from farmers across the world, including in Europe and Asia, the corporate concentration in agriculture has continued, expanding across various domains such as digital technologies, biotechnology, and beyond.

While corporate actors engage with farmers in developing and testing their technologies (Freidberg 2019;2022), some of these actors hail from farming families themselves and play an important role in shaping these interactions. Their presence complicates the "stark transnational capital versus peasantry" binary in the food regimes literature (Aga, 2018, p. 671). Instead of analyzing these interactions solely through the lines of capital-centrism, imagining otherwise, or both, we aim to situate them in the everyday lives of farmers and corporate agents who work as foot soldiers of financial capital.

This roundtable seeks to ethnographically explore the ongoing corporate attempts to dominate agriculture globally, without reproducing the discourse of the "powerful." It proposes an anthropological examination of last-mile interactions between farmers and corporate actors, exploring both the fragilities and dependencies of the powerful while simultaneously analyzing their attempts to dominate agriculture. Could this way of revisiting power dynamics in agriculture provide pathways for promoting justice while also "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016)?

We invite participants to discuss ethnographic stories/work from diverse contexts, focusing on everyday interactions between corporate actors (including technology developers and state officials) and farmers. We will address (but are not limited to) questions such as:

- What kinds of interactions occur between corporate actors and farmers? How do these actors approach these interactions, and why?
- How is power formed within these interactions?
- Do we observe contestations within these formations? If so, are these contestations generative, and if so, in what ways?
- How have these interactions evolved historically? What roles have the emergence of digital and other technologies played in shaping these changes?
- Are the long-standing categories used to analyze agricultural change (e.g., small, medium, and large farmers) still relevant, or are they being challenged and reconfigured in these interactions?
- Do these interactions themselves offer strategies for rethinking the discourse of domination and making it more just?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Nikhit Agrawal, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Montserrat Perez Castro Perez, Dartmouth College, Alexa Russo, Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology, Nikhit Agrawal, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, NAFSIKA PAPACHARALAMPOUS, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Discussant: Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University

8774 Association of Latina/o & Latinx Anthropologists (ALLA) Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Association of Latina/o & Latinx Anthropologists board members will meet to discuss organization's budget, awards, board and committee openings, and membership recruitment efforts.

3773 Outside the Resilience Frame: Writing on Immigrant Endurance in Un-endurable Times

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together activist-engaged scholars rethinking the contours of immigrant justice narratives. In the virulent anti-immigrant present, we see clearly the collapse of the myth of the good (enough) immigrant juxtaposed with the bad/criminal immigrant, revealing that concerns about the law, good behavior, coming here the "right" way, was always a pretense. Anthropologists

have long struggled with how to explore, analyze, and collaboratively share stories of migrants; striving to find balance between recognizing pain and power. There is a growing concern, however, about the utilization of resilience as a framework for migration; as resilience necessitates violence which creates a concerning dynamic of fetishizing pain. As anthropologists writing in other contexts have argued (Bonilla and Lebrón 2019), resilience narratives easily become alibis for structured abandonment, transforming the measure of "good citizenship" in the neoliberal age to one's capacity to "stick it out well" (Hage 2013). In this roundtable, we seek to trouble the ideology of immigrant resilience. We ask: How might anthropologists reconcile imperatives to honor the agency of individual immigrants, while attending to the structural violences with which they must contend, and the need to build collective power that challenges those violences at their roots? Within our writing, how do we refrain from the denials of coevalness (Fabian 1983) that necessarily attend to resilience framings? How do interlocutors themselves react to framings of their stories in this way?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Elizabeth Rubio , Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Xitlalli Alvarez Almendariz, Harvard University, Carlos Martinez, University of California, Santa Cruz, Ola Galal, New York University

Discussant: Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Cecilia Vasquez, University of California, Riverside

3259 On Racial Hauntings and Undisclosed Traumas in National Imaginaries

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We are living, learning, and writing during haunted times-the legacies of settler colonialism, white supremacy and racial capitalism always dependent on profound loss, suffering, and a collective forgetfulness that leaves many ghosts in their wake. Indeed, we exist in an economic-political system whose very livelihood is dependent on state-sanctioned repression and the mass disappearance of bodies and bodies of knowledge that trouble our deeply felt ideas about freedom and exceptionalism so intricately woven into the ideological fabric of nation-states.

They haunt us, ask not to be forgotten, demand not to be erased. Their absence is a disturbing presence. The "undisclosed traumas of previous generations" disturb the lives of their descendants, despite being unaware of their distant causes'(Colin Davis, 2005, p. 373, cited in Phoenix, 2024). According to Avery Gordon (2008), these apparitions offer up a purpose, a propulsion; they disturb us, reminding us of what has been lost and propelling us towards what must be found again. Such perturbations signal to the ways that abusive systems of oppression have forcibly disappeared certain things, ideas, and bodies, rendering them marginal, excluded, or repressed in the dominant imagination, but they also animate our longing for "what could have

been and can be otherwise" (p. 57). These "ghostly matters" of our past/present demand a reckoning, "to be haunted" is to be entirely engrossed, and intimately "tied to historical and social effects" (Gordon, 2008, p. 190).

The papers in this panel seek to collectively trace the ways that the past always haunts the present, attending to the living traces of that which has been disappeared and rendered ghostly. Dyrness explores how encounters with a murdered indigenous land defender transformed experiences of Costa Rica, challenging myths of Costa Rican exceptionalism and one school's ecotourism approach to the local context. Looking at contemporary media representations related to immigration, Ríos-Rojas' paper examines the migrant as "spectral subject" for what it reveals and hides about nationalist projects. García-Sánchez explores a recent controversy related to the racial slur "moro/moors" and how Muslim immigrant communities in Spain are particularly susceptible to being viewed through this ghostly racializing lens. Jaffe-Walter interrogates how the colonial ghostly trope of promising a "normal childhood" is deployed to justify coercive assimilation. Abu El-Haj and Brayboy consider scholasticide as a concept that can be leveraged across sites of settler colonialism, asking how indigenous scholars haunt settler colonial projects, centering sovereignty in educating against erasure. Each paper is a meditation on how we are called upon in our work to intentionally engage with these ghosts as necessary portals that link up the present to the past.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Reva Jaffe-Walter, Montclair State University, Anne Rios-Rojas

Chair: Anne Rios-Rojas

Presenter(s): Thea Abu El-Haj, Barnard College, Reva Jaffe-Walter, Montclair State University, Inmaculada García Sánchez, University of California, Los Angeles, Andrea Dyrness, University of Colorado, Boulder, Anne Rios-Rojas

Discussant: CINDY Cruz, University of Arizona

Presentation(s): SOVEREIGN HAUNTINGS: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA AND PALESTINE

Karma Nabulsi (2009) used the term "scholasticide" to explain the centrality of the destruction of indigenous education to the Israeli settler colonial project. Brayboy and Chin (2020) coined "territory" to describe a similar process in North America. In this paper, we leverage these related concepts across sites of settler colonialism, while also considering how indigenous people haunt the settler colonial projects that wish to make us ghosts. Reading across sites of settler colonial erasure, we analyze the policies and practices of scholasticide and territory, attending to reverberations and disjunctures across time and space. In the U.S., territory has taken the form of assimilation through boarding schools toward what Col. Richard Pratt called the need to "Kill the Indian in him and save the man." For Palestinians, scholasticide manifests in direct Israeli violence that obliterates entire populations of students and educators, alongside the buildings. But, it is also baked more quietly into the policies that deploy "neutrality curriculum" and "human rights" to attempt to crush all forms of national consciousness. Despite these powerful apparatus of erasure, these indigenous lands remain haunted by the living who cannot be made ghosts. An oral history

project with Palestinian teachers in Lebanon explores their presence as political actors who insist that "knowledge is our strongest weapon". In the U.S. the bodies of Indigenous children have emerged as mar

Presenter(s): Thea Abu El-Haj

Co-author(s): Bryan Brayboy

On the Promise of a Normal Danish Childhood: Integration through Coercive Assimilation

A recurring ghostly trope in Danish nationalist projects is the benevolent offering of opportunities for "normal childhood" through regimes of racial violence that have justified cultural erasure and the removal of children from their families.. Denmark positions itself as a paragon of human rights and equality, projecting a national image of "racial innocence" despite its historical and ongoing participation in regimes of coercive assimilation and racial violence in Greenland, St. John and at home (Wekkler, 2016). In the current context, Muslim families and neighborhoods are positioned as sites of deviance and risk and childhood is framed as a critical time of intervention to address the putative "integration crisis". Deployed in the name of addressing honor-related crimes, these policy mandates are then expanded to include routine aspects of family's everyday lives and perpetuate the racialized surveillance and exclusion of Muslim youth in schools. Drawing on critical policy analysis and ethnographic fieldwork, this paper considers how current Danish integration regimes promise access to a "normal Danish childhood" through processes of coercive assimilation. In doing so, it examines how Danish liberal humanitarianism logics echo earlier hauntings of colonial and racial violence and offers up young people's critiques of their false promises for inclusion.

Presenter(s): Reva Jaffe-Walter

The Return of the Moor: When Morophobia/Islamophobia Goes to Hollywood

When Karla García-Gascón (the Spanish star who in 2025 became the first transgender actor nominated for an Academy Award) published "How many more times will history have to expel the Moors from Spain?" and similar sentiments in a series of tweets spanning the late 2010's and early 2020's, she was invoking *longue durée* specters that have sustained the nationalist racialized affects (Berks and Ramos-Zayas 2015) that belie Maurophobia and Islamophobia in Spain.

While the discursive contours of Maurophobia/Islamophobia in Europe are always shifting (García-Sánchez and Treteault 2024), contemporary Maurophobia/Islamophobia in Spain is constituted at the intersection of two related processes: (1) It participates in the brand of Islamophobia that is an ideological syncretism of the attribution of orientalist "otherness" to Islam (Asad 2003; Said 1978) and the more recent security discourse of the so-called war on terror (e.g. Silverstein 2004; Werbner 2005); and (2) it is socioculturally rooted in the specific historical past of the Spanish context, where Muslim communities thrived during the medieval and early modern periods (López García 2006).

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the controversy that García-Gascón's newly resurfaced tweets provoked focusing on her use of the racial slur "moro/moors" and how Muslim immigrant

communities in Spain are particularly susceptible to being viewed through this ghostly racializing lens.

Presenter(s): Inmaculada García Sánchez

Countering Costa Rican exceptionalism: The Ghosts of Indigenous Land Defenders in Education for Sustainability

In a Costa Rican international school dedicated to peace and sustainability, the country's indigenous past and present haunts efforts to teach and learn about Costa Rica's biodiversity and "sustainable development". Behind the national mythology of Costa Rica as a prosperous and peaceful "Switzerland of Central America", a long-running and bloody conflict over the land rights of the country's Indigenous communities has been largely hidden from public view. In this paper I describe how encounters with a murdered indigenous land defender transformed the experience of Costa Rica for a group of students and myself, challenging myths of Costa Rican exceptionalism and the school's ecotourism approach to the local context. I call these encounters "hauntings," following Yoon and Chen (2022), as multisensorial experiences of (re)visitation, where truths that have been covered up are brought to life, opening space for new ways of being. Drawing on my fieldnotes and interviews with students following a weeklong visit to Brörán indigenous territory, I track moments where embodied learning, heeding hauntings, and bearing witness to loss and struggle disrupted business-as-usual and previous learnings about peace and sustainability in Costa Rica. To witness, for Yoon and Chen, is "to be with ghosts and feel traces of their pain."

Presenter(s): Andrea Dyrness

The Ghost(s) in the Machine: Racialized Haunts and Other Disturbances in Immigration Media Representations

I grew up hearing stories of La Llorona—the legend of a ghost who haunts riverbanks mourning her drowned children. The specter of this weeping woman was meant to compel children like myself into behaving, but it is also a story about loss—about what has been disappeared through colonial violences, and the ghosts that haunt us in its wake. During an era of mass abductions, immigration itself is spectral, its own ghost story.

This paper follows Gloria Anzaldúa as spirit-guide through the haunted terrain of immigration, centering "spirit-thinking" as "an epistemic and ontological project that takes seriously spirits, ghosts, and others" whose presence disturb taken-for-granted realities and render the invisible visible (Sinclair & Newton, 2021, p. 49). Looking at contemporary media representations related to immigration, this paper examines the migrant as a "spectral subject." Exhuming the spirits of immigration's past-present, it traces the socio, legal, and economic conditions surrounding immigration and the ghostly images through which it is being portrayed. Whether referencing "ghost citizens" clandestinely living in the shadows of the nation, "ghost flights" covertly transporting "illegal aliens" across borders, or the alleged "ghost criminals" terrorizing our national home, I

argue that these ghostly discourses not only reflect the nation's imaginary, but also mold, "haunt" even, our national discourse, guiding our policies and practices towards immigrants.

Presenter(s): Anne Rios-Rojas

Discussion

3480 Linguistic Anthropology with an Attitude: Thinking with Alessandro Duranti

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel honors Alessandro Duranti, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at UCLA, whose impact on linguistic anthropology over the last 45 years has been wide and consequential. His approach to pragmatics and politics was visionary, with his work on rethinking context - especially the role of the audience (a.k.a. listeners) in the co-constitution of meaning - presaging broader linguistic anthropological interest in this topic by decades. His phenomenologically-informed analysis of agency, intentionality, and improvisation changed how we understand the links between grammar and social action. Notably, Duranti also helped give the subfield its contemporary form through a stream of influential edited volumes and companions (as well as a critical textbook) alongside his stewardship of the JLA and Oxford book series. He has broadened global engagement with the discipline through his publications in French and Italian, and his generous mentorship, paired with his ability to embrace unconventional and creative perspectives, has shaped multiple generations of scholars. Perhaps just as importantly, Duranti has done "linguistic anthropology with an attitude," that is, with a perceptible vibe that encourages a flexible state of play with respect to "rules" and conventions. This panel, which is composed of Duranti's students and others he has advised, expands upon these key contributions to the discipline and explores the impact of Duranti's intentional feeling or mood of un-convention-ality in developing these contributions.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Keith Murphy , Steven Black, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Justin Richland, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Adrienne Lo, University of Waterloo, Natalie Marshall, University of California, Los Angeles, Steven Black, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology, Jan David Hauck, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Heather Loyd, Keith Murphy

Presentation(s): In a World of Others

In this presentation, I consider the key role that Sandro Duranti has played in shaping the direction of our field, through his work as a scholar, editor, and mentor. I discuss the ways that he has helped to guide us towards a capacious and inclusive vision of ling anth, making room both intellectually and socially. The kind of labor that he engaged in throughout his career was not always of the sort valued by the academy, and yet he showed us how to be both intellectually sharp and generous, tenacious yet not mean. I consider what his legacy means for linguistic anthropology, in light of the

current turbulence in the academy, a time in which what we are supposed to be doing as scholars, what it is we study, and what it means to call oneself a "linguistic anthropologist" are all in flux.

Presenter(s): Adrienne Lo

Projected Futures and Ghostly Subjects: An Analysis of a Nonprofit Storytelling Genre

Alessandro Duranti has practiced a dynamic and lively approach to studying genre – broadly understood in linguistic anthropology as discourse that is associated with a particular context or event – in his work on political speech. In this work, Duranti frames the performance of political speech as an emergent and productive activity, where people not only experiment with generic conventions, but also construct identities and selves, configure stories and worlds, and shape relationships with others. Using this analytical spirit, my talk examines the genre of nonprofit advocacy reports through a textual and autoethnographic discussion of a report written and disseminated by employees of a large food justice nonprofit in Los Angeles. In my analysis, I think closely with Duranti's work on Walter Capps' campaign speeches and Samoan political meetings to delineate the narrative strategies and plot features of the stories told in nonprofit advocacy reports. In doing so, I demonstrate how individual activists and their concerns become ghost-like in the project of creating a compelling, future-oriented master narrative of a social issue or cause within this political storytelling genre.

Presenter(s): Natalie Marshall

Improvisation, Intention, Imagination: How Values Shape (and are Shaped by) Interaction

In this presentation, I outline a theory of how improvisation, intention, and imagination intersect to constitute value systems, providing a novel perspective on the relationship between moment-to-moment encounters and cultural-historical patterns. My analysis links two of Alessandro Duranti's central contributions to anthropology—improvisation and intentionality—with discussions of the role of imagination in the constitution of values. Duranti's conceptualization of intentions emphasizes an aboutness to one's actions that need not be culturally elaborated to be relevant in an interpersonal encounter. Linking this to his research on improvisation, Duranti describes an improvisational impulse that counters routinization and exceeds the scope of intentions.

However, my own experience as a jazz musician suggests a more complex relationship between routinization, improvisation, and intention, especially when improvisers enter into a "flow state." I argue that in improvisation, routinization is often the long-term habituation of an intention which makes creative action possible. I then introduce a third term into this discussion: imagination. In routinization and practice, the imaginative horizon for an intention may be extended far into the future. I suggest that the emplotment of imagined futures provides a bridge between the phenomenal realm of intention-in-interaction and the abstraction of culturally-specific value systems.

Presenter(s): Steven Black

Unexpected Encounters in the Forest: Intentional Modifications of Experience on an Aché Hunting Trek

This paper explores a series of intentional modifications induced by an unexpected encounter in a forest camp of a group of Aché hunter-gatherers in Paraguay. It takes as its starting point the attentional pull of a sudden sound coming from the thicket not too far away, interpreted as harbinger of imminent danger. Women, children, and ethnographer were alone at the camp, all hunters roaming the forest in pursuit of prey. The Aché are not the only hunters in the forest and roles of predator and prey can easily shift, demanding heightened sensory perception. Noticing the sound set in motion a series of actions to avoid the danger it announced, adults and children beginning to climb nearby trees—only to realize a few moments later its real nature: hunters returning to the camp with a special prey. The tense atmosphere was broken by amused smiles, which turned into resounding laughter as someone pointed out that the panicked rush on the trees had been captured on camera by the ethnographer. Drawing on Duranti-inflected concepts from Husserlian phenomenology, I discuss here the progression through ever higher levels of intentional modifications of the unfolding events: from the initial phenomenal modification of the sound, to the camera-induced reflection on the reaction to the sound, to second- and third-order reflections on the entire episode at subsequent watch parties back in the village, allowing everybody to relive the experience over and over again in subsequent weeks.

Presenter(s): Jan David Hauck

In the Middle of Things: Sandro Duranti's Lasting Impact on Linguistic Anthropology and Me

This paper reflects on Sandro Duranti's enduring influence on how I collect and analyze data and my overall being in the world. It highlights how his deep knowledge and practice of film from his Spaghetti Western days pushed me to always be in the middle of things when filming but never in the way. Referencing Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* and his own footage from Samoa & beyond, he taught us with humor and joy the principles of filming & editing and how to make in-the-moment filming decisions, since an anthropologist can never ask participants to "redo a scene." My work with girls in Napoli, Italy has also been deeply influenced by Sandro, especially his focus on connections between agency, power, and verbal art. This paper accordingly examines how Neapolitan girls use verbal and embodied strategies to problem-solve and navigate their social & moral worlds and how audience shapes their performances and co-construction of conflict. Despite high pressures to conform, girls find space for individualism & agency. As verbal artists, they deploy dialect & gestures (demonstrative pronouns, humor, theatricality) to display assertiveness, epistemic certainty & wit. I argue they participate in a 'culture of ambiguity' using metaphors, idioms & innuendo to allude to meanings audiences can 'read' & are therefore adept at both directness & indirectness while maintaining interactional coherence. I ask, - through means of aesthetics, how does performance do social work?

Presenter(s): Heather Loyd

Concepts, Like Shadows on a Wall: On Studying Disinformation

Research on disinformation has exploded over the last decade, driven in large part by a parallel explosion in disinformation's spread and deleterious effects in the social world. The vast majority of this research, while useful, can be characterized by a preoccupation with (an aesthetics of) methodological rigor, on the one hand, and a palpable disinterest in robust conceptual frameworks for interpreting disinformation data on the other. This has led to an ever-proliferating stockpile of highly quantified studies of specific disinformation events, each of which tends to use its own bundle of ad hoc concepts to help make sense of its data. In short, while this new and important field of research provides insight into many kinds and cases of disinformation, it has little to no foundational theory that helps explain its own central object of inquiry. What it's missing, I think, is full engagement with both concepts and attitudes developed within linguistic anthropology, one of the only disciplines that can theoretically account for the wide range of communicative practices and ideologies that underpin almost any kind of disinformation. Drawing primarily from the work of linguistic anthropologist Alessandro Duranti, I'll present in this talk the beginnings of a framework for understanding disinformation as an interactive, improvisational, and—critically—a deeply human phenomenon, all of which Duranti prefigured in his groundbreaking explorations of culture and communication.

Presenter(s): Keith Murphy

3844 Blind Spots: Uncertainty and Alterity in Healing and Medicine (I)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how medicine, like any other social system, is always in flux and continuously grappling with the unknown. This panel is timely, given the increasing hesitancy around vaccine use and public health programs in both the Global North and the Global South. From anti-vaxxers in the US to patients resisting polio vaccines in countries like Pakistan and Nigeria, global health programs continue to grapple with issues of trust. In this context, we propose this panel to bring traditional anthropological concerns around efficacy and healing to the forefront, enriching our understanding of why people do or do not trust medicine.

In this panel, we bring together presentations to juxtapose uncertainty in the use of new medical technologies, such as artificial intelligence, prosthetics, precision medicine, and telemedicine, with uncertainties in traditional spaces of healing. We argue that by acknowledging blind spots in modern medicine, we can approach medical discoveries from a humbler vantage point, helping to dismantle rigid binaries between "science" and "superstition" as well as between "rationality" and "irrationality." By considering blind spots in a range of medical institutions and spaces, as well as indigenous healing practices, we argue that the contemporary medical landscape would benefit from more, not less, epistemic uncertainty. This panel attempts to diagnose the temptation to view medical discoveries as magic-bullet solutions and the projection of these inventions as complete and perfect, especially as media, start-up companies, and venture capitalists inflate solutions to conjure new expectations and raise capital.

The panel features ethnographic studies in clinical spaces to think about how imperfections, contingency, and unpredictability define clinical research as much as healing practices in a wide range of cultures. Instead of viewing this comparison as an attempt to discredit scientific practice, the comparisons can further help us understand the dynamic nature of social life and the ways in which it influences medical practices. By bringing together our interests in medical anthropology, religious studies, psychoanalysis, and kinship, this panel will explore how we as humans are continuously in the process of sublimating and displacing our feelings, and therefore the relationship between the self and the other becomes central to any inquiry into the complexities of healing and recovery -- whether this includes relations, drugs, or diagnostic media.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Sanaullah Khan, The University of Akron, Department of Anthropology, Muhammad Osama Imran

Chair: Muhammad Osama Imran

Presenter(s): Dara Bramson, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Utpal Sandesara, Sanaullah Khan, The University of Akron, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Murphy Halliburton, CUNY - Queens College, Karen-Sue Taussig, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Braiding Knowledges: Ethnographic Case Studies of Tibetan Medicine in Exile

In the past decade, Robin Wall Kimmerer popularized the notion of "braiding" in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Her work has become increasingly relevant in the context of environmental stewardship and offers important applications to cross-cultural integrative medicine. Considering the distinction between the process that Mi'kmaq peoples call "two-eyed seeing" and the method of "braiding knowledges", this paper engages these concepts in the clinic based on research conducted on Tibetan medicine in exile in North India. This exploration aims to illuminate the tangible practices, successes, and challenges of the braided methodology. What are the ways in which indigenous knowledges (IK) and western science (WS) can unite and coexist as different but equal knowledge systems in response to an increasingly global healthcare landscape?

Presenter(s): Dara Bramson

Hepatic Hesitations: Cirrhosis as a Lens on Biomedical and Bodily Uncertainties

Every heart, lung, or kidney fails in a more or less similar way; every liver failure is its own unique disaster. Such are the uncertainties of cirrhosis, the process in which long-term liver inflammation leads to irreversible scarring, which in turn leads to complications like confusion, muscle wasting, fluid accumulation, and catastrophic bleeding. The chronically diseased liver may be especially "good to think with," as it melts common biomedical dichotomies of acuteness and chronicity, stability and deterioration, mind and body, even science and craft – yet it has received short shrift in the anthropological literature (see Rehsmann 2022). Drawing on clinic- and home-based ethnography in the urban U.S. among low-income patients suffering from cirrhosis and the family

members who care for them, we ask: How do biomedical practitioners bend and manage expectations amidst the unknowability of cirrhosis? How do social vulnerability, disjointed medical communication, and the irreducible waywardness of the cirrhotic liver converge? Liver failure, we argue, offers a limit case for understanding biomedicine's capacity to predict, tame, and definitively narrate the body.

Presenter(s): Utpal Sandesara

Co-author(s): Ramón Casillas-Salazar

Ghostly Technology: Spirits in the Age of AI and Precision Medicine

Biopharmaceutical companies are under pressure to enter new drug markets to ensure profitability. They often turn otherwise "normal" life transitions into opportunities to create new markets. However, the competitive space can result in direct losses if they are not the first entrant. In this financially vulnerable position, compounded by delays in drug market introductions and challenging lawsuits, their survival hinges on the creation of new drugs. More importantly, they rely on the "orphan" status of drugs to generate profits despite structural vulnerabilities, often selling them at exorbitant prices. This practice frequently leads to significantly increased prices for generic drugs, making treatment extremely expensive for those suffering from rare chronic conditions. Using a range of sources, this presentation explores how biopharmaceutical companies target rare conditions with narrow windows of opportunity but high profit potential in the age of precision medicine and AI, resulting in higher costs of care for patients due to the development of specialty drugs for generics. Using blindspots in medical research as "spirits" frustrating the certainties of biopharmaceutical promise and by relying upon previous ethnographic research among healers in Pakistan, I highlight the "unknown" that medical companies continue to grapple with and are unable to overcome, as they make a case for producing drugs that perfect and prolong human life.

Presenter(s): Sanaullah Khan

Discussion

7165 The Haunting Ghosts: Unspoken Voices and Unseen Existence

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This interdisciplinary panel traces the spectral presence of marginalized identities in educational institutions and beyond—those whose voices are unspoken, whose existence remains unseen, yet whose impact is undeniable. Engaging with the metaphor of the "ghost," panelists examine the haunting silences, erasures, and acts of self-censorship that shape gender and sexual subjectivities across global and local contexts. Through a focus on queer and trans experiences in and across educational systems, this panel also confronts the ghosts that linger in institutions meant to foster growth. We consider the haunting impacts of anti-DEI, anti-queer, and anti-trans policies on international students navigating U.S. academia, where visibility can come with

precarity. We explore the spectral presence of shame and silence in sex education, particularly through the narratives of female teachers in Lahore, Pakistan, whose voices are shaped by colonial legacies and cultural taboos. Another thread follows the embodied migrations and transformations of transmasculine individuals moving from Florida to New York City, tracing how legislation, geography, and belonging are haunted by systemic erasure. Across these stories, we ask how queer and trans futures might be imagined in spite of-through-the ghosts that shadow the everyday.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Max Yakubovskiy, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub

Chair: Akira Sawata, University of Minnesota

Presenter(s): Akira Sawata, University of Minnesota, Farah Basit, Hunter Dodrill, Max Yakubovskiy, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub

Discussant: Farah Basit , Hunter Dodrill

Presentation(s): Anti-DEI/Anti-Queer/Anti-Trans Impacts on (Higher) Education

In the chaos full of political violence, people lament the excessive political interference, resulting in (self-)censorship, curriculum-banning, and dismantlement of minority resource centers, as something "surreal" (yes, it is "real"). There seems to be an eerily familiar spatiotemporal diagnosis when people ask, "Is this really 2025?" or "Is this really the United States of America?" The anti-DEI movement in 2025 of the U.S. "brings us back" to the divergent space-time(s) where/when many of us have not actually experienced yet have known the certainty of the threats, such as the Red (Lavender) Scare in 1950s of the US, the exile of scientists, scholars, and targeted minorities in 1930s-40s of Germany, and more. This presentation shares a couple of concepts (hope/less, future-making, and ghost [haunting]) to encourage researchers to investigate the current anti-Queer/Trans movements and policies in a broader spatiotemporal framework, which can serve as an analytic strategy to avoid giving more power than the current administration/government actually has.

Presenter(s): Akira Sawata

Sex, schools and Shame: exploring the experiences and narratives around sex education of female teachers in schools in Lahore, Pakistan

In Pakistan, the female body is more than a biological entity—it is a vessel haunted by centuries of cultural expectation, seen as the bearer of family honor and the locus of potential shame. The silence surrounding sexual and reproductive health education is not neutral; it is enforced by the spectral weight of taboo, fear, and moral policing. These ghosts—of propriety, of communal judgment, of imagined dishonor—linger in classrooms, homes, and policy rooms alike. With few safe spaces or trusted adults available, young girls are left to navigate curiosity, confusion, and danger alone—further fueling gender inequity and violence. School-based sex education holds the potential to exorcise some of these hauntings, yet its presence in Pakistan remains minimal and fraught. This study explores the shadowed landscape of sex education in Pakistan through interviews with teachers, illuminating both formal and hidden curricula. In doing so, it seeks to

understand how we might better support young women in reclaiming their right to knowledge about their own bodies—despite the cultural phantoms that try to keep them silent.

Presenter(s): Farah Basit

Chasing Queer/Trans Futures: Exploring Transmasculine Transitions & Migrations from Florida to NYC

Urban city centers have long been positioned as the 'destination' for rural Queer individuals. This is rooted in the idea that Queer and transgender individuals move to cities in order to 'come out' and assume a better life by doing so, with everything to gain and nothing to lose in the process. Through ethnographic content analysis, interviews, and participatory audio-visual work, this work explores the dual transition and migration processes for transmasculine individuals who migrated from Florida to New York City. In conversation with scholars on topics including Queer/trans metronormativity, temporality, Florida's suburban expanse, and the embodied experience of a gender-affirming transition, I complicate the rural/urban divide in current literature. Asking questions about spatial and embodied senses of loss concerning identity and 'home-ness', this presentation highlights the hauntings of intra-national migration and gender transition amid increasingly restrictive legislation against Queer and transgender individuals in the United States.

Presenter(s): Hunter Dodrill

Haunting Past (and Present) that Affects Queer* International Students in the U.S. University

Upon arrival to the United States, queer* international students have to understand, address, and adapt to new cultural and social norms, including such intersecting categories of race, gender, and sexuality, among others, while constantly thinking of the ghosts of the past that haunt them. In this environment, these students experience the dynamics of processually becoming and doing identities. Through interviews with 24 queer* international students from a public university in the Midwest, this paper, employing an intersectional lens, examines how international queer* students navigate their sexual and gender identities in the cultural context of U.S. higher education institutions. The findings indicate the complexity of balancing queer* and ethnic/cultural identities, address the nuanced concept of "outness," and consider how queer* international students' experiences can help to decolonize queerness*.

Presenter(s): Max Yakubovskiy

Discussion

Discussion

4547 Paranormal Data: Empiricism and Ethnographies of the Unknown and Unknowable

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology is well-suited for the study of the paranormal, rooted in classic anthropological studies of how people perceive and experience phenomena that fall both within and outside of organized religious belief, including witchcraft, magic, spirits, monsters, and other nonempirical beings. Paranormal or "nonempirical" beings, phenomena, or experiences often elude scientific evidentiary procedures, challenging the epistemological and even ontological basis for our scientific approach to the natural and human world. Anthropology does not discount the individual's phenomenological experience, even if our ethnographic "evidence" may be at odds with what Martin Holbraad described as the "alterity" of our data. Rather, our anthropological currency is the human experience, for even if the paranormal is ultimately uncapturable by contemporary scientific methods, people's experiences with the paranormal—the spectral visit, the prophetic vision, the UFO sighting, the Bigfoot chase—render the paranormal ethnographically capturable.

This panel interrogates the ways in which people discuss and experience the paranormal in contemporary societies in an era of globalized digital landscapes and of ever-expanding religious/spiritual pluralism. We are also living through a time in which political actions are often undertaken by favoring conspiracy theories and "fake news," some of which draw on theories of the paranormal. Our panelists explore a wide range of related topics, including how the sacred aspects of Egyptian belly dancing might be diluted or lost in the U.S. context; how certain Buddhist concepts, in particular the Tibetan tulpa, are represented in Western media and internet subcultures; how Chinese animal rights activists might wield or invent ideas about supernatural beliefs that are purported to exist among rural populations or minority ethnic groups; how students express and reflect on their own uncanny experiences in an anthropology course on monsters and other nonempirical beings; and how biomedical and science-based approaches to understanding death and the afterlife might discount the experiences of patients and caregivers. We query the very contours of empiricism as anthropologists exploring both the evidence of ethnography and the evidentiary practices to attempt to prove the existence of or validate others' experiences of the paranormal.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Organizer: Cassandra White, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology, Timothy Gitzen, Wake Forest University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Cassandra White, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Suzanne Barber, Kanan Mehta, Margaret Morley, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Sara Conrad, Cassandra White, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Timothy Gitzen, Wake Forest University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Creation of the Supernatural Other and the Modernization of the Chinese Animal Protection Movement

China is currently the second largest pet market after the U.S. Yet it is a cultural trend rife with contradictory data, shifting supernatural beliefs, and conspiratorial narratives that demonstrate the

potent political nature of the nonhuman and the role the growing animal protection movement has in both promoting and challenging these beliefs. The very argument that keeping pets in China remained illegal until the 1990s, often repeated by animal protection activists and scholars alike has since been proven to be a false narrative, created by a British citizen, likely as a form of anti-communist propaganda. Yet it remains a useful narrative to separate modern pet keepers from a partially fictionalized problematic past. This paper examines how activists work to expose and in turn fix what they see as the gap between the self-declaration of humanness and the lack of humaneness within modern Chinese society. But even while humanity is based on an erasure of the human/nonhuman binary, the movement inadvertently holds up and sometimes strengthens the separation of themselves from other citizens, often based upon and supported by separating their own beliefs from the supernatural and assumed false and old-fashioned beliefs of the rural and ethnic Other. In many cases, the existence of these reported supernatural beliefs that activists use to demonstrate the backwardness and lack of humanity of these marked Others, lack evidence beyond rumors, the very type of data they critique.

Presenter(s): Suzanne Barber

Grief, Ghosts, and Remembrance

I was watching TV. I remember admiring the scene on screen. For some reason, only the living room lights were on. Every other light was off. It was dark around me which is unusual because I do not like darkness. The sky was emboldened in hues of deep violet and gray like the waves of the ocean when they converge.

I heard the familiar sound of her walker. I looked to my right in disbelief as a dim light poured in from the right. I looked towards her room. There was no one there. I got up and walked towards the light. She was standing there. Her fragile frame towering over the walker. Her stature shriveled with illness and age, but her gaze confident and proud, just how I remembered her.

Me: Do you still have pain?

Mama: Yes

Me: Has it not healed yet?

Mama: No.

I looked outside. The sky had disappeared. Was this a visitation or was it my own trauma?

When my mother passed, I looked towards anthropology as a long-standing companion to find answers. In doing so, I have wondered where do culture, dying and the "afterlife" intersect with pain, loss, and legacy? This narrative is an attempt to present these intersections and share lived experiences of illness and caregiving in social and institutional domains. In addition, it is a commentary and an autoethnographic account of how societal and medicalized perceptions of aging define, and deny patient experiences and autonomy in biomedical ethics and practice.

Presenter(s): Kanan Mehta

Phenomenologies of Communitas in Egyptian Belly Dance

The musically-induced ecstasy of tarab is an Arab cultural iteration of *communitas* (Turner 1969). This paper will explore approaches to understanding ecstatic physical experiences of community through tarab in Egyptian belly dance, remaining attentive to different sensory registers, prioritizing vibrational senses like sound and affect over the visual. In contrast, belly dance in the US is often taught with a focus on how the body looks from the outside and on disciplined control of muscles in isolation, influenced by our prevailing scientific culture. I speculate that this visual approach hinders dancers' ability to connect with others, both human and non. The sacred and paranormal are often key parts of generating the experience of *communitas* in rituals, and although the stigmatized status of belly dancing as a profession would cause many to scoff at the idea, Egyptian dancers have spoken about tarab as sacred. I will combine embodied autoethnography - discussing my own experiences of tarab - and phenomenological interviews with foreign and Egyptian dancers working in Cairo about how tarab feels in their bodies, seeking to understand how energetic connections with paranormal and human others register in the body.

Presenter(s): Margaret Morley

The Tibetan Tulpa and Western Paranormal Media

This paper examines the Western interpretation of the Tibetan tulpa, a Buddhist thought-form created through spiritual practice, through a comparative analysis of television shows *The X-Files* and *Supernatural*. Alexandra David-Néel first wrote about the Tibetan tulpa in English and encouraged her fellow followers of Theosophy to create a tulpa as a way to gain supernatural powers. This paper also examines the spread of tulpa discourse into digital subcultures, including BRONY fandoms, shedding light on how spiritual concepts are hybridized in contemporary Western imagination. Within internet subcultures such as adult My Little Pony fans, "Tulpamancers" report to employ lucid dreaming and meditation to form deep emotional and psychological connections with tulpas modeled after characters from the show (Veissière 2016). By examining the popularity of Buddhism in everyday cultural life we see how Buddhist elements are consumed and indeed desired in modern - Western imagery. Drawing on Tibetan textual sources and Lopez's (1994) framework of New Age Orientalism, this paper explores the perpetuation of a romanticized "mystic Tibet."

Presenter(s): Sara Conrad

Teaching the Paranormal, Learning from Students

The paranormal is "good to think with," to quote Claude Lévi-Strauss as he attempted to explain why certain totem animals might be chosen over others. The paranormal is also a topic that is good to teach with, as it is generally compelling for university students. How does teaching the paranormal differ from teaching a more traditional "Anthropology of Religion" course. The latter may take a more etic and/or scientific approach to attempting to identify the structure and functions of organized religion in different societies. In this paper, I discuss approaches to teaching different iterations of an anthropology course currently called, "Monsters, Magical Creatures, and other Nonempirical

Beings," at Georgia State University. Through teaching this course, I have explored different ways of talking about and teaching about perception and religious and spiritual experience. Student narratives of nonempirical experiences tell us much about their relationship to and understanding of the paranormal and how approaching these experiences with a consideration of "the reality of spirits" (taken from the title of an essay by anthropologist Edith Turner about being open to nonempirical possibilities). This course has also provided an opportunity to discuss critical thinking, the possibilities and limits of science to explore the paranormal, and the representation of the scientific approach in "paranormal investigations."

Presenter(s): Cassandra White

Discussion

1872 Black Queer Hauntings

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology is haunted. From its perpetuation of sexual conquest and other modes of colonial violence to its ongoing debates about the repatriation of human remains and cultural artefacts, the discipline has found itself in a moment of reckoning with its ethical foundations. In doing so, however, some anthropologists have subconsciously (and, at times, intentionally) used this fraught history to silence the study of autonomous, consensual practices in sexual relation and identification. This spectral presence—a fear of engaging with human sexuality beyond histories of injury, violence, and abjection—has limited the potential of what the discipline can do in concert with the peoples most impacted by its legacy.

Despite these limitations, Black scholars have used ethnography as a way to speak earnestly about sexuality, embracing the liberatory potential of sex—as act, performance, embodiment—in their theorizations of Black life across the diaspora. This panel finds articulation in the works of Black queer and feminist ethnographers who take sexuality seriously as part of our collective liberation praxis (Wekker 2006; Williams 2013). Engaging with monstrous performance, afro-diasporic cosmologies, art worldings, and political ecologies, the panel continues opening space within Anthropology for critical discussions about racialized genders and sexualities. In pushing the ethical boundaries of Anthropology, the panel proposes an undisciplining that might lead to more generous interpretations of Black queer research within and without the academe.

In dialogue with Black queer anthropologists across the diaspora, this panel considers Black queer hauntings in two registers: 1) the ghosts that haunt us; and 2) the ghosts we become in response to Empire. The papers in this panel coalesce around the following questions: How do Black queer communities grapple with the spectres of colonialism to envision more equitable worlds? What forms of "good haunting" might lead to the realization of these worlds? In what ways do dark ecologies engender forms of relation, play, and other liberatory practices previously foreclosed under Western humanism? Focusing on Brazil, Colombia, and the United States, the panelists lean

into the multifaceted nature of haunting to envision how Black communities mobilize ghosts—of people, entities, places, and times beyond our current moment—to materialize worlds rooted in afro-diasporic ways of knowing, being, and living.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Joshua Reason

Chair: Joshua Reason

Presenter(s): Kyera Sterling, Watufani Poe, Amber M. Henry, Harvard University, Joshua Reason

Presentation(s): Sexuated Entropies: Black Chthonic Cosmologies in Ganja & Hess

In a restaged black Eden, a sensuous black femme drinks from the ground. Her voracious appetency is a corollary of her metaphysical transformation, a vampiric modulation of black abjection. Her hunger and her willingness to satiate it differentiates her from her husbands -- both of whom cede their beings to cosmological haunts which subsume them. This is Ganja & Hess, Bill Gunn's 1973 art-house vampire film which stages zones of cosmological drama in what Celio Cooper calls the "postlapsarian" cosmological schema of Blackness as fallen, diabolical, and uncontainable. I use this black chthonic cartography to track the vertical alignments of the film's protagonists: Dr. Hess Green, George Meda, and Ganja. Through the erotics of bloodlust, possession and unrepentant hedonism, the film imagines abjection as not merely that which haunts black being, but that which enables it. Ganja's hunger -- insatiable, decadent, and sovereign -- queers the politics of survival by choosing, rather than inheriting, metaphysical alterity. While Hess retreats into Christian martyrdom and Meda enacts an ontological refusal-through-suicide, Ganja remains: erotic, undead, and reborn. Her final gaze, fixed on the man she's killed and resurrected, signals a sovereign futurity grounded not in redemption but in hauntological self-possession. This paper considers Ganja & Hess as a speculative anatomy of queer Black haunting, one in which sex, death, and refusal generate cosmological insurgency.

Presenter(s): Kyera Sterling

Representatividade: The Body Politics of Federal Brazilian Federal Representative Erika Hilton

In 2025, the Rio de Janeiro-based samba school Paraíso do Tuiuti made Xica Manicongo their theme for the yearly Carnaval competition between samba schools. Manicongo was a Black gender variant subject from the Kingdom of the Congo who was enslaved in Bahia, Brazil, and denounced in Portuguese inquisition documents from 1591 for dressing outside of European gender norms. Contemporary activists and artists have resignified Manicongo's archival presence as an early proof of African-rooted trans identity in Brazil. Erika Hilton, Brazil's first Black trans federal representative from São Paulo state, was invited to headline the Paraíso do Tuiuti's homage to Xica Manicongo. In the opening to the school's performance, Hilton lamented the violent execution and burning of Manicongo's body by the inquisition and insisted that this kind of violence continues to haunt trans people throughout Brazil. But she boldly affirms that her presence as a federal representative is to prevent that history from repeating itself. Analyzing this bold moment in conjunction with Hilton's political projects as a representative, as well as her political speeches, I argue that Hilton mobilizes

a representatividade through a bold body politic which connects her fate to all other trans people and women throughout Brazil.

Presenter(s): Watufani Poe

La Mojana: Black Queer Hauntings in the Maroon Community of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia

How might spectral figures queer time in ways that challenge both binary notions of gender and linear notions of time? This explores black queer hauntings in the maroon community of San Basilio de Palenque in the Caribbean region of Colombia. It focuses on the mojana—a spirit that lives by the river and represents the underworld. A distinguishing feature of the mojana is that she appears with feet backwards, and can take on the appearance of a male or female, child or adult, human or adult in order to lure the living into the land of the dead and the spirits. In addition to this queer presentation, the mojana represents a queering of time in that her existence is atemporal. Her ability to intervene in past, present and future inaugurates the new temporality, or at least a different temporal logic. The connection with queerness is further evidenced in the notion that the mojana avoids the use of salt in her food, and can even be warded off by throwing salt. This is connected to queerness in that the colloquial term for queer men in palenque is "le falta sal," or "he is missing salt," thus bridging the absence of salt and queerness in this maroon community. By analyzing the mojana, this paper considers the importance of the spectral as a sovereign space of Black life for ancestral communities, and asks what forms of "good haunting" sustains, protects, and helps realize these worlds?

Presenter(s): Amber M. Henry

Archival Pleasures: Race, Region, and the Pornographic Imagination in Brazil

"Is desire enough to propel a body across slave lines?"

By positioning our desire for freedom as/like our desire(s) for pleasure, intimacy, companionship, scholars Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie Johnson (2014) widen the scope of archival research to attend to erotic lives previously thought insignificant or impossible in the context of chattel slavery. This paper extends their archival reading practice to Acervo Bajubá—a LGBTQ+ community archive in São Paulo, Brazil with a selection of pornographic films claiming to feature Black and/or Indigenous men. Drawing upon pornotopes that render Black : Indigenous flesh as primordial, exotic, and ripe for consumption, these materials sit at the nexus of colonial haunting and pleasurable possibility. In response to this tantalizing contradiction, I worked with Ediyporn—an experimental porn collective based in São Paulo—to write, direct, and star in a film that refracts the violent histories indexed by these materials. Titled "Acervos de Prazer" (Archives of Pleasure), the film places me—as Black queer diasporic subject and researcher—in erotic relation to the pornographic imagination that haunts this archive. In conversation with Black queer anthropologists and Black porn feminists, this paper pushes the limits of anthropological ethics to consider what consensual, mutual pleasures might be possible in diaspora.

Presenter(s): Joshua Reason

1886 Anthropologists Writing Trade Books

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropologists have long been writing for audiences beyond academia, engaging with issues of interest to the broader public. In the past few years, however, there's been a notable shift in this direction: more anthropologists have pivoted from scholarly to trade publishing. This roundtable will explore the opportunities as well as challenges and misconceptions that accompany this shift by discussing the following questions: How do the conventions of trade writing differ from academic writing? What compromises are needed (if any) to make anthropological insights accessible to non-specialists? How can anthropologists balance intellectual rigor with narrative appeal? Participants in this roundtable - five anthropologists who have recently published trade books, one literary agent, and one editor - will reflect on their experiences navigating the trade publishing world, including developing book proposals, working with literary agents, and engaging with editors and publicists. The roundtable will also address the reception of these books both outside and inside academia and their potential impact on scholarly careers. We invite anthropologists of all career stages who are interested in writing trade books to join us in this conversation about how we can write narrative, literary nonfiction that appeals to broader audiences while maintaining the discipline's core values.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Ieva Jusionyte, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Angela Garcia, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jason De Leon, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, Laurence Ralph, Princeton University, Ieva Jusionyte, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Margo Beth Fleming

Discussant: Kate Marshall, University of California Press

2660 After Liberalism: Rethinking the Anthropological Stakes

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology has long been skeptical of political liberalism, documenting its structural violences and inequities while questioning its claims to universality. Once assumed to be the default framework for democracy and tolerance, liberalism is now increasingly seen as embattled, inadequate, or complicit in its own unraveling. Critique of liberalism has moved beyond theory to take on urgent political stakes amid the global rise of far-right populism and authoritarian rule. How should anthropology respond?

This panel addresses two interrelated concerns. First, we invite reflections on how marginal or (pre)modern religious traditions offer alternative modes of relation that subvert dominant liberal ideas of coexistence. Often sidelined within liberal discourse, such traditions have their own

genealogies of negotiation, accommodation, and dissent. We aim to trace how these practices have been marginalized and what their re-emergence reveals about the current political moment. What relational possibilities do they suggest, and how do they challenge both liberal universalism and exclusionary illiberalism? At the same time, what are the politics of framing these traditions as "alternatives"? Rather than proposing a new totalizing vision, we ask how they might plant "seeds" of disruption, illuminate liberalism's internal fractures, or unsettle binary logics. How do we avoid reifying liberalism as the dominant horizon of critique, especially when it is itself in crisis?

Second, we consider the utility and risk of anthropological critique in a moment of democratic backsliding. Anthropology has long revealed liberalism's exclusions—its constraints on alterity, its racialized structures of participation, and its entanglement with imperial projects. Yet as liberalism faces existential threats from the far right, what does it mean to critique it now? Does anthropological critique help to imagine more inclusive alternatives, or does it risk undermining values of pluralism, deliberation, and coexistence at a vulnerable moment?

This panel gathers papers that examine liberalism's failures and afterlives, alongside visions for pluralism and democratic life beyond its framework. We particularly welcome contributions that reassess liberalism's claim to tolerance in light of other political traditions, historical modes of accommodation, and emergent grassroots movements. Together, we ask what is at stake—ethically, analytically, and politically—in the contemporary crisis of liberalism.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Erica Weiss, Brown University, Giulia Liberatore, University of Edinburgh

Chair: Ammara Maqsood, University College London, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sami Everett, Ammara Maqsood, University College London, Department of Anthropology, Giulia Liberatore, University of Edinburgh, Charis Boutieri, King's College London, Lilith Mahmud, University of California, Irvine, Erica Weiss, Brown University

Discussant: Kimberly Arkin, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Chili and Garlic Solidarity: Mediterranean Masculine Sociability Beyond Liberal Coexistence

This paper explores the vibrant, sensuous solidarities that emerge in the everyday food-making, football-fandom, and friend-forming practices of working-class men in peripheral Marseille. These forms of intercommunal interaction—mechanical, magical, traditionalist, and affectively charged—are neither liberal nor reactionary. They are not animated by panic over civic breakdown or the fantasy of reconciliation, but by the slow and spicy life-work of shared space, memory, and respect. Through male friendships forged around cooking, language, banter, and sport (kick/boxing, weightlifting), I explore how Jewish and Muslim Mediterranean social forms are neither obstacles to, nor vehicles of, coexistence—but social facts negotiated through routine, rhythm, and ritual. Rather than offering a liberal scene of recognition, these relations embody an alternative form of *solidarité*—one stewed in chili, garlic and inherited gestures, grounded in the pleasure and pressure of doing things together. This case both departs from Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis, which imagines solidarity as the product of thin exposure, and troubles Nissim Mizrachi's claim that

"Arab-Jew" is an exhausted theoretical site. Instead, these entangled/convivial practices refuse liberalism's terms while offering something more textured and durable in its place. Attuned to the peripheral/affective, this paper insists on the beauty and political stakes of relations that do not aspire to be liberal at all.

Presenter(s): Sami Everett

The 'traces' of something else: reflections on Hindu-Muslim modes of relating and recognition in urban Pakistan

This paper centers on Hindu-Muslim relations and interactions in Pakistan, drawing attention to 'traces' (Napolitano 2015) of modes of relating and recognition that run counter to the dominant. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Karachi on the everyday lives and experiences of young Hindu men and women who have recently migrated to the city from smaller towns and villages in Sindh, the paper illustrates how relations between Hindus and Muslims remember, embody and enact the communal politics and violence of partition and, in many ways, are emblematic of the boundary-making (often around religion and ethnic difference) inherent in the formation of nation states in South Asia. At the same time, the paper notes moments of rupture in these modes of relating, a brief appearance or a 'trace' of an alternative kind of relationship or recognition of the other. Through examples from different domains; fleeting friendships between Hindus and Muslims, the acceptance and acknowledgement of difference in failed (and successful) inter-religious romances, and the entanglement of Muslim saints in Hindu kinship and familial tensions and obligations; the paper offers glimpses into forms of relating that run counter to the logics of the majoritarian nation state, and can neither be classed as liberal or non-liberal.

Presenter(s): Ammara Maqsood

A Hagio-Ethnography from Palermo, Sicily

In southern Italy saints play a central role in contemporary public life. They are not only at the centre of practices and rituals of devotion, folklore and tradition, but they also significantly animate contemporary debates around urban transformations, from emigration and migration, to economic precarity and social marginality to depopulation and urban decline. This presentation draws on some of the preliminary ideas underpinning a hagio-ethnography that I have recently started to co-write with anthropologist Eugenio Giorgianni (Università di Messina). Our experimental text weaves the lives of four popular saints in Palermo, Sicily (Saint Rosalia, Saint Joseph, Our Lady of Sorrows and Saint Francis) with ethnographic material collected over the last decade on encounters with difference, including differences in social class, gender, generation, religion and racialization. We suggest that these encounters with and through Saints offer a privileged place from which to unsettle hegemonic ideas about 'Europe' while proposing alternative modes of inhabiting urban spaces and relating with others that are often marginalized and do not sit well within secular and liberal frameworks, nor within liberal and/or Catholic social and political imaginaries of the Mediterranean.

Presenter(s): Giulia Liberatore

The fragility of theoretical critique and the power of ethnographic distinction: Reflections on liberalism and democracy in post-revolutionary Tunisia

This paper reflects on how I have grappled with liberal democratic governance and social engineering in post-revolutionary Tunisia since 2013. My work, centered on multiple public spheres emerging after the revolution, critiques liberal stagings of democracy for foreclosing its revolutionary potential. I locate that potential in grassroots imaginaries of radical redistribution and the subversion of social hierarchy, including in kinship. Rooted in public deliberations and a historical analysis of liberalism's ties to colonial, nationalist, and neoliberal agendas, my argument treats democracy not as a political system but as a social theory grounded in the ongoing negotiation of legitimacy—aligning it more closely with revolution than with Enlightenment liberalism.

This framing is politically fraught in light of its appropriation by Tunisia's elected-turned-authoritarian president, Kais Saied. In response, I draw on recent conversations with interlocutors—revolutionaries turned civic trainers turned voters. Our joint analysis helps me clarify the important distinction between the non-liberal and the illiberal: the former is the genuine multi-faceted and multi-lingual grassroots imagination and practice of democracy untethered to liberal norms - an overture to recalibrating democratic theory - while the latter is the strategic and reductive culling of the former to serve modes of governance that are xenophobic and authoritarian.

Presenter(s): Charis Boutieri

Liberalism Won't Save Us: Lessons from the Anthropology of the Right

As far-right parties have achieved staggering victories across the globe in recent years, academic interest in fascism has intensified. A growing body of anthropological literature on conservative movements has demonstrated the unique contributions ethnography can offer to scholarly understandings of the Right. Studying the everyday lives of a wide range of differently positioned conservatives—from populists and neo-fascists to (para)military, religious, or "anti-gender" groups—anthropologists have made sense of their interlocutors' illiberal and sometimes "repugnant" worldviews. In the process, however, they have also tested the limits of anthropological ethics and methods.

Drawing from the author's research and the broader subfield, this paper argues that the anthropology of the Right can make visible not only the everyday social realities that animate racist, sexist, or transphobic ideologies, but also the pernicious assumptions about agency, gender, race, and the human that implicate anthropology itself. Anthropology's core liberal foundations have too often hindered, rather than strengthened, our discipline's capacity for grounded critique, especially of far-right movements. Through an exploration of alternative models of ethnographically based theories and practices of resistance, this paper therefore attempts to re-imagine anthropology as an illiberal and antifascist project capable of facing the challenges of the present.

Presenter(s): Lilith Mahmud

Tolerance Without Redemption: Ethnographic Notes from a Shattered Public

This paper shows how Palestinian and Jewish residents in Ramla cultivate local minor practices of tolerance: relational, contingent, and practical modes of living with difference that resist the individualizing and depoliticizing logics of mainstream Israeli liberal discourse. These practices provide a crucial rebuttal to the weak and neoliberal models of coexistence promoted by Israel's left and its international allies, which often aestheticize difference while hollowing out political solidarity.

Yet the decision to foreground tolerance at this moment—when Israeli democratic institutions are being systematically dismantled, when Gaza is under relentless assault, and when public discourse has reached new heights of violence—demands critical reflection. Can highlighting these minor, situated modes of shared life appear as naïve or evasive in the face of collapse and catastrophe? This paper argues that while such practices do not offer redemption or resolution, they nevertheless create conceptual and political space by showing that the capacity to live with difference has never been the sole province of liberalism. In doing so, they reframe the anthropological study of tolerance not as a search for norms or ideals, but as an inquiry into the social and moral conditions that enable or undermine living together with difference—especially when tolerance is not a given.

Presenter(s): Erica Weiss

Discussion

3573 [b]...[/b]Rising Specters of the Right[b]...[/b]

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Rising specters of authoritarian or illiberal political movements are growing in force across the world. Rightwing movements are rearing up to take state power: LePenism in France; the neofascist AfD Party in Germany, and movements in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Many of these apparitions have already shaped-shifted into regimes taking state power. Their supporters are drawn from groups in neoliberalized and economically straitened landscapes, drawn together by shared rage inculcated by the toxic stew of digital social media, and egged on by demagogues in alliance with wealthy elites.

The Trumpist MAGA movement in the US; the Hindutva fundamentalist movement and Islamophobic BJP rule in India; the "illiberal democracy" of Orbán in Hungary; the Duterte regime in the Philippines with its military rule, massive killings of drug users and press suppressions; the authoritarian populism of Bukele in El Salvador – these are only the best known of the apparitions that have now "taken on flesh" to capture the apparatuses of liberal democratic states.

This roundtable resists the intellectual reduction of these contemporary movements/ regimes to the "classical" fascisms of the German and Italian interwar varieties. Instead, taking account of

issues of gender, class, sexuality and race, the roundtable considers their distinctive ghostly histories and trajectories in situ in Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, India, and Latin America. The hope is that a diagnostics grounded in the materiality of these formations' ghostly histories will provide critical anthropologists with the theory and impetus to praxis to resist their rise, consolidation, and recourse to extreme violence.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Don Nonini, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alpa Shah, London School of Economics, Don Kalb, University of Bergen, Department of Social Anthropology, Julio Gutierrez, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Jeff Maskovsky, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Giacomo Loperfido, Jayaseelan Raj

Discussant: Don Nonini, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Ida Susser, CUNY, Hunter College, Department of Anthropology

2409 Encountering the Occult

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Occult, from the Latin, hide, conceal, secrete, but also "cover over"; What is occulted from view is unseen, yet there. This concept takes on particular significance in 2025, for what is revealed (to the press, the public, and our consciousness) often obfuscates another reality that drives and determines manifestations at every magnitude: personal, social, political. What assumptions weave invisible threads across dimensions and communities under the scrim of awareness? Does the oneiric realm extend further than the individual to be socially shared? Following philosopher Karen Barad, the materiality of memory leaves physical traces: "And that's why ghosts are real," she has publicly said. The authors in this panel plumb the "occult economies that lurk in the shadows of daily life" (AAA CFP) in narrative worlds across the spectrum of human expression – in Algerian theater, in North African possession rituals, in the sonic story of Egypt behind bars, and in discourse that makes sense of the violent death of migrants in North Africa and Europe. Hannoum inquires into migrants who do not survive border crossings, and whose lives are materially erased even as they continue to haunt in the margins of memory and narrative. Malmström tells stories from the sonic traces of former political prisoners, who become ghost bodies, materializing the prison's disciplining affects even after they have left detention. Goodman examines the realm between life and death in theater, unpacking multiple layers of performance that produce a living character perceived as dead, and viewing performance itself as a kind of possession. Turner considers how sonic worlds generate nonhuman presences in Islamic diwan performance in Algeria. Kapchan asks what it means to become possessed by another, grounding her inquiry in Sufi philosophy. Together, papers explore encounters with the occult and the occulted in sonic, embodied, and narrative worlds. All presenters anchor their ethnographic work in North Africa and the Middle East.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Jane Goodman

Chair: Deborah Kapchan

Presenter(s): Majid Hannoum, University of Kansas, Maria Frederika Malmström (Malmstrom), University of Gothenburg, Jane Goodman, Tamara Turner, Deborah Kapchan

Presentation(s): The Missing: The Migrant Ghost in Northern Morocco

One of the most salient aspects of contemporary African migration to Europe is the high death toll documented by NGOs, with the bodies of young migrants reduced to mere statistics. In 2024 alone, 10,000 fatalities were reported. While analyzing these numbers is essential, it's equally important to recognize the missing—those who disappear without a trace—as a darker and more haunting reality. These lives, turned into ghosts, are neither fully visible nor invisible, lingering in the margins of borders they never crossed. This paper explores the issue of the missing through a tragic event on June 24, 2022, when Spanish and Moroccan police intercepted around 1,700 migrants attempting to cross into Melilla, a Spanish-controlled city in northern Morocco. The case underscores the inequality of human lives and deaths, demonstrating how some fatalities are rendered insignificant, with the missing becoming ghosts of lives never acknowledged. The paper argues that the issue of the missing must be understood in connection with the dead and the living. The missing are invisible, unable to speak, and we can only hear their stories through the voices of the living—their families, whose hope persists in the face of uncertainty, haunted by the belief that their loved ones might someday reappear.

Presenter(s): Majid Hannoum

The Desire to Disappear in Order Not to Disappear: Cairene Political Ex-Prisoners

This is the sonic ghost story of Egypt behind bars—about the disappeared, the absent and the forgotten political bodies. This is about unseen former political prisoners who nowadays live in the shadows. The sonic infrastructure of torture in prison under today's autocratic regime provoke an afterlife of emotional responses of not only loss and non-belonging but also paranoia, depression, and even death-worlds. The disciplining effect of walls, torture, controls, and armed personnel permeates the body of these men, and the sound of violence produces an ambience of uncertainty and invisible threads of painful body memories. Hence, the forces of affect are materialized in the bodies of prisoners long after they have left detention—the affect of sonic infrastructures produce porous and broken bodies. Former prisoners are both traumatized and terrified of being detained again, so they do not live a life in dignity or navigate Cairo as they did before the prison experience. They must avoid the atmosphere of silence at coffee shops and bars (where the ear of the state is always present), avoid silent dawn streets since these men may forcibly disappear by the assistance of security forces. The sound of life for these men is continuously transformed into the sound of death; where the desire to disappear in order to not disappear again produces 'ghost bodies' alienated from not only the 'new Egypt' but also from the family and the self too.

Presenter(s): Maria Frederika Malmström (Malmstrom)

Incarnating the “dead-living”: Between possession and performance in Algerian theater

This paper explores the realm between life and death in the work of Algerian playwright Abdelkader Alloula. Unlike the more common understanding of the "living dead" as the dead who comes to life (in French, *mort-vivant*), I take up the "*vivant mort*," or the living person perceived as dead. Such a character inhabits Alloula's famous play *Djelloul El Fhaymi* (the wise one). Djelloul, a hospital employee, has bounced from job to job because, though highly skilled, he is overcome by feverish rants when he sees incompetence or injustice. He ends up working in the morgue, where he faces an administrative nightmare: a living patient was mixed up with a dead one and was sent for burial preparation. From this liminal, oneiric state between life and death, the apparent corpse rises but believes he is dead. Awaiting final judgment, he takes Djelloul to be Israël, Archangel of Death. As Djelloul encounters this "dead living" figure, he becomes possessed by rage at the system that gave rise to it such that all he can do is run. And as the actors materialize the encounter on stage, they draw on the sonic, vocal, visual, and embodied affordances of acting to generate an intangible oneiric realm to which both actors and audiences are transported, as performance becomes another form of possession.

Presenter(s): Jane Goodman

Vibrating Specters: Music, Atmosphere, and the Unseen in Algerian Ritual Healing

What do specters sound like? How does sound generate, precipitate, and negotiate spectral worlds? In the Algerian popular Islamic ritual called *diwan*, one can be haunted and inhabited by the deep, bass register melodies of sub-Saharan spirits, Muslim saints, and historical figures of the trans-Saharan slave trade. The melodies of these personages erupt into uncomfortable and often painful sensations that cultivate multiple registers of trance, ranging from what we might label as absorption to total bodily inhabitation of nonhuman presences and complete dissociation. It is music alone that makes such trance formation possible in that music and specters both envelop human actors as immersive, expansive atmospheres, captured by the particular Algerian use of the term "*hal*." Because nonhuman presences, music, and atmosphere share geneeses as felt, bodily phenomena, sonic worlds instruct us on how shadowy histories resound and vibrate through generations.

Presenter(s): Tamara Turner

Face to Face with the Spirits: Paradox and the Anthropology of the Esoteric

What does it mean to be possessed, to become another? What changes in the brain, the body and emotions? Does the ability to empathize increase, as in meditation? And what of the capacity to listen, and to hear? Some scholars explain possession rationally (as catharsis, a reaction to trauma, symbolic play, a system of social cohesion or a means of gender-bending and temporary power inversion); others aesthetically, as musically-induced performance. Why the need to translate such spiritual realities in other terms? What does this translation allow "us," we who study the esoteric, to know, to do, and to be? In this presentation, I examine the inter-semiotic translation of trance and oneiric consciousness through the prism of Ibn al-Arabi's Sufi philosophy, revealing the paradoxical dance of immanence and transcendence in various densities of human existence.

Presenter(s): Deborah Kapchan

2752 Desiring Ghosts

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropology is haunted. Our disciplinary ghosts continue to linger despite decades of ritual exorcisms aimed at decolonization, recapturing, reinvention, or renewed responsibility. But what if the ghosts don't linger because we haven't found the right formulae to release them from this plane of reality? What if they remain because we desire our ghosts-and they desire us back?

This roundtable explores what is at stake in our individual and collective desires for the very ghosts we desperately wish (or claim to wish) to no longer stalk our halls. We do not seek to enact yet another ritual exorcism; neither is it a retelling of the importance of anthropological hauntology-the anthropological study of ghosts and experiences of being haunted-though this work is important here, too (Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi 2022; see also Fischer 2014; Strong 2021). Instead, we will explore how the incomplete project of a decolonizing anthropology (Harrison 1995; Jobson 2016; Bolles 2023) across subfields is repeatedly stymied by the hauntings we collectively fear, resent, and loathe, but cannot bear to see leave, from the persistence of the discipline's raciolinguistic uncanny (Rosa and Flores 2020) to colonial and imperial inheritances in archaeology and biological anthropology. We end not with a hauntological roll-call or litany of the ghostly presences from which to rid ourselves, but by reflecting together on the question: how does anthropology move beyond naming disciplinary ghosts and shift to helping them cross over as an act of resistance and collective liberation?

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Joshua Babcock, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Amanda Brock Morales, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Annalisa Heppner, Jonathan Rosa, Stanford University

4131 Ghosts and Specters of Patriarchy: Gendered Violence, Moral Complicity, and Embodied Hauntings in Post-socialist China

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the aftermath of China's socialist modernization and market reforms, where neoliberal governance entwines with Confucian familial logics and moral resurgence, gendered violence persists in forms that are intimate, affectively encoded, and socially legitimized. Rather than disappearing with the decline of socialist collectivism, patriarchal structures have reasserted themselves through new alliances with familial ethics, reproductive governance, and nationalist discourse. This panel investigates how such violence operates not only through bodily harm or legal exclusion, but through routinized and diffuse mechanisms embedded in cultural, economic, and

kinship structures. Drawing on feminist anthropology, critical kinship studies, and ethnographies of emotion and embodiment, we conceptualize these operations as ghosts and specters of patriarchy. "Ghosts" register the affective and embodied traces of violence, which are those that linger in everyday life through memory, silence, and sensation. "Specters", following Derrida's notion of the spectral (Specters of Marx, 1994), point to structural and historical legacies that return in altered forms under postsocialist modernity. Together, they help us ask: how are gendered subjects disciplined through both material regimes and symbolic scripts? What kinds of violence become invisible precisely because they are ordinary?

The papers in this panel examine interconnected sites of gendered oppression in contemporary China. Ran Ai analyzes informal garment workshops where production and reproduction collapse, embedding female migrant labor into global supply chains while rendering it invisible. Xinyi Yuan interrogates marriage trafficking through "communities of complicity", showing how kin, neighbors, and officials legitimate coerced marriages under cultural and reproductive responsibility. Yitong Xu focuses on Chaoshan women's ritual food labor, showing how culinary expertise sustains patrilineal traditions while inscribing gendered complicity onto bodies. Ray Shi examines how attacks on Japanese schools manifest nationalist masculinity shaped by postcolonial tension, historical memory, and symbolic vulnerability. Aaron Hu explores how normative pressures around marriage constrain lesbian women in heterosexual unions, revealing the disciplining force of filial piety and social expectations.

Together, these papers contend that gendered violence in contemporary China is perpetuated not only through overt acts but through its embeddedness in social, familial, and economic institutions. This panel contributes to feminist anthropological debates on violence by shifting the analytic gaze from spectacular events to everyday harm, which are those embodied, inherited, and legitimized forms that persist through complicity, affect, and structure. "Ghosts and specters" offer a generative framework for tracing how patriarchal inequality is not simply enacted but sedimented across time, space, and intimate life.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Xinyi Yuan

Chair: Xin Qu, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Xinyi Yuan

Presenter(s): Aaron Hu, Yitong Xu, Xinyi Yuan, Ran Ai, University of Toronto, Ray Shi

Discussant: Ai Gu, Xin Qu, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology

Presentation(s): Exploring the Impact of Societal Pressures and Reproductive Expectations on the Identities of Chinese Lesbian Women in Heterosexual Marriages

This paper examines the experiences of Chinese lesbian women navigating their sexual identity within the confines of heterosexual marriages, set against a backdrop of deeply ingrained traditional family values. In China, where same-sex relationships remain socially stigmatized and same-sex marriage is illegal, lesbian women are often compelled to enter into formal marriages due to societal expectations, including the pervasive "leftover women" discourse.

Based on in-depth interviews with 11 lesbian participants aged 22 to 43, this study explores the specific challenges they face within these marriages, particularly the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, including the expectation of childbearing. The research highlights the emotional, psychological, and social struggles these women endure, such as managing relationships with their husbands, negotiating reproductive duties, dealing with financial difficulties, and coping with the heightened risk of sexual violence. By examining the intersection of gender, sexuality, and societal expectations, this paper contributes to understanding the unique struggles of LGBTQ+ individuals in a context that prioritizes heteronormative values and reproductive imperatives.

Presenter(s): Aaron Hu

Sacrificial Steam, Patriarchal Schemes: Culinary Labor and Gendered Hierarchy in Chaoshan's Ritual Food Traditions

In Chaoshan, a coastal region of China renowned for its elaborate ritual culture, women's heavy culinary labor during ancestral worship, Chinese New Year, and seasonal festivals (e.g., Mid-Autumn, Winter Solstice) constitutes a critical yet understudied domain of gendered power imbalance. State-led "intangible heritage" discourse exacerbates this tension by celebrating this custom as the persistence of culture while erasing the gendered burdens of its production.

This paper investigates how food practices across these occasions—from sourcing festival-specific ingredients like guo (糰) for New Year to preparing grave offerings during Qingming—naturalize women's roles as sustainers and subordinates of patriarchal clan systems. By situating Chaoshan's gendered food rituals within China's patrilineal kinship system, this study demonstrates how acts of culinary labor during festivals become sites where patriarchal power is enacted. Ultimately, it argues that ancestral food traditions are not merely cultural heritage but active mechanisms for sustaining gender inequality.

Presenter(s): Yitong Xu

"Bound by Gendered Relations, Legitimised by Complicity": Analysing the Structural Vulnerabilities of Women in Rural Chinese Marriage Trafficking

This paper investigates the ongoing issue of marriage trafficking in rural China, using real-life cases such as the widely publicized "Xiaohuamei" incident to illustrate how trafficked women are caught in webs of control. These women are often sold by brokers and deceived into marriages where they are expected to bear children and fulfill domestic roles. Once purchased, they are trapped not only by the physical environment but also by social expectations and local moral narratives that justify their presence as "wives" rather than victims.

The analysis draws on Hans Steinmüller's concept of "communities of complicity" (2015) to explain how villagers, local officials, and even police officers often turn a blind eye or actively participate in maintaining these arrangements. Rooted in Confucian family ideals and economic hardship, entire communities justify the trafficking as necessary for continuing family lines and stabilizing village

life. Feminist anthropology and theories of neoliberal commodification reveal how women's bodies and labor are treated as resources to be exchanged and controlled. This paper challenges the simplistic notion that trafficked women are either passive victims or active agents. Instead, it shows how their limited choices are shaped by structural violence, gender norms, and collective complicity.

Presenter(s): Xinyi Yuan

In the Vortex of Production and Social Reproduction: Gendered Labor in South China's Informal Garment Workshops

Throughout southern China's coastal regions, female rural migrants live and work as precarious "floating populations" in informal spaces nested in former village houses. Such houses are often informally converted for industrial and commercial use, lowering land costs by bypassing formal regulations and taxes. Tolerated by the government, these transformations expanded in scale, fostering low-cost production zones where exploitative labor practices proliferated. Thus, a distinct urbanization process driven by low-end manufacturing reconfigured both physical spaces and social relations. Despite their informality, these spaces supply products to the international market, serving as integral yet overlooked nodes in global supply networks.

This paper attends to the informal sites of garment production in urban villages in southern China, which are predominantly staffed by female rural migrants. The research aims to unpack the entanglement of urbanization, global capitalism, and gendered labor practices by examining how international fast fashion companies depend on these informal spaces and the feminized labor regimes they sustain. The study looks particularly into the connections between women's roles in production and reproduction, tracing the relationship between different spaces, from informal workshops to spaces for daily life, schools, and homes.

Presenter(s): Ran Ai

Spaces that Bleed: Violence, Nationalist Masculinity, and Vulnerability in Chinese International Schools

This article examines two violent attacks targeting Japanese international schools in the major Chinese cities of Suzhou and Shenzhen in 2024. Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and Saskia Sassen's insights on global urban dynamics, it analyzes how international schools become culturally contested spaces characterized by both international elite privilege and localized tensions. The study argues that these attacks should not be viewed merely as isolated incidents; rather, they reflect deeper anxieties linked to nationalism, masculinity anxieties, and historical memory in contemporary China. By critically analyzing official media coverage, social media discourse, and public commemorations such as National Memorial Day, this paper explores how collective perceptions of foreignness and national identity are actively constructed and reinforced. These discursive practices amplify both the spatial and symbolic vulnerability of international schools. Ultimately, the research reveals how nationalist sentiments, urban

transformations, and masculinity anxieties intersect, making globalized educational spaces critical sites for negotiating identity, belonging, and social conflict in urban Chinese contexts.

Presenter(s): Ray Shi

Discussion

Discussion

4962 Haunted Infrastructures - Infrastructural Haunting: Part 1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this panel, we think about haunted infrastructures and infrastructural haunting. Infrastructures are not only about moving matter forward (Larkin 2013), they are embedded in relationships of mutual becoming. (Re-)Structuring space, compressing time, erasing pasts and promising futures, infrastructures unfold in ways that are both material and durable as well as volatile and invisible. We propose these infrastructural transformations create actual and metaphorical ghosts: Place-bound, fleeting, yet persistent, referencing the past through the present, ghosts are at once tied to matter and in excess of it.

First, we draw attention to material infrastructures and their potentials for being enlivened or haunted by immaterial entities. Infrastructures are relational (Rest and Rippa 2019) and extend beyond the human through matter. Key materials in infrastructures, stone, water, minerals, are in themselves social agents. They are the communicating ancestors of people and the founding infrastructures of subsistence landscapes. The denial of the ancestral relationship between people and their infrastructure is infrastructural haunting.

Haunted infrastructure is enacted by ghosts and beings trapped in space-time. Drawing on Freud's exploration of haunting as 'Heimsuchung' (Freud 1919), we emphasize that the nonhumans haunting infrastructures are caught in a state of liminality from which they seek to escape. Taking the ontological status that ghosts have for our interlocutors seriously, we seek to illuminate what kind of social ontologies (Baumann and Rehbein 2020) are reproduced through infrastructures.

Second, through this juxtaposition of the material and the immaterial, we shed new light on infrastructure as it creates hubs of human-non-human interaction. If we take the colonized people seriously, the entire human-built environment is enlivened with entities that emerge through the energy released at production. Ghosts are invisible traces of what came before and is no longer remembered as part of what exists now (Tsing et al 2017).

Third, this attention to (im)materiality and space/place/time requires linking the haunted to temporalities of infrastructures. Infrastructural temporalities encompass maintenance and entanglement amid the materially unfinished and crumbling, and the immaterial suspensions and anticipations they engender. Attempts to connect the different temporal registers with space and

place, however, remain rare. By drawing together both the singular events and the deep time of infrastructures, we connect 'ghosts' to the matter that both enlivens and entraps them through the spectral lens of folded space/time.

We ask: What kind of infrastructures are haunted ? How does their materiality provide them with ghosts?

How do new infrastructures try to erase haunted pasts and make space for enlivened futures?

Does cross-time/cross-border infrastructural haunting create alternatives for analyzing bounded spaces?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Verena La Mela, Heidelberg University, Courtney Work

Chair: Courtney Work , Verena La Mela, Heidelberg University

Presenter(s): Jane Ferguson, Australian National University, Daniel Mohseni Kabir Bäckström, University of Oslo, Benjamin Baumann, Tim Burger

Discussant: Benjamin Baumann

Presentation(s): Ferragamo's Favorite Phantom: Passenger Aviation's Economies and the Versatile Ghosts of Thailand's Suvarnabhumi Airport

Although the term "ghost airport" is generally applied to abandoned sites or to state-planning's oversupply of facilities, ghostlore is endemic part of airport operations writ large. In Myanmar and Thailand, ghostlore and ritual practices are embedded in, and speak to, most aspects of airport operations. Thailand's airports, namely Bangkok's Don Mueang Airport featured King Power Duty Free retail for international passengers starting in 1989. The terminal facility at Suvarnabhumi Airport boasts extensive retail options, and retail workers comprise approximately 15% of the airport's employees. Although focus on the airport's role as a regional hub might suggest infrastructure ghosts would be endemic to aviation operations, that is only part of the story. Given the precarity of commission-based retail jobs, and the increased economic role of retail in airport livelihoods, spiritual involvement has reflected, if not instigated, some of these shifts. Based on ethnographic research both in the airport as well as at shrines propitiated by airport workers, this paper will explore the ways in which ritual spirit veneration and propitiation involves and extends to the commercial capacities of the airport facility.

Presenter(s): Jane Ferguson

Infrastructures of Ghosts and States

In China's southwest, along the mountainous China-Myanmar border, live a small ethnic minority who call themselves Blang. Blang communities are surrounded by powerful, immaterial others: ghosts, gods, and states impose on the village from the outside. Ghosts are unable or unwilling to feed themselves; when hungry they afflict humans with mischief, misfortune, or violence in order to be fed. But how can humans send things to ghosts if they cannot see or touch them? My conference paper will examine the ritual infrastructure that makes possible interactions with ghosts; how

humans can send foil, bamboo, and clay figures, that for the ghost becomes great riches; and how it makes possible the dispatching of ghosts, using infrastructure to send them away. Until 1953, Blang communities say they "had no state." Much like ghosts you cannot shake hands with the state. How did this powerful, immaterial other make its way into the mountains? Employing lessons from the ritual infrastructure Blang communities employ to interact with ghosts, I show how infrastructure in the traditional sense (the construction of roads, border fences, and electricity lines) has made possible the transformation of something conceptual for one party into something real for the other. Just as humans send conceptual and metaphorical riches that become real for ghosts, so what was first conceptual (citizenship, population, borders) has recently become real for Blang communities.

Presenter(s): Daniel Mohseni Kabir Bäckström

From haunted sites to places of worship: Exploring the social ontology of roadside shrines in Thailand's lower Northeast

Although people have marked sites of human death along roads throughout much of human history (Clark 2007, Cohen 2013), there seems to be something special about the intersection of ghostly and human infrastructures in Thailand's rural Northeast. Here, bad deaths associated with traffic accidents produce a distinctive class of malevolent ghost-like beings that haunt the site where the accident occurred. These more or less stationary ghosts are known as phi tai hong in Thai. Their haunting is particularly feared as it causes more accidents to happen. However, accidents may also produce phi samphawesi, wandering ghosts that dwell at crossroads and other nodes of the local infrastructure. Both kinds of ghostly beings haunt the living in Freud's (1919) sense as they remain attached to the world by the desire to return to a home that is forever lost. While their uncanny haunting is feared by many, it may also constitute the first stage in a ghost's social life. Looking at roadside memorials and other shrines signifying critical junctures of the local infrastructure, this paper seeks to map the social ontology (Baumann and Rehbein 2020) that allows for a haunted site's transition into a place of worship. Part of this transition is the ghost's ritual domestication through which it not becomes the member of an emplaced social collective, but is also transformed into a master of the place.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Baumann

Bewitched Houses and Homily Hauntings: Infrastructure as Abandonment on the Azores

In the contemporary Azores, vital infrastructures have become uncanny. After decades of large-scale outmigration and rural decline, crumbling houses sit in abandoned landscapes, irrigation systems leak and corrode, and formerly cultivated terraces are overgrown by brushwood. In the debris of Lusophone colonial settlement, my paper focuses on two ethnographic observations: first, agrarian households are haunted by specters of past flourishing, the once enlivened and now unviable time of abundant people and thriving places. Second, as certain houses are increasingly commodified through an emerging tourist industry selling experiences of allegedly pristine wilderness at the edge of Europe, they become targets of occult powers (cf. Heslop 2022). Houses

that serve as infrastructures of capitalist accumulation are consciously bewitched by ill-meaning, others thus failing to provide homeliness for guests. I suggest grasping the uncanniness of vital infrastructures in the wake of severe depopulation and rapid economic transformation beyond Freud's sense of 'Heimsuchung' as a perception of unsettledness that conjoins deeply familial and disturbingly alien experiences of one's proximate infrastructures (Long 2013). Examining people's wrestling with uncanny affects seen as residing in non-human objects such as house roofs or terrace walls makes for prime sites to study the interdependency between haunted infrastructure and infrastructural haunting.

Presenter(s): Tim Burger

Discussion

6947 Aftermaths: Ambivalent Relations and Murky Responses in the Wake of Crisis

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What do capitalists think, feel, and do in the aftermath of the disasters they've wrought? What happens when they respond to the loss and damage? Whether overharvesting, pollution, or social corrosion, anthropologists have importantly critiqued the violence inflicted through capitalist pursuits. Yet, as both local and global critics call out such harms, actors in powerful corporations and other related institutions today are often not unaware of the critiques directed to them. This panel proposes to study the actual workings of contemporary capitalism by attending to the anxieties and senses of vulnerability that actors within the system themselves articulate in the aftermath of capitalist crises. Building broadly on critical and feminist ethnographies of capitalism, we examine how the dynamics among corporate actors, affected communities, and other agents around them might be reconfigured when capitalism recognizes, reckons with, or even gestures to repair its harms. By considering "aftermaths" as a lens to probe the ambivalent, surprising, and contradictory forms of relationality that emerge from capitalist vulnerabilities, we aim to move towards an expansive understanding of what life in the aftermath looks and feels like.

This panel consists of four papers, bringing together different catastrophes and geographies to generate vibrant discussion. We ask: What exactly is an aftermath "after," and for whom? In a world filled with multiple, layered, and overlapping crises across time and space, how do different actors contend with nested forms of loss? Given all these complexities, what might it mean to envision and build a future? Reichardt will examine the extent to which settler colonialism becomes an "aftermath" for Dáil leaders as they govern white settlers in Northern Canada. In Moral's paper set in Northeast India, "dead" silk plantations in the aftermath of intense production are now going through state attempts to "revitalize" its supply chain in the name of heritage preservation. Seraphin approaches wildfires in California as an aftermath of the settler colonial system of fire suppression, tracing consequences of the ways that the US Department of Agriculture is embracing controlled

burning practices that it once racialized and disparaged. Yamada focuses on the aftermath of mining pollution and the resulting public health crisis in north-central Japan, following the uneasy pursuit of environmental remediation among industry actors and affected residents in the ensuing decades. In thinking across these papers, we aim to foster a critical discussion on the thorny politics surrounding the ambivalent relations and murky responses that often emerge in the wake of crisis.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Shoko Yamada, Yale University, Elliott Reichardt, Stanford University

Chair: Emma Crane, Stanford University

Presenter(s): Radhika Moral, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Elliott Reichardt, Stanford University, Bruno Seraphin, University of Connecticut, Department of Anthropology, Shoko Yamada, Yale University

Discussant: Emma Crane, Stanford University

Presentation(s): Revitalizing a 'Dead' Plantation: Agrarian Transformations, Corporatization, and Preservation in Northeast India's Silk Plantations

Muga silk (*Antheraea Assama*) plantations in Northeast India, in Assam, are on a steady decline. This luxury silk is predicted to become 'extinct' by 2040, as per farmers and sericulture experts. Muga plantations are seasonally declared dead by the state as a way of renewing the land after multiple harvest seasons to make the land habitable for silkworm rearing that would lead to a better yield in the following season. However, government intervention, supply chain experts, and corporate interests have attempted to 'revitalize' the Muga supply chain by scaling up production—primarily driven by notions about better access to markets, expansion of trade networks, and renewed interest in heritage preservation. I examine an agrarian industry undergoing a commodity revitalization model due to intensification of production. I further explore the contemporary politics of a seasonally 'dead' plantation that engenders new forms of socioecological vulnerabilities while simultaneously yielding desirable agrarian transformations. I investigate the faultlines in a revitalization model, a feature of agrarian capitalism that are neither apolitical nor entirely exclusionary. I argue that the continued friction between regimes of corporate dependence that seek to expand and simultaneously preserve, and the struggle for agrarian autonomy recasts agrarian communities' relationship to land but crucially shapes dynamics amongst various stakeholders who claim to revitalize and preserve Muga silk.

Presenter(s): Radhika Moral

Dakelh Governance in the Aftermath of Settler Colonialism

What does Indigenous governance look like in the aftermath of colonialism? On June 29, 2021, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that many Indigenous Peoples had a right to veto all further development on their land. This precedent set for BC formalized a key point in the shifting of the power of government away from the Canadian state and towards emergent Indigenous ones. Alongside legal authority, the Dakelh nations I work with have also regained considerable economic

and social power in the region and now increasingly set the terms of continued settler presence. I conducted ethnographic research with two Dakelh First Nations who now govern Dakelh people and settlers within an uneven polity. In this paper I examine one Dakelh goal, that of maintaining a sufficient population to receive vital state goods, such as healthcare and infrastructure spending. Dakelh leverage their power to change how the economy is structured in the region and drive changes in how whites treat Indigenous Peoples. They deploy the reasoning of biopolitics and governmentality to support an economy that sustains a white population now dependent on Dakelh sovereignty. Dakelh people must now consider and manage the futures of white settlers who only a few decades ago were active participant in the destruction of their landscapes and their cultures via the residential school system and industrialization. The Dakelh leadership experiences this as an "ambivalent aftermath".

Presenter(s): Elliott Reichardt

The Colonial Art of Failing Up: Fire, Timber, and Crisis in California

In 2025, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) opened half of all National Forest lands to expedited timber production – justified in part under the sign of "wildfire crisis." Fire scientists and Indigenous leaders noted that this move will benefit the timber industry but do little to reduce high severity wildfire. The root of wildfire danger in California is the settler colonial system of suppression that has criminalized Indigenous management and aggressively fought all natural wildfire to protect private property. This fire suppression paradigm was established by timber capital and the settler state in the early 20th century, building from an 1850 California law outlawing Indigenous burning. Today, as wildfires escalate, a growing public and governmental consensus heeds the words of Karuk fire expert Leaf Hillman: "fire suppression has failed." However, the way the USDA and timber industry navigate toward greater authority in response to this failure epitomizes the improvisational art of "failing up." With one hand, the USDA is embracing controlled burning practices that it once racialized and disparaged. With the other hand, it strives to exploit a crisis of its own making by declaring a state of emergency, granting itself exceptional power toward further resource extraction. This paper draws from my 8 years of collaboration with Karuk fire managers to evaluate how capitalist and colonial institutions maneuver to gain advantage in the aftermath of their failures.

Presenter(s): Bruno Seraphin

Promises and Regrets: Negotiating Repair after Toxic Exposure in Japan

In the aftermath of a public health crisis wrought by mining pollution since the 1910s, the Toyama region of northcentral Japan saw the rise of a grassroots movement that earned a landmark court victory in 1972. Yet the historic ruling marked only the beginning of the affected residents' much longer work of demanding environmental remediation from the industry, which still continues today half a century later. By tracing Toyama's decades-long search for environmental repair through the ethnographic lens of "promises," I demonstrate how the ever-unfinished work of remediation has brought the mining company and the residents into an enduring relation. In contrast to the earlier

hopes for a resolution, the remediation has entailed the two parties' recurrent encounter, negotiation, and collaboration in the decades since. I argue that this unexpected attachment has become a vital arena for navigating the persistent aftermath of toxic exposure. By situating such engagements within broader political-economic dynamics, I suggest how this tie is reconfiguring what it takes to reckon with the environmental legacies of modern Japan.

Presenter(s): Shoko Yamada

Discussion

8805 AFA Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Poydras (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

AFA (Association for Feminist Anthropology) Board Meeting

4652 Embodied Hauntings: Reimagining the Human Condition Through Sport

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Sport spaces, bodies, and movement practices are shaped by past traces of colonialism, capitalism, racial and gender inequality, while ecological change continues to inflect the present. Sport practitioners are haunted by their dreams, hopes, and aspirations, often submitting to extreme processes of transformation, consumption, and even destruction. Across diverse contexts, the ghostly immaterial offers tangible ways of reimagining the human condition through sport. This panel invites scholars to explore how practices of sport and the sporting body are shaped by haunting forces of the past and of the future.

From playing fields built on contested lands to practices that reanimate cultural heritage, and from embodied performances of resistance to the specters of commodification and exploitation in global sports industries, "sport" and its practices emerge as compelling sites of meta-social commentary. This panel examines how historical and cultural memory intersect with sport, and those that consider how sporting practices create possibilities for resisting and reimagining the haunted landscapes of the present.

In sport, personal biographies intersect with the collective histories of communities. Following ethnographic work that explores the entanglement of care and injury in combat sports (Hopkinson, 2024), and virtuous suffering among ultra-endurance athletes (Lanclus, 2024), we delve into the sporting body-in-movement. Hence, the sporting body might be conceived as a vessel of transformation and self-cultivation (Rana, 2022), or as a receptacle of material and immaterial forces, from pharmaceutical substances to ethical judgments.

By centering the sporting body and its practices as sites where the past, present, and future collide, this panel explores how sport and movement reimagine the human condition, engage with the ghosts of history, and open up possibilities for renewal, resistance and transformation. Jenny Tang's paper focuses on the embodied specters of classical ballet, questioning whether ballerinas can free themselves of these hauntings, even after their careers. Joshua Rubin revisits Guttman's framework for "modern" sport, offering insights into the ways that sporting practices carry traces of the past through performative gestures. By speculating through the Basque Athletic Club de Bilbao, Mariann Vaczi explores why it is so hard to resist the neoliberalism of sport despite acknowledged evils. Eilis Lanclus' paper discusses how sensory and affective hauntings experienced by trail sport participants inform practices of care and ecological responsibility. Finally, Adriano De Francesco's auto-ethnography of boxing examines the ethical fluctuations arising when a moral imperative to care coexists with the project of a weaponized body. Together, these papers offer complementary perspectives that aim to deepen our understanding of the haunting forces of the past and of the future in sport.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Eilis Lanclus , Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland

Chair: Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland, Eilis Lanclus

Presenter(s): Eilis Lanclus, Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland, Mariann Vaczi, University of Nevada, Reno, Joshua Rubin, Jenny Tang, University of Cambridge

Discussant: Leo Hopkinson

Presentation(s): Sensory Hauntings on Trails: Navigating Outdoor Recreation in Times of Climate Crisis

Trail sports – hiking, running, off-road cycling – are gaining increasingly in popularity in Western contemporary societies. These sports are often celebrated as ways to immerse oneself in "wild(er)" landscapes and to measure personal endurance against nature. But the climate crisis has begun to unsettle this relationship. The landscapes these trails move through are increasingly shaped by loss – of species, stable seasons, biodiversity – and by futures that fracture before they fully arrive. The climate crisis reveals the past unfinished and the future already unfolding – a specter urging us to listen. On trails, climate change is felt not as data but as sensory disruptions: the crackle of dead undergrowth, flood-strewn trails, or snowless winters where snow once marked the season. For trail sport participants these encounters stir an embodied unease – a recognition of landscapes as vulnerable, already altered and continuously reshaped by the climate crisis. How can these sensory and affective hauntings experienced on trails invite a shift from trail sports as acts of personal conquest or consumption of landscapes to practices grounded in care, attention, and ecological responsibility? In this presentation, I will discuss the duality between the growing desire of trail sport participants to engage with "wild(er)" landscapes and the ecological pressures these activities put on those landscapes based on ethnographic fieldwork in Belgium and the UK.

Presenter(s): Eilis Lanclus

Ethics Between the Ropes: Notes on Care and (Self-)Destruction in Boxing

This paper explores the ordinary ethics of combat sports. In the carnal sociology inaugurated by Wacquant (2004), practice aligns the apprentice's self with ontologically salient notions of honor and respect while familiarizing their body with violence and pain. Rather than considering the homogenizing dimension of habitus production, I focus here on what resists and interrupts it. For one year, I trained at one of New Zealand's most powerful amateur boxing clubs. Though I am an outlier in demographic terms, my commitment to hard training regimes soon turned the gym into a plinth of my everyday life. However, I remain conflicted about crossing the line between sparring and competitive fighting that marks full belonging to this community of practice. Crossing this line entails inflicting and being exposed to potentially life-changing neurological damage. I reflect on my encounters with the ethos of sacrifice that permeates the sport of boxing: Can a moral imperative to care for oneself and others coexist with the project of a weaponized body? What happens when we are summoned by incommensurable ethical criteria (Lambek, 2015), and find ourselves acting against our better judgment (McKearney & Evans, 2023)? I suggest that attending to the "ambiguous nature of care" in boxing (Hopkinson, 2023) through the lens of a "first person phenomenology of action" (Mattingly, 2014) can illuminate the ethical conundrums arising as we explore our powers while being scarred by the world.

Presenter(s): Adriano De Francesco

"Happiness is the Moment You Want More Happiness:" Football, Capitalism, and Desire

With each new game and new season, fans buy into a fundamental capitalist fantasy: the promise that satisfaction and happiness will come with the ultimate sport commodity, victory. But will it? This lecture seeks to identify the mutual nourishment between sport, the logic of capitalism, and human modes of desiring. How can we explain the staying power of capitalism despite its acknowledged evils, warning signs, and growing grassroots activism that rejects it? How does it create landscapes of desire that keep its actors within its orbit? Some point at the hegemony of capitalist stakeholders, and the essential powerlessness of fans. Others have variously identified the impacts of capitalism as inequality, exploitation, or repression. Following McGowan (2017), we may add that the power of (sport) capitalism is owing to its ability to engage with human modes of desiring. Just like capitalism, sport too rests on the idea of accumulation, and keeps subjects in a constant state of desiring for the next commodity, let it be a championship title, elite league playing opportunity, or the signing of a top athlete or special coach. This lecture will discuss sporting capitalism's hold of our psychic lives and, through the Basque Athletic Club de Bilbao from the Spanish Liga, it will speculate about how one might escape or reimagine, in sport and beyond, the haunting grasp of the Invisible Hand.

Presenter(s): Mariann Vaczi

Re-enchanting Records: Guttman and the Evocative Significances of Sporting Performance

Allen Guttman, drawing on the work of Max Weber, once famously claimed that "modern" sports could be distinguished from their "traditional" antecedents on the basis of no less than seven criteria. Though Guttman's framework has been thoroughly and justifiably critiqued, this paper

returns to Guttmann and, with the aid of the concept of "haunting," revisits his framework with an eye toward reopening and re-enchanting its significance. The paper focuses especially on Guttmann's criterion of "questing for records," and it proposes that this criterion should be understood not as a rationalized pursuit of measurable success but rather as a structured set of practices of memory and memorialization that allow current athletes to compete against ghosts. Elaborating on 17 months of fieldwork in South Africa, this paper argues further that attending directly to these practices sheds new light on the ways that sporting activities carry traces of the past—not primarily through meanings which are then read, or symbols that are deciphered and interpreted, but through performative gestures that "evoke" in an emergent fashion and, in doing so, activate memory and call felt experiences of the past up into the present. These evocations, once identified, can be traced and analyzed for their social and political implications.

Presenter(s): Joshua Rubin

Can the ballerina ever be free?

Based on autoethnographic reflections and journalistic materials, this paper asks whether the classical ballerina, vocationally formed since adolescence, can ever free herself from the her discipline's haunting ideals. When the young dancer first enters ballet school, she is told how to behave: Wear a pink leotard, pink tights, and pink ballet shoes; bow to teachers and follow instructions. She soon learns that is ideal ballet student should have a 'perfect ballet body': an objectified aesthetic with a laundry list of physical specifications—shaped historically from the rise of the Enlightenment and the tastes of aristocratic patrons—that conditions what is deemed beautiful and desirable in the classical ballet tradition. Growing up with this rigorous physical, aesthetic, and ethical education, the habitus becomes, like what Latour describes of the perfumer's nose, incorporated as the dancer's identity, refined through everyday practice. The habitus, as Bourdieu theorises, is inculcated by successive acts. This process, I argue, is one of reflexive subject formation and takes place in the rehearsal studio, which functions as a liminal space, in Victor Turner's terms. Every movement is examined by the gazing self and others in relation to a mythicized notion of perfection, not unlike that which occupies Saba Mahmood's pious subjects. The embodied spectres of the classical discipline haunt long after the ballerina's career ends. As such, can the ballerina ever be free?

Presenter(s): Jenny Tang

Discussion

4129 Governing Data: Regulations, Rights, and Relations (I)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Data is increasingly recognized as a valuable global asset, sparking intensifying struggles over its extraction, accumulation, and regulation. Across the world, lawyers and policymakers are constructing new regulatory infrastructures to govern data. Yet in doing so, they often encounter

deep tensions rooted in competing epistemologies and ontologies-fundamentally different ways of knowing and being through which 'data' is produced, interpreted, and contested. As data reshapes relations of power between individuals, communities, and states, it is also unsettling liberal frameworks-from rights and personhood to sovereignty and citizenship. This panel approaches data from an anthropological perspective, asking how cultural, socio-technical, and juridical forces assemble 'data' and, in turn, shape its governance. We invite abstracts that explore struggles over data, trace how it is reconfiguring power relations, and examine how new legal and normative frameworks are being articulated in an increasingly datafied world.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Matthew Canfield, Leiden University

Chair: Hayal Akarsu, Utrecht University

Presenter(s): Xing LI, Zeynel Gul, University of Illinois at Chicago | AnthroClub, Romm Lewkowicz, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Nicole Bennett, Zongtian Guo, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Presentation(s): Authorizing Editing: Governing the Uneven Access to a Centralized Online Civil Registration System in Nepal

Over the past 4-5 years, the Government of Nepal, with support from the World Bank, has been implementing a centralized online civil registration system. While it is the local-level bureaucrats who use the system to input citizens' vital life events, including birth, marriage, death, divorce, and migration, and provides relevant government certificates, only the federal-government office responsible for developing and monitoring the system has authority to edit data within the system. Drawing on analysis of bureaucratic documents, interviews with and participant observations among IT engineers, call-centre staff, and administrative officers in this federal-level office in 2024, this paper explores how the uneven access to the system sets the stage for reconfigured intra-bureaucracy communications and state-citizen relations. In particular, local-level bureaucrats and citizens would reach out to the federal-level office with requests to use the office's editing authority to revise mistakes, edit data, or delete records within the system. The need to respond to these requests without compromising legal restrictions, however, presents novel challenges of governing digitized data in a post-conflict bureaucracy slowly adapting from hand-written paper-based administrative practices. While the office resorts to producing hierarchically reviewed papers to regulate actions of data editing, the normative bureaucratic culture gets reproduced.

Presenter(s): Xing LI

Barcode Epistemologies: Assembling the Laboring Body in Diagnostic Circles in Turkey's Expert Hospitals

In Turkey, over 12,000 workers annually seek care and recognition at occupational diseases hospitals. Yet the Turkish Social Security Board (SSB) reports fewer than 10% of these cases in national health statistics. NGOs, labor organizers, and medical professionals contest these figures, distinguishing "medical occupational diseases" seen in clinics from "legal occupational diseases" recognized by courts and insurance boards. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic research

at an occupational diseases hospital, this paper explores how scannable barcode labels—mundane yet powerful filing technologies—mediate this very distinction. As barcodes circulate through clinics, labs, and archives, they shape how worker-patients' bodies are fragmented, documented, and translated into state-legible forms. This data infrastructure embeds a filtering logic: only certain harms, traceable and verifiable within institutional procedures, can be converted into compensable diagnoses. Rather than neutral data points, barcodes mediate a politics of recognition, assembling health data that conforms to legal and bureaucratic thresholds. Situating these barcode practices within global struggles over data governance, the paper argues that the production of worker health data is not only technical but deeply political. It shows how legal and medical infrastructures together deflect employer responsibility and recast worker suffering as ambiguous, de-personalized, and often unaccountable.

Presenter(s): Zeynel Gul

“No Water, Food, or Fingerprinting:” How Biometric Data Collection Became a Humanitarian Appeal and Evidence of State Crime in Rogue Borders Regimes

This paper examines how biometric fingerprinting of illegalized migrants in the EU's Mediterranean borders—long resisted by migrant communities and solidarity networks as criminalizing and dehumanizing—is increasingly framed by those same actors as a humanitarian appeal and articulated as a procedural right amid the intensification of covert pushbacks.

Drawing on ongoing fieldwork in Greece since 2018, as well as reports from the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), the paper traces the transformation of biometric data collection from a site of contestation and refusal into a migrant-rights demand, phrased in humanitarian terms. It analyzes how BVMN reports portray the absence of fingerprinting, photography, and document checks in the same vein as accounts of food deprivation, medical neglect, and torture. I argue that the deniable nature of rogue border enforcement has rendered the border not only a site of state violence, but also a testbed for ways to obscure it. In this context, the border emerges as a crime scene in which migrants—many of whom have experienced multiple pushbacks—become key actors in the forensic documentation of state crimes, gathering diverse forms of data beyond their individual cases. In their demand to be fingerprinted, subjects of migrant criminalization become agents in criminalizing rogue state conduct.

Presenter(s): Romm Lewkowicz

Constructing the Digital Self: the Regulation of Identities in Data-Driven Migration Governance

Migration governance is increasingly structured through data infrastructures that construct, monitor, and regulate the "digital self," a datafied identity composed of biometric records, risk assessments, and algorithmic categorizations. This paper argues that the digital self plays a crucial role in migration governance, often determining access before a migrant reaches a border. Migrants can be physically absent but digitally present, existing in databases yet denied movement. Through databases like Eurodac and PRIMES, AI-driven risk assessments, and data-sharing agreements, migration control now unfolds across transnational, networked systems rather than territorial

boundaries. This respatialization of migration governance produces new, invisible borders that shape mobility through data rather than geography. Traditional border enforcement, reliant on physical territory, is increasingly outsourced to automated systems and corporate surveillance, creating zones of digital precarity where migrants remain in suspended legal identities. However, migrants also resist these infrastructures, challenging algorithmic governance through counter-mapping and anti-surveillance tactics. Extending the work of Amoore and Hall, this paper shifts the focus from the fragmented body at the border to the autonomous, mobile digital self that circulates across databases and influences migration governance.

Presenter(s): Nicole Bennett

Health Data and the Doctor–Data Relationship in China and Norway

Our research compares how doctors in China and Norway understand and relate to health data in their everyday work. Drawing on interviews and observations in hospitals in both countries, we explore how health data is not simply a clinical record or technical asset, but a relational object embedded in different systems.

In Norway, many doctors express concerns about data privacy and emphasise their role in safeguarding patient autonomy. Data is framed as something personal and potentially vulnerable, and doctors are cautious about how it circulates beyond the clinic. In contrast, doctors in China often describe health data as a shared institutional resource—centralised, coordinated, and used to improve efficiency and system-level outcomes. Individual consent is less emphasised, while collective benefit and state oversight are central.

Recent anthropological work on data has emphasised that data practices are shaped by social and political contexts rather than being universally understood or applied. Building on this, our study focuses on medical professionals' perspectives to show how distinct models of data governance take form in clinical practice.

Through this comparison, we argue that data is not neutral or universal, but shaped by the values, expectations, and pressures that surround it. The doctor–data relationship becomes a key lens through which broader differences in data governance can be understood and examined.

Presenter(s): Zongtian Guo

Co-author(s): Roanne van Voorst

2508 Looking Ahead with PoLAR: A Roundtable on the Future of Legal and Political Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable features current and prior members of the editorial leadership of PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review. Speakers will address issues at the level of the journal, the field(s),

and academia writ large. What have been continuities and transformations in manuscript evaluation and development at PoLAR? What are current trends in legal and political anthropology, and where is the field heading? How is the journal-and how are the subfields-adapting to changing and escalating pressures on academia and to our current political climate? This reflective and timely conversation will be of interest to junior scholars curious about academic publishing, to legal and political anthropologists grappling with their role in the current climate, and to all anthropologists interested in thinking about the scholar in society.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Neil Kaplan-Kelly, Flagler College

Presenter(s): Monica Eppinger, Saint Louis University, Jennifer Curtis , Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh, Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology, Sandhya Fuchs, University of Bristol

Discussant: Deepa Das Acevedo , Neil Kaplan-Kelly, Flagler College

8694 Anthropological Ancestry Crochet Tapestry

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton on the 5th floor, all day Thursday.

Fiber arts hold an important place in anthropological studies. Not only are the fiber arts artistically significant, they are a way of preserving and passing on cultural knowledge and history, are a meaningful form of narrative, and can provide self expression and connection. I have recently enjoyed learning crochet and have used it as a way of relaxing as well as connecting with many different communities where I live. As the field of anthropology is facing many challenges and criticism of late, I have been thinking of my own identity as an anthropologist and what the field has meant to me. I decided to use crochet as a tool to tell my story and show what I believe anthropology is and why it is still an important field of study.

Organizer: Stephanie Fox

8791 Appearances : Ritualized spaces and Identity constructions

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Takes place at the Sheraton on the 4th floor, all day Thursday and Friday.

Photography installation where you can see different scenes of ritualization proposed during the carnival period by activist associations in the beginning of the year and also celebration during certain days like the abolition of slavery which take place in May, by so called activists and progressist associations like the LKP (lyannaj kont pwofitasyon).

Organizer(s): ANNICK DELANNAY

8576 Breathing with Danger: The Body of a Fireworks Factory

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located in the Grand Ballroom Foyer at the Sheraton, all day Thursday.

This installation project will present an exhibition of photographic works. The factory-a classic concept in labor studies (particularly within Marxist academic discussions)-is often abstracted into a series of keywords: workshops, machinery, dust, noise, assembly lines, monotonous labor environments, tedious repetition... The factory can be an organ of capital production, a node of ecological metabolism, or a micro-polity. Yet, we still lack a more tangible, embodied perspective to truly experience and understand the factory.

In recent decades, anthropologists and sociologists have begun conducting fieldwork, entering factories themselves to grasp their textures, breath, and rhythms-capturing the factory as a vast, ever-evolving corporeal existence. When we step away from the traditional labor studies framework of class antagonism and instead adopt a dwelling perspective of everyday life-how people interact with their environment within workspaces-we naturally wonder: What does a factory look like? How do people move and act within it?

Of course, this will include our focus on labor processes, but we do not simply treat the factory as a stage for labor to unfold. Instead, we observe how the factory's body is shaped by the relationships between people and specific materials, which in turn influence the labor processes. At the same time, labor processes are not merely confined within the factory. If we adopt a dwelling perspective, we find that they are isomorphic with the daily lives of workers. In my case study-this fireworks factory-we see a particular kind of fusion: how locals bridge agricultural and industrial ways of living. Such observation demands a more holistic perspective, one that examines not only the labor processes inside the factory but also the world beyond its walls.

Therefore, I choose to represent this factory through visual means. This approach not only liberates the factory from the sea of traditional conceptualizations, but also-more crucially-embodies the holistic perspective I advocate: by observing different parts of the factory's body, we witness not only hazardous labor processes and how people navigate them, but also how the factory is embedded in the natural environment through the unique materiality of its product (fireworks). We see its landscapes, its ties to workers' households, and the rhythms of everyday life.

These photographs stem from my fieldwork. I believe that, alongside academic writing, visual representation can amplify the significance of ethnographic research while offering audiences a more vivid and impressive understanding. Ultimately, they return us to the most fundamental question: What can a factory be?

Organizer(s): QI SHAN

8735 Missing Observer Studies Reading Room: the utopic imaginaries and voluntary associations of artist-run art book publishing

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton on the 2nd Floor, near the escalators, all day Thursday and Friday.

The M.O.S. Reading Room is an area to rest and peruse a selection of artist-made books and zines. M.O.S. is a slow/small artist-run imprint working between film, poetry, and sound, and located in Braddock, Pennsylvania. The project is run by a horizontal collective of relational and time-based artists who consider anthropology to be an interlocutor and co-theorizer. Feel free to sit and linger as long as you like.

Organizer(s): Roseanne Johnson

8643 The Last Supper Project Archive Installation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton in the Lainappe Foyer on the 2nd floor, all day Thursday.

Joseph Awuah-Darko is known as the artist behind The Last Supper Project, in which he documents sharing meals with complete strangers that he meets through the project. In 2024, Joseph shared to his robust following on social media that he had moved to the Netherlands to apply for assisted euthanasia on the grounds of psychological suffering, citing his treatment-resistant bipolar diagnosis, and later, PTSD. Joseph also noted that while assisted medical death for psychiatric conditions is legal in the Netherlands, it includes a lengthy approval process. In an age of content creation and heightened discourse around mental health, Joseph's 'digital diary' on social media has become a lively site of discourse, with users often bringing up their own struggles as well as themes of anticipatory grief, over/identification with diagnosis, social relations as a mode of healing, and the emergence of 'therapy culture.' Joseph describes his dinners with strangers as a radical mode of healing, finding connection with others and resisting the isolation inflicted by mental wounds like trauma. Along the way, Joseph has gathered small traces of these dinners- postcards, notes, and other keepsakes-all gifted to him by those he shares a meal with. I am honored and excited to propose an installation of archival materials from The Last Supper Project in collaboration with Joseph, inviting a reflection on friendship, social connection as a mode of healing, and the conference theme of 'ghosts' as it is often applied to conversations about trauma. While trauma is often understood as a painful past 'haunting' a person's present and future, anthropologists have broadened and complexified our understanding of how people's relationship to trauma and identity are not fixed, but rather permeable to local and individual understandings of

healing. In *Transcultural Psychiatry's* 2013 special issue, which lays the groundwork for a critical anthropology of trauma, anthropologist Rebecca Lester writes: "Much has been gained in this scaling up of anthropological studies of trauma...What often falls through the cracks, however, is a serious attending to the fact that, regardless of whatever social or cultural meanings might accrue, people genuinely suffer. Any anthropological consideration of trauma cannot—should not—lose sight of this fact. And people not only suffer; they endure, and sometimes even transcend. People find ways to go on living—not just by resolving deep psychological conflicts or by reorganizing their experience to meet existing categories, but through ongoing, iterative, continuous processes of meaning-making that emerge in relationship with others, across a variety of levels and contexts, and through time" (p.754). This installation is an invitation and provocation to reflect on what it means to connect with others over shared hardship in this digital era of social media, online diaries, and content creation. It will include 'archival' materials from Joseph's project alongside brief reflections on themes and questions that have emerged through his journey.

Organizer: Sarina Adeline McCabe

8752 What Remains: Braiding and Honoring Migration Dreams and Stories

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton, on the 3rd floor, in the Napoleon Foyer all day Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

What Remains brings together artistic production—photography, illustration, sound, video, and installation—with multidisciplinary approaches, including ethnographic research, partnerships, and activism, to reframe migration as a universal and timeless human experience; one that occurs before, during and after the passage itself. The project is a tribute to those that have made this journey, but have been silenced or whose voices were never heard.

The main piece of the installation, *La Trenza (The Braid)*, is comprised of rescued objects that hold unknown stories that were abandoned in the desert near the border of Mexico and the United States. Those objects are braided together with donated pieces that represent the known stories from families that have crossed geographical and political borders. *La Trenza* symbolizes the stories of people who continue to cross physical and sociocultural borders facing dehumanizing discourses across the world.

Through immersive engagement, What Remains invites reflections of connection and compassion as bridges that transcend and unite all types of borders. The project aims to incite social change and keep growing by braiding and joining more communities and stories around the world, translating awareness into practices and actions of solidarity and support for those who endeavor in the global and timeless phenomenon of migration.

Organizer(s): Monica Lozano, Adriana Alvarez

8676 A NAPA Professional Development Workshop: Fundamentals of Storytelling for Anthropologists

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Workshop

Storytelling is a powerful and essential skills for anthropologists but few are trained in the skills that will support effective creation and telling of stories. Stories are essential for to anthropologists in all fields as they are proven to engage listeners effectively.

In this workshop, participants will learn the fundamentals of effective storytelling from four senior and experienced professional anthropologists. The workshop is experiential, providing opportunities to learn and practice skills in a safe and supporting environment.

Anthropologists at all levels of training and experience are encouraged to participate.

5375 Linguistic Anthropology with an Attitude, Part 2: Being with Alessandro Duranti

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will explore the diverse ways in which Alessandro Duranti's ideas, ways of being, teaching, and academic scholarship have impacted the lives and work of our participants. Duranti's approach to pragmatics and politics was visionary, with his work on rethinking context - especially the role of the audience (a.k.a. listeners) in the co-constitution of meaning - presaging broader linguistic anthropological interest in this topic by decades. His phenomenologically-informed analysis of agency, intentionality, and improvisation changed how we understand the links between grammar and social action. Notably, Duranti also helped give the subfield its contemporary robust form through a stream of influential edited volumes and companions - as well as a critical textbook - alongside his stewardship of the JLA and Oxford book series. He has broadened global engagement with the discipline through his publications in French and Italian, and his generous mentorship, paired with his ability to embrace unconventional and creative perspectives, has shaped multiple generations of scholars. Perhaps just as importantly, Duranti has done "linguistic anthropology with an attitude," that is, with a perceptible vibe that encourages a flexible state of play with respect to "rules" and conventions.

The roundtable will expand on ideas addressed in the panel "Linguistic Anthropology with an Attitude, Part 1: Thinking with Alessandro Duranti." Recognizing Duranti as a critical root in the family tree of linguistic anthropology, participants will trace their own trajectories within and beyond the subfield, mapping Duranti's role in shaping their paths in and beyond academia.

Roundtable participants will reflect on how Alessandro Duranti's academic scholarship and teaching have shaped their own work, how his being-in-the-world has affected their own attitude and agency, and how his scholarship and attitude have impacted linguistic anthropology and related disciplines.

Participant contributions will focus on a number of common themes from their work with Duranti, including (but not limited to) 1. The specific texts (e.g., his 'red book' on Linguistic Anthropology) that drew them into the subfield; 2. The impact of watching him at work, observing his unique approach to writing, reading, and/or thinking; 3. His role as a steward of the subfield's intellectual history; 4. The centrality of improvisation and creativity as both an academic interest and a key component of his teaching, mentorship, and scholarly collaboration; 5. His teaching of fine-grained linguistic and pragmatic analysis in relation to broad sociopolitical concerns; and 6. His unique mentorship style and its combination of rigor, generosity, good humor, and genuine curiosity about others.

We will also invite comments and questions from the audience that explore the varied ways in which Duranti's influence persists in their own lives and work.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Rachel George, Whitman College, Robin Riner, Marshall University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Teruko Mitsuhashi , Aurora Donzelli , Cre Engelke , Anna Corwin , Wendy Fonarow , Nicco La Mattina , Jennifer Reynolds, University of South Carolina, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Rachel George, Whitman College, Robin Riner, Marshall University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

300 Society for East Asian Anthropology- Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Yuki Negi, University of Tokyo, qingyang xie , Zi-Tong Scarlett ZHANG , Lan Shi , Junyi Ji , Pamela Runestad , KEXIANG ZHAO , Pengfei Li

Presenter(s): Yuki Negi, University of Tokyo, qingyang xie, Zi-Tong Scarlett ZHANG, Lan Shi, Junyi Ji, Pamela Runestad, KEXIANG ZHAO, Pengfei Li

Presentation(s): "Being gifted again" as reciprocating: An examination of the practice of gift exchange in the business succession on the remote island in Japan

This presentation analyzes how practices of gift exchange are taken place between the deceased or retired family business owners and the successors of that businesses in the island in Japan.

As the birthrate declines and the population ages in Japan's rural areas, many private companies operating in these areas face the problem of severe aging and shortage of workers. Especially on

the remote islands, the very small private enterprises provide the essential services for the social life of the islands, and if the owner of the enterprise retires or passes away, someone must take over the business, or the social life of the island will be severely affected.

In this presentation, I will consider the question from the viewpoint of gift theory; how "objects" such as businesses and companies, which must be unilaterally gifted in the form of transfers when business owners retire or pass away, are or are not transferred and gifted in what ways to which persons or organizations.

My research field is a remote island in west Japan called Ama-Cho(town), Shimane Prefecture, which is famous for their active rural revitalization and increasing the number of young immigrants from the urban areas.

Therefore, even though there are young people available to take over businesses that are in danger of closing, these businesses are mainly taken over by the island residents or existing private companies on the island, rather than by new migrants. And many of them are closed down without being taken over when the island residents or private companies on the island are unable to take over the businesses, even if the businesses are significant to the social life of the island.

I explain that the "object" of the business has an inalienable relationship with the person of the deceased or retired business owner from the case of business succession on the island in which the gift economy practiced by the limited people and land.

Then I will review the act of "being gifted" in the practice of gifts through discussing the following.

1. The business transfers by the island residents and private companies on the island are the practices in which the actors who have already gifted something from the previous owner, such as the employees or business partners on the island who were taken care of by the owner, dare to "be gifted again" as reciprocating for the gift they have already received.
2. Thereby transforming the negative image of the business that "must be taken over" into a positive one that respects the previous business owner as a member of the island community.
3. Being transferred a business as a practice of reciprocating also prevents the successor from being given a selfish image within the rural community.
4. The islanders maintain a reciprocal community in the island through these practices of gift.

Presenter(s): Yuki Negi

Dreaming in Decay: Digital Nostalgia and the Infrastructural Temporality in Chinese Dreamcore

In contemporary China, a youth-driven (mainly Generation Z) vernacular digital aesthetic called Chinese Dreamcore (Zhong Shi Meng He) surfaced, reviving shared memories as ghostly presences: a digital nostalgia that reconfigures decaying urban spaces into discomfiting and dreamlike tableaux of estrangement and suspended time. Emerging but diverging from the Western subculture aesthetic of Dreamcore, Chinese Dreamcore deviates from ironic critiques of

consumerism, instead appearing as spectral returns of a national dream. This digital aesthetic reanimates the spatial ruins of China's late-1990s to early-2000s developmental optimism as spectral remnants of a stalled national dream-aging corridors, empty neighborhoods, and deteriorating residential blocks now rendered in digitally enchanted form.

This paper brings together anthropological concerns with infrastructural form, digital materiality, and the temporal politics of post-socialist transition. While nostalgia in China has often been associated with an idealized revolutionary past marked by bitterness (Griffiths & Zeuthen, 2014), Chinese Dreamcore points to a different direction, revealing the political dynamics in post-socialist China. It is a mediated and affectively distant practice of remembering. Structures once hailed as emblems of progress return in pixelated form, haunted by a stagnant national dream of post-socialist progress. They offer aesthetic interruptions, as attachments and signs of what refuses to disappear.

Through ethnographic readings of Chinese Dreamcore production, I argue that its popularity shows a generational hope in a disjointed temporality. These images not only represent the urban decay but also evoke idealized imaginations of home (Doná, 2015). This idealization is filtered through distortion and surreal aesthetics, showing the ghost of the past and memory. In this way, Chinese Dreamcore reimagines nostalgia as an affective tension between progress and stagnation. It offers an anthropological lens into how young adults are involved in digital culture and interact with urban materiality, dwelling with decaying housing infrastructures and stagnant dreams. These images trouble the linearity of developmental time, suggesting a recursive temporality where the past persists as affective residue.

Presenter(s): qingyang xie

Flux and My Han-ness in Southern Xinjiang: Making the Next Three-Year Choice within the Teleoaffective Structures

Historically, Han migration to southern Xinjiang has often been interpreted as a unidirectional population movement driven by state agendas, amounting to a form of regional occupation in service of political objectives. Within this narrative, "Han-ness" is frequently regarded as a functional identity constructed to fulfill the needs of nationalism, closely tied to the perceived fixity of the Han population in the region. However, through close observation of mobility patterns among Han migrants in the Aksu area of southern Xinjiang, this paper identifies a more subtle and cautious trend of movement. Within a seemingly stabilized sociopolitical atmosphere and under policies that appear increasingly liberal, a new generation of Han migrants-specifically, those who outwardly comply with current CCP policies-display ambivalence in both political belonging and residency decisions. This hesitancy stems in part from dissonance between different waves of Han migrants and from an acute awareness of everyday differences between Han and Uyghur modes of life. These dynamics point to the emergence of a new, indeterminate pattern of bidirectional migration.

Amid such social fissures, Han individuals begin to treat Han-ness as a reflexive identity shaped by their specific spatial and temporal circumstances. They gradually disentangle this identity from the essentialist binary of fixity and flux. Using these two concepts as analytical entry points, the study reconceptualizes Han-ness as an individualized form of self-identification. This identity emerges through negotiations of agency under constraint and gains meaning through interpersonal interactions. In turn, these evolving identities influence and are influenced by their immediate social environments. Drawing on the process through which self-identity becomes socially embodied, the paper reconfigures Han-ness as a dynamic and adaptive form of life rather than a static cultural category. By conceptualizing Han-ness as a collective formation marked by resilience and organic capacity for growth, the analysis adopts an introspective lens to reflect on the limitations embedded within its developmental context. These constraints are closely tied to a broader crisis of procedural legitimacy in the region. The paper ultimately argues that Han-ness exists within a gray "third zone," haunted by historical ghosts and legacies, oscillating between idealized loyalty and opportunism—a vacuum shaped by the internal struggle of individuals negotiating within Teleoaffective structures.

Presenter(s): Zi-Tong Scarlett ZHANG

Ghosts of Participation: The Aftermath of an Abandoned Rural Museum in Eastern China

This paper reflects on a village museum in Eastern China that no longer functions - its exhibitions deteriorating, its doors locked, and its community largely ambivalent. Intended to celebrate intangible heritage and foster local pride, the project now lingers as a silent monument to misplaced intentions. Through field observations and conversations with villagers, I consider what this "ghost museum" reveals about the symbolic role of heritage infrastructure in state narratives of rural development. What kinds of absences does it produce? What traces of participation remain? In treating the museum not just as a failure but as a meaningful artefact in its own right, I raise broader questions about the temporality, utility, and politics of cultural heritage.

Presenter(s): Lan Shi

Media Deceleration: Temporality and Time Experienced in iPanda Slow Live-Streaming

The giant pandas (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) are believed to be cute and cozy, sleeping a lot and being somewhat slow. The iPanda channel puts Pandas' real-time life 24/7 on a non-stop live stream, which resembles slow live streaming. Pandas combined with slow live streaming makes it even "slower", where time seems to be extended. How is time and temporality experienced subjectively in panda slow live-streaming? What is behind the "boring yet interesting" live images in a digital media age? This paper, taking technography as research method, tries to understand time and temporality within panda slow live-streaming through participant observation and in-depth interviews. This paper found that panda slow live-streaming is embedded into time for sleep, labor, and leisure. Instead of slowing down the paces of everyday life, panda slow live-streaming actually serves possibility for "time axis manipulation". The audience of iPanda, or "panda fans", gain an impression of company and co-presence, and develop a subculture through panda slow live-

streaming. The cameras are not panopticon or human-centrism gaze, but more of tools for "social co-presence". Through co-presence with pandas, people retained "becoming-with" the nature, sharing their individual time with other people and species. Media provide the accessibility of social deceleration, which is not time that slows down, nor the slow-motion in videos. Social deceleration means that users are able to manipulate media content to match their own everyday life rhythm, thus re-establishing a coordinate reference system of time, and adjusting subjectivity within time and temporality.

Presenter(s): Junyi Ji

Co-author(s): Lei Zhang, Junyi Ji

Spectral Associations: Sophrology and medical knowledge in a Japanese maternity clinic

Sophrology is a set of relaxation strategies that are employed to improve clinical outcomes. Utilized in practices from dentistry to imaging across Europe, Sophrology is most commonly applied to childbirth in Japan. Drawing on DelVecchio Good's biotechnical embrace to examine the literature and practices of Sophrology in a Japanese maternity clinic, I demonstrate how Sophrology used during labor provides a case study of how medical knowledge is circulated, applied, and embodied to meet national ideals -- even when (perhaps especially when?) specters of orientalism and occidentalism are part of the narrative.

Presenter(s): Pamela Runestad

Tianxia's Elastic Boundaries: Symbolic Inclusion and the Ethic of Placability

In its classical sense, Tianxia constituted a world-ordering structure predicated on narrativity-discourse, symbolism, and ritual. Its logic operated on the principle that "order is relationality": a cultural-ethical narrative stratifying, categorizing, and ascribing meaning to the world. Constructs such as the "Five Zones" (五服) and "tributary homage from myriad states" were not geographical facts but symbolic spatial arrangements. Tianxia functioned primarily as a symbolic system-a cultural grammar that imbued political relations with significance rather than a technical blueprint for power distribution. This study is based on ethnographic research in Western China.

The contemporary resurgence of Tianxia discourse in China should not be interpreted as either a revival of classical political idealism or nationalist nostalgia. Instead, it operates as a machine of illusion-generation-a "hyper-moral phantasmagoria" produced through the interplay of technological media, state rhetoric, historical inertia, and global capital. This phantasm does not rely on ethical-rational coherence but thrives on affective mobilization, cognitive closure, and hyperreal saturation. Within this spectacle, Tianxia manifests not as a rational dialogic framework but as a recursive circulation of national sentiment as spectacle.

We inhabit a globally interconnected space in which ethical bonds have become unanchored, and symbolic orders detached from lived values. The modern resurgence of Tianxia (天下) in China does not restore a moral cosmos, but operates as a spectral formation-haunted by its historical grammar yet animated by affective mobilization and geopolitical desire. Its subjects do not live

within a coherent ethical world, but rather drift as spectral presences-summoned by a fantasy of civilizational harmony, yet suspended in the hollow form of value rationality.

Can we envision a non-phantasmic Tianxia? What ethical foundations and practical logics might undergird it?

Although the distinctive external signs of ethnic minority life in Guizhou and Hunan have gradually faded in the course of modernization, the village feuds and clan conflicts that were common in the early years of the PRC still survive today in more veiled forms-through customs of non-intermarriage, mutual avoidance, and ritual exclusion, especially in remote villages. In some places, crossing a single mountain ridge means entering a world governed by entirely different customs, languages, and even ethical structures. These boundaries are not those of the nation-state, yet they constitute the gray violence within the logic of Tianxia-not overt hostility, but latent forms of exclusion and symbolic aggression, born of irreconcilable belonging, identity, and cultural incommensurability. This is Tianxia as a symbolic structure made real: it sustains its flexible margins not through explicit sovereignty, but through passive civilizing projects, muted alterities, and unspeakable t

Presenter(s): KEXIANG ZHAO

“Ordinary people”: The formation of a moralistic discursive space

Inspired by the Foucauldian theory of subject-formation, this article examines the formation, or more precisely the re-formation, of a moralistic discursive identity in contemporary China: "ordinary people" (putong ren). Though "ordinary people" is not a new concept in China, it has gained a renewed popularity in a paradoxical manner since the late 2010s: while the Chinese society as a whole has become more extraordinary rather than ordinary globally, Chinese subjects predominantly and passionately identify themselves as "ordinary" rather than "extraordinary" people. To address this paradox, we analyze how two groups of Chinese citizens-middle class persons and migrant workers-themselves actively pursue and identify with this newly popularized discursive space of "ordinary people," apart from clarifying the hegemonic role of the state in the formation process.

Whereas both groups passionately employ the newly popularized "ordinary people" identity, they have rather distinctive and at times contradictory rationales underneath. For middle class persons, their identification with "ordinary people" makes them at once enjoy their newly obtained freedoms (mainly in terms of freedom of consumption choices) and shirk whatever social responsibility they may assume for the society at large. For migrant workers, in contrast, this discursive identity largely comes out as a result of resignation, a powerless acceptance of their disadvantaged status in today's China-that is, being ordinary as the only life option rather than one choice among available others. In spite of these differences, both groups embrace the identity of "ordinary people," and both groups inject a strong moralistic underpinning of the "ordinary people" identity.

Presenter(s): Pengfei Li

310 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Jianhua Zhao, University of Louisville, James Debowski , Brandon Costelloe-Kuehn, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Dan Qaurooni , Zhaoyi Yan

Presenter(s): Jianhua Zhao, University of Louisville, James Debowski, Brandon Costelloe-Kuehn, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Dan Qaurooni, Zhaoyi Yan

Presentation(s): Forging an identity in the present with the past: A case study of a Chinese couturière

With Rihanna donning a bright yellow dress by Guo Pei ascending the stairs at the Met Gala in 2015, Chinese couturiers have come to the fore in the global high fashion world. To distinguish themselves, however, Chinese couturiers often take inspirations from China's past. Drawing on field research of a noted couturière based in Shanghai, China, this paper examines how China's past has come to help define the present and how a sartorial identity is articulated to and received by the clients. It explores the extent to which a new couture culture is emerging in the context of the 21st century Shanghai.

Presenter(s): Jianhua Zhao

In the Shadow of Ghosts: Recovery, Identity and the Catastrophic Injury Industry

Catastrophic injury bifurcates a life. Abruptly propelled along a new trajectory, survivors are beset by ghosts: ghosts of the self as we knew it, of life as we had planned, of the people and relationships we loved, and of ways of being now incomprehensible. Every moment holds reminders of a life lost. Insurers and medico-legal experts summon these ghosts to measure and quantify injury and loss. Success in the medico-legal system demands that survivors live in the shadows of their ghosts. Yet, these are the very moments where survivors must make peace with what haunts them to redefine their existence.

This paper examines notions of 'recovery' within the catastrophic injury industry. Specifically, I examine how ideas of recovery differ between injury survivors and the experts quantifying their claims for financial compensation. Should survivors strive to become a repaired, imperfect version of their former selves, or might they grow to encompass, and be transformed through injury? This presentation entwines 5 years of 'recovery' from catastrophic injury with five years of ethnographic encounters with the medico-legal industry, problematizing the very notion of 'recovery' at the heart of catastrophic injury compensation.

Presenter(s): James Debowski

Nuclear Systems Literacies as a Non-Goal-Oriented Goal: Context-Centered Pedagogy for Collaborative Siting

In an attempt to depart from top-down, technocratic nuclear waste management approaches, the U.S. Department of Energy recently supported process development for "collaborative siting" (originally "consent-based siting"). The 12 "consortia" funded to advance this process from 2022 to 2024 conducted research to better understand informed consent around complex topics, and the conditions necessary for a legitimate consent-based process. This paper, emerging from broader ethnographic research on the evolving consent-based siting process, argues that this new approach to siting demands new models of knowledge sharing and creation that go beyond transmission-/deficit-model-based attempts to unidirectionally "inform" the public. We ask, as our central question, what pedagogical contexts could cultivate "nuclear systems literacies" that enable meaningful participation in consent-based siting processes and other scientifically and politically complex challenges? Based on our design and evaluation of a program focused on nuclear science and engineering fundamentals, and also incorporating perspectives from the interdisciplinary field of science and technology studies, we propose three conditions that characterize our "context-centered pedagogy:" 1) an exploratory atmosphere; 2) experiential and interdisciplinary learning; and 3) imaginative shaping of what is being consented to. A context-centered pedagogy, as we are developing the concept and practice, aims to go beyond "raising awareness" of contextual factors as background by reframing contexts as effective targets of intervention; encouraging work on systems, not just in them. This, of course, is a challenging goal; a "non-goal-oriented goal," that requires the development of experimental systems. While pre- and post-program surveys (with open-ended and Likert scale questions, supplemented with participant-observation field notes, and analysis of student presentations) reveal significant changes in perception around nuclear topics, we conclude that more research is needed on efficient pedagogies for systems thinking and epistemological literacy (put simply, understanding how the map is never the territory while collaboratively developing maps that are better fit-for-context).

Presenter(s): Brandon Costelloe-Kuehn

Rites of False Passage: a ritual critique of MIT Media Lab's Food Computer project

Between 2015 and 2020, MIT Media Lab's Food Computer project captivated public imagination with a promise of democratized digital farming: anyone could become a "nerd farmer" by uploading and downloading "climate recipes" to grow plants in a computer-controlled box. But behind the sleek interfaces and TED-stage charisma, the device failed to grow anything at all. It was, ultimately, an elaborate fiction-fabricated data, staged demos, and no verifiable agricultural output.

This talk offers a ritual critique of the Food Computer based on my ethnographic research. Drawing from Tim Ingold & Elizabeth Hallam, I frame the process of making in terms of rites of passage for makers and materials. The making of the Food Computer, however, was arguably a **rite of false passage**. Rather than facilitating a real transformation in farming or technology, the project only managed **impressions** of transformation: the front stage dazzled with promises of efficiency and democracy, while the backstage remained empty-no growth, no results. The ritual signs persisted and thickened despite this absence, creating an illusion of efficacy. A rite of false passage is an

unstable symbolic performance that is not anchored in any referential reality. This instability appends two phases to the classic three stage structure of ritual as understood by Van Gennep and theorized by Turner. Separation, liminality, and reintegration are followed by exposure, when the facade cracks, and closure, when the issue is redressed.

False passage is not unique to the Food Computer but endemic to a wider class of techno-speculative artifacts. Recent examples of adjacent technologies include Theranos' Edison, One Laptop Per Child, Rabbit r1, and self-driving cars, among others. Such objects inhabit a thick symbolic terrain, recycling cultural myths of innovation and empowerment, while severing the grounding from any stable reference. In the computer and cognitive sciences, this disjunction is known as the "symbol grounding problem". But symbolic excess is not just a technical issue. Ritual critique can offer diagnostic tools for understanding a tech culture whose symbolic forms can perform transformation without enacting it.

Presenter(s): Dan Qaurooni

What Makes Cross-Gender Performance in Chinese Opera Possible: An Ethnomusicological Study on Theatricality, Conventionalization, and Codified System

This paper investigates the codified aesthetic system underlying cross-gender performance in Chinese opera, a practice that transcends historical origins to remain a cornerstone of the art form. While existing literature highlights the historical development and the performative techniques of Chinese opera, less attention has been given to its systematic theatricality-rooted in conventionalization, abstraction, and codification-that enables cross-gender roles to thrive. Drawing on insights from performance studies, semiotics, and cultural anthropology, this study addresses this gap by exploring how these elements create a shared "contractual" language between performers and audiences.

The research is grounded in extensive fieldwork across 11 cities in Mainland China, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with 70 practitioners and audience members in 2023 to 2024. These findings illuminate the layered codification within Chinese opera, spanning the personal connections between performers and their roles, interactions among co-performers, and the dynamic performer-audience relationship. By contextualizing these practices within broader theoretical frameworks-such as Brecht's alienation effect, Schechner's performativity and Saussure's semiology -this paper examines how cross-gender performance blurs boundaries between gender, reality, and imagination.

This analysis offers new perspectives on the sustainability of Chinese opera in contemporary society, also emphasizing the need for audience education and cultural appreciation. By situating Chinese opera within both its historical roots and current challenges, this paper contributes to discussions on global performance traditions, aesthetic systems, and the interplay between traditional art forms and modernity.

Presenter(s): Zhaoyi Yan

323 Council on Anthropology and Education Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Qinwei Qi , Arpith Isaac , Seven Mattes, Michigan State University, Felicity Breedlove , Amy Robbins, Watershed School, Tricia Gray, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Bóris Maia

Presenter(s): Qinwei Qi, Arpith Isaac, Seven Mattes, Michigan State University, Felicity Breedlove, Amy Robbins, Watershed School, Aprille Phillips, University of Nebraska, Kearney, Bóris Maia

Presentation(s): Audible Ghosts: A Semiotic Ethnography of Teacher Voice in China

Voice is ubiquitous in human communicative practices. In classrooms, teachers consciously employ their voices as vital pedagogical tools, shaping instruction and students' learning experiences through subtle shifts in tone, volume, and rhythm. Given teachers' heavy vocal demands, many experience vocal strain or disorders, highlighting the embodied nature of teacher voice. Anthropologists have extensively explored the embodied voices of singers, politicians, poetry reciters, and call center workers, tracing the sensory dimensions of sound and illustrating how voicing bodies are embedded within historically and culturally specific ideologies. Yet, existing discussions of teacher voice have remained largely metaphorical, emphasizing voice as symbolic agency or discursive authority, while neglecting detailed analyses of teachers' embodied vocal experiences.

This study builds on previous ethnographic investigations of voice and draws on Peircean semiotics to highlight the dual nature of teacher voice as both a physiological act and a socially constructed phenomenon. This perspective considers teachers' reported bodily and sensory experiences of using their voices, while also attending to how teachers come to perceive their voices as embodied principles.

The main fieldwork was conducted over six months in a variety of K–12 schools across China. As an embedded researcher, I observed daily classroom interactions across subjects and grade levels, audio-recorded all sessions, video-recorded selected ones, and conducted multiple teacher interviews-including open-ended, semi-structured, and video-cued formats-to explore how teachers use, experience, and interpret their voices.

Findings suggest that vocal professionalization is a central part of becoming a competent teacher. This professionalization is often framed through teachers' efforts to cultivate, perform, and maintain a voice that possesses Chuantouli (穿透力)-a Chinese local concept roughly translatable as "penetrating power." While Chuantouli can refer to the physical capacity of the voice to travel across a room, it is more than an acoustic trait-it is a culturally shaped expectation, reflecting an embodied ideal of the teacher voice in Chinese schools.

A voice with Chuantouli generates a sensory experience; it is expected to cut through students' bodily barriers, reaching into their awareness and moral consciousness. It draws attention, evokes

emotion, and incorporates teachers and students into a shared felt-body, fostering perceptual attunement within a common experiential field, and even contributes to the emergence of the student as a new subject. Cultivating Chuantouli thus requires teachers to develop bodily techniques and tacit knowledge to align with a culturally defined vocal norm.

Presenter(s): Qinwei Qi

Co-author(s): Sihan Xiao

Films, strongmen and gender: a visual cued ethnographic exploration of gender representations and practices among youth.

In recent years, the demand and acceptance among mainstream Indian audiences for the 'traditional' and 'Indian' has resulted in an increasing number of films being produced that echo conservative sentiments on gender roles with hyper-masculine male heroes and subordinated and sidelined female characters.

A twenty-month ethnography that began during the Covid-19 lockdown periods and into the post-lockdown times with a group of Grade 9 students from a government-run school in Tamil Nadu, raised questions about the use and influence of films on youth in this state. The lockdown periods which resulted in the shift to online classes, albeit with limited accessibility for many students in these government schools, also resulted in students receiving legitimate access to technology and the internet.

Past research and the literature show that peer influence is perhaps strongest in youth activities surrounding media. Young men are influenced by movie 'heroes' and they perform acts of masculinity inspired by these stars. The strong heterosexual culture in these movies results in young men shifting these masculine performances to an outside and different audience- women (Osella & Osella, 2006).

This paper demonstrates the use of visual cued ethnography (VCE) in working with a group of youth in a participatory approach, to create spaces of safety, critical reflection and dialogue. VCE holds promise for this research as it privileges the voices of marginalized groups allowing the researchers to listen more carefully to the participants and allowing participants to play active roles in forming the research methods and directly engaging in analysis of the findings. VCE also creates a less threatening and more inviting environment (Tobin, 2019).

I used the method of critical viewing of diverse film clips followed by group discussions.

This was my primary form of data collection; within this, different formats (e.g., worksheets, debates) were used. The discussions were facilitated by the use of relevant films, by my critical intervention, and by the participants who perform this role for each other through the discussions.

A key finding has been the destabilizing potential of using films to upset accepted gender beliefs and norms. During the research, particular beliefs, mindsets or attitudes (stereotypes more broadly) related to gender, masculinity, and inequality were challenged and hotly debated by participants, and led to changes in their stated responses, questions asked and even manner of participation.

Presenter(s): Arpith Isaac

Ghosts in the Lecture Hall – Living with the MSU School Shooting

On February 13th, 2023, a man entered Berkey Hall and began shooting. His rampage continued across Michigan State University's campus. Students barricaded themselves in rooms, calling their parents in tears, while police walked the expansive land-grant institution. Three students were killed and five were injured. The response to this event was a lesson in the complexity of disaster response. Amidst the media frenzy and the public grieving rituals, professors were thrown into roles they were not trained to perform, and the student body was cheered on for being "Spartan Strong" at their weakest moment. The university's dated hierarchical power structures intensified the unequal distribution of labor and expectations. As an Assistant Professor specializing in disaster studies, and teaching over a thousand students during this tumultuous time, I utilize autoethnography to assess the immediate and long-term aftermath.

Presenter(s): Seven Mattes

Liberal Arts Colleges Admissions Practices: Historical Context and Suggestions

Liberal arts colleges in the United States have long been regarded as institutions that cultivate critical thinking, leadership, and moral development. However, these institutions also function as mechanisms of social reproduction, reinforcing elite privilege and historical marginalization. This thesis critically examines how the admissions processes at these colleges favor students with social capital, shaped by historical legacies of exclusivity. While test-optional policies have been implemented to promote access, they fail to meaningfully address structural inequities. Additionally, diversity is often framed as a metric of institutional progressiveness rather than a genuine commitment to equity. Using a systematic literature review and guided by theories of social reproduction, social capital, and meritocracy, this study critically investigates the admissions processes of selective liberal arts institutions. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates education, anthropology, and sociology, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about equity in higher education and the future of admissions reform.

Presenter(s): Felicity Breedlove

Teaching Happiness (and Surviving Middle School) Like an Anthropologist

Since 2018, Finland has consistently ranked as the world's happiest country according to the World Happiness Report (WHR), an initiative promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Meanwhile, the U.S. slipped from 15th to 23rd on the WHR in 2023, and if ranked by the happiness of its young people, it would fall to 62nd (Newman, 2024). This notable contrast inspired me to develop "Project Happiness," an interdisciplinary middle school course blending my background in cultural anthropology with my current role as a humanities teacher.

In this presentation, I illustrate how anthropological thinking and practice - curiosity, cultural relativism, participant observation, and reflection - can enrich middle school education, fostering student engagement, empathy, and global awareness. Project Happiness invites students to examine happiness not simply as a personal emotion but as a complex experience shaped by systems, cultural values, relationships, and contexts. Students grapple with essential questions about the nature of happiness, how it's measured, and its implications for communities.

Drawing from global education frameworks and my Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad experience in Finland, along with my upcoming Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms experience in India (planned for July 2025), this course integrates educational principles emphasizing care, community, and connection. In the presentation, I will share specific examples of activities and approaches used in the course, highlighting how students applied anthropological tools to explore diverse cultural conceptions of happiness, engage with global happiness indices, and connect their findings to local experiences.

Ultimately, this presentation advocates for middle school as a vibrant context for anthropological practice - not by explicitly teaching anthropology, but by immersing students in authentic inquiry. Additionally, it also encourages emerging or transitioning anthropologists to consider K-12 education as a meaningful and impactful field for applying and sharing their skills.

Presenter(s): Amy Robbins

The Ghosts of What Could Have Been in Educational Decision-making Spaces

Ethnographic research methods in education create the conditions to understand what is, but also how the past haunts the present, and what might have been or could be. In educational spaces, ethnographic tools reveal decision-points within their sociocultural contexts. We apply Agar's (1996) framing of "rich points" to explore how the tension in these spaces illuminates not just what happened, but also the ghosts of what could have been. We observe what happened, but we must also interrogate why it happened how it did and look for the ghosts down the pathways not taken. Attending to "provoking absences" (Phelan & Sumsion, 2003), what did not happen or what remained unspoken, sheds light into the spaces where inequity is born and offers insight into how we might move more intentionally toward educational equity.

We identified two cases (Stake, 1995) that demonstrate decision-points where what happened clearly contrasts with what could have been. Describing how different decisions could have shaped different outcomes provides glimpses into what is possible in advancing educational equity. Our two cases come from larger ethnographic studies: (a) a public school in Indian Country that was identified for state-led intervention and (b) an English Learning classroom in a demographically changing Midwestern public school.

Data collection in these studies involved participant observation (Spradley, 1979), fieldnotes, and thematic coding (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Erickson, 1984). Data sources included transcripts of legislative hearings and state board of education meetings, interviews, field notes, and artifacts from the contexts we explored. Analyses involved iterative coding and memo writing (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Owen, 2014). We triangulated data by examining how themes interacted across transcripts, artifacts, and fieldnotes. We conducted member checks (McQuillan, 1998) in an effort to ensure triangulation and validity. Data were collected over an extended period in each case.

These two cases offer numerous examples of "provoking absences" (Phelan & Sumsion, 2003), including missed opportunities to honor Tribal members' sovereignty in educating their young people, and missed opportunities to connect the life and curriculum of the "sheltered" (Haneda, 2009) U.S. history class to newcomer students' lives and to integrate them into the school and community. Such missed opportunities underscore the importance of attending to what goes unspoken or overlooked, reminding us that "provoking absence" is not merely a theoretical idea but a practical obligation to notice, disrupt, and reimagine what education might otherwise exclude. Our findings demonstrate the potential for advancing equity by exploring the space that "leaves open the possibility of provoking what is currently absent" (Phelan & Sumsion, 2008, p. 5). It is in this generative uncertainty that we see potential for reimagining what equity can mean in practice.

Presenter(s): Aprille Phillips

Co-author(s): Aprille Phillips

Waiting for Foucault at School: An Ethnographic Study on Disciplinary Measures in Brazilian Schools

This study explores the dynamics of disciplinary practices in Brazilian public schools through an ethnographic lens, examining how institutional responses to conflict and violence relate to broader debates on power, punishment, and control. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theoretical framework—particularly his concepts of disciplinary power, the production of docile bodies, and the panopticon—the research critically investigates the extent to which public schools reproduce mechanisms of surveillance and normalization under the guise of educational governance.

Based on fieldwork conducted in a municipal public school in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro across multiple periods in 2023 and 2024, the study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The focus lies on the daily practices of school administrators, teachers, and staff involved in maintaining order, managing conflict, and implementing disciplinary procedures.

The findings reveal a persistent predominance of punitive and repressive approaches to student behavior, even in institutional contexts that have formally adopted alternative frameworks such as restorative justice or conflict mediation. Although these approaches are presented in official discourse as progressive, humane, and protective—aiming to shift away from punishment toward repair and inclusion—their practical application often remains limited or symbolic. Instead, the

study documents how practices of control are rearticulated through new languages and protocols that ultimately sustain hierarchical relations and the marginalization of students perceived as "disruptive."

This tension between discourse and practice points to a broader paradox in educational policy: the coexistence of protective-restorative rhetoric with institutional logics rooted in exclusion and discipline. Rather than signaling a transition away from Foucauldian disciplinary models, the findings suggest a mutation of these mechanisms, in which control is maintained not through overt coercion alone, but through bureaucratic procedures and moralizing narratives of care and responsibility.

By interrogating how discipline is practiced, narrated, and justified within the everyday life of a public school, this research contributes to the anthropological and sociological literature on education, state power, and the management of childhood and youth. It also invites critical reflection on the limits and possibilities of institutional reform in contexts marked by inequality, structural violence, and deeply ingrained modes of social control.

Presenter(s): Bóris Maia

2523 Imagistic Kinship: Traversing Thresholds and In-Between Spaces in Family Life, Part 2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this panel, we take our point of departure in recent proposals of image as method (Stevenson 2014), imagistic inquiries (Grøn and Mattingly 2022) and spectral kinship (Gammeltoft 2022) in order to listen carefully to uncertainties, doubts, dreams, affects and ghosts in family life, thus orienting our attention towards immaterial, yet crucially important, dimensions of family life.

For decades the new kinship studies have inspired and expanded our understanding of family life by paying close attention emergent forms of family making like adoption, assisted reproduction, LGBTQ+ and more, demonstrating that kinship is not only about biology, but relatedness emerges through sharing of food, belongings, memories, and places (Carsten 2004). Medical anthropology has demonstrated new formations of biosocial relatedness and disability studies have paid close attention to 'kinship imaginaries', i.e. how the experience of disability reshapes kinship and family life (Rapp and Ginsburg, 2001, 2024). Kinship relations are practiced through closeness and distance alike (Stasch 2008, Strathern 2020, Navne, Svendsen and Gammeltoft 2017) and come with considerable ambiguity (Geschiere 1997; Peletz 2001). They are experienced as both nourishing and poisonous: hauntings and contagious connections inform intergenerational family life (Meinert and Grøn 2020) as well as state/family intimate belongings (Johannesen and Grøn 2022).

More specifically, we have asked the contributors to contemplate what we can learn about kinship by considering ghosts, thresholds, and in-between spaces:

What in-between spaces may open possibilities for dwelling, becoming and belonging in kinship relatedness? Or close them? Which ghosts, moods, affects, atmospheres and hauntings dwell there?

What material and immaterial thresholds are present and absent in family life? How do they mark or blur boundaries and demarcations of difference in the family and in more extended 'mutualities of being'?

Navne takes us through thresholds of belonging in care arrangements between families with children with cerebral palsy and welfare state professionals in Denmark: From in home visits to haunting state presences in family life. Moving to US and Indonesia, Hollan explores how in dreams people extend their desires for affiliation with people, spirits, animals, or objects that would in waking life be considered non-kin, while opposing those considered kin in waking life. Continuing the exploration of spectral forms of kinship, Nielsen reflects on haunting trauma in Danish family life with ADHD, experienced as both biological inheritance and a relational process shaped by family dynamics, caregiving and intergenerational trauma. Finally, in villages of Northern Vietnam, haunted by ancestors, ghosts, scarcity, loss, and chronic diseases, Gammeltoft explores the vital role of embodied generational images as crucial in shaping how people respond to health threats in ways deeply inflected by history.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Lone Groen, VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research, Laura Emdal Navne, University of Copenhagen; VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research

Chair: Teresa Kuan, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Laura Emdal Navne, University of Copenhagen; VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research, Douglas Hollan, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Mikka Nielsen, Tine Gammeltoft, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lisa Stevenson, McGill University

Presentation(s): Under the same roof: Thresholds of belonging in welfare state and family life with cognitive disability

"Enter the Upside Down" reads a doormat at the front door of the house of a family with three children with cognitive disabilities. Bringing together anthropological scholarships on new kinship, disability studies and imagistic care, this paper takes material and immaterial thresholds as a method to explore what forms of sociality are forged in extended care arrangements in families living with children with cerebral palsy in Denmark.

Children born prematurely and living with cerebral palsy are immediately attached to both family and welfare state in public care arrangements. "Our home is like a busy train station" are words used by parents to describe their relationship with the local authorities which stress the unsettled

boundaries of where their home ends and the place of the state begins. I explore these unsettled and porous boundaries as haunting i.e. a "visitation or inhabitation by a ghost, frequenting a place, dwelling place" (i.e. Good 2022). Inspired by Stevenson's (2014) image of the raven which represents an imagistic and indeterminate presence/absence, I trace kin and state relations across thresholds of belonging: From physical encounters in home visits and network meetings to spectral and haunting state presences in family life.

Presenter(s): Laura Emdal Navne

Dreaming Kinship, Kinship in Dreams

"Kinship" is a condensed, and at times, paradoxical concept of relationship and identification suggesting, among other things, inclusion (with those to whom one is considered kin) and exclusion (from those who are not kin); rights and entitlements (from kin), but also duties and obligations (owed to kin); affinity and emotional and physical intimacy (with kin), but also awareness of difference and aversion (despite kinship). Cultural norms in most places in the world inhibit people from talking about, or even thinking about, many of the paradoxes of kinship and the ambivalences they can generate, yet they may find relatively open, non-discursive expression in dreams. In dreams, people may extend their desire for affiliation or identification to people, spirits, animals, or objects they would otherwise define as non-kin, and the reverse: they may suffer from, oppose, or repudiate people or others who would otherwise be considered "kin" in waking life. Using dreams from Indonesia and the United States, I argue that dreams are one very important window through which we can observe how people both reveal and conceal the challenges of living with kin.

Presenter(s): Douglas Hollan

Haunting Trauma, Care, and Neurodivergence: Spectral Kinships in ADHD

This paper explores the intersection of trauma, care, and diagnostic categories within families navigating ADHD. Drawing on the concepts of contagious kinship connections (Meinert & Grøn, 2020), and spectral kinship (Gammeltoft, 2021), the study examines how ADHD is experienced as both a biological and relational process that is shaped by family dynamics, caregiving, and intergenerational trauma. The paper focuses on how ADHD manifests across generations, considering the ways in which neurodivergence is passed down within families. ADHD is framed as a condition that is not simply an individual diagnosis but a family trait that influences how family members relate to themselves and their roles within the family. Through the lens of hauntology (Derrida, 1994), the paper considers how past traumas—both individual and familial—continue to shape present lives, creating a spectral kinship where the legacy of earlier generations haunts current experiences. Ultimately, this paper asks how trauma, care, and diagnostic categories intertwine to shape family relationships and individual identities. How do family members reconcile their shared neurodivergence, seeing themselves in each other while also striving to carve out their own paths? The study contributes to an understanding of how neurodevelopmental conditions are embedded in family dynamics, intergenerational experiences, and the emotional work of caregiving.

Presenter(s): Mikka Nielsen

Embodied generational imaginaries: Spectral family pasts in Vietnam's chronic disease epidemic

Across the globe, healthcare landscapes are transforming as increasing numbers of people are affected by chronic, non-communicable diseases. In this paper, I argue that understanding the implications of these epidemiological shifts for human lives and coexistence requires attention to intergenerational time and what I term "embodied generational imaginaries." I develop this concept to capture the vital role of embodied images in shaping how people perceive and respond to health threats in ways deeply inflected by history. Embodied generational imaginaries emerge from shared historical experiences, whether through public iconography or personal life events, and play a critical role in shaping how people experience and handle somatic vulnerabilities. By connecting three rich and evolving areas of anthropological research—studies of global epidemiological transitions, spectral kinship, and the social and affective force of images—I explore how different generational imaginaries coexist within families in northern Vietnam, highlighting how spectral shades of memory create kinship frictions and tensions when healthcare practices clash and transform.

Presenter(s): Tine Gammeltoft

Discussion

8270 Listening Back: Veteran Engagement and the Ethics of Recognition in VA Research

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists, through practices of deep listening and immersion in others' lifeworlds, bring an ethnographic ear to participatory research in complex healthcare systems. Within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), patient engagement increasingly involves Veterans as active partners in shaping research and care. This panel examines how ethnographic methods support these efforts, helping build trust and everyday forms of knowledge that institutions often overlook. We focus on how Veterans' experience of illness and healing, voices and visions, housing instability, and institutional mistrust contribute to the development of housing and healthcare programs. Presenters draw from collaborations that include Veteran Engagement Groups, women's health collectives, peer-led spaces, and patient-informed quality improvement efforts. These settings reflect the VA's expanding emphasis on engagement while also revealing ongoing challenges. These include the weight of past military and institutional experience, moments of miscommunication, and the emotional labor required of both researchers and participants. The papers explore interview-based research with Veterans living with serious mental illness, national organizing among Women Veterans navigating fragmented systems, the role of Veterans in building out a community space, and the role of homeless-experienced Veterans in shaping overdose prevention efforts. Together, these presentations ask how experience becomes legible as knowledge within

institutional structures and what it takes to sustain engagement in contexts marked by precarity and past harm.

Anthropologists embedded in healthcare systems bring an interpretive framework that is often absent in conventional health services research. As Fix (2025) notes, ethnographic methods allow researchers not only to generate insights about care delivery but to shape the very questions institutions ask about well-being. Anthropologists working in VA settings form a national community of practice that supports institutional reflexivity, builds trust among Veterans, and contributes to the implementation of patient-informed programs. These contributions are grounded in deep engagement with lived experience and informed by an orientation toward policy and practice that makes a difference. As Hyland and Bennett (2013) argue, anthropology offers a model for linking academic inquiry with problem-solving, especially in contexts shaped by historical exclusion or mistrust. Within the VA, this approach makes space for Veterans' voices to be heard in ways that reconfigure institutional logics of expertise and care.

These papers ask what engagement means in an institution that seeks to learn from those it serves. They consider how ethnographic attention to experience and relationality can respond to longstanding mistrust and examine what makes engagement meaningful. They ask what anthropology can offer to a system seeking new ways of listening and care.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Matthew McCoy, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Chair: Alison Hamilton

Presenter(s): Ippolytos Kalofonos, University of California, Los Angeles, Matthew McCoy, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Alison Hamilton, Agatha Palma, Erica Fletcher, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Traben Pleasant, Oregon State University

Presentation(s): Veterans with Psychosis as Experience-Based Experts: Centering Veteran Voices & Visions

The Veteran Voices and Visions (VVV) project is an adaptation of the Hearing Voices approach at the Greater Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center. This project depathologizes psychosis by creating groups for Veterans where it is normative to hear voices and see visions, by validating nonbiomedical framings of unusual experiences commonly diagnosed as psychosis, and by encouraging and supporting participants to engage with their experiences as meaningful rather than only interpreting them as symptoms of an illness to be eliminated. Groups are co-facilitated by a clinician and a Veteran with their own lived experience of unusual experience. The groups assume that those who experience psychosis are experts of their own experience and invite participants to share their expertise with each other as they explore what it means to live with voices and visions. Participants share stories of suffering and recovery, coping strategies and worldviews, and often end up supporting each other in their ongoing life projects. Veteran engagement has been fundamental to this project, and Veterans, particularly those with lived experience of psychosis, have been involved in the project at all stages, including in the design, the adaptation of the

training, and in the facilitation of groups. This presentation will explore some of our experiences with this project, emphasizing the insights of Veterans from our groups.

Presenter(s): Ippolytos Kalofonos

Co-Creating Voice and Visibility with Homeless-Experienced Veterans in a VA Tiny Home Community

This paper describes the creation of a Veteran Engagement Committee (VEC) composed of homeless-experienced Veterans (HEVs) residing in a VA-sanctioned tiny shelter community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The site located on the West Los Angeles VA campus offered low-barrier housing and basic services to unsheltered Veterans. To bring Veteran perspectives into program design, a weekly committee was formed by HEVs, Veteran, peer specialists, and a medical anthropologist (author). Veterans co-developed meeting protocols and feedback systems to share concerns directly with VA leadership. These included issues related to healthcare access, basic supplies, communication with staff, and opportunities for connection. The group also identified needs that could be addressed immediately—such as providing hygiene kits, outdoor lighting, harm reduction trainings—demonstrating how small-scale changes could improve daily life. The paper reflects on the VEC as a participatory space where HEVs engaged with and across institutional hierarchies. It examines the labor of trust-building in a context marked by surveillance, stigma, and complex institutional histories. The VEC's work shows how relational presence and responsiveness can matter as much as formal policy. Drawing on Cheryl Mattingly's concept of "moral laboratories," the analysis explores how HEVs used the committee as a space to reimagine care, offering practical and ethical insights into partnering with homeless-experienced persons.

Presenter(s): Matthew McCoy

Engaging women Veterans in improving VA women's health research: the VA Women's Improvement Network (WIN)

Women Veterans make up only 10% of the VA patient population but represent the fastest growing group of users, prompting adaptations to better meet their needs. The VA has a long history of integrated health services research, and women's health is now a core focus. Since 2015, VA has prioritized Veteran engagement in research to foster trust and promote more Veteran-centered practices. We conducted national interviews with women Veterans to understand their perspectives on research participation. Many cited lack of awareness, distrust, and competing responsibilities in revisiting military experiences as barriers. Some expressed skepticism that their involvement would make a difference. As one Veteran shared, "We've been let down so much as women who served in the military." In response, our team launched the Women's Improvement Network (WIN) in 2019, the VA's first national, all-women Veteran engagement group. WIN was created to guide women's health research, support innovation, and share findings. The group has maintained stable membership, with 10 to 12 members regularly attending quarterly meetings. Members reported high levels of trust, mutual respect, and shared power. Over time, cohesion has grown through empathy, collaboration, and the visible impact of member input. This paper explores

how sustained engagement, grounded in anthropological methods of deep listening and relationship-building, can repair institutional trust and improve the relevance of VA research.

Presenter(s): Alison Hamilton

Psychotic Applied Anthropology: Interviewing Veterans with Atypical Forms of Communication for Quality Improvement at the VA

Anthropological theories of subjectivity arguably exclude people with non-normative forms of consciousness. Methods informed by these theories, like interviewing, are often ill-suited for participants with atypical forms of communication: they take for granted one's ability to use spoken language to represent the self, to think and communicate in chronological or logical sequences, and to think in terms of "experiences" and to then shape those experiences into narrative form. In an applied field such as the VA, where research is aimed at improving care for Veterans – and where datapoints must be turned over rapidly and distilled for key stakeholders – a rigorous, hardline approach to qualitative methods is taken. Researchers thus grapple with the contradictions in using these methods with Veteran participants, often homeless-experienced, who recount unusual experiences or communicate atypically. Researchers are often left with incomplete or questionable histories, uncertain timelines, and doubts over whether certain events ever really happened. Structured or semi-structured interviews may also be particularly distressing to these vulnerable research participants if not performed with sensitivity to their lived experiences. This paper grapples with these contradictions and presents some ideas for performing a sensitive "psychotic anthropology" in the applied setting.

Presenter(s): Agatha Palma

Implementing a Community Center in VA Housing: The Limits of Veteran Engagement in Continuous Quality Improvement

This paper describes the early implementation and formative evaluation of a community space for Veterans with homeless experience now residing in permanent supportive housing on a VA campus. Envisioned as a homelike environment, the center is staffed by Veteran Peer Support Specialists who share their experiences of overcoming life adversities to support fellow Veterans and foster campus community. The initiative uses a shared governance model, encouraging members to shape policies, develop leadership skills, and practice mutual aid. Over the past several months, the evaluation has integrated Veteran perspectives to inform continuous improvement through ethnographic methods, including interviews, participant observation, and focus groups with Veteran "guests" and VA staff. These methods capture the nuanced ways Veterans navigate life at a VA campus, contributing insights that shape the community center's development.

Throughout this process, we have encountered structural barriers to centering Veterans' voices in a complex healthcare and housing system, particularly VA policies around data sharing, volunteer coordination, and outreach. These challenges constrain what forms of engagement are permitted within both implementation and evaluation. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on Veteran engagement and community based participatory research in applied anthropology.

Presenter(s): Erica Fletcher

Ripple Effects Mapping: Veteran Perspectives on Veteran Engagement in VA Research

Anthropological approaches to listening, meaning-making, and collaboration offer vital tools for improving Veteran engagement (VE) in research within VA. This paper presents findings from five Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) sessions, a participatory method rooted in appreciative inquiry, exploring how Veterans experience their roles as research partners, participants, and consultants across VA contexts. While Veterans are increasingly involved as peer researchers, advisory members, and co-designers, little is known about how they interpret the personal and institutional impacts of this work. Drawing from diverse positionalities shaped by military service, institutional history, and lived expertise, REM surfaced benefits (e.g., community-building, shaping research), burdens (e.g., tokenization, poor compensation), and unexpected outcomes (e.g., emotional triggers, altruistic purpose). Sessions were co-facilitated by a Veteran Engagement Liaison and generated visual maps tracing ripple effects of engagement and what Veterans find meaningful or hope to change. The paper also addresses ethical tensions around what it means to be heard in institutional spaces shaped by trauma, illness, and structural harm. Linking participatory insight with practice, this work contributes to an anthropological praxis that repositions Veterans as contributors and co-authors of knowledge and change. The presenter, a Veteran and anthropologist embedded in VA, reflects on the sessions from within.

Presenter(s): Traben Pleasant

502 Society for Medical Anthropology Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Krisjon Olson , Emily Kaner, University of California, Los Angeles, Frederick Howard, The Ohio State University, Sarah Asantewaa , Gareth Edel , Javid Riahi, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Emmanuel Asante, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Siden, Stanford University

Presenter(s): Krisjon Olson, Emily Kaner, University of California, Los Angeles, Frederick Howard, The Ohio State University, Sarah Asantewaa, Gareth Edel, Javid Riahi, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Emmanuel Asante, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Siden, Stanford University

Presentation(s): Remaining Risks: Palliation and the Violence of Staying Behind

Stepping off a Cessna into northern Guatemala in 1998, a passerby warned, "Everyone here is drunk, dead, or unhappy." Ignoring this missive led to a decade of ethnographic research among youth confronting genocide's aftermath, systemic precarity, and pressures toward migration. This paper examines palliation-the practice of easing without curing-as experienced by individuals who have remained, troubling simplistic notions of recovery and engaging long-standing anthropological

debates around structural violence, suffering, and obligations created by fieldwork (Scheper-Hughes 1993; De León 2015; Warren 1998; Sanford 2012; Grandia 2012; Yates-Doerr 2015).

Grounded participant observation, interviews, and collaborative analysis over two decades, this paper begins at the grave of my twenty-one-year-old godson. In the past two years, he had risen in the ranks, with my intermittent financial support for his schooling, to become manager a fast food restaurant on Guatemala City's urban periphery. He died. We will never know why. Perhaps he refused to issue a loan; or to put his car into the service of cartels. Maybe he was robbed; or fell asleep at the wheel. Each scenario exposes how formal and informal actors enforce systems of control. I first confronted his tortured body via video call, and then video replay as they proliferated across the Guatemalan press. Accompanying his family to secure burial space, by removing the bones of an unpaid grave occupant, underscored multiple registers of abandonment.

These are economies that do not produce prosperity; service labor is volatile and racialized. Such patterns are further intensified by global anti-immigrant rhetoric, as the Trump administration inflates the value, and risks, of migration and staying in place.

During Guatemala's genocide the state strategically denied responsibility for civilian deaths, employing uncertainty as a form of terror. Contemporary corporations and politics now assert the right to enact violence openly. As Grandin (2004) suggests, this shift marks a transition from hidden to overt forms of state-sponsored brutality. In this context, acts of aid or alleviation serve as covert mechanisms of control, revealing how palliation itself reproduces structural violence.

My ethnographic analysis challenges moral binaries between suffering and survival and reframes palliation as a form of systemic entanglement. It argues that those who remain, often depicted as static in the postwar or after mass outmigration, navigate uncertain terrain. Ultimately, the paper contributes to anthropological understandings of violence, labor, and migration by tracing how we depend on the suffering of others. It calls for renewed attention to the responsibilities of anthropologists, states, and consumers in sustaining regimes of dispossession.

Presenter(s): Krisjon Olson

Rural Place Stigma as an Affective Experience: Health Implications for California's North State

Spatial stigma, which can be conceptualized as symbolic meanings associated with a place, including negative perceptions and attitudes associated with certain geographic areas, has emerged as an important social determinant of health. Over the past decade, researchers have theorized links between spatial stigma and negative health outcomes, including poorer mental and physical health. However, much of this research has focused on urban areas, with less attention paid to how spatial stigma may operate in rural places to produce health inequities. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews from two studies examining social and structural factors that shape substance use practices among young adults in California's rural northern counties, referred to as the "North State," this analysis draws attention to the affective dimensions of stigma to understand the embodiment of rural place stigma, and examine links to health. Resisting categorization, stigma can be viewed as an affective resonance that carries emotional and embodied dimensions that can

attach to specific places with the potential to become embodied in residents of those places.¹ In the context of the North State, participants reveal an awareness that their communities are "symbolically degraded" by widely held perceptions of drug use within rural North State communities. In this context, place functions as a "spoiled identity" which is linked, yet distinct from biases based on race, class and other social positions.¹ Indeed, throughout the interviews, many participants shared negative portrayals of the rural communities they either lived in or grew up, often alluding to larger structural issues related to economic disinvestment and inadequate housing, all of which can impact access to health-promoting resources and various health outcomes, including substance use.

1. Ahmed S. Happy Objects. In: Gregg M, Seigworth GJ, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press; 2010. Accessed December 8, 2024.

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/1469/chapter/170328/Happy-Object>

2. Graham LF, Padilla MB, Lopez WD, Stern AM, Peterson J, Keene DE. Spatial Stigma and Health in Postindustrial Detroit. *Int Q Community Health Educ*. 2016;36(2):105-113.

doi:10.1177/0272684X15627800

Presenter(s): Emily Kaner

Silver Teeth: Silver Diamine Fluoride Hesitancy and Parental Perspectives on Oral Health Outreach at Head Start

How do parents weigh the benefits and uncertainties of preventative dental care delivered in early childhood education settings? This talk draws on qualitative research conducted in partnership with Ohio State University's dental outreach team and the Head Start program in Franklin County, Ohio to explore how parents and caretakers make decisions about consent for onsite dental screenings, fluoride varnish application, and silver diamine fluoride (SDF) treatment for caries control. While such interventions are effective, inexpensive, non-invasive, and safe, they also prompt hesitation among caregivers for a variety of reasons. One well discussed concern regards aesthetics, as SDF stains damaged enamel a dark color. This talk opens up the layered experiences that shape parental hesitancy like strained medical trust, feelings of shame, and diffuse concerns about fluoride safety.

Teeth are an under-investigated aspect of social life. They are sites of perceived medical vulnerability, which are prone to misinformation and anxieties that often index other social concerns. Teeth emerge as a site of affect, where emotions like fear and shame are densely experienced. This talk discusses the logics and affective impulses that inform oral health decision making. Parental narratives reveal structural barriers and deeply felt beliefs that shape engagement with dental public health efforts. Findings offer insight into the basis of communication between oral health professionals and the communities they serve, particularly in disadvantaged communities where dental outreach is needed most.

Dental care is a site of negotiation, rather than simple compliance or resistance. This work contributes to broader anthropological discussions on health governance and institutions of care in early childhood-an area where anthropology offers critical insight.

Presenter(s): Frederick Howard

Co-author(s): Tammy Duangthip

Social Connection Among the Unhoused in Northern Arizona

Homelessness is a major public health issue in the US. Research shows that unhoused people face numerous challenges including social isolation and loneliness. Ethnographic researchers show how unhoused individuals also desire and establish relationships and connection. We draw on participant-observation and 14 semi-structured interviews with individuals at an emergency shelter in Northern Arizona. The interviews explored participants' early lives, social connections, work, and experiences of institutional care. Themes identified include trauma and adversity in early relationships, positive social relationships, connection through helping others, and the complex relationships between unhoused individuals and social service providers. While social connections can offer unhoused individuals a sense of connection, they may also limit personal autonomy. This is particularly the case for relationships with social service providers. It is essential to enhance service provision by fostering reciprocal relationships and opening possibilities for the unhoused to not only be care-receivers but also care-givers.

Presenter(s): Sarah Asantewaa

Co-author(s): Michelle Parsons

Social Weight : Observing Weight Loss drug Prescription in American Media & Culture

In the last 5 years, the introduction of "weight loss" & 'weight controlling' drugs, GLP-1, often metonymically referenced Ozempic, have dramatically shifted public debate about weight & fatness, acting strongly in cultural construction of the idea of fatness itself as disease now that a direct treatment is available, in contrast to ongoing political and medical efforts to separate body-size from definitions of disease. Our concerns follow from a group led interdisciplinary roundtable at the 2024 Meetings, drawing on the authors' cooperative autoethnographic, media analysis, & critical professional paraethnography. Impacts of these drugs are expected to be enhanced in the near future as a potentially lower cost, & easier to access "Weight Loss Pill" version is to be introduced. In contrast to its predecessor, which was intended to treat disordered blood sugar, the new version is targeted directly to a weightloss market. Neoliberal and individualist modes shape these pharmaceutical products as an enticement & engagement with issues of weight, health, eating-disorders, conception of willpower, & lifestyle. We consider the cultural relevance of even greater importance than the rising medical issues related to overprescription & rising rates of related nutritional deficits. GLP-1 drugs act particularly by encouraging a fundamental conflict in the conception of eating as a desirable basic human function- rewriting appetite as 'addiction' or 'compulsion' expanding sites of debate in what we should consider need and appropriate

conception of human experience. We suggest current fights about biological innateness and the future of a healthy humanity are haunted by the remnants of the eugenics movement and its normative medical science - things we often consider exorcised in light of modern concepts of consent. But when cultural logics deny real evaluation of position and conception, individualist modes of decision making may not sufficiently evade the wraiths of the past that shape our choices at the historical scale, resurrecting the 'Ghosts' of debates that may or may not have been suppressed in the past regarding the acceptability of medical intervention to 'will' or 'self-determination.' Celebrities, responding to weight shaming and fat-phobic normative culture, use the drug or are accused of using the drug when their weight loss appears technologically enabled, bearing comparisons to widespread over-prescription of mood-altering drugs & diet pills, 'mother's little helpers,' as a contested pharmaceuticalization of people's conformity to an ideal in the 1950's. We also see the spectre of 'naturalism' in these discussions, In the form of a demand that people's changes are both self-directed and accomplished 'naturally,' even though the denial or camouflage of chemical assistance is contrary to widespread legitimation of these drugs being promoted to the widest possible audience who can pay for the privilege of being in the 'healthy' appearing group

Presenter(s): Gareth Edel

Co-author(s): Kate Tyrol, Erin Johnson, Dorian Gittleman, Rebecca Tombleson

The Social Life of Anabolic Steroids in Egypt: Embodiment, Enhancement, and the Specters of Uncertainty

Egypt is a global hub for the international bodybuilding community and one of the few countries where the non-prescription use of anabolic-androgenic steroids remains legal. While unique in this regard, Egypt also reflects broader regional trends: Middle Eastern countries are overrepresented in bodybuilding championships and report some of the highest rates of steroid use worldwide.

This presentation draws on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Cairo, including participant observation in gyms, pharmacies, and clinics, as well as interviews with personal trainers, bodybuilders, gym-goers, pharmacists, and medical professionals. It follows the social life of anabolic steroids across formal and informal markets, tracing how they circulate, how they are prescribed and monitored, and how users navigate their risks in pursuit of physical and social transformation.

Rather than framing steroid use through dominant paradigms of pathology-such as addiction, muscle dysmorphia, or narcissism-this research examines how the materiality of steroids, the legal conditions enabling their widespread availability, and the markets through which they circulate shape embodied experiences. While Egypt's legal status allows wealthier users to access medical oversight, many-especially younger or working-class users-rely on personal trainers, gym communities, social media, and self-experimentation. In a healthcare landscape where institutional gaps and economic barriers limit formal medical guidance, individuals must regulate their own enhancement practices, reflecting a broader neoliberal logic in which responsibility for health is increasingly individualized.

Yet this self-responsibility is not just an economic burden-it is an affective and embodied one. Users experience a heightened sense of mastery over their bodies while simultaneously fearing unseen risks. The materiality of steroids-fluctuating hormone levels, heightened aggression, increased confidence, shifting libido-entangles with the social relations of their use, from gym camaraderie to summer vacations, trust, and dependence on informal experts. These biochemical and social forces co-produce new forms of masculinity that are at once fragile and intensified, shaped by aspirations for strength, control, and mobility in an unstable economic landscape where the body itself becomes a site of investment and risk.

By shifting attention from elite bodybuilding subcultures to more casual users, this research highlights how steroids mediate not only the physical body but also emotions, desires, and relationships. It contributes to critical debates in medical and psychological anthropology, embodiment, and biopolitics, showing how bodily modification practices mediate emerging forms of personhood, risk, and aspiration in contemporary Egypt.

Presenter(s): Javid Riahi

“Being sick is a family affair”: familial and social support as resilience strategies for mitigating health disparities among Veterans in Ghana ΣÁ

Drawing on research in Ghana, I explore how family ties and social networks enhance resilience and reduce health disparities among veterans. While researchers have considerably focused on non-veterans' experiences of accessing healthcare, there is little attention paid to veterans and their unique challenges in Ghana. I explore how social relations compensate for the shortcomings created by pharmaceuticals in the healthcare system. Drawing on ethnographic interviews and document analysis, I investigate the nature of care support available within veterans' families, the healthcare system, and the Veterans Administration, Ghana (VAG), to demonstrate how such supports help veterans to navigate the healthcare system in Ghana. Interview questions explore how financial, emotional, transportation, and medication management support shape health outcomes for Ghanaian veterans. The paper critically examines the impacts of increasing reliance on pharmaceuticals and how familial support contributes to improving the physical and mental wellbeing of historically disadvantaged veterans in Ghana. ΣÁ

Presenter(s): Emmanuel Asante

“We can’t solve food insecurity”: The food-is-medicine paradox and competing goals of care among healthcare staff in Northern California

"Food is medicine" refers to a growing paradigm shift within western medicine that emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between nutrition and health. Though this concept has roots in ancient global traditions that place food and medicine within the same continuum, "food is medicine" as-used in U.S. research and policy refers to the greater integration of nutrition and food-based interventions within healthcare services. This work draws from a 3-month pragmatic ethnography conducted in 2024 for a quality improvement project within an academic, pediatric health institution in northern California. Interviews and observations were conducted with frontline healthcare workers and

leadership to understand the on-the-ground impact of the 2024 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services requirement for healthcare organizations to screen patients for food insecurity. In the U.S., food insecurity and its social drivers have been a growing area of emphasis within the food-is-medicine paradigm, propelled by the continual rise in the number of individuals living within the U.S. who have difficulty accessing either nutritious food, or any food at all. First, I explore the ways in which healthcare staff conceptualize healing and care in the context of providing food-based resources for food insecure patients. I then critically examine the food-is-medicine paradigm, highlighting an intrinsic paradox that is created by equivocating food with medicine while simultaneously divorcing "food as treatment" from "food as sustenance" in practice. I then conclude with arguing that for healthcare organizations managing limited resources, this paradox of the food-is-medicine paradigm creates a complex moral landscape; new questions arise around the responsibility of the health system and the "deservingness" of different recipients that can lead to competing goals of care.

Presenter(s): Rachel Siden

2385 What Walks with Us Daily: Dialoguing on Poetics as Ethnological Praxis

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Interview

Poetry is both an ancient art and one of the first methods of documenting and spreading cultural values. What Walks with Us Daily: A Conversation on Poetics as Ethnographic Praxis will be an interview session between poet anthropologists in which Ashley-Devon Williamston fields pressing questions to Jason Vasser-Elong regarding poetry as a mechanism for communicating, understanding, and reckoning with acquired cultural values amid ever-shifting sociocultural landscapes. Vasser-Elong, 2022 poet-in-residence for Sapiens, explores cultural learning and belonging through poetic topics such as child's play and encounters with distant elders. Through the dialogue, AAA attendees will gain an understanding of poetry as more than mere cryptic art form and be encouraged to explore how writing and/or observing others' poetry can facilitate ethnological learning.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Ashley-Devon Williamston

Presenter(s): Ashley-Devon Williamston , Jason Vasser-Elong

2657 Excavating museum pasts, trekking pathways forward: ghosts in the proverbial museum closet

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Museums and archives have checkered pasts that we have long endeavored to thwart and redirect in our practice and scholarship. This session explores contemporary approaches to working with historical collections, colonial legacies, and a variety of challenging museum histories, attending to the accompanying ideologies, power dynamics, and absences that have shaped museum pasts and also shaped how we react to them moving forward. Session presentations will examine repatriation, community-based research, museum and archival information practices, and collecting histories. Broadly, this panel will engage a few key questions: how do museum pasts continue to haunt contemporary museum and archival practices? And how do we respond?

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Amanda Sorensen, University of Maryland, College Park

Chair: Christopher Smith, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Christina Hodge, Brown University, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Jayne-Leigh Thomas, Indiana University, Bloomington, Amanda Sorensen, University of Maryland, College Park, Sara Ann Knutson, University of British Columbia, Christopher Smith, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Corinne Kratz, Emory University

Presentation(s): The Ghosts of Emma Shaw Colcleugh

This paper considers how a collector haunts her collection. In 1930, the Haffenreffer Museum's founder purchased a collection of around 260 items from local Providence, Rhode Island journalist and lecturer Emma Shaw Colcleugh. She acquired them during her global travels in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the midst of expanding American military and industrial imperialism. Colcleugh's artifacts are now tangible museum collections, while her personhood has become frustratingly intangible, partial, and "ghostly": perceived indirectly through signs and traces. Colcleugh's radical independence, imperialist worldview, and racism are clearly embedded in the objects she acquired. Yet, decontextualized, these artifacts fail adequately to convey her motivations. We need to look both inside and outside museums to fully confront the lingering presence of collectors—figures whose ideologies continue to influence via the material traces they left behind.

Presenter(s): Christina Hodge

Voices from the Past: The Importance of Information Sharing in NAGPRA and Repatriation

co-author: Martha Only a Chief (Pawnee Nation)

In 1965, a collection of Pawnee artifacts was donated to Indiana University (IU) from a wealthy benefactor in Colorado. In 2024, numerous objects from that collection were repatriated by IU to the Pawnee Nation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); however, prior to repatriation, questions remained – How did this individual come to acquire such a large collection of Pawnee items, particularly so many sacred objects? Why were they given to IU? A subsequent investigation into archival and historical records revealed information answering these questions as well as illuminating the voices of Pawnee people from nearly 100 years ago. This paper

will discuss the importance of developing strong partnerships, thorough archival and historical research, and focused collaboration to bring repatriation and cultural revitalization efforts full circle.

Presenter(s): Jayne-Leigh Thomas

Digital Hauntings: Sociotechnical Legacies Impacting Museum Collections Management Systems

Developers and users alike intend collections management systems (CMS, CMSs plural) to support knowledge production associated with collections, documenting the content and the context of cultural heritage, but what information represents collections is a cultural, social, and political question. The current form of museum information systems have been shaped by overlapping histories of computing, corporate culture, and museum bureaucratic practices. By virtue of their technical development processes, CMSs hold various perspectives on, and interpretations of, reality encoded within them. As such, CMSs frame collections, encouraging particular understandings of cultural heritage works on the part of users.

This paper will present preliminary findings encompassing a portion of my dissertation research about museum CMSs. The data in question results from a qualitative content analysis, analyzing publicly available documentation about the information infrastructures and design of a selection of museum CMSs currently on the market. Contextualizing museum databases within histories of computation and software studies theory, I examine the shapes contemporary museum CMSs take and what this means for the shape of data within them, namely for descendant communities, researchers, and museum professionals.

Presenter(s): Amanda Sorensen

Material “afterlives” and the haunting of the ethnographic collection

This presentation begins from the observation that there are, broadly speaking, two ways in which a material may appear in museum collections and archives: first, its physical presence in these collections and second, through other materials that contain traces of the object's itinerant history—for instance, a photograph of the material or an associated museum object label. Sometimes only the latter traces, not the physical object, remain in a museum archive. This paper will examine how itinerant materials leave museum-based traces in absence of their own material presence and will demonstrate how these material “afterlives” are not neutral encounters.

Focusing on case studies from my research on Islamic coins and their “afterlives” in archival photographs and museum records, including in ethnographic collections, I examine the role that museum pasts play in structuring power dynamics, informing contemporary museums-based research, and, in some cases, disrupting community values. I demonstrate how materials can become entangled in a web of other collecting histories and colonial legacies beyond their own itinerant histories. Ultimately, I question: what does it mean for materials like coins to reside in

museums and how might theorizing material "afterlives" inform how we engage museum pasts and promote community values in museum futures?

Presenter(s): Sara Ann Knutson

Toward an Ethical Art Market: The Problem of Indigenous Belongings in Private Collections

The presence of Indigenous belongings in private art collections has long been a source of tension between Indigenous communities and collectors. While laws and ethical guidelines pertaining to museum collections have continued to evolve and become more engaged with Indigenous communities, the private sector consisting of auction houses, art dealers, and collectors has remained largely immune to these regulations. This is unlikely to remain the case, though, and it's imperative that both art collectors and sellers make moves toward a more ethical and responsive art market that respects Indigenous patrimony and property.

This paper outlines the collaborative processes between myself, Nadine Di Monte at First Arts Auctions, and several museums and Indigenous communities to move culturally sensitive belongings out of private collections and the art market and back to their rightful homes. Through case studies including the return of a Northern Cheyenne bison headdress to descendants in Wyoming, a Yup'ik mortuary figure from Alaska, and a Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations headdress from Vancouver Island, the author will share successes, challenges, and potential paths forward for the future of this kind of work.

Presenter(s): Christopher Smith

Discussion

3351 Things Fall Apart: A Roundtable on the Seen and Unseen in the NGO/NPO World, from Reagan Thatcher to Post Trump

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Haunted by decades of increasing privatization of government services, the recent defunding of USAID and subsequent criticism of empathy as part of operational practice have brought renewed attention to the (seen) impact of authoritarianism, oligarchy, and coloniality on the NGO/NPO landscape. In the specter of USAID past/present, our roundtable brings together engaged, cross-generational anthropologists from diverse sectors of the NGO/NPO world to deploy their knowledge and experience in reconceptualizing the (unseen) futures of NGOs, particularly grass roots community organizations, which have had important roles in sustaining civil society and the care economy.

We seek to address a larger conceptual concern involving the continued salience and liberatory potential of NGOs/NPOs in the context of ongoing intergenerational, political, legal, digital, and funding shifts, as well as the tensions between the relevance of engaged theoretical research and

the importance of action-oriented knowledge. Reflecting on their work across diverse NGOs/NPOs with contrasting organizational structures and diverse priorities (from environment, health, and natural resources to community-based concerns of immigrants and elders), participants will pursue this inquiry through exploring the following questions:

What unique insights can be derived from "deep", longitudinal engagement in an organization? What are the advantages of multi-stakeholder collaboration in sustaining or restricting grass roots missions and autonomy? Do transborder partners contribute to flexibility or limit equitable, bottom-up decision-making? What are the impacts of contrasting organizational and socio-relational structures of different NGOs (from voluntary networks, faith-based and non-faith based, to staffed community-based organizations) in fostering empowerment and collaborative governance? Can democratic processes be nurtured through knowledge and power sharing in community organizations? What is the impact of intergenerational diversity on organizational resilience and adaptation to changing conditions? What is the role of building external/internal social relations in creating effective community missions? Do digital technologies offer new possibilities or subvert reciprocal aspects of NGO work through 'thingification' of 'clients'? Are legal resources instrumental in achieving NGO effectiveness in navigating complex environments? Has the mission of 'filling the gaps' removed critical resistance to structures of dominance from community organization toolkits?

Returning to reimagining elusive NGO futures, discussants will reconsider the liberatory possibilities of NGOs/NPOs in light of criticisms that they serve as proxies for state interests or replicators of coloniality, as well as the persistent reluctance to incorporate and acknowledge the contributions of action-produced knowledge to NGO effectiveness and the field of engaged anthropology itself.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Janet Bauer, Trinity College

Presenter(s): Jean Schensul, Institute for Community Research, Inc, Ritu Verma, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Out-of-the-Box Research and Action, Ryan Seidemann, Abigail Francis, McGill University, Department of Anthropology, Wei Gan, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Kristen Viera, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Timothy Hartshorn, Pitzer College

Discussant: Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology, Janet Bauer, Trinity College

7005 Sacred Kinship in a Time of Global Instability

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

For many Christians, sacred beings including God, Jesus, Mary and the saints and other holy figures are not just a matter of belief. They are persons with whom they talk and share their experiences

and feelings. In turn, as anthropologists and scholars of religion have shown, sacred persons may 'talk back', act and produce complex social, biographical and relational effects (Orsi, 1996, 2004; Luhmann 2012). Further, holy figures may be understood as more-than-metaphorical kin, and may be enfolded and experienced within local idioms of kinship and self-making (Cannell, 2001, 2006, 2013; Thomas, 2021; Goodgame, 2023). This panel revisits the theme of sacred kinship at an unprecedented moment of global political instability. On the one hand, we enquire further into how sacred persons become kin in the specific idioms of different parts of the world, and ask how far sacred intimacies may currently sustain communities under pressure. On the other hand, we ask in what ways relations with sacred others may be changing in the face of new political and temporal configurations drawing on Christian idioms, including intimations of the end-times.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Fenella Cannell, London School of Economics, Ottavia Paternò, The London School of Economics and Politics

Chair: Fenella Cannell, London School of Economics

Presenter(s): Clayton Goodgame, Fenella Cannell, London School of Economics, Ottavia Paternò, The London School of Economics and Politics, Meadhbh McIvor, Jacob Bessen

Discussant: Giulia Liberatore, University of Edinburgh

Presentation(s): Saints of a haunted landscape: divine presence in depopulated Palestinian villages

A regular figure of Palestinian culture since the war of 1948 has been the "present absentee", which refers to those Palestinians who were physically present in the newly founded Israeli state but legally categorized as "absent" from their homes after being forcibly displaced. Today, one can find Palestinian villages in which the homes have been destroyed and only a church or saint's shrine remains. Drawing on fieldwork among Palestinian Christians, this paper takes the presence of saints, and the divinity saints carry, as a lens through which to examine landscapes haunted by the memory of Palestinian displacement. When the descendants of refugees visit these villages, searching for signs of a former home, a well, or a public square, the divinity of saints becomes entangled with the saint's social history. Engaging Palestinian theological framing of saints as witnesses (shuhada') alongside anthropological scholarship on haunting, the paper suggests that Palestinian saints have become a powerful medium for reimagining kinship in the absence of a home.

Presenter(s): Clayton Goodgame

The instability of Mormon Prophecy?

This paper considers the sacred relationality that American members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (sometimes called 'Mormons') sustain through their church. Sacred relationality in Mormonism is both fundamental to the church's ontology (Cannell, 2006) and wide-ranging in scope, and includes both personal and collective ancestors as well as the sacred figures of the Christian story as understood in the church. Since the beginning of President Trump's

candidacy for office in 2016, Mormon Utah Republicans have been divided between those who support Mr. Trump and those who have a different vision of Republicanism, exemplified by former Presidential candidate Mitt Romney and others. In parallel with these divisions, different interpretations of Mormon scripture and different political claims about key Mormon scriptural figures such as the defender against tyranny Captain Moroni have been voiced both by ordinary members and by elected Utah politicians (Cannell, forthcoming). This paper asks how far the understanding of Mormon sacred persons—including the crucial figure of the prophet-leader and the meaning of prophecy itself—are being or may be reconfigured by alternative American political-eschatological logics associated with the present government.

Presenter(s): Fenella Cannell

Faith in times of economic instability: the case of the Virgen de Urkupiña in Argentina.

The practice of religion for indigenous and mestizo Catholics in Salta Capital, Argentina, revolves around the establishment of a personal relationship with the Virgin Mary. She's not considered just as the content of a belief, but as a person and kin, whose role in the family is modelled on local conceptions of kinship. She is an ideal mother and acts like one, which means she's engaged in ties of reciprocity through divine action and miracles in the everyday life. This paper will demonstrate how this sacred relationship helps people navigate economic insecurity, through the example of the cult of the Virgen de Urkupiña. This Bolivian Virgin Mary is deemed to be particularly miraculous for money and material goods. People who are devoted to this Virgin Mary have a statue of her at home that they care for by praying, setting up elaborate altars, bringing her to hear Mass and organising fiestas in her honour. In exchange, they ask her to give them all the things they need to live: money, work, cars, houses. In the context of Argentinian economic instability, marked by constant inflation, job precarity and diffused poverty, establishing ties of sacred kinship with the Virgin Mary allows people to gain some agency on their lives. This relationship allows them to think the hazards of the market in terms of reciprocity and kinship and thus act upon them.

Presenter(s): Ottavia Paternò

“Whiteness is Not an Ancestor but a Legacy”: Kinship, Responsibility, and Justice in US Unitarian Universalism

Much recent scholarship on US-American white-majority religion has focused on the relationship between evangelicalism and white supremacy, including the mobilisation of the language of ancestry, kinship, and "heritage" in service of this project. Indeed, the rise of Christian nationalism means conservative Christianity is increasingly presented as the quintessential form of European-American religion. While these studies have cast important light on the political theology of kinship as/and white supremacy, less attention has been paid to the role of anti-racist kinship "work" among communities that are both primarily white and explicitly committed to the pursuit of racial justice. Unitarian Universalism—a post-Christian movement built around "the free and responsible search for truth and meaning," which has its roots in various Protestantism denominations—is one such tradition. Based on fieldwork with Unitarian Universalists in Arizona, this paper analyses UUs'

interest in genealogy and ancestry as an example of efforts to recognise and counter white supremacy within a religious space that remains overwhelmingly (and, for some congregants, uncomfortably) white. By framing genealogical research as a means to spiritual growth, white-identified Unitarian Universalists mobilise theological resources in their efforts to both take responsibility for and construct an identity "beyond" whiteness.

Presenter(s): Meadhbh McIvor

Between Children of Saints and the Adoption of Neighbors: Making Sacred Bonds in Mobile Times

Abstract: This paper follows how traditions of child circulation – termed "children of saints" (figli di santi) – animate the way lifelong residents create bonds with newly arrived migrants in the mountaintop town of Sutera. Located in the rural center of the island of Sicily, the town employs the idea to deal with co-occurring emigration and immigration. Through inquiring about the continuity of children of saints, interlocutors explained the many ways that the devotion they felt to other peoples' children is the type of devotion they feel toward the saints. Through these parallel affective and relational logics, people renew the sacred command to love one's neighbor in increasingly unstable times.

Presenter(s): Jacob Bessen

Discussion

6315 From the Haunting Shadows of the Isthmus: Critical Conversations in Central American Studies

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As scholars with a deep connection and commitment to Central American studies, we come together, bridging Sociocultural Anthropology, Political Anthropology, and Clinical Forensic Psychology to critically remember the haunting and violent past of this region, as much as we address the transformative expressions of existing otherwise (Elizabeth Povinelli 2014). In order to move beyond dominant narratives to explore the lingering legacies, silenced histories, and emergent perspectives that often remain in the "ghostly shadows" of the Isthmus, the roundtable will delve into how historical traumas, political violence, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural, racialized, and gendered marginalizations continue to shape the present. As we engage in these critical conversations, we seek to present research that reveals an alternative understanding of violence and marginalization from a perspective of resistance, solidarity, and hope.

From this understanding, the Central American communities we collaborate with transform violence, marginalization, and exclusion by producing regenerative acts of hope, healing, and care. The roundtable endeavors to discuss how our research, art, and practices prioritize remembrance, solidarity, and belonging amidst displacement and violence. We consider how our cross-disciplinary work engages deeply with the Central American experience and its survival, revealing

how our communities embody resistance and persistence. This approach generates what Mayan activist and former political refugee, Juanita Cabrera Lopez (2025) affirms, that despite the historical and contemporary existence of multivariate forms of violence and displacement, Indigenous peoples, much like Afrodescendants, Trans and LGBTQ+ individuals, women, and political activists of Central America, "continue to exist despite the violence of the state" (2025). By centering on the "haunting shadows" – representing past structural traumas and obscured present realities represented in the experience of Central American immigrants – we seek to illuminate the complexities of the region and the existence of its diaspora to foster a more critical, artistic, and decolonial approach to the scholarship emanating from this region.

Therefore, the roundtable, consisting of four Central American scholars, considers more broadly how the "haunting shadows of the Isthmus" impact Central Americans today and how they continue to respond and transform in the present and the future.

Our critical conversation bridges various topics from migration, exile, grief, healing, and belonging as a collaborative endeavor to draw scholarly attention to Anthropological and Psychological Central American Studies.

Section: Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists

Organizer: Thelma Dietrich Rivera, University of California, Irvine

Presenter(s): Thelma Dietrich Rivera, University of California, Irvine, Carolina Fuentes , Clara Olivo , Tanya Erazo, University of San Francisco

Discussant: Carolina Fuentes

2971 The Cracked Foundations of Society: Unraveling the Ghosts of Power and Displacement

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the lasting effects of power, displacement, and cultural erasure, framed through the lens of "ghosts" - the invisible or forgotten consequences of systemic forces that continue to shape both individual lives and broader societal landscapes. By examining the ways in which power structures leave behind lasting imprints, each paper in this panel highlights the ways in which marginalized groups, communities, and environments are haunted by the remnants of their histories.

The papers in this panel draw connections between the enduring legacies of historical oppression, whether through the abandonment of military spaces that reconfigure local ecologies, the reclamation of spiritual practices as acts of resistance against imperialism, or the overlooked contributions of women and African Americans during the Civil War. All of these histories intersect in their ongoing impacts on marginalized communities, from the recovery of lost cultural identities

to the creation of "ghosts" in the U.S. healthcare system - groups whose struggles continue to be invisible within dominant social frameworks.

These "ghosts" are not static but active forces in contemporary society. They manifest in cultural erasure, the contested spaces of urban development, the persistence of gender and racial inequities, and the ongoing efforts to decolonize systems of power that continue to marginalize and disenfranchise. As these histories resurface, they reveal the cracks in society's foundations, providing insight into the dynamics of power, resistance, and healing. Through this panel, we aim to demonstrate that the work of addressing these ghosts is not simply an academic exercise, but a necessary act of reclamation and transformation that empowers marginalized communities to reshape their narratives and futures.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning these discussions include critical race theory, feminist theory, decolonization theory, and critical medical anthropology. These perspectives guide the examination of how power is distributed, how resistance emerges, and how historical and contemporary erasures can be addressed. By revisiting these often-overlooked histories, the panel seeks to uncover how contemporary issues of power, memory, and identity are shaped by past injustices. These discussions aim to shed light on the haunting presence of these "ghosts" and the potential for reclaiming and reimagining identity, resistance, and resilience in the face of continued displacement. Through this lens, we challenge the prevailing narratives of progress and healing, offering a more inclusive understanding of the fractures in our society's foundations and the transformative potential of cultural and historical reclamation.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Meghan Blust

Chair: Meghan Blust

Presenter(s): Sean Roberts, Meghan Blust, Autum Fox, Leticia Castro

Presentation(s): Ghosts of War: The Afterlife of Military Bases and the Rise of Raptors in Shared Spaces

The transformation of military bases into civilian spaces leaves behind more than abandoned infrastructure—it reshapes ecologies, social landscapes, and historical memory. In Orange County, California, the closure of Marine Corps Air Stations El Toro and Tustin has given rise to new urban developments, yet their former perimeters have also become unexpected refuges for raptors. Once displaced by military aviation, red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, and barn owls now reclaim these altered environments, exploiting greenbelts, landfills, and repurposed hangars as hunting grounds.

This paper examines how the resurgence of raptors in post-military landscapes reveals deeper tensions between history, conservation, and urbanization. As apex predators, raptors thrive in transitional spaces, yet their increasing visibility generates conflicting public perceptions—celebrated as natural pest control yet sometimes viewed as intrusive. Their presence complicates narratives of environmental recovery, challenging assumptions about what is "wild" versus human-engineered. Through an anthropological lens, this study explores how post-military landscapes

remain contested, both in memory and in ecological function, as raptors and humans continue to renegotiate the boundaries of shared space.

Presenter(s): Sean Roberts

Ghosts of Imperialism: Alternative Spirituality as Resistance and Cultural Reclamation

This study explores the "ghosts" of cultural erasure and spiritual disconnection caused by Western imperialism, focusing on how contemporary spiritual practices serve as pathways to reclaim ancestral identities and rebuild community bonds. Through a comprehensive literature review along with qualitative interviews with pagan Americans disenchanted by mainstream American Christianity, this research examines how pre-colonial spiritual traditions help restore lost cultural roots. Drawing on phenomenology and decolonization theories, the study investigates how these practices not only heal cultural wounds but also foster resistance against ongoing cultural erosion. The concept of "ghost cultures" — lost traditions reconstructed through myth and memory — is central to this work. By analyzing the intersection of spiritual practices with decolonization efforts, the paper highlights how these practices can challenge cultural appropriation and empower marginalized communities. Ultimately, this research offers insights into the transformative potential of spirituality in decolonizing the Western mind, promoting community resilience, and reimagining identity in the face of colonial legacies.

Presenter(s): Meghan Blust

Ghosts of the Civil War: The Roles of Women and African Americans

This paper examines the roles of women and African Americans during the Civil War, focusing on how societal structures perpetuated systems of power and displacement, impacting their contributions and recognition. Women of various backgrounds, including free Black women, widows, and farm women, played crucial roles in the war effort. Nearly 20,000 women served in Union hospitals, often in roles with limited recognition and compensation. African American women, despite their essential contributions, were relegated to lower-wage positions like cooks and laundresses. Figures like Susie King Taylor exemplified the resilience of Black women in these roles. Women, such as Dr. Mary Edwards Walker and Clara Barton, also pushed for medical reforms, yet systemic gender biases often led to their insights being dismissed. Similarly, African American men, initially rejected by both Union and Confederate armies, were later enlisted in large numbers. Despite contributions, Black soldiers faced segregation and discrimination. This discussion explores how these "ghosts" of the Civil War were indispensable yet invisible within power structures, drawing parallels to contemporary issues of racial and gender equity. By revisiting their hidden histories, the paper aims to reconstruct a more inclusive understanding of the Civil War's legacy.

Presenter(s): Autum Fox

Ghosts in the System: The Shadows of the U.S. Healthcare Experience

This hybrid autoethnography/research paper utilizes critical medical anthropology (CMA) to explore how the U.S. healthcare system can create "ghosts" or invisible struggles faced by individuals within it. Using CMA, we can examine how social, economic, and cultural factors contribute to healthcare disparities. With CMA, we can view the interconnectedness of health, politics, and human rights. Explaining the health hierarchies and choosing what are the most important health matters to address. In an already complicated setting, patients have a second role as consumers in this highly politicized and economically driven industry. This can cause people to feel lost or left out while navigating the maze of healthcare services leading to a sense of abandonment. Anthropology can expose and improve distinct issues from diverse industries. The paper is also an analysis of how policies and practices can overlook these individuals, turning their challenges into unseen issues. Looking at these challenges, the paper aims to suggest ways to improve the healthcare system, making it more accessible and understandable for everyone, ultimately reducing the impact of these haunting experiences. By discussing these hidden struggles, we can hope to promote understanding and drive changes that can help make healthcare more equitable for all.

Presenter(s): Leticia Castro

3921 "Roundtable/Town Hall: Ghost Anthropology"

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropology, arguably more than any other field, understands that our human worlds are inhabited by spectral presences. But, how does the field grapple with its own indeterminate subjectivity? This panel on "Ghost Anthropology" is an invitation for anthropologists to ruminate on teaching a field even when they are not technically located inside the field—and even when it does not exist—in their respective institutions? How do we understand belonging in the absence of a concrete institutional affiliation? How do you train students in a field that they cannot experience directly? What is anthropology without an anthropology department? If disciplines are born and die, do they have afterlives? This session will bring together anthropologists working and teaching outside of anthropology departments to consider the ghosts of anthropology.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Lily Chumley , Michael Ralph, Howard University

Presenter(s): Sareeta Amrute, The New School, Sarah Muir , Gustav Peebles, Stockholm University, Maya Singhal, Vanderbilt University

Discussant: Lily Chumley

511 American Ethnological Society Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Tatiana Haddad, University of Houston, Bryan Hill , Maria Lourdes Beldi Alcantara , Carly Dokis, Nipissing University, Clara Fortes Brandao, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Ajmal Hussain, University of Warwick, Saman Fazeli, University of Chicago, Holly Porter, University of Cambridge

Presenter(s): Tatiana Haddad, University of Houston, Bryan Hill, Maria Lourdes Beldi Alcantara, Carly Dokis, Nipissing University, Clara Fortes Brandao, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Ajmal Hussain, University of Warwick, Saman Fazeli, University of Chicago, Holly Porter, University of Cambridge

Presentation(s): Beyond the Western Housewife: Rethinking Domestic Labor in Bedouin Economic Transitions in Lebanon's Bekaa

This presentation will be examining the intergenerational transformations of Bedouin women's labor in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, focusing on how economic integration has reshaped domestic life, intrafamilial gender roles, and personal narratives of work. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and participant observation carried out over several months in the Bedouin village of Hosh Al Nabil in 2024-5, this ethnographic study traces a shift from mainly subsistence-based pastoral and artisanal labor to widespread participation in agricultural wage labor, factory work, and domestic consumerism.

I analyze how Bedouin women explain these personal labor transformations against the backdrop of larger socio-economic changes of the area, such as land privatization, the decline of small-scale and communal agriculture, and the concentration of wealth among agribusiness operators. These changes have dramatically reorganized the daily life routines and needs of the Bedouin, reshaping how Bedouin women experience time, rest, work, and family responsibilities. Older generations describe labor in terms of survival, communal duty, and moral obligation, while younger women navigate a more fragmented landscape of wage labor, education, personal desire, and consumer expectations.

In this analysis, I engage with the key frameworks of Marxist feminist theory, social reproduction theory, and housewifization to examine the feminization and devaluation of labor under capitalist integration. The concept of "accumulation by dispossession" is additionally central to this project, as Bedouin women's historical roles in self-reliant, home-based economies have been increasingly rendered invisible or obsolete. However, I argue that these transitions do not follow the same trajectories as Western models of post-industrial domesticity. Instead, Bedouin women's labor transformations emerge from localized negotiations with capital, state infrastructure, and cultural memory.

This project contributes to broader anthropological conversations on gender and labor by centering rural Middle Eastern women as agents of historical and economic narration. In doing so, it challenges both developmentalist assumptions and universalizing models of domestic transformation, offering a grounded alternative rooted in Bedouin lived experience. Finally, the

study vividly illustrates how women's stories of work are also stories of identity, continuity, and change in one of Lebanon's most overlooked communities.

Presenter(s): Tatiana Haddad

Fades to Fellowship: An Ethnography on Barbershops

Barbershops have long been spaces where individuals go for haircuts and engage in exciting conversations. Conversations can stem from topics such as sports, music, fashion, cars, relationships, politics, and more. However, looking deeper into the complexity of barbershop conversations can reveal how a foundation of understanding and respect between barber and client is created as well as the reinforcement of shared identities. Through participant observation, interviews, and collected surveys from barbershops, findings suggest that barbershops serve as a place where opinions on masculinity, sexuality, and pop culture can be discussed and, in turn, reinforce the relationships created in the barbershop. The structural hierarchies within these barbershops were also revealed from body language and verbal cues. This study analyzes the conversations observed to highlight how these conversations contribute to themes of identity, sense of community, and intergenerational knowledge exchange.

Presenter(s): Bryan Hill

Gossip, often dismissed, acts as a hauntological tool in Indigenous communities—preserving memory, regulating belonging, and sustaining cultural cohes

In contexts where social cohesion is fragile due to historical trauma, political marginalization, and economic precarity, gossip emerges as a critical mechanism for maintaining communal ties. This session examines the intersection of witchcraft, ghosts, and wellbeing in Indigenous reserves, emphasizing how rumor functions as a last-resort social adhesive when kinship networks and governance structures weaken. By tracing the circulation of supernatural narratives—witchcraft accusations, ghostly encounters, and whispered suspicions—we explore how these discourses shape communal responses to illness, moral transgression, and social belonging.

The anthropology of illness and healing has long recognized the inseparability of medical epistemologies from social and cosmological frameworks (Good, 1994; Kleinman, 1988). In Indigenous contexts, health is not simply a biomedical condition but a relational state, entangled with land, ancestors, and collective memory (Kirmayer et al., 2014). When sickness and misfortune strike, explanations often transcend biomedical models, invoking witchcraft or spectral presences as causative agents (Lewis, 2003; Niehaus, 2012). These narratives are not merely expressions of belief; they are social strategies for negotiating blame, asserting agency, and reinforcing community boundaries (Good & Good, 2000; Stewart & Strathern, 2004).

Gossip, often dismissed as trivial, is in fact a potent social technology that regulates moral behavior, consolidates alliances, and mediates power (Gluckman, 1963; White, 2000). Within Indigenous reserves, where colonial disruption has fragmented traditional governance structures, gossip becomes a primary means of adjudicating disputes and policing social order. Rumors of

witchcraft serve to explain inexplicable suffering, linking individual afflictions to broader histories of dispossession, intergenerational trauma, and environmental precarity (Todd, 2016; Tsing, 2015). Simultaneously, ghostly encounters reflect ongoing tensions between Indigenous epistemologies and state interventions in healthcare (Kopenawa & Albert, 2013).

Drawing from ethnographic and theoretical perspectives, this session interrogates the political stakes of supernatural discourse: How do whispered accusations of witchcraft reinforce or challenge existing social hierarchies? In what ways does the invocation of ghosts articulate unresolved histories of violence, land dispossession, and cultural erasure? How does the circulation of rumor shape health-seeking behaviors and access to care?

By reframing witchcraft, ghosts, and gossip as active forces in the production of social reality, this session contributes to broader anthropological debates on affect, spectrality, and the politics of care. Through a comparative lens, we seek to illuminate how Indigenous communities navigate precarity through the intangible-words, spirits, and suspicions-thereby transforming uncertainty into structured meaning.

Presenter(s): Maria Lourdes Beldi Alcantara

Leaving Offerings: Digital Storytelling as Active Survivance

This presentation describes possibilities for mobilizing digital storytelling as a strategy for Indigenous revitalization and resurgence. Drawing from digital story work conducted with Anishinaabe storytellers in northern Ontario, Canada, we argue that digital storytelling is an effective medium for challenging representational politics of memory, identity, and legitimacy that have often accompanied the depiction of Indigenous experiences in public spaces. Our focus has been on protecting dibaajimowinan, or personal stories that people tell about their lives, by recording and archiving them for future generations so that they can guide them on their path to minobimaadiziwin, or the good life. We explore opportunities for sharing these stories within and beyond community in ways that create space for learning and to foster critical reflections on what it means to live in treaty relationships.

Presenter(s): Carly Dokis

Restless Ghosts: Temporality and Political Autonomy among an Amazonian Indigenous People

This presentation examines how engaging in remembrance and relationality with the spirits of the dead forms the foundation of the contemporary political life of the Kajkwakhratxi, a Jê-speaking Indigenous people residing in Southern Amazonia.

In the 1960s, following their first contact with Brazilian society, the transmission of viral diseases killed 90% of the Kajkwakhratxi population. In the 1970s, government officials revoked their reserve and relocated 41 of the survivors to villages inhabited by other Indigenous groups. Over the ensuing decades, the Kajkwakhratxi faced persistent assimilation pressures from their hosts. Despite the threat of imminent ethnocide, they succeeded in transmitting their language, culture, and history to

new generations. Their physical and cultural reproduction is grounded on the elders' enduring remembrance of ancestors killed in their original territory.

Acting on the understanding that the soul of the dead lingers near its grave – and may turn against the living if bodily remains are not treated with respect – community leaders have concentrated their political efforts on protecting the cemeteries of their parents and grandparents. This is being pursued through a legal claim for the re-demarcation of their original land, which remains unrecognized by the state. The area is currently undergoing rapid deforestation, threatening the cemeteries once shielded by tall forest vegetation. Centered on this ongoing judicial dispute, the first part of the presentation explores how remembrance and care for the dead underpin the Kajkwakhratxi's political struggle for territorial autonomy and cultural continuity.

In *Ghostly Matters* (1997), Gordon introduces 'ghosts' as an analytical tool for understanding acts of social violence that, although ostensibly belonging to the past, continue to haunt the lives of those who experienced them by demanding a 'something-to-be-done'. In the Kajkwakhratxi case, such specters are not metaphorical, but literal – taking the form of the spirits of the dead who propel the efforts of the living to reclaim their territory. Drawing on Gordon's concept, the second part of the presentation examines in these 'ghosts' the entanglement of spatial historicity and futurity in the political life of this Amazonian people.

This ethnographic analysis aligns with a recent trend in the anthropology of Indigenous Amazonia. The presentation concludes by noting that this branch of the discipline has increasingly recentered on the theme of temporality, investigating how communities are creatively exploring the consciousness of their connection to a pre-contact past while at the same time hesitantly engaging with non-Indigenous institutions and emerging forms of sociality. Time, once sidelined in early anthropological debates on Indigenous Amazonia, has regained centrality as 'ghosts' of the past come to guide communities' political projects for the future.

Presenter(s): Clara Fortes Brandao

Rethinking "Left Behind Places": Marginalisation, stigma, and political mobilisation

The term "left behind places" has gained significant traction in public and policy discourse, in the US, UK and beyond. This paper critically examines this concept, arguing for a nuanced understanding that moves beyond simplistic labels and acknowledges the complex interplay between socio-economic changes, political mobilisation, and stigmatising discourses. The paper traces the shifting use of concepts such as social exclusion and left behindness, examining how they have evolved to reflect changing understandings of marginalisation. Drawing on original ethnographic fieldwork in Spain and the UK, the study explores how these concepts are applied to communities affected by economic decline, the erosion of once-thriving industries, and the growing divide between over-developed urban centres and stagnating rural or post-industrial regions. The paper critically analyses the tensions and contradictions inherent in the use of these concepts, exploring their role in stigmatizing discourses and their adoption within the rhetoric of populist politics. By assessing how these concepts shape public perception and policy across

different geographical and sociopolitical contexts, this research illuminates the real-world consequences they have on the communities they aim to describe. Ultimately, this paper offers a critical reflection on the evolving language applied to marginalized places and communities, highlighting its significant implications for social and political mobilisation and advocating for a more sensitive and context-aware approach in policy and public discourse.

Presenter(s): Ajmal Hussain

Co-author(s): Olga Jubany, Camila del Mármol

Secular Ghosts: Debiasing, Islam, and the Haunting of Ethical Reason

In this presentation, I draw on four years of fieldwork among a community of immigrant Iranian AI scientists in the U.S., whose work centers on "debiasing" artificial intelligence systems. I examine how the concept of "bias" travels across their professional and personal lives. My interlocutors often mobilize the language of bias not only to detect and correct injustice in algorithms, but also to reconfigure their own moral stance in the world. Debiasing thus emerges as a unifying ethical practice, linking their technical responsibilities to their personal commitments. Yet, as they extend this framework from code to conduct, the ethical clarity they seek becomes clouded by contradiction. Their commitment to debiasing collides with unresolved feelings toward Islam, feelings shaped by past experiences that continue to intrude upon the present. Their aversion to Islam is rooted in their experience of having lived most of their lives under the Islamic Republic, and in a commonly held view that equates the state with Islam.

In AI, bias is treated as a problem that can supposedly be articulated, quantified, and mitigated. Attributes such as race, gender, and religion (including Islam) are categories protected from algorithmic discrimination (Mehrabi et al., 2021). My interlocutors understand this task as essential to building "ethical" technologies. Yet in their personal lives, the category of Islam is fraught with ambivalence. Their memories of the past linger, surfacing in private conversations, jokes, hesitations, and silences. While they pursue self "debiasing" against Islam, their efforts often falter.

For them, Islam is not simply a subject of bias, but an exception. Heavily burdened by fragments of memory and history, Islam for them becomes a source of bias itself. As a result, attempts at debiasing often paradoxically reproduce anti-Islamic sentiments, even as they strive to transcend them.

This paradox reveals the limits of treating bias as a purely technical or cognitive issue. What happens when the very effort to be unbiased is haunted by affective residues that cannot be cleanly parsed, coded, or corrected? This project is often troubled by the ghosts of personal and political histories that continue to shape their moral imagination. Thousands of miles away from Iran, the Iranian state—and its attached memories and emotions—materializes in their daily efforts and projects of secular-ethical self-making.

By tracing how the language of bias mediates both algorithmic justice and ethical self-fashioning, my research reveals how the past haunts the very tools and categories used to imagine justice

among my interlocutors. It underscores the limitations of a techno-secular ethics centered on bias, an ethics that rests on ideals of neutrality and dispassionate reasoning, yet cannot fully account for the emotional, memorial, and historical/political entanglements that shape moral life.

Presenter(s): Saman Fazeli

Semen, Blood, Dust & DNA: Elements of relation

The elements that constitute us give shape to relational and political orders and claims of belonging. They also structures our imagination of what is possible within the 'given' of concrete 'realities'. To what extent are the bodily elements of blood, semen, blood, dust/soil, and DNA seen as fixed and determinative or do we exist in a field of relational potential? How this is answered has implications from our most intimate relations (sexual partners and potential offspring) to politics broadly conceived and practiced. Anyone who is paying attention to the rise of far-right politics and ethnonationalist ideologies and the violences they entail will be familiar with modes of relating that are rhetorically anchored in these elements as a strategy for solidifying exclusionary political and material claims. If we are to recognize what is broken in our relational orders, reflection on what constitutes them and the extent to which the situation is malleable and open to reconfiguration is due. We might ask if the attachments and relations to those materials themselves give rise to rigid exclusionary, gerontocratic, patriarchal, oppressive, and violent systems of relation or if there are ways of reimagining the constitutive relations with those elements that is more liberatory? Drawing on ethnographic work on gender and sexualities in the context of war and its aftermath in northern Uganda since 2005, in this paper I reflect on Acholi notions and experiences related to elements that comprise us and our relations as potential sources of inspiration-not as models that can or should be followed, but as sources of insight and potential provocations to widen the conceivable field of possibilities. With each element, there is something immaterial that the material points toward. Thinking this through brings our attention to the ghosts, the excess, the animus-and the insufficiency of relational claims made solely on material bases.

The ethnography reflected on here shows that semen/blood/DNA based relations were not seen as static or simply a given state-one can become someone's child. Relations are contingent and can change. The basis on which they are seen to do so is an intermingling of material and immaterial. DNA is more about experiential and relational claims, ways of being and responsibility, rather than about biological determinism. Ancestral spirits are moveable and open to adopt new kin. Kinship can be expanded-making foreigners unkillable. Without romanticizing Acholi experiences of different structuring of social order in ways that are often oppressive in a multiplicity of ways, there are modes of thinking and conceptualizing relations in their approach to these elements (and their ghosts) that point us to another way of conceptualizing relations in and with the world.

Presenter(s): Holly Porter

5023 Cooperative Insecurities: Crisis, uncertainty, and collective action

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

That cooperative practices play significant roles in contexts of crisis, uncertainty, and ecological stress is well established. However, studies tend to emphasize these conditions as opportunities for cooperation to emerge, almost as if it were natural to crisis. In this panel, contributors denaturalize cooperation as a condition of insecurity and to interrogate the relations, institutions, and immaterial aspects of experience that produce and sustain cooperative practices while situating them in social, political, and ecological contexts. What are the different modalities of cooperation and collective action pursued by actors in these contexts? To what extent do these cooperative arrangements endure and facilitate change beyond liminal crisis responses that revert to "normal" practices?

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: A.J. Faas, San Jose State University, Daniel Murphy, University of Cincinnati, Department of Anthropology

Chair: A.J. Faas, San Jose State University

Presenter(s): Anais Roque, Duke University, Daromir Rudnyckyj, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology, Jaroslava Pallas-Brink, Wayne State University, Department of Anthropology, Bram Tucker, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Daniel Murphy, University of Cincinnati, Department of Anthropology, A.J. Faas, San Jose State University

Presentation(s): Beyond the Storm: Cooperation in Post-Disaster Puerto Rico

After a disaster, critical infrastructure systems—like interconnected food, energy, and water (FEW) systems—face disruption, leaving households and communities vulnerable to resource insecurities. These disruptions not only exacerbate material scarcity but also lead to psychological distress. When the state fails to respond, community leaders assume an important role in ensuring resource security. Drawing on interviews with community leaders from urban and rural areas in Puerto Rico, I analyze their responses to food, energy, and water insecurity following Hurricane Maria (2017) and current efforts for community resilience 8 years after this event. This research underscores how cooperation, fueled by networks of trust, reciprocity, and social obligations rather than merely economic incentives, influences post-disaster responses. By focusing on the factors that encourage cooperation, I also explore how these cooperative arrangements persist or evolve after the critical moment of disaster.

Presenter(s): Anais Roque

Interest Rate Crisis, Collective Action, and Cooperative Currencies: Toward a Theory of Social Credit

The early 1980s precipitated a widespread economic crisis as the US Federal Reserve sought to quell inflation by dampening economic activity through raising borrowing costs. The so-called "Volcker-shock" was felt globally, drastically raising the interest charged on contracts such as home mortgages. This paper describes how, in British Columbia, the interest rate crisis was acutely felt, as demand for the province's main resource, lumber, fell precipitously. High interest rates created a disincentive for home loans, which precipitated a decline in housing construction. Based on

ethnographic and archival research I explain how citizens in the Comox Valley region collectively created a pioneering virtual currency to redress the local economic crisis triggered by extreme interest rates. Prior to the widespread availability of the internet, the "green dollar" used state-of-the-art technologies of the day, the desktop computer and the answering machine, to enable members of the community to provide credit to one another. In the context of insecurity and uncertainty, they created a form of mutual credit rather than relying on credit from the state or commercial banks. The paper argues that what is termed "social credit" offers a powerful collective response to the forms of credit facilitated by the state or through the market.

Presenter(s): Daromir Rudnycky

"We All Need Each Other": Cooperation, Food, and Care When the Crisis Doesn't End

This paper examines the uneasy terrain of cooperative food aid practices in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a peri-urban community shaped by layered crises and competing visions for care and need. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted during and after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I argue that grassroots mutual aid food efforts emerge not as spontaneous responses to crisis but as contested alternatives to formalized charity systems. Rather than naturalizing cooperation, I interrogate the fragile nature of its relationships, strained by municipal regulations, moral hierarchies, and shifting definitions of need. While institutions mark the end of the pandemic through policy rollbacks, local residents continue to face compounded economic and social vulnerabilities. These mismatched temporalities generate friction between mutual aid food pantry organizers, vulnerable communities, and city officials, complicating efforts to negotiate solidarity in public space. As pandemic-era funding retreats, mutual aid groups are forced to make do within and against systems built for temporary relief, choosing to embrace practices of abundance as a form of resistance to institutional scarcity. This paper highlights how cooperation during and after a crisis is a process of negotiation, raising urgent questions about whose crisis is recognized and when it is allowed to end.

Presenter(s): Jaroslava Pallas-Brink

Strengths and Fragilities of Village-level Collective Action in Southwestern Madagascar During Uncertain Times

The cohesive rural imagery conjured by the idyll "it takes a village" is often aspirational rather than real. In Madagascar, where the national government has devolved some governance to formal and informal community institutions, village cohesion fluctuates with economic fortunes and with local politics, embedded within moral economies. In this research we ask how the rewards and punishments that reinforce village-level collective action are likely to be affected by events of extreme duress. The data come from Madagascar's rural southwest, where extreme rainfall unpredictability means cycles of drought and inundation cause perennial crop loss, livestock death, and foraging and fishing failures. We examine people's perception of sanctions by neighbors, ancestors, and the government for collective action problems involving social safety nets and common property. Preliminary analyses suggest that people perceive punishments by

neighbors to be more frequent but less severe than punishments by the government and ancestors. During times of extreme crisis, neighbor punishment erodes, supernatural punishment strengthens, and government enforcement becomes more variable. These preliminary findings elucidate the fragility of local social institutions.

Presenter(s): Bram Tucker

Strategies to tactics: Disaster, Climate Uncertainty, and Rethinking Cooperation in Pastoral Mongolia

This paper describes moral economic reassessments of cooperation emerging in the wake of a massive winter disaster in 2023-2024 on the eastern steppes of Mongolia. Households reported between 10-70% livestock loss in a region long noted for its low disaster risk, high livestock productivity, and large herd sizes. For many herders, the experience of such loss and the climatic and weather conditions that immediately precipitated it called into question the relevancy of local knowledge and the resilience of dominant herding strategies. Many herders reported the failure to predict emerging weather conditions and the muted success, even impossibility, of traditional strategies like long distance mobility and kin-based labor pooling. Households tactically responded by adopting coping mechanisms that included seeking support outside their typical networks including cooperating with non-kin neighbors, as well as unfamiliar practices such as emergency destocking. These improvisational techniques reflected a shift away from the management of risk to coping with newfound uncertainties. Moreover, the logics that undergird those techniques have prompted reflection on market-based moralities that have dominated local discourse for the past two decades. In the months following this tragedy, herders began to rethink their etiological explanations for dzud disasters, their social relations with other herders, and the rationale behind dominant livelihood strategies like rural-urban straddling.

Presenter(s): Daniel Murphy

Cooperating for Conflict: Non-State Organizing for Violence in Disaster

Studies of cooperation and mutual aid in disaster tend to overgeneralize and treat them as universal human nature while idealizing them as altruistic and serving public good. We develop a critical approach to studying cooperation as an institution, with attention to rules, sanctions, and belonging, that alternatively facilitate and inhibit cooperation and conflict, such that cooperation can be and often is an approach to organizing non-state violence to visit harm on perceived enemies. Drawing on cases of militia groups responding to and forming during disasters in several US states, we develop an approach to studying violence in disaster through the lens of cooperation.

Presenter(s): A.J. Faas

Co-author(s): Ashley Bergstrom, Livia Valentine

5399 Specters of Covid-19: Mental Wellbeing and the Life Course, Five Years On

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Five years ago, daily life around the world was upended when Covid-19 spread around the globe and launched a pandemic. For a period of weeks, months, or even years, large numbers of people in nearly every country in the world altered the way they worked, played, and learned. While life has since returned to "normal" for most, the long tail of Covid is still being assessed. This panel examines how the shocks of Covid-19 impacted long term mental health particularly for those going through key life transitions—what Jennifer Johnson-Hanks calls "vital conjunctures"—like entering higher education, the workforce, parenthood, and retirement. For some just finding their way in life, the dramatic external shocks associated with Covid pushed them off the paths they were trying to build for themselves, introducing stressors and obstacles that challenged their wellbeing and remade their futures. For others, Covid solidified and clarified their values and goals, changing their long term wellbeing in positive ways while keeping their trajectories intact. Early reports suggested that the biggest impacts on wellbeing would be felt among vulnerable populations who were disproportionately impacted both by the virus itself and the financial and educational disruptions associated with it. This panel will examine how students, young adults, new parents, retirees, and others who faced Covid at vital conjunctures - especially those who are members of vulnerable populations - are coping five years later.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Katherine Mason, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Andrea Flores, Brown University

Chair: Katherine Mason, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Heather Wurtz, University of Southern California, Fei Yuan, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Hugh Gusterson, University of British Columbia, Grazia Ting Deng, Brown University, Andrea Flores, Brown University, Xueying Wang, Harvard University

Discussant: Sarah Willen, University of Connecticut, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Becoming in a transnational space of aging and adversity among Latinx immigrant women in New York City

We explore how Latina immigrant women in their 50s and 60s struggled to flourish and thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic, while simultaneously confronting the realities of aging and various forms of adversity. We draw on findings from a qualitative study based in New York City, including ethnographic interviews and biweekly journals created over a six-month period. Findings illuminate how women cleaved to their most basic, defining commitments — including commitments to protect and nurture the people closest to them, who may include children or grandchildren, their community, or themselves — while also learning to live in aging bodies and cope with tremendous disruption and social upheaval. We foreground the importance of listening to the perspectives of

older immigrant women, especially in efforts to understand how the pandemic both intersected with and impacted their experiences of aging. Careful attention to the texture and dynamics of their experiences can strengthen understanding of gender and migration over the life course — and contradict assumptions that immigrant women's lived experiences of aging are necessarily constrained by vulnerability, stasis or stagnancy. As immigrant populations grow older, experience-near insights into how they pursue a meaningful life in the face of adversity and while navigating pivotal life transitions can deepen understanding of both the challenges of aging and the ways in which later life can be positive, enriching, and transformative.

Presenter(s): Heather Wurtz

Co-author(s): Sarah Willen

Fragile Obligations: Navigating Elder Care and Self-Care in Post-Pandemic China

This paper examines how the prolonged effects of the pandemic have reshaped the ethics and boundaries of intergenerational care in urban Chinese households. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Beijing in 2023, it explores the emotional complexities and ethical dilemmas faced by adult children caring for aging parents with chronic illnesses and cognitive decline. Amid China's volatile political economy and unstable housing market, intergenerational households have become contested spaces marked by tensions between filial obligations and caregivers' own well-being. Through interviews and participant observation in homes and care institutions, I focus on two interlocutors, both only children in their late 50s. Ming, living abroad and constrained by pandemic-related travel restrictions and lockdowns, struggles with the decision to institutionalize his mother, who has Alzheimer's. Lina, facing financial insecurity following early retirement, ultimately opts for home-based care after extended deliberations with her parents, who previously resided in an expensive nursing facility. Their narratives reveal how adult children approaching retirement navigate vulnerabilities, moral ambivalences, and economic pressures intensified by structural uncertainties. Ultimately, this paper illustrates how caregiving amid systemic instability and life transitions compels caregivers to continuously renegotiate the boundaries of proximity, intimacy, and obligation in their everyday lives.

Presenter(s): Fei Yuan

Covid, Mental Health, and the Structuring of Time

"Unstructured time could become an overabundant and even dangerous quantity," says Danya Fast (2024:91) in her ethnography of addicted youth in downtown Vancouver. She identifies boredom, lack of movement, a sense of being stranded in place as key drivers of youth crime and addiction. Much discussion, by anthropologists and health experts, of the damage covid inflicted on mental health, especially the mental health of youth, focuses on the following issues: the sudden sense, in 2020, of acute bodily vulnerability; the abrupt unexpected deaths of friends and family members; deaths enacted, in defiance of normal social scripts, in quarantined isolation; the loss of social interaction due to quarantine rules; and conflicts over mask-wearing. Here, drawing in part on the experiences of my teenage children, I look instead at the restructuring of time, both repetitive and

linear time, as a mental health problem. In terms of repetitive time, students have conventionally structured their days in terms of commutes to and from school, class periods, scheduled breaks, after-school hangouts and so on. When school became remote these rhythms dissolved and time became more "unstructured" and "overabundant." In terms of linear time, until the vaccine, covid profoundly undermined the progress narrative whereby each generation is better off than its predecessor that is core to the American imaginary.

Presenter(s): Hugh Gusterson

The Afterlife of Fear: Chinese Migrants' Practices of Well-Being in Post-Covid Italy

Fear is the recurring keyword used by Chinese migrants in Italy to recall the most challenging moments of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their fears of a mysterious and deadly virus threatening transnational families, of worsening economic precarity under a piecework-based labor regime, and of rising anti-Chinese racism, reveal layered emotional and social stressors in navigating uncertainty in a foreign country. Five years on, Covid-19 has become both a collective memory and a lingering social trauma. While life trajectories appear to have returned to pre-pandemic rhythms of long hours and intense work, the specters of the pandemic continue to haunt many Chinese migrants. The Covid-19 pandemic marked a turning-point in their understanding of life and death, prompting new negotiations over what it means to live well and over the very meaning of working abroad. This paper draws on long-term ethnographic research in Prato, a Tuscan town known for its Chinese-led textile and garment industry, to examine how Chinese migrant entrepreneurs and workers have transformed a condition of living in fear into practices of doing well-being in post-pandemic times. These practices, ranging from dietary arrangement and physical exercise to spiritual engagement, reflect evolving notions of health and self-care amid ongoing precarity and uncertainty. While the discourse of well-being has become increasingly popular, access to and expressions of health practices are unequally distributed.

Presenter(s): Grazia Ting Deng

Birthing Knowledge: First-Generation Students Managing Kin, College, and Wellbeing

Five years ago, first generation college students (FGCS) entered an already unfamiliar US higher educational landscape that rapidly shifted course amid the chaos of the Covid-19 pandemic. The structural fallout of Covid threatened these students' advancement through the educational pipeline, and thus their ability to create class mobility for their family members. Covid also turned the once-ordinary intimacies of students' family lives, like the birth of new kin, into the realm of the extraordinary. Based on longitudinal journals and interviews with FGCS from around the US, we examine how some participants who wrestled with their responsibilities to 'uplift' their families through their individual educational attainment also faced new responsibilities to support new family members born during a time of crisis. We show how the conjoined vital conjunctures, of pregnancy/birth and higher education, intersect with the mutual production of well-being and new kinship roles. We also demonstrate how families' shared experiences of the pandemic illuminated

the intersubjective nature of both vital conjunctures and broader life projects, including the reproduction of generations and the building of generational mobility.

Presenter(s): Andrea Flores

Co-author(s): Katherine Mason

From Precarious Death-scapes During the Pandemic to Haunted 'Afterlives' in Post-Pandemic China

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era of reflection on mortality, reshaping the landscape of death rituals, death markets, and biopolitical regulations in China. Through continuous fieldwork from 2020-2024, I investigated the intricate transformations experienced by mortuary rituals, death markets, and political regulations over the afterlife in China during and after the pandemic. This research adopts a comparative perspective, aiming to discern differences and similarities in these transformations across different regions and demographics. Specifically, it tries to explore the nuances of death, dying and afterlives experienced by ethnic minorities in Yunnan in comparison to the predominant Han majority in the Yangtze Delta Region during and after the pandemic. Beyond the transformations in mortuary rituals, the research also wants to frame the emergence of new spaces for mourning and commemoration amidst the evolving death landscape in the funerary industry—including spirit mediums, Daoist priests, and state-owned funerary runners. Furthermore, this research navigates the concept of haunting to investigate the supernatural and afterlives caused by the pandemic within the context of post-pandemic China, where state regulations over death are becoming increasingly stringent, secularized, and politicized. Finally, the paper examines the quest to understand how these shifts centering on 'death' contribute to our comprehension of 'life' under accumulating precarity.

Presenter(s): Xueying Wang

Discussion

4378 Community-Based Research: Grappling with Ghosts of Research Past, Present, and Future

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

How have ghostly legacies of research past influenced the ways we currently practice and envision collaborative and participatory ethnographic research? As ethnographers deeply engaged in community-based participatory research in the U.S., Canada, India, Iraq, and Ecuador, we will discuss the development of our methods and methodologies across distinct cultural contexts -- often in response to research's haunted past. Methods like photovoice, participatory mapping, and community walks demonstrate our efforts to resist spectral legacies of research and forge a collaborative ethnographic practice that promotes diverse ways of building rapport, sharing stories, and making research matter. From designing mutually beneficial service-learning trips to connect

college students with an Indian NGO, to long-term studies of community food systems, affordable housing, and jails in U.S. cities, to accompanying Yazidi women in publishing auto-ethnographic research, our roundtable participants will share strategies to confront disciplinary specters along with our challenges and missteps along the way. Trust is difficult to build and easy to lose, and this roundtable creates space for candid discussion about the significance of community-based research and the ongoing, unfinished nature inherent in collaborative research within a haunted discipline. How, for example, do you build collaborative research relationships with communities who have been historically treated as test subjects by researchers? How can you work collaboratively with a community whose neighborhoods were demolished for the expansion of the very university you represent? How do you navigate a shift in your role from a UNHCR employee determining refugee status to a researcher focused on statelessness and institutional humanitarian work? Not only are we ethnographers, but we are also professors, (former) NGO employees, and members of local committees and initiatives. We will discuss how our positioning within the university system and within the communities where we work influences how we learn and how we collaborate. What is our role as engaged anthropologists? What do people expect of us, and what do we expect of ourselves? How are we co-constructing research agendas, and how do we ensure our work leads to impacts defined by our community partners? Finally, how do we navigate current political and institutional challenges with our partners while reflecting together on the future of community-centered research?

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Alysa Handelsman, Wofford College, Sociology and Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Rachael Goodman, Mercer University, Department of International and Global Studies, Claire Menck, Ankita Chandranath, Malvya Chintakindi, Justin Helepololei, Colgate University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Sofya Shahab, Hema Ganapathy Coleman, University of Toronto

Discussant: Alysa Handelsman, Wofford College, Sociology and Anthropology Department

2794 The Specter of Fascism

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

There is a specter haunting the globe. Once imagined as a hollow revenant of 20th century catastrophe, fascism again looms large in our political present: as a resurrected governing formation; a glaring threat to minority lifeways; a crisis of liberal norms; an incendiary charge to lob at one's opponents; and, perhaps most often, a question. Questions like the oft-invoked "Is this fascism, yet?" embed a temporality that makes it hard to mobilize, for they posit fascism as that which cannot be named until too late. Historically, conceptually, politically, we hold this position is untenable. Rather, the ghosts of fascism are emergent, tangible, hauntological presences across a spectrum of horizons.

This roundtable therefore gathers scholars who are not content to consign fascism to the extreme, nor to the 20th century. We study fascism that calls itself by many names and charges banal sites of social life: mundane violences that emerge in liberal institutions, structure school curricula, shape relationships with nature, identify as "critical" and "feminist." Turning from book burnings to blockbuster films, dictators to PTAs, and examining sites of racialized and gendered violence across the Global North and South, we consider fascism not as an ideal type but as it haunts the everyday – all with an eye toward grasping fash-ish moods before they advance into full-fledged fascist masses.

Despite a growing sense that fascism is on the rise, boundary work has muddled what could be a clarion call for antifascist research. Popular responses range from naive tolerance to bloody confrontation, and academics appear hamstrung by a similar dissensus. Some frame fascism as an illiberal force; others as an apparition that stupefies the masses into (neo)liberal norms. Some call developing a general theory of fascism the most pressing matter of our time; others hold the concept loses teeth when abstracted. Some lament that fascism "is not who we are" in liberal democracies, while others locate its inception at democracies' frontiers. These debates are hardly frivolous, but while they unfold, fascism unfolds, too. There are questions worth exploring that do not hinge on their belabored resolution. And anthropology, ever curious about the instability of meaning, is precisely the discipline to ask them.

In short: we believe anthropology has rarely been more needed, but also that our field needs work to meet this moment. Recent scholarship has gestured notionally toward the possibilities of an antifascist anthropology, but the time has come for thinking programmatically. Together, we ask what fascism becomes when unhinged from its natal contexts. We map its spectral presence in domains from home to healthcare, economy to education. We inquire how to approach it as an ethnographic object and as the condition of our lives and work. And we consider how to remake anthropology into an antifascist discipline that can fight back not only in theory, but in practice.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Chloe Ahmann, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Sophie Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lilith Mahmud, University of California, Irvine, Bo Kyeong Seo, David Giles, Deakin University, Anthropology Department, Ali MUSLEH, Columbia University, Finn West, Cornell University, An Hoang Xuan

Discussant: Radhika Govindrajan, Douglas Holmes, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

1169 Haunting Returns

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

This roundtable explores the many ghosts of migration and return. Drawing on but also going

beyond insights from a recently published book, *States of Return: Rethinking Migration and Mobility* (NYU Press, 2024), panelists will discuss phantoms across time, haunted places, and the darkness of state violence that infuse nearly all border crossings, especially those understood as "return," whether desired or forced. The concept of return intrinsically evokes the idea of ghosts. People who return, especially when they are forced to do so, may face harrowing journeys, the horror of indefinite detention, and the fear and dread of increasingly unchecked and militarized policing, or they may be deported to unsafe places haunted by terrors from the past. Those who "choose" to return must confront the often frightful memories of war, poverty, and other generational traumas that led to exile in the first place. Even for those who desire a return to home or homeland, return dredges up nostalgia and reflections on the past. Thus, our discussion will focus on the many ways that ghosts infuse migration and return-be it metaphorically, conceptually, legally, or literally-in places around the globe, past and present. From the ghosts of U.S. imperialism that produce cyclical returns between Philadelphia and Puerto Rico, to memories of civil war, dictatorship, and extreme poverty that shape returns between Mediterranean and Western Europe, to state controls that surface materially and less tangibly through rural Chinese returns, to ghastly, shapeshifting U.S. detention and deportation apparatuses, panelists will consider return's multiple hauntings and the ways people navigate and attempt to exorcise them as they create new lives during and after return. Throughout the session, panelists and audience members will prioritize discussion about how the immateriality of migratory ghosts might lead us to tangible public engagement and concrete political actions. Focusing on the specter of return, anthropologists of migration are especially well positioned-and directly called upon-to act in solidarity with people crossing borders in the current moment.

Organizer: Deborah Boehm, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology, Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Deborah Boehm, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology, Philippe Bourgois, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, David Divita, Pomona College, Laurie Hart, University of California, Los Angeles, Minhua Ling, Geneva Graduate Institute, Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Leo Chavez, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Susan Coutin, University of California, Irvine

8008 Disturbing the Ghosts: Un(der) questioned assumptions, ideas, and practice in human evolutionary studies

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Paleoanthropologists, geneticists, and archaeologists are often primarily focused on the study and understanding of empirical data to better understand the human past. In studies of our evolutionary past, the legacies of both historical practice and theory often lie unacknowledged and unexamined beneath many contemporary debates within the field. This session will dig up some of

these ideas and explore the potential consequences for how we study and understand our evolutionary past today. For example, how have colonial practices of paleoanthropology shaped the trajectory of the composition of the fossil record and its understanding? How have prominent ideas become ingrained as baseline starting points of analysis, rather than as hypotheses subject to continual scrutiny? How have institutions themselves served as legacy bodies that shape careers, research agendas, and practice? This session is intended to open the floor for questions that are, at least today, seldom questioned within the field. The aim is not to provide clear or concise answers to these questions, but rather to explore the potential consequence of our reluctance to pay attention to these implicit biases, practices, and ideas.

Section: Biological Anthropology Section

Organizer: Adam Van Arsdale, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Adam Van Arsdale, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Adam Van Arsdale, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology, John Hawks, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Department of Anthropology, Sheela Athreya, Texas A&M University, College Station, Department of Anthropology, Marc Kissel, Appalachian State University, Jonathan Marks, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Discussant: Karen Rosenberg, University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Caspari, Central Michigan University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

Presentation(s): The Legacy of *Homo habilis*: A counterfactual history of the origin of the genus *Homo*

The 1964 publication of *Homo habilis*, "a new and lowly species of *Homo*," based on fossil and archaeological evidence from the lower beds of Oldupai Gorge has had a lasting legacy on the understanding of the origin of the genus *Homo*. Many of the traits central to Tobias' model of *Homo habilis*, such as dental reduction and encephalization, remain critical elements in the fossil identification of early *Homo* today, even as other elements of his model, such as tool use, have been shifted earlier in the hominin record. At the time of its publication, *Homo habilis* was filling an important gap between the South African Australopithecine fossil record, an emerging hominin record for East Africa, and a historical record of *Homo erectus* largely derived from East and Southeast Asian fossils. In addition to knowing that some of the elements of Tobias' model no longer apply, the fossil record for early *Homo* has expanded massively. This paper will consider how our understanding of the origin and early evolution of *Homo* might have proceeded differently had the timing and discovery of key fossil finds been different. In so doing, the paper will try to elucidate the ways that *Homo habilis* has continued to haunt our understanding of early *Homo*.

Presenter(s): Adam Van Arsdale

Finding a place for *Homo erectus* out of the spectre of *Pithecanthropus*

First discovered in 1891 and defined in 1894, the species known today as *Homo erectus* was one of the first entries into the scientific record of human origins. Its long precedence makes it central to any discussion of hominin systematics, and the popular awareness of the species has placed it

centrally in many people's imaginations of human ancestry. For most of this history, *H. erectus* has been contentious. Some favor recognizing many different species for the fossils often attributed to *H. erectus*, while others would reject the species entirely. Between these extremes *H. erectus* stands out as the largest hominin fossil sample aside from Neanderthals and modern humans, one of few that exhibits substantial change over hundreds of thousands of years, and the only hominin other than modern humans with a distribution across Africa, Asia, and Europe. This talk considers the 130-year legacy of *Homo erectus* within human evolution research. It includes a critical examination of the place of the species in today's systematics. Recent discoveries have tended to promote the idea of *H. erectus* with a concept not generally shared by historical sources. The talk presents a sketch of a different way of handling the *Homo erectus* fossil record.

Presenter(s): John Hawks

Exorcizing our evolutionary ghosts: Denisovans and other spectral beings of the Pleistocene

Unlike other evolutionary sciences, paleoanthropology is made personal as it sifts through ghosts from the past to frame the evolutionary history of our own species. Bones and ancient DNA are the physical evidence of once living people and, as framed by Spooner-Lockyer and Kilroy-Marac (2021), also represent spectral beings who occupy invisible landscapes. In the case of the population referred to as the Denisovans, genomes are unmoored from heads, faces, and bodies and as such are incomplete spectral beings. For paleoanthropology, this type of incompleteness encourages the naming convention of 'ghost'. Even so, Denisovan ghosts are more complete than other echoes of past populations that are essentially statistical artifacts instead of individual genomes. Although Denisovan genomes tell us more about them than can be gleaned from their scant remains, the absence of skeletal elements that are also morphologically salient puts us in an unfamiliar place. We investigate how genomic research disassociated from skeletal remains is a trap that prevents us from conceptualizing Denisovans appropriately. Naming those genetic ghosts as Denisovans is just the first problem. In our attempts to humanize them, we create a category that really has no evolutionary or analytical meaning.

Presenter(s): Sheela Athreya

Co-author(s): Mica Glantz

The “concept” of ‘behavioural modernity in palaeoanthropology

"Behavioural modernity" refers to a loosely & variously defined set of behaviours and their material correlates suggested to indicate the cognitive, technical, and social traits characteristic of *Homo sapiens*. While it continues to be a topic of palaeoanthropological focus and has had a wide impact, current scholarship has reached an impasse. We examine the historical legacies of the concept of behavioural modernity, looking at how some of its core traits, such as its concentration on symbolic thought, are consequences of problematic assumptions about human nature. The importance of 'behavioural modernity' stems more from the impact that this concept has had, and continues to have, on anthropology regardless of how well it functions as an accurate framework for examining hominin socio-cognitive development. We use the analysis of citational practices to

trace how this concept was constructed and validated, how it has shaped the discipline of palaeoanthropology, and the implications of this concept for the understanding of human evolution. While many assumptions of the model are rejected today, the overall narrative still persists. Though scholars have suggested moving past this concept, it is still seen as valid outside of palaeoanthropology and its impact is wide. We further suggest that the ghost of modernity continues to impact how our research is framed and that moving past it requires a rethink on how we talk about human evolution.

Presenter(s): Marc Kissel

Co-author(s): Jennifer French, Maggie Mason

Ghostly Ancestors

The major difference between biology and biological anthropology is the reflexive nature of thinking about ourselves scientifically. In the case of ancestry, hominin taxonomy is, and has always been, a mess. Traditional explanations for this situation involve general incompetence and prostitution of the scientific record in the service of personal aggrandizement. This, however, assumes that there is a correct species-level taxonomy "out there" for a competent scientist to discern. I suggest a different reason for the widespread perpetual dissatisfaction with hominin taxonomy. Unlike the way that chimpanzees conceptualize their ancestry, human ancestors are, in an anthropological sense, sacred. There can be no purely objective, scientific discourse about our ancestors without either (a) ceasing to think in a human fashion about them; or (b) pretending to be a space alien and imagining that they are not our own ancestors. Conceptualizing our ancestry is a cultural activity, whether scientific or not. Consequently, arguing about the biological reality of hominin taxa may be an ultimately fruitless activity, if they are not part of the biological realm. Following racial taxonomy, I suggest that human ancestry is most accurately described non-taxonomically, at least at the lowest levels.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Marks

Discussion

6336 Giving Up the Ghost: USAID's Closure and Global Health After Trump

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Since Donald Trump took office and eliminated the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), terminated National Institute of Health (NIH) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) contracts, and attacked diversity programs, the field of Global Health has been in a state of chaos. In the face of mass layoffs in America and the cession of life saving public health prevention and detection programs across the Global South, Global Health actors around the world have scrambled to preserve what's left, provide care, and ask what is next for the field. We have

witnessed a variety of responses to the Agency-some redemptive, claiming USAID's role in "helping to end apartheid," while others celebrate the end of an abusive, ultimately colonial funding relationship. For, while USAID and other American and European entities currently culling their programs provide essential care, Global Health has been haunted by its implications in imperial occupation and extraction, neoliberal and neocolonial dynamics of racial capitalism, "soft power" and diplomacy. Thinking from and with field sites impacted by these changes, this roundtable aims to complicate the narratives surrounding USAID and grapple with what its closure means for public health, development and governance outside of the US. If the "global health score after trauma," or GHOST, measures the severity of impairment, death and disability after a major traumatic event (Berger Estilita et al. 2019), we offer a more capacious interpretation of GHOST to interrogate the forms of resistance, resilience, and injury sustained by USAID's abrupt closure. This not only looks to rapid response on the ground but also to the historical legacies of trauma that inform USAID and Euroamerican interventionism's very inception. Thinking with the ghosts of Global Health, this roundtable thus asks what ethnographic study from the places where Global Health unfolds-the elite boardrooms in Geneva, the technocratic field offices across Africa, and the rural clinics-can offer in making sense of this moment.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Daniel Krugman, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Dina Asfaha , Megan Schmidt-Sane, University of Sussex, Sharon Watson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Isabella Schultz

Discussant: Svea Closser, Johns Hopkins University, Tsitsi Masvawure, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

3239 Carcerality and Trauma Theory

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the relationship between carceral structures and trauma theory. Employment of trauma theory in the discipline abounds, but much of it is anchored in different, sometimes contradictory definitions of the term. Meanwhile, studies of carcerality have expanded to the extent that carcerality could mean anything ranging from states of mind, to prisons, to policing very generally defined. In this panel, panelists will debate the utility of both of these concepts in contemporary anthropological studies of violent structures and modes of adjudication. Papers explore themes including the genealogy of different definitions of trauma, the relationship between experiences of violence and the temporality of trauma theory, law and evidential systems in arbitrating carcerality, the endurance of crimes against humanity and their traumatic effects, and the role of language systems in all the above. The papers aim to advance the debate on the role of anthropology in employing, challenging, and advancing trauma theory and the analytic frameworks with which we understand the worlds it diagnoses.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Douaa Sheet, American University

Chair: Douaa Sheet, American University

Presenter(s): Douaa Sheet, American University, Alex Pillen, Serra Hakyemez, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Jess Cooper, University of Edinburgh

Discussant: Kristin Doughty, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Carceral Temporalities: Tunisian Political Prisoners and the Inadequacy of Trauma Theory

If we approach prison as a temporal category, how does that bring new insights into our understanding of carcerality? Drawing on human rights reports, prison literature, public testimonies, and interviews with former prisoners and their families in Tunisia, this paper focuses on Tunisian political prisoners who were incarcerated between 1960 and 2010. The paper challenges the delimited, material conception of the prison by exploring the temporal experience of incarceration that often endures after release from prison. Specifically, I focus on "administrative control" (raqāba idāriyya)—a police practice where former prisoners are placed under forced surveillance after their release for a period that can range from a few months to an indefinite number of years, requiring them to report to police stations multiple times a day, in the process purposefully disrupting their ability to maintain employment and sustain housing. Through the lens of temporality, surveillance, prison studies, and borders, I examine incarceration in its physical, social, and temporal dimensions as it extends beyond prison walls. I ask: How does "administrative control" in the aftermath of time in prison redefine how we conceptualize incarceration? The paper seeks to challenge the trauma framework that has come to dominate how we conceptualize post-prison experiences, and to rethink them through the prism of carceral, state logics and their policing of former prisoners' temporal lives.

Presenter(s): Douaa Sheet

Language and the Endurance of Crimes Against Humanity

This paper will explore the role of language as an aspect of the endurance of crimes against humanity. In 2016, I published an article entitled 'Language, Translation, Trauma' in *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Since then I have continued research on the language of survivorhood. I will offer insights from my recently published book *Endurance: Speaking Kurdish in a Warped World* (Brill 2024). I will focus on the affordances of the Kurdish language that enable a sense of uniqueness in the face of state-sponsored cultural assimilation and violence. By reading a selection of excerpts from this monograph I will participate in the panel's debate about the role of anthropology in challenging and advancing trauma theory.

Presenter(s): Alex Pillen

Magical Realism of Trauma and Incarceration

Trauma theory and literature share a common ground in their construction of the subject through language. While trauma theory situates condensed pain that displaces the subject at the limits of

ordinary language, literature challenges any limits imposed on ordinary language by creatively using its tools of displacement and condensation (i.e. metaphors and metonyms) to express pain. At the intersection of trauma and literature, this paper focuses on the fiction writings of two Kurdish political prisoners who spent thirty years in various maximum-security prisons in Turkey. Nevzat and Rojbin were both college students when they were imprisoned in the early 1990s with the charge of "terrorism." Released in 2022, they are now the authors of several novels written in the genre of magical realism. In conversation with these authors and their novels, this paper asks what theory of trauma emerges from their literary works which evolve around the theme of life amid extraordinary suffering wrought by the Turkish counterinsurgency war in Northern Kurdistan. Critical carceral studies suggest that prisoners are not only the products of carceral power but also the subjects theorizing that power in their political writings. Building on this praxis-oriented theory, this paper asks what the fiction writings of political prisoners tell us about carcerality, on the one hand, and trauma, on the other.

Presenter(s): Serra Hakyemez

The Fantasy of Trauma's Repair in California's Mental Health Courts

It is hard to come by a Californian on the political left who does not acknowledge that ideologies and institutions of mass incarceration are traumatizing for the people and communities who pass through them. Activists, attorneys, mental health clinicians, and social workers in the San Francisco Bay Area have tried to both the trauma of mass incarceration and the social traumas of racism, xenophobia, and class-based hatred that undergird it, by creating new, reform-based, progressively minded courtrooms, called mental health courts. The social justice-minded rationale for these courts equates justice with social and psychic repair. People are suffering from mental illnesses, so goes the discourse, and progressive institutions ought to organize themselves to provide services to people who need them, whose welfare has been otherwise abandoned by a racialized police state. This paper argues in counterpoint to suggest that such repair is a fantasy that mobilizes the very structures of inequality the courts aim to ameliorate. Drawing on a psychoanalytic vocabulary, I ask, how can we differently understand ethics when we do not aim them at the lost objects of an untraumatized subject or a just society? What can we say about ethics if we figure repaired subjects and social justice as limit cases, rather than desired ends?

Presenter(s): Jess Cooper

Discussion

3628 Ghostwriters: The Limn Roundtable

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Featuring work from Limn's newly released 13th issue, this roundtable takes the pandemonium around artificial intelligence as an opportunity to revisit a classic problem: ghostwriters. Since the AI Spring of 2023, proponents have lauded AI's scientific and economic benefits. Detractors have

warned of its harms, often invoking the well-worn sci-fi tropes of machine takeover and human obsolescence. Driving the frenzy are more profound questions of authorship and agency: What does it mean for things from tariff rates to Top 40 hits to be generated by ghosts in the machine? This means taking ghostwriting seriously, both as a way of reframing catastrophist readings of AI as well as grounding experiments in publishing in anthropology, haunted by the discipline's conventions as well as the obscure workings of an inherited idea of peer review.

This roundtable gathers editors, authors, and other experts in scholarly publishing to reckon with these ghosts of publishing pasts. Using the experimental journal *Limn* as our medium, we ask how we might forge other ways of interrogating authorship while forging alternative paths for producing knowledge. We summon participants to reframe the eeriness of the AI-dawn, its histories, and its futures by illuminating places where voice, authorship, and presence are tweaked, generated and rebuilt—albeit with an occasional screw missing. Bridging current editorial concerns within anthropology, we will also lift the veil on *Limn*'s unique process to consider how thinking with ghosts might auger distinctively collaborative modes of inquiry, authorship, and publishing. Through the makings of *Ghostwriters*, we'll then open up a conversation with the audience about what it will take to build a publishing machine that is a little more human(e) and a little less machine, for the re-limning of this most humanistic of social sciences.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jerry Zee, Princeton University, Towns Middleton

Presenter(s): Courtney Handman, University of Texas at Austin, Christopher Nelson , Jason Cons , Fernando Armstrong-Fumero , Via Matthews , Emily Ng, University of Pennsylvania

Discussant: Stacy Wood

7161 Media and Empire in the Americas

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Empire has long been an issue of concern in relation to media in Latin America. From the early twentieth century on, U.S. media industries from Kodak through Hollywood sought a foothold in the region, leading to the dominance of Hollywood films on Latin American screens and stereotyped depictions of Latin America in U.S. media. Latin American intellectuals and artists, cultural officials, and political leaders vehemently criticized and resisted these media incursions, as well as broader US political and economic intervention. Following the success of the 1959 revolution in Cuba, the new state nationalized media production and distribution and forged new alliances with Third World and socialist media and artistic movements. The subsequent rise of powerful media industries in the region, including Brazilian and Mexican television, provided commercial counters to U.S. media influence. The current political turmoil in the United States, which involves both a realignment of the nation with former Cold War enemies such as Russia and a retreat into protectionism, invites a reevaluation of U.S. influence in the region. This panel takes up this challenge through papers that address U.S. media and political imperialism across time and in

multiple Latin American contexts. Ali Feser analyzes the material processes that subtended early twentieth century U.S. media imperialism. She shows how Kodak expanded into Panama City to create film that would resist the decay brought on by tropical conditions. Taking up a close reading of a test shot of Ana Fong, a secretary in the Panama lab, she reveals how these experiments were designed to expand Kodak's vision of a White "good life" on a global scale. Laura-Zoë Humphreys examines the role of U.S. media in analog video circulation. As she shows, despite the widespread association of illegal Cuban citizen video libraries with U.S. action films, one of the highest-renting products was Mexican telenovelas. This finding reveals the often-overlooked influence of Global South television and women's labor and media consumption in analog video. Agnès Mondragón Celis turns her attention to how media advances imperial power in the U.S. war on drugs. She examines how media such as court hearings, press releases, and other official discourse produce a transnational form of "crime talk" that erases facts and accounts that would support Mexican nationals who are extradited to U.S. courts in drug proceedings. Finally, Meg Stalcup analyzes a fake map that depicts the Amazon rainforest as belonging to the United States and the United Nations, which circulated over the early internet and has periodically reappeared, often making the news. Contextualizing this artefact within broader visualizations of Brazil across colonial, imperial, and republican eras, she shows how this map and its recurrence reflects ongoing anxieties over US imperialism.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Laura-Zoe Humphreys, Tulane University, Department of Communication

Chair: Laura-Zoe Humphreys, Tulane University, Department of Communication

Presenter(s): Ali Feser, Laura-Zoe Humphreys, Tulane University, Department of Communication, Agnes Mondragon Celis, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology, Meg Stalcup, University of Ottawa

Presentation(s): Decay is a Woman: Kodak's Tropical Research Laboratory and the Materiality of U.S. Imperialism

This paper tells the story of Eastman Kodak's Tropical Research Laboratory in Panama City and how scientists tried to solve the problem of "image impermanence." That is, how film decayed faster in hot and humid conditions than they did in the temperate climates of upstate New York where it was originally designed. The point of this research was to standardize photographic emulsions and to ensure that Kodak commodities behaved the same in all times and all places. The knowledge produced at the Panama laboratory was calculated into Kodak's fantasy of the "average consumer." This new, global average was assimilated into manufacturing processes in order to extend the life of film and expand Kodak's market. Once standardized, film becomes a media for U.S. imperialism and an agent of standardization in its own right. It sustained the state infrastructure necessary for Kodak to extend its own empire. Finally, the essay meditates on how images of women—specifically a test shot of Ana Fong, a secretary at the Panama Lab—figured as the media through which Kodak reproduced its vision of the white "good life" and extended it on a global scale.

Presenter(s): Ali Feser

Video as Media Imperialism? The Arrival of Analog Video in Socialist Cuba

Throughout Latin America, analog video led to renewed concerns about the threat of U.S. media imperialism. This was particularly the case in socialist Cuba, where analog video threatened state control over media distribution after efforts to nationalize production and distribution and cultivate a media culture that would produce socialist citizens. Paradoxically, however, state video services often circulated U.S. media while illegal video circulation promoted regional content. Drawing on oral histories and archival work, this paper shows how the state worked to control analog video through services such as a line of pirate videocassettes that circulated U.S.-distributed movies (Omnivideo). Despite associations of illegal citizen video libraries with U.S. action movies, by contrast, Mexican telenovelas, which were recorded from pirated satellite signals and attracted predominantly women viewers, were among their highest earning content. Whereas histories of video outside the U.S. have often focused on the use of video to circulate U.S. movies and on the labor of the men who predominantly controlled these networks, this paper instead demonstrates the ties between analog video, satellite television, and women's labor and consumption. In so doing, it enriches our understanding of the late twentieth century Latin American media industries that competed with U.S. dominance and provides an infrastructural and material account of how this content circulated.

Presenter(s): Laura-Zoe Humphreys

Crime Talk, Extraterritorial 'Justice,' and the Politics of Mediation in the Drug War

Every year, about a dozen Mexican nationals are extradited to the US on charges related to drug trafficking. While extradition is often spoken of as a remedy to Mexico's collapsed judicial system and its near absolute impunity, I argue that this judicial processing is partial and selective, marked as much by erasure as by the production of 'truth.' As extradited individuals are taken before the US judicial system to respond for crimes allegedly committed on US soil—usually the trafficking of drugs—those that are perpetrated on Mexican territory—often murder and disappearance—are left unspoken and unresolved. This paper follows the cases of two Mexican nationals in US courts through ethnographic and archival work. It critically compares the knowledge produced around each case by and for the US state—through court hearings, press releases, and other official discourse—and the forms of epistemic erasure (despite different actors' attempts) on facts and accounts that would serve the interest of Mexican victims, which then circulate in more speculative forms (as a transnational form of 'crime talk'). I argue that the differential valuation of these kinds of knowledge and their purposes instantiates the imperial power underlying the US's war on drugs, not only by illuminating the extraterritorial reach of the US's judicial apparatus, but also by revealing the unequal value ascribed to the lives of US and Mexican citizens at the heart of this transnational project.

Presenter(s): Agnes Mondragon Celis

Visualizing Empires: Maps, Botanical Illustrations, Memes, Renderings

Soon after Spain and Portugal split the world between them, or tried to, in 1494, the Portuguese empire claimed the territory that would become Brazil and named Ilhéus one of the original

hereditary captaincies. Drawing on archives and fieldwork in the area around the city of Ilhéus today, in this talk I trace visualizations of the nation and the region through periods of colonial, imperial, and republican governance. Early maps of the captaincies are a microcosm of royal loyalties and recompense, the fiercely resistant indigenous populations which would limit the colonizers' success nowhere to be found. Some 500 years later, another map of Brazil circulated via email on the early internet, in which the Amazon rainforest was depicted as belonging to the United States and the United Nations on the page of a junior high school geography textbook which never existed. The image and text were fake, but the sense that US imperialism threatened Brazil's sovereignty was real enough that nearly twenty-five years on, the map still periodically reappears and makes the news. No image stands outside of ideology, Azoulay reminds us, and in examining maps, botanical plates, and computer renderings I attend to the ways that empire is implicated in these images.

Presenter(s): Meg Stalcup

2004 Fiscal Flows: A Site of Ethnographic Intervention and Disciplinary Reflection

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel posits "fiscal flows" as an object of study and as a site for re-thinking areas of anthropological interrogation such as the state, debt and credit, inequalities, nation-making, and everyday life. Fiscal flows encompass both the payment of taxes as well as myriad forms of redistribution and expenditure. In paying attention to flows we explore how fiscal resources move – where, what, and who they run to, from, and through, where they pool, and where they dry up – and the impacts of their particular pathways. Fiscal flows themselves are generative of critical junctions in economic, political, and social life – pulling together and channelling the movement of resources, wealth, and power, and directing anthropological analysis to such traffic. Fiscal flows are also entangled with wider global forces; the recent imposition of trade tariffs and altered terms on which the US offers military security to Europe link national fiscal flows to changes in global geopolitics and empire, for example.

This panel explores multiple aspects and scales of fiscal flows and how they produce society and generate spectres of extractive histories, including but not limited to: taxes, benefits, public spending, redistribution, and monetary and fiscal policy. The papers move from how offshore finance builds welfare in Luxembourg; remittance economies and land-brokers in Nepal; the histories and presents of welfare states and austerity measures in northern Europe; through tax-like extraction by dons in Jamaica for the creation of public goods as inventive re-shaping and movement of fiscal funds; and the colonial logics of capital flows through tax havens; to how fiscal flows shape love and kinship in India.

In doing so, the papers address key questions regarding fiscal flows including:

- Who is seen to pay for whom and, conversely, to benefit? What moral/ethical evaluations are attached to fiscal obligation and expenditure?
- What are the effects of fiscal flows on individual subjects and social collectivities, from the household to transnational?
- How does the fiscal figure in projects of governance, security, social movements, political contestation, etc?
- Where might fiscal flows encounter entanglements and blockages, and with what effects?
- How can attention to fiscal flows generate sites of ethnographic intervention and disciplinary reflection?

By taking fiscal flows as a point of departure, this panel opens new anthropological horizons and thematic linkages, and creates critical space for re-considering the discipline's engagements with policy, social movements, and other political actors within and beyond academia.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Miranda Sheild Johansson, University College London, Charles Dolph

Chair: Miranda Sheild Johansson, University College London

Presenter(s): May Hen, University of Cambridge, Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam, Samuel Weeks, Andrew Haxby, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Charles Dolph, Garima Jajju

Discussant: Caitlin Zaloom, New York University

Presentation(s): Extortion or taxes? Criminal leaders and fiscal flows in Kingston, Jamaica

Through an analysis of the "fiscal" flows mobilized by criminal leaders known as dons, this paper explores popular understandings of taxation, political authority and the public good in Kingston, Jamaica. It focuses on the payments that dons exact from small and large entrepreneurs, and how these are connected to the provision of neighborhood-level common goods. While the Jamaican police and media are quick to describe such economic exchanges as "extortion," both entrepreneurs and dons go to significant lengths to narrate and perform them as other-than-extortion. Aligning with recent work in fiscal anthropology, where taxation is understood as a payment extracted and redistributed by political institutions in and beyond the state, the paper takes seriously this framing in terms of taxation. It analyzes how the payments exacted by dons and the performance of consent play a role in the formation of political – and indeed fiscal – communities. Connecting the perspectives put forward by dons, low-income residents and entrepreneurs, the paper traces the fiscal flows associated with donmanship in order to understand their role in enacting fiscal-political territories both at the level of the don's neighborhood-based territory and at the scale of the Jamaican nation-state.

Presenter(s): Rivke Jaffe

Offshore finance in the service of social democracy: The curious fiscal case of Luxembourg

Luxembourg is a paradoxical fusion of offshore finance and social democracy, whereby low taxation on financial transactions and progressive taxation on finance workers' salaries have enabled the country to build a welfare state. Offshore finance – in which Luxembourg developed a specialty in

the 1960s – has propelled the country to a high global GNP figure, shielding it from hardships experienced elsewhere in the Global North. In this paper, I present the results of an anthropological study on how my interlocutors in the financial center address the following three tensions. First, how do Luxembourg's elites seek to expand finance activities, given that current social-welfare demands necessitate their future growth? Second, why is it that said elites have, curiously, neither expanded financialization domestically nor do they discuss the financial center much with locals? Third, given that current fiscal flows and patterns of rent accumulation enable the Grand Duchy to maintain high living standards while avoiding austerity, how do my interlocutors confront the contradiction between promoting offshore finance internationally while maintaining a social democracy domestically? I end with a few thoughts about how ethnographic methods can help us to understand complex fiscal flows. I highlight some strategies for studying offshore finance and fiscality in Luxembourg, whose practitioners generally seek to operate without public scrutiny, whether from anthropologists or others.

Presenter(s): Samuel Weeks

From Fiscal Flows to Remittance Economies: Brokers, Land, Capture, and the Public Good in Kathmandu

A critique of foreign remittances is that they replace fiscal flows. The argument goes that, when a society becomes reliant on money sent from nationals abroad, then pressure on the state to deliver services, encourage growth, and invest in development is lessened; that remittances become a stand-in for governmental forms of management and redistribution. But what of the remittances themselves? Do they come to be viewed as a kind of fiscal flow by those living in remittance-reliant societies, as something at least partially earmarked for the public good? Or do they fully retain their character as private property? This presentation explores such questions through an examination of remittances, urban land, and brokerage in Kathmandu, Nepal. Nepal is one of the largest receivers of foreign remittances, a surprising amount of which gets invested into urban land. This capital flow has attracted a host of young men to the professions of land brokerage, work that necessitates capturing a percentage of remittances from families looking to invest, sometimes through morally dubious methods. This presentation argues that brokers justify such methods by questioning the ownership of remittances, using tropes of governance, development and the public good in unexpected ways. In this way, brokers play on the ambiguous role that remittances have in their society, creating new constellations of meaning and morality around the shifting distinctions between public and private.

Presenter(s): Andrew Haxby

Mutations in the (study of) austerity: New terms of empire, changing fiscal flows

In this paper, I consider mutations in austerity—and anthropological approaches to it—in the UK against the backdrop of wider changes to fiscal flows: from the new terms of US empire marked by the Trump administration's demands that Europe assume greater responsibility for its security to the first Labour government following fourteen years of Tory rule and austerity measures. Together,

these shifts have set the stage for a return to austerity in the UK, albeit under markedly different conditions than their imposition in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. Indeed, current calls by UK and European political leaders for 'trimming the welfare state to build the warfare state' raise the specter of retooling the fiscal-military states upon which modern forms of taxation and extraction emerged. In this context, the UK Labour government has intensified austerity measures by cutting disability benefits and pushing 'workfare' regimes which threaten beneficiaries to return to work or lose benefits. I draw on fieldwork with benefit recipients and resistance and solidarity movements to examine these mutations in (the study of) austerity, connecting them to macro-level dynamics of state formation and the altered terms of US empire which challenge the common association of austerity with neoliberalism.

Presenter(s): Charles Dolph

Fiscal flows, un-flows, mis-flows: Gender, kinship and the landscape of intimate speculations in Gurgaon, India

Gurgaon, India has seen spectacular urbanisation in recent years, with private capital transforming the city from an agrarian hinterland to India's 'millennial city'. This has meant a massive influx of money and people, and the creation of new avenues of work, consumerism, and leisure. Money is present in seeming abundance in the city. At the same time, it remains elusive and mercurial in that it is hard to acquire and fast finishing for most. While the urban economy has been variously studied with attention to its ever-expanding capitalistic frontiers of investment, employment and spending, I trace how the fiscal flows of the city manifest within the home as a deeply gendered substance of kinship tied to gendered roles, obligations, and relations. Taking the family as my starting point - with its structural constraints, affective entanglements and relations of interdependence - I study how the fiscal flows, mis-flows and un-flows of wage, rent, financial assets, income, savings or expenditures become crucial plot points around which 'family dramas' congeal, animating familial anxieties, ambitions and attachments, and oftentimes reorganizing the family structures and gender roles. I explore how the existing or anticipated flows of money intersect with women's ideas of desirable kinship futures and how women may come to use money to practice forms of intimate speculations to renegotiate belonging within the home, amidst the larger speculative urbanism of the city.

Presenter: Garima Jaju

2693 Resisting Petrocultural Anthropologies: Who's Afraid of Petroghosts?

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The increasing prominence of concerns and responses to the fossil fuel industry within the global public sphere breathes new life into classic anthropological problems and debates.

Anthropologists are partnering with new ecologies of actors—both within and beyond academia—in

working to reinvent the human's relation to technology and the environment, to resituate the divide between scientific and traditional ways of knowing, and to deconstruct the dominant nexus of language, power, value, and ethics. And yet, at the same time, recent intensifications of energopolitical conflicts and their fossil-fueled war machines, the resurgence of demand for coal, nuclear, and other hazardous fuels and infrastructures, and the pronounced ascendance of new petromasculine authoritarianisms all suggest that "petroculture" is alive and thriving as ever before. What can we learn, as anthropologists, from this simultaneous popularization of petrocultural critique amidst a dramatic and vengeful resuscitation of petrocultural hegemony?

Appealing to petroculture's more spectral and parasitic capacities, this panel mobilizes the concept of "petro-ghosts" to draw these speciously separate developments together, revealing their otherwise unthought continuities and entanglements. In brief, petro-ghosts signify how petroculture shapes the way folks envision what a non-petro-racial capitalist society might look like, as well as how we might get there. That is, how have the past two centuries of globalized attunements to fossil fuels infused our social and mental ecologies with petrocultural assumptions, values, beliefs, desires, strategies, and practices? How have more recent efforts to catalyze sustainability reproduced or even consolidated petrocultural systems or formations at different scales? And how might the seeming intractability of petromodernity hint at the way our very modes of scholarship and resistance reflect deeply petrocultural anthropologies? As a whole, the papers warn us to be vigilantly reflexive, showing how any attempt to critically investigate or deconstruct the culture of petroculture runs the risk of always already being petrocultural.

Professional anthropologists are, of course, no exception. As such, many papers will reflect on the way our ethnographic insights into petrocultural anthropologies revealed our own petro-ghosts, shaping the way we design, fund, conduct, analyze, write-up, and publish our research, and how these activities both reflect and reshape the quotidian goings-on of our fieldsites, workplaces, and personal lives. As a mode of resistance, the papers also emphasize the continual need for new experimental pedagogies, research designs, and methodologies, which can be designed to produce the kinds of untimeliness, dissonance and disjointedness necessary to conjure and exorcise these lingering petro-poltergeists.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: James Adams, University of California, Irvine

Chair: James Adams, University of California, Irvine

Presenter(s): Adam Fleischmann, University of Ottawa, Erin Victor, University of Maine, Chiara Arnavas, University of Oslo, Prerna Srigyan, James Adams, University of California, Irvine

Presentation(s): Energy ethics, anthropology and their ghosts in North America and France

This paper takes up ongoing research on climate and energy in North America and France to ultimately reflect on the material and methodological conditions of contemporary anthropology. Energy projects—renewable, oil and gas or otherwise—are not only technical and infrastructural, but also social in their stakes and impacts, organization and development, risks and benefits. Further, energy projects promote particular viewpoints about the present, but also entail visions of how the world should be and how to enact desirable futures. In short, debates about energy raise

fundamental ethical questions about how we envision a world of flourishing. These ethical stakes are collectively structured yet varied across time and place. In the Canadian context, climate and energy discourses are actively entrenched in a petrochemical extractive industry that is at the centre of a divisive technological nationalism predicated on settler-colonial relations. Meanwhile in France, petrocultures and their hauntings are complicated by a different arrangement of energopolitics: looming are the ghostly echoes of energy pasts, presents and futures deeply committed to nuclear power (and its subsequent colonial relationships with Africa). In an era of uncertain environmental and political futures, what can these field sites and their differences tell us about energy and our research on it? This conference paper will consider such questions about energy, ethics and politics across field sites.

Presenter(s): Adam Fleischmann

Petrochemical hauntings: Resisting the logic of disposability in circular economy policies for plastic packaging

News stories about plastic's harms are now commonplace—from entangled marine animals to cancers linked to chemical additives. Once considered a solution to the overuse of scarce resources like ivory, these petrochemical-derived materials are now one of the greatest challenges of our times. Recognizing the sheer magnitude of the problem, the UN resolved to develop a global plastics treaty, centering on policies like Extended Producer Responsibility. Shifting responsibility for recycling from municipalities to brand owners, the underlying assumption is that producers will be incentivized to re-design packaging to reduce costs. While these policies are gaining traction, advocates fear they are not enough to resist petroculture's hegemony as industry groups request exemptions, find loopholes, and push false solutions like "advanced" recycling.

Based on 24 months of ethnographic research, this paper examines policy negotiations around disposable packaging in the US and Canada. Attuning to human and more-than-human entanglements, this paper illuminates how ideas of plasticity and modernity are co-constructed, thus challenging attempts to resist the seemingly insatiable appetite for plastics in petrocultural modernity. I argue that plastic petroghosts delimit which solutions are envisioned, advancing techno-managerial solutions that maintain the logic of disposability. Meanwhile, toxic plastic materials promise to "bite back," haunting colonial and capitalistic logics of progress.

Presenter(s): Erin Victor

Coal mining and the anthropologist's crime in West Bengal petroculture, India

This paper examines the deep imbrication between green urbanism, the resurrection of coal mining, and anthropology's risk of criminalizing the victims of petroculture in the Indian state of West Bengal. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime of petro-masculinity, the state of West Bengal figures as a possible exception. The ruling party in West Bengal has based its legitimacy on the promotion of green cities, and avoidance of large-scale land dispossession of peasant land. Yet, I consider the seemingly paradoxical promotion in West Bengal of green policies along with new state mines to extract large amounts of coal from an area that is set to become the second

largest coal block in the world. The government may soon dispossess land belonging to tribal and Muslim communities. I argue that what connects projects of eco-green urbanism with coal mining is a mafiazation of land dispossession, crucial to acquire land both for eco-green cities and to access hazardous fuels like coal. I foreground how dispossessed communities are, at the same time, fighting against coal mining, while also enlisted as foot-soldiers for the land mafia as part of the state's compensation scheme. Yet, as ethnographic research can expose this mafiazation process, anthropological knowledge risks reproducing the government's mystification of long-standing inequalities, and sustaining a criminalizing discourse that, while blaming the West Bengal mafia for pollution, also criminalizes its victims.

Presenter(s): Chiara Arnavas

Should we be afraid of petro-pedagogies? A gosht-ly reading of Petro Pete's Big Bad Dream

Across the US, as elsewhere, the petrochemical industry shapes what people learn and teach in schools. The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board (OERB), for example, has spent plus \$40 million on K-12 education over the last 20 years, designing "hundreds of pages of curricula, a speaker series and an afterschool program — all at no cost to educators", says the Center for Public Integrity.

This paper is a fleshy reading — a gosht-ly* reading — of OERB's book series "Petro Pete's Adventures" — to describe the learning and teaching of petro-culture in geologies of loss and fear. A gosht-ly reading makes available decaying and defecated components of petro-culture that nevertheless haunt teaching and learning: the desiring flesh of curiosity, the pulsating flesh of relation, and the rotting flesh of death.

If petro-ghosts remind us of the stickiness of petro-culture, petro-pedagogies remind us of its thickness, how it's learned across scales and systems. A gosht-ly reading is not satire or irony, however. It is a sincere mode of attention to petro-culture that seeps our petro-pores and petro-skeletons. If something as entrenched as petro-culture sits so deeply in the geist and the body, banishing or cutting it out will not do. Instead, petro-culture needs to be cared for and aided in its passing. What ways of stewarding, caring, and aiding petro-culture can be made available so that petro-culture can rest in peace? (*In Urdu, gosht means meat.)

Presenter(s): Prerna Srigyan

"And so we'll see that in the wind business": On renewable energy, petro-ghosts, and the immanence of cultural change

The history of Texas' renewable energy industry is riddled with petro-ghosts. This presentation conjures these specters by analyzing the petrocultural anthropology of one of Texas' more influential environmentalists: Michael Osborne. Osborne developed his theories of culture and technology directly from the patterns he observed in the historical ascendance of Texas's oil and gas regime. Working at the vanguard of renewables, he relied on analogies between these past and present energy transitions to gain a sense of direction and agency within his own historical

moment. Analyzing his published works, his oral history, and the public record of his career in renewables, I illustrate how Osborne reproduced petrocultural dynamics by performatively enacting this kind of historico-analogical positivism. I then extrapolate from Osborne's example to consider how it suggests the need for more immanent approaches to cultural change within contemporary ethnographic theory. Rather than pointing to any transcendent or transcendental structure, Osborne's case reveals how culture is re/produced through the historically contingent ways that possibilities for cultural transformation are differentially experienced, framed, contested, and enacted as vernacular anthropologies. That is, we aren't trapped within petroculture so much as haunted by petrofied modes of cultural invention, indexing equally radical potential for collectively reinventing society while also producing endless petro-ghosts.

Presenter(s): James Adams

7132 Haunted Education: Ghostly Gender and Sexuality

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This panel explores the spectral traces that linger in moments of transition, rupture, and silence—those ghosts that persist even when we believe we've moved on. Our conversations trace how the past catches up with us, not as a linear narrative, but as an insistent presence that defies closure. We examine the voices that go unspoken but not unheard—the disciplined erasures shaped by fear, trauma, stigma, or politics. The haunting ghosts of the past experiences of gender and sexuality have an impact on how movements across borders—physical, psychological, and political—become both a search for belonging and a confrontation with loss. The haunting ghosts of the hidden curricula and political interference affect how silence and surveillance discipline bodies and desires, revealing how institutional control stifles academic freedom and critical discourse around gender and sexuality. Together, these panel makes visible the ghostly, affective dimensions of gendered and queer lives in education—moments made explicit, bodies rendered ghostly, and the haunting fear of speaking that becomes a lived reality. In a time when political and social crises compel both reckoning and resistance, we ask: What ghosts do we carry? Which do we confront, and which do we invite to speak?

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Max Yakubovskiy, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub, Akira Sawata, University of Minnesota

Presenter(s): Naomi Moland, American University, Farah Basit, Akira Sawata, University of Minnesota, Hunter Dodrill

Discussant: Hunter Dodrill

3924 Fugitive Anthropology: Embodying Activist Research (Part II)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This two-part roundtable features contributors to the edited volume, entitled "Fugitive Anthropology: Embodying Activist Research" (forthcoming, University of Texas Press), an expansive development of the co-authored article "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Race, Gender, and Violence in the Field" (Cultural Anthropology 2017).

Decades after initial calls to "decolonize" the anthropological discipline (Harrison 1991), which grew out of work with liberatory social movements across the globe, the production of insurgent knowledge remains a fugitive endeavor. This edited volume works to unsettle the heteropatriarchal gaze that continues to elide or erase the intimate, embodied politics of ethnographic fieldwork and "the undercommons" (Harney and Moten 2013) of the university.

Building on the legacy of the Austin School approach to diaspora studies (Gordon 2007) and activist research (Hale 2001, 2008, Speed 2006), feminist activist ethnography (Craven and Davis 2013), and Black feminist anthropology (McClaurin 2001), we assert that liberatory knowledge production is an embodied praxis and fugitive endeavor forged in and with community. The panelists draw from traditions of Black, Indigenous, queer, and decolonial feminisms, to explore the following questions:

- How do gendered racial positionalities inflect the research process, and how can activist research methods be accountable to the embodied aspects of conducting research in contexts of colonialism, war, and conflict and conditions of gendered and racialized terror?
- What does it mean to produce feminist knowledge that advances theory in collaborative ways?
- How might an intergenerational engagement with questions of embodiment, knowledge production, and methodology push feminist anthropology and activist research in new directions?

The urgency of centering the individual and collective body in the process of anthropological knowledge production in 2017, when the article was originally published, will be considered in the context of the current onslaught.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, R. Elizabeth Velasquez Estrada, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Presenter(s): Shannon Speed, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Adriana Linares-Palma, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, R. Elizabeth Velasquez Estrada, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Discussant: Mariana Mora, Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology

2918 Loud Silences: Ghostly Signals of Humanitarian and Development Interventions in East Africa

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

A vast literature has shown how contemporary aid and development reproduce colonial structures of power, knowledge, and value, shaping the world through logics of legibility, intervention, and control. Yet, these regimes of aid are as loud in their presence as they are in their absences, the silences that they enforce, and the ruins they leave behind (Stoler 2008). This panel draws on the notion of haunting to explore the 'ghostly signals' (Gordon 1998:204) of coloniality and the violence of systemic and epistemic oppression in East Africa. We examine aid landscapes as both haunted and haunting-shaping affective experiences and local imaginaries, while bearing the spectral and violent traces of colonial pasts. In so doing, we embrace the invitation to study the 'silence of everyday life' (Good 2023) in postcolonial contexts, asking how lingering forms of power, coloniality, and oppression manifest themselves in the voids left and imposed by development and humanitarian regimes, and how they are experienced and made sense of across diverse East African contexts.

Bringing together diverse empirical contributions, this panel examines these hauntings through registers of absence and silences in the daily realities and aftermaths of humanitarian and development operations. Thinking through haunting as the ways 'in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with... or when their oppressive nature is denied' (Gordon 2008:xvi), this panel interrogates the affective dimensions that populate the silences, absences, and ruins surrounding and stemming from humanitarian and development interventions. Panellists will explore themes ranging from the material afterlives of abandoned aid infrastructures, to the silenced subjects of colonial and humanitarian photography, to the collapsed temporalities of unmet promises, betrayed expectations, and epistemic and phenomenological erasure.

Our contributions address the following questions:

- How are development and humanitarian interventions entangled with the unmet promises of the past, present and future? How does coloniality endure in the ruins of projects, in the grief of unmet expectations? How is oppression reasserted in the silence and failures of interventions?
- What are the ghostly signals that point to what is overlooked? How do they make themselves heard? How do communities make sense of and live with these ghosts, negotiating, resisting, or reclaiming the silences?

By centring these silences and absences, this panel shifts focus from the overt operations of humanitarianism and development to the gaps they create, the absences they fail to acknowledge, and the histories they cannot erase. In doing so, it invites a broader reflection on the afterlives of empire, the politics of forgetting, and the hauntings that structure aid landscapes in East Africa.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Costanza Torre, London School of Economics, Charlotte Brown

Chair: Costanza Torre, London School of Economics

Presenter(s): Costanza Torre, London School of Economics, Charlotte Brown, Berenike Eichhorn, ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon at the Center of International Studies, Chimwemwe Phiri, University of Manchester

Presentation(s): The haunted clinic: trauma and power in refugee mental health in northern Uganda

This paper examines the haunting silences that structure clinical encounters in a mental health clinic in Palabek refugee settlement, northern Uganda. While humanitarian psychiatry mobilises trauma narratives to render refugee suffering legible, these narratives paradoxically silence and erase the ongoing violence of displacement and the oppressive structures that shape refugee life. Drawing on ethnographic research in the clinic, I argue that trauma discourse, rather than giving voice to haunting memories, is itself haunted—inhabited by what it occludes, by the political and structural violence it fails to name. The Ugandan state, whose presence saturates the lives of refugees through restriction, surveillance, and exclusion, remains a spectral force in the clinic, unspoken yet ever-present in the therapeutic exchanges between clinicians and patients. Taking a psychological anthropological approach to haunting, this paper moves beyond the conventional focus on traumatic memory to explore how trauma narratives function as technologies of erasure, producing absences that themselves become sites of haunting. In doing so, it interrogates the entanglements of humanitarian psychiatry, state violence, and the politics of silence, foregrounding how unspeakable histories and enduring forms of oppression make themselves felt in the affective textures of clinical practice.

Presenter(s): Costanza Torre

Haunted: spectral self-reliance in northwestern Uganda

If 'haunting ... alters the experience of being in linear time, the way we separate the past, present and the future...' (Gordon et al. 2020, p. 339) what does life look like in the interstices and voids of the refugee architecture, in the static of the spectre? This paper draws on the imposition of spectral self-reliance as the central conceit of the humanitarian architecture in Uganda to attune to the frequencies of repression as they play out across West Nile. I argue that self-reliance is a malign, spectral force that haunts and distorts everyday life in refugee settlements in north-western Uganda. The paper draws on haunting as a central conceptual metaphor to understand how self-reliance reverberates through everyday life under humanitarian protection. In its silences, the haunting spectre obscures the inequalities underpinning structural stasis. Amidst the wavering and illusory claims of humanitarian actors, South Sudanese people contend with the central conceit of

global humanitarianism which seeks to destabilise the experience of linear time, erasing their past, dismissing their present and conjuring an imagined future. Evoking their material, social and physiological present, in the 'silence of everyday life' (Good 2023) South Sudanese people assert the 'lived and living ... losses of modern systems of abusive power in their immediacy and worldly significance' (Gordon 2008, p. xvi).

Presenter(s): Charlotte Brown

Ruins and Rituals: Living with Legacies of Development Interventions in Tanzania

This paper explores how literal and metaphorical ghosts emerge within landscapes of former development interventions in Tanzania. Through two case studies, we examine how legacies of past projects continue to shape ecological and economic realities, and affective atmospheres.

In the same district, northern Tanzania, a JICA agricultural development project introduced pesticide trials for rice cultivation in 1988. Beyond lasting environmental effects, this intervention is entangled with longstanding ritual practices that call upon ancestral spirits to protect and nurture the land. As soil fertility declines and pests resurface, communities negotiate neglecting their rituals in favour of foreign scientific interventions, generating feelings of loss and self-blame. In the southern Lindi Region, cashew processing factories built under a World Bank-funded development scheme in the 1970s have since fluctuated between closure and revival. The erratic operations create a sense of inherent unfinishedness where memories of past prosperity collide with uncertain futures. This interplay shapes people's emotional attitudes toward the material structures themselves, but also the potentials they simultaneously emanate and suspend. Within these two contexts of environmental and industrial ruination, we ask how people experience the 'present absences' of development projects, the voids left and the voids reclaimed —and how the concept of ghosts and spectrality helps us grasp lived realities.

Presenter(s): Berenike Eichhorn

Co-author(s): Lulu Tessua

Haunted frames: unpacking the coloniality of care in medical photography

This paper makes a connection between the past and present, linking the visual logics of colonial medical photography to contemporary medical humanitarian imagery. It explores how early twentieth century colonial images (1902-1918) originally created to document tropical diseases such as elephantiasis produced silences and absences that continue to haunt those who view them. Focusing on colonial medical archives from Malawi and Sudan, it interrogates the visual logics that rendered the colonized subject hypervisible as a site of affliction yet silenced aspects of personhood. Drawing on Black feminist praxis and ethical engagements with the archive, this paper positions the ghosts of these historic medical photographs not as passive absences but as active presences haunting the archive and the photographic frame (Campt, 2017; Gordon, 2008). The paper explores how moments of refusal, such as an averted gaze challenge the colonial gaze and reclaim imposed the narratives, in turn offering new modes of engagement. The paper then argues

that in present contexts humanitarian images carry with them ghostly traces of colonial medical photography. Just as colonial photographs constructed the colonised body as a site of suffering and intervention, humanitarian photography echoes racialized representations and medical violence in ways that continue to shape how race, health, and crisis are visualized today.

Presenter(s): Chimwemwe Phiri

5077 Youth Language and Politics

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel considers how children and adolescents experience and navigate the political structures of the worlds they grow up in. It brings together sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists to highlight language as a site socialization into systems of power: through our interactions with others, we learn to navigate political hierarchies, norms, and ideologies. The panel begins in early childhood with a discussion by Lilit Ghazaryan. Drawing from her fieldwork in Armenian preschools, Ghazaryan shows how geopolitical conflict shapes school rituals and classroom interactions. Next, Nandi Sims takes us to a middle school in South Florida, illustrating how racial hierarchies in the United States are reproduced, reinforced, and reimagined through the interactional practices of sixth grade students. Pivoting to a *longue-durée* study of youth expression, Kelly Wright charts how profanity in adolescence—from Victorian self-censorship through punk defiance to the "Satanic Panic" of the 1980s—illuminates changing alignments between affect and political ideology across generations. Turning to contemporary struggles over language policy, Keisha Wiel examines classrooms in Aruba and Curaçao, where teachers' unsanctioned translanguaging between Papiamentu/o, Dutch, and English enriches students' educational experiences while subverting colonial hierarchies. Tyanna Slobe closes the panel with a comparison of Santiago high schools, revealing how institutional stratification channels youths' affective responses to political crisis. Together, the papers demonstrate that language is both conduit and crucible for youth political socialization.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Tyanna Slobe, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Keisha Wiel

Presenter(s): Lilit Ghazaryan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NASRA, and the American University of Armenia, Nandi Sims, Stanford University, Kelly Wright, Keisha Wiel, Tyanna Slobe, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Mary-Caitlyn Valentinsson

Presentation(s): Language, War, and Childhood: Recent Wars and Their Consequences on Language Use and Discourse in Preschool Classrooms in Yerevan, Armenia

This presentation examines how recent wars—the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts of 2020 and 2022, and ongoing war in Ukraine—shape linguistic practices and educational rituals in Yerevan

kindergartens. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2019–2024, I reflect on how war enters early childhood spaces both overtly and subtly. The project is grounded in a dual positionality: as an anthropologist and community member present during these conflicts. The war with Azerbaijan intensified purist language ideologies and brought performative memory practices into public kindergartens—most visibly in war-themed recitals and commemorative rituals. Drawing on frameworks of affective socialization and pedagogies of nationalism, I analyze how children are positioned as future soldiers or grieving citizens in these performances. The Russia-Ukraine war, by contrast, reshaped language dynamics in private kindergartens through the influx of Russian-speaking children. Classroom hierarchies and correction practices were suspended or altered in response to perceived linguistic privilege. Using frameworks from language socialization and ethnographic attention to informal peer interactions, I explore the intersections of linguistic accommodation and belonging. This work traces how geopolitical shifts are felt at the micro-level of preschool classrooms and how childhood becomes a political terrain in times of war.

Presenter(s): Lilit Ghazaryan

Racial Ideologies in Pre-Adolescents

This paper explores how racial ideologies are reproduced, reinforced, and reimagined through language at a primarily Black middle school in South Florida. It draws from ethnographic fieldwork with 6th graders during the 2019-2020 academic year. The Black/white binary of the U.S. undergirds social distinction at Michael Irvine Middle School, though its students are entirely racially minoritized. Social groups split racially, with 'Hispanic' acting as Anglo-white would in a different context. Students demonstrate an understanding of how ideologies shape their world through strategic use of racialized language. For example, when using a word like 'ghetto' to describe the speech of peers, students make claims about race, class, and inherent value. This value is absolute—'the kids at this school speak bad'—and relative—'those kids speak bad, but I do not'. A descriptor like 'lightskinned' can describe skin tone, but ideologies of skin color often come into play such that students may use lightskinned to describe someone they think is pretty, regardless of whether that person is objectively lighter. The opposite also occurs—lightskinned can describe someone who thinks they are better than others, with the implication that they're not. By using racialized language through analogy, students reveal awareness of the rigid racial categories imposed on them, as they begin to understand what these categories mean for them as racially Black and non-white individuals in the U.S.

Presenter(s): Nandi Sims

The Body, The Built Environment, & The Belief

Embodied knowledge is linked to the social meanings available to an individual across linguistic markets, and thus illuminates the ways in which linguistic markets are simultaneously responsive to identities and the extant sociohistorical facts which afford social power. Profanity

is most often acquired between ages 11 and 13, within the most active period of adolescent self-making. This paper considers youth language, focusing on profanity to exemplify the ways in which

affect and political ideology align. First, considering the Victorians, who were motivated to self-censor in public and private discourse, and across modalities, through fear of social ostracization and stagnation. This period of reduced profane usage aligns with increased social control. Next, the Punks, whose search for authenticity created a dissonant–tongues-out, middle

fingers-up–spectacle which rejected global trends in commodification. Here, increased profane usage redefines the relationship between self and material. Finally, the Satanic Panic, which aligns with a moralist political turn which shifted non-status-quo oriented identity expression especially in young people—from common to criminal. This period of profane usage aligns with an embrace of baptismal ideologies of meaning. By examining the ways in which young people's profanity aligns with extant political ideologies, we view the body, the built environment, and societal beliefs shaping a given user's means of self-determination.

Presenter(s): Kelly Wright

Translanguaging as Educationally Incorrect: How Teachers in Aruba and Curaçao Unintentionally created a Translanguaging Model for Language

In 1979, an ordinance that aimed to make Papiamentu/o the language of instruction in the first two years of primary school was introduced into parliament as a way to resolve supposed language problems on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao (Dijkhoff and Pereira 2010: 242). Although the vote on the ordinance was postponed until 1998, local teachers were already using an unsanctioned translanguaging model to teach their students. Since students understood Dutch but could not comprehend their education materials in the language, teachers often taught in a combination of Papiamentu/o and Dutch (and later on English) in order to ensure that their students would be able to understand their educational materials. Presently, schools are allowed to suggest which language they want to use as the language of instruction. But, since there are limited resources for educational materials in Papiamentu/o or in English, most schools default to Dutch as the language of instruction. Using research conducted from 2019 to 2021, this paper examines how teachers unintentionally subvert language policies to use translanguaging as a teaching method. Although it is technically not allowed, teachers have created their own methods to ensure their students succeed in education. Finally, this paper will propose what a translanguaging language(s) of instruction model could like using the experiences of teachers and students in Aruba and Curaçao.

Presenter(s): Keisha Wiel

Affective Divides: Political Crisis and the Politics of Emotion in Chilean Classrooms

This paper examines the organization of affect during class activities at two socioeconomically segregated high schools in Santiago, Chile: an elite private school in a wealthy Santiago suburb and a working-class public school near the city center. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted during the 2019 academic year, I compare classroom responses to 'el estallido social' [the social explosion], a mass uprising in late 2019 that challenged entrenched inequalities rooted in neoliberal economic policies first imposed under Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship (1973-

1990). Focusing on students' first day back on campus following protest-related school closures, I compare classroom activities designed to help students make sense of the unfolding political crisis. At The Private School, teachers led structured, emotionally detached discussions that emphasized metalinguistic reflection—encouraging students to analyze how the uprising was being framed in public discourse. In contrast, at The Public School, class activities centered on students' lived experiences of economic precarity, political repression, and state violence, inviting emotional expression and critical dialogue. Comparing these pedagogical approaches, I show how classroom interactions differently organized students' affective orientations to the uprising, revealing how institutional ideologies and class-based distinctions shape youth socialization into political practices and identities.

Presenter(s): Tyanna Slobe

Discussion

7308 It's Never Too Late (or Too Early) to Write Memoirs: The Association of Senior Anthropologists' Autoethnohistory Project

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropologists and anthropologies of the ever-receding past may fade into a ghostly mythology not clearly understood by professional colleagues later and misunderstood by the public at large. Senior anthropologists—having witnessed accomplishments and shortcomings of various approaches to research, teaching, and practical applications—represent the living history of the discipline. Assessing the orientations and practices they have encountered, they ask what has been learned to guide us in moving forward. But anthropologists at any stage of their careers can speak to their pre-professional and more recent histories. Many will recognize their childhood perspective as a proto-anthropologist.

The purpose of the panel is to review ideas that have been circulating about memoir writing as a way to consolidate contributions of the Association of Senior Anthropologists. Speakers will distinguish rubrics such as autoethnography, the ethnographic self, anthropological autobiography, and social memory; and explore innovations in writing forms, techniques, and strategies that foster imagination and storytelling. All attendees are encouraged to share examples and raise questions.

Autoethnohistory is proposed as a name for efforts by anthropologists to emphasize social contexts and settings in memoirs, while also taking their subjectivity into account as a source of insight. They may have to clarify insider/outsider distinctions. Sources such as photographs, textual documents, and interviews with living elders may reinforce memories and serve as supports to recreate scenarios from their youth, graduate studies, first fieldwork, late career gigs, and a range of other ethnographic moments.

The discussion is intended especially for colleagues daunted by the prospect of autobiographical writing, who might begin by compiling fragments of a memoir. In the following bibliography, several exemplary monographs accompany some key formulations of concepts, theories, and methods.

M. C. Bateson, *With a Daughter's Eye* ((Morrow, 1984). R. Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer* (Beacon, 2022). H. Campbell, *Mexican Memoir* (Bergin & Garvey, 2001). J. Climo and M. Cattell (eds.), *Social Memory and History* (AltaMira, 2002). P. Collins and A. Gallinat (eds.), *The Ethnographic Self as Resource* (Berghahn, 2010). V. Crapanzano, *Recapitulations* (Other, 2005). F. Harrison, *Outsider Within* (Illinois, 2008). A. Kehoe, *Girl Archaeologist* (Nebraska, 2022). K. Narayan (*My Family & Other Saints* (Chicago, 2007). J. Okely and H. Callaway (eds.), *Anthropology and Autobiography* (Routledge, 1992). G. Peterson, *War and the Arc of Human Experience* (Hamilton, 2021). D. Reed-Danahay (eds.), *Auto/Ethnography* (Berg, 1997). P. Stoller, *Wisdom from the Edge* (Cornell, 2023). A. Waterston and M. D. Vesperi (eds.), *Anthropology Off the Shelf* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). P Worsley, *An Academic Skating on Thin Ice* (Berghahn, 2008). H. Wulff (ed.), *The Anthropologist as Writer* (Berghahn, 2016).

Section: Association of Senior Anthropologists

Organizer: Jim Weil, Science Museum of Minnesota

Presenter(s): Maria G Cattell , Alice Kehoe , William Donner, Kutztown University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Stephen Schensul, University of Connecticut School of Medicine

Discussant: Jim Weil, Science Museum of Minnesota

309 Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism Flash Session

#1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Jie Gao, University of Arizona, Kari Colosi , Yining Fu , Stephanie Hartman

Presenter(s): Jie Gao, University of Arizona, Kari Colosi, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Yining Fu, Stephanie Hartman

Presentation(s): (Re-)Imagining Morocco: Chinese Interpretations of Moroccan Culture Through Tourism

Despite limited historical ties and significant geographic distance, Morocco has long captured the Chinese cultural imagination. From the storied travels of Ibn Battuta to China to the romantic portrayals of Saharan life by Taiwanese author Sanmao, educated Chinese audiences have envisioned Morocco as an exotic frontier where the desert meets the sea. Over the past decade, Morocco has emerged as a popular destination for Chinese tourists, offering them firsthand encounters with a land they had previously known only through stories. These experiences are widely shared through short travelogues on Chinese social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu (Rednote), contributing to a dynamic and evolving reimagination of Morocco within Chinese society.

Building on Noel Salazar's seminal concept of "tourism imaginaries"-collectively held, socially circulated representations that shape how tourist destinations are perceived and experienced-this article explores how Moroccan culture is constructed and contested in the context of Chinese outbound tourism. Based on a comparative thematic analysis of Chinese travel narratives on Xiaohongshu (January–December 2024), promotional content by Moroccan tourism authorities targeting Chinese consumers, and ethnographic interviews with Chinese tourists, Chinese tourism operators, and Moroccan tourism officials (conducted between December 2022 and January 2024), this study addresses four interrelated questions: (1) How do Chinese tourists and tourism intermediaries imagine and represent Moroccan culture online? (2) How do Moroccan tourism authorities frame Moroccan culture for a Chinese audience? (3) Where do these representations diverge, and why? (4) How might Moroccan tourism planning better align with Chinese tourism imaginaries to enhance its competitiveness in China's outbound travel market? Incorporating Gerard Toal's critical geopolitical theory and Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems perspective, the article further interrogates how Chinese tourist imaginaries of Morocco reflect broader hierarchies in global cultural ordering in the post-colonial era. By tracing the mutual entanglement of tourist desires, digital media, and national branding efforts, this study advances the anthropology of tourism by demonstrating how tourism imaginaries serve as a mechanism through which emerging powers like China reshape cultural hierarchies across the Global South. These Chinese reimaginings of Morocco are not merely projections of fascination with an unfamiliar culture; they also reveal China's emerging position as a powerful consumer and increasingly dominant producer of global cultural narratives-a dynamic that remains understudied by Western anthropologists. Tourism imaginaries, therefore, offer a critical window into how cultural hierarchies and soft power are negotiated in the contemporary Global South.

Presenter(s): Jie Gao

Footprints Without Landfall: Cruise-By Tourism and the Commodification of Polar Landscapes

This paper examines how polar cruise tourism, including sharp rises in "cruise-by" itineraries - reveal contradictions in mass-market travel to endangered environments, specifically narratives that cast tourists as ambassadors or stewards while masking the extractive logics embedded in their experience. Based on ethnographic research onboard two polar cruises (Antarctica 2022 / Arctic 2025) the work argues that polar landscapes are commodified for consumption while tourists are insulated from environmental degradation that tourism itself intensifies through industry-driven narratives that frame them as "ambassadors."

The presence of cruise ships in polar regions reinforces a central contradiction whereby climate crisis becomes both a selling point and a cost. Polar cruises package ecological precarity as transformative experience, reframing environmental vulnerability as a consumable encounter even as the industry deepens that vulnerability by bringing more tourists each year. In 2018 more than 50,000 tourists visited Antarctica; by 2024 that doubled to 105,000. Contradiction is enabled by cruise infrastructure, relying on heavy fuel use, waste discharge, and large-scale provisioning. Environmental impacts can be outsourced or obscured - geographically and rhetorically - through

logistical complexity and ambassadorship rhetoric, which frames consumption as care. Cruise-by tourism (itineraries in which passengers view polar landscapes from ships without setting foot on land) is a growing model, engendered by the economics of mass tourism reaching polar destinations. Landings remain the purview of the wealthy since they are tightly controlled, exclusive, and expensive - requiring small ships, high fares, and additional regulations. In contrast, cruise-by itineraries allow large lines to market polar travel less expensively to broader middle-class demographics. The rise of cruise-by tourism is inseparable from global patterns of classed access, shaping how Antarctica and the Arctic are experienced, marketed, and remembered. Drawing on critical political ecology, the tourist gaze (Urry), and commodified nature (Harvey & Smith), this work explores how polar landscapes become "haunted" spaces - marked not only by imperial legacies but by the specter of future ecological loss. While the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and cruise companies promote "ambassadorship" to present tourism as ethical engagement, onboard evidence suggests tourists rarely envision behavioral change post-trip. Their journeys are framed instead as bucket-list travel or personal achievement: to see Polar regions before they change. Polar cruise-by tourism both democratizes access to remote spaces while commodifying loss as spectacle. Tourists are drawn into a mediated encounter with endangered landscapes, where beauty, precarity, and consumption converge - crafting a tourist gaze haunted by forces shaping the future of these regions.

Presenter(s): Kari Colosi

Mausoleum Heritage in 1935 China: Fengshui, Temporality, Authenticity, and Nation-Building

This paper examines the 1935 restoration of the Ming Changling Mausoleum as a lens through which to explore the reinterpretation of traditional Chinese concepts of mausoleum heritage during the formative period of modern nation-building. Drawing on archival documents and historical sources, the study investigates how practices grounded in imperial Chinese cosmology—such as fengshui, temporality, and notions of authenticity—were preserved, modified, or marginalized in this state-directed project. In the imperial context, mausoleum architecture was deeply embedded within natural landscapes, particularly through the geomantic layout of sacred groves and the principles of fengshui. These landscapes were integral to a cosmological system that linked the human, natural, and spiritual realms. Temporality in this tradition emphasized cyclical renewal through reconstruction, rather than the preservation of original materials. The reuse of aged timber and tiles, along with the dismantling of peripheral structures to conserve core elements, reflected this worldview. Authenticity, accordingly, was defined through ritual continuity and spatial symbolism rather than material permanence. Yet the 1935 restoration also marked a significant transition. While retaining many traditional elements, it increasingly embraced modern heritage discourses that prioritized chronological classification, architectural significance, and visual integrity. Concurrently, the Republican government reframed the mausoleum's political meaning, promoting the Yongle Emperor as a national icon to bolster anti-Japanese sentiment. This paper argues that the Changling restoration exemplifies a critical moment of negotiation between imperial and modern conceptions of heritage. It reveals how traditional frameworks were selectively adapted to serve the cultural and political imperatives of a modernizing nation-state.

Presenter(s): Yining Fu

What we do in the Shadows: Museums, Dark Tourism, and the Anthropology of Hauntings

Dark tourism-visiting sites associated with death, tragedy, or the paranormal-has become a growing cultural and economic phenomenon. Museums and cultural institutions are increasingly engaging with this trend as visitors seek to understand the history of death, hauntings, and the paranormal. This session explores the motivations of visitors who come to these spaces to learn about death-related events and engage with theories of hauntings. Drawing on anthropological theories of place, memory, and the afterlife, we aim to understand why such experiences captivate the human imagination. Furthermore, this presentation examines how dark tourism can serve as a tool for education, providing opportunities to reflect on mortality, history, and the social construction of belief systems.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Hartman

3674 Specters of Care and Hauntologies of Disability in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable engages with hauntologies that emerge at the nexus of disability and care – a nexus we contend is central to anthropology.

Disability, argues Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, is "the essential characteristic of being human" because it reminds us of the mundane truth that "all bodies need care and assistance to live" (2017, 328). How, then, to make sense of anthropology's resistance to disability as a focus of research and its troubled histories of engaging disabled people and disabled anthropologists (e.g. Colligan and Jaysane-Darr 2025)? Conversely, anthropological literature on care has proliferated so extensively that its contours have blurred. Care is in need of troubling (Duclos and Criado 2020), but it continues to haunt our work: we constantly return to care as a category of analysis and practice.

Relationships between care and disability are ethically and politically fraught. Histories of eugenic and colonialist social policies haunt disability, highlighting how care can be paternalistic, violent, and toxic as much as beneficial or healing. Disabled people and allies clash over what good care looks like and to what ends. Paid and unpaid caregivers get worn out by the machinery of care bureaucracies and the weight of caring in conditions of precarity. Through research and lived experiences with care, anthropologists navigate these contradictions and highlight forms of kinship, ethical and political orientations, and embodied action that emerge from the disability-care nexus.

Roundtable participants will grapple with the uneasy nexus of care and disability by addressing the following questions: How do we ethnographically engage the specters of violence that haunt care in disability worlds? What does it mean to work towards "middle theories of care" (Wolf-Meyer 2025),

and what can this work do for the study of disability and for anthropology writ large? What ethnographic modalities inform and emerge from grappling with disability and care, and how can these be mobilized across subfields of our discipline?

Hauntologies invite us to engage with the spectral presences that we as researchers and our research communities contend with in everyday life. This roundtable explores how ghosts-of people, policies, and practices-shape how anthropologists have and might address disability and care anew, to align historical forces with future needs for us as anthropologists and for the communities we serve.

Colligan, Sumi, and Anna Jaysane-Darr, eds. 2025. *The Disabled Anthropologist*. Routledge.

Duclos, Vincent, and Tomás Sánchez Criado. 2020. "Care in Trouble: Ecologies of Support from Below and Beyond." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (2): 153–73.

Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. 2017. "Becoming Disabled." In *Beginning with Disability: A Primer*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 15–19. Routledge.

Wolf-Meyer, Matthew. 2025. "Forget Care." *Anthropology News*. Jan 16, 2025.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: K. Eliza Williamson, Duke University, Pamela Block, Western University

Presenter(s): Timothy Loh, Princeton University, Sasha Kurlenkova, New York University, Kim Fernandes, University of Pennsylvania, Kathryn Wright, Wayne State University, Christine Sargent, University of Colorado Denver, Department of Anthropology, Helena Fietz, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Discussant: Faye Ginsburg, New York University, Zhiying Ma, University of Chicago

4551 Illiberal Urbanisms: Violent Hauntologies of Our Urbanizing World

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Liberalism is all too frequently associated with urban political formations. Across the world, cities are often celebrated as cosmopolitan antidotes to ethnic nationalist, authoritarian, and reactionary political developments. They are frequently seen as tolerant, enlightened enclaves that must be defended against assaults by resentful, angry, and reactionary forces associated with the hinterland. But the liberal urbanite versus reactionary provincialist binary contains just enough truth to make it very misleading. In this roundtable we seek a more historically, geographically, and ethnographically nuanced understanding of the sources of authoritarian populism and other forms of illiberal politics. We develop the concept of illiberal urbanism to unsettle conventional urbanist claims that equate liberalism with urbanity, and we explore instead the multiplicity of liberal and illiberal forces, projects, and antagonisms that shape political life in our urbanizing world.

We address the AAA annual meeting's theme of ghosts by tracing the rise of violent hauntologies in different urban contexts. Panelists are especially interested in tracing the persistence or return of violent and coercive elements from the past that shape cities in the present. We show how these hauntings are both embedded in, and sometimes pitched in opposition to, carceral forms of containment, dominant class, race, and gender politics, pernicious securitization schemes, violent counter-insurgency efforts and the key dynamics of racial capitalist city-making. In our discussion, we will examine different urban political regimes from the authoritarian to the putatively neoliberal to tease out frequently unexamined connections between urbanism and urbanization on the one hand and illiberal government on the other. Together, we will devise answers to difficult questions such as, how are safety and security spatialized across different metropolitan landscapes? How do past experiences of mass incarceration, segregation, enclosure, and containment resurface in urban politics today? How do violent histories of counterinsurgency and political surveillance continue to affect city-making projects today? What are the class, gender, and racial dimensions of contemporary urbanizing projects and why do they so frequently take on illiberal elements? How do illiberal and liberal measures combine in contemporary forms of city-making? And, perhaps most importantly, what kinds of counter- or alter-politics can overcome authoritarian rule? What kinds of mobilizations can overcome the popular allure associated with safety, security, and urban orderliness? And what kinds of hauntings might inspire such politics? Panelists have expertise on cities in the Global South, East and North. They have written extensively about state security measures, urban surveillance architecture, urban political economy, social reproduction, urban political movements, and unregulated economic activities.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Omnia Khalil, City College of New York

Presenter(s): Sharryn Kasmir, Hofstra University, Department of Anthropology, Penn Tsz Ting Ip , Deniz Yonucu, Newcastle University, Omnia Khalil, City College of New York, Ayse Caglar, University of Vienna

Discussant: Jeff Maskovsky, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

3925 Remembering Nelson Graburn and his Many Contributions to the Anthropology of Heritage, Tourism, and Identity

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This special roundtable honors the memory and legacy of longtime AAA member Nelson H. H. Graburn, who passed away in February 2025 after a painful illness. Throughout his 60-year career, Graburn had been a leader, innovator, and mentor. Although he is best known as one of – if not the – father of the anthropology of tourism, his wide-ranging work addressed the interconnected areas of art worlds and museums, heritage and cultural identity, post-coloniality and Indigeneity, and pilgrimage and other forms of travel (such as food and wine tourism). His work also contributed to the anthropological study of a number of important cultural groups and their processes of identity

creation and change over the years, including the Inuit of Alaska and Canada (with whom he conducted his dissertation research) and multiple ethnic groups in Japan and China. Active in many international anthropological and interdisciplinary communities, he had been a staple at the AAAs for many decades, and lent his expertise and vision to numerous AAA entities, supporting the foundation of the Anthropology of Tourism Interest Group (ATIG) and its transition in 2025 to the Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism (CHAT). CHAT's Graburn Book Prize honors his dedication to mentoring the next generation of scholars. Panel participants briefly share the ways in which Graburn and his work has influenced their own scholarship and professional development, and ample time is allotted for all in the audience to discuss his intellectual legacy and its broader impact.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Naomi Leite, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Presenter(s): Paula Mota Santos, Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Rachel Giraudo, California State University, Northridge, Magdalena Banaszekiewicz, Jagiellonian University, Celia Tuchman-Rosta, Denison University, Mary Mostafanezhad, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Kathleen Adams, Loyola University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Naomi Leite, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

8682 Writing Anthropology in the Moment

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

Too often, anthropologists are the most well-informed yet least tapped voices in the public arena, a chronic source of frustration for those who would contribute to sharing much-needed anthropological knowledge in the current moment. This interactive workshop will focus on effective writing strategies that can help move anthropologists off the sidelines and into the most crucial debates about communities and issues they know intimately through their original ethnographic research. Beyond inexperience with writing for wider audiences, reluctance to forego standard peer review, and the ongoing struggle to override jargon-laden styles of expression, anthropologists are now rightly concerned that their subject areas are real or anticipated political targets in the workplace. Participants in this workshop will explore tools, publishing pathways, and techniques that can empower writers and thus fight the potential for self-censorship at the very moment when audiences need all that anthropology has to offer.

8832 Applying Anthropological Understandings of Culture to Improve New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

With diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) coming under nationwide attack in the United States, many U.S. based organizations have started to shift DEI programs and goals, rebranding them under new names and reorienting them under new divisions. In doing so, practitioners have attempted to continue to advance DEI principles and meet existing DEI goals.

In the midst of this shift, the concept of culture has emerged as central. Many rebranding and reorientation efforts have prioritized concepts like culture, community, and belonging and cultural assessments have become increasingly important for organizations attempting to pivot to build new DEI strategies under new names and within a shifting socio-political and legal landscape. However, competing understandings of what culture is and how it operates, both within and outside of the organization, can critically impact the success of new DEI programs, strategies, and efforts. This makes the presence of anthropologists in DEI spaces, as culture experts, even more critical.

During this workshop, students and potential jobseekers will be provided with up-to-date information, illustrative case studies, and hands-on activities that elucidate the shifting DEI landscape in and outside of the United States and the centering of culture in this landscape. Facilitators will show how competing models of culture impact approaches to organizational assessment and the development of strategies for inclusive culture-change as well as how the application of anthropological knowledge and skills can result in more impactful DEI outcomes, particularly in an uncertain DEI landscape.

2859 Scale and Loss: frontiers of care and the ghosts of mediation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores ethnographically and theoretically how local understandings of loss function across transformations of societal scale and its mediations. In the edited volume *Scale: Discourse and Dimensions of Social Life*, Carr, Lempert, and their co-contributors examine the ways in which scale – often imagined as a measure, ratio, or progression – takes shape by way of spatial and temporal dimensions of social life (2016). Building on their work, we focus on how past cultural forms persist and haunt the present in new digital contexts as we explore how the experience of loss and abandonment – of varied objects and relations, in diverse settings, over multiple time frames, and assigned to both individuals and collectivities – shapes and is shaped by scale. Grief for example, can be experienced personally, nationally, and even globally; its commemoration can be ephemeral, periodic, systematic, or permanent; and the medium of its representation -- from microscope to satellite – can deeply, and eerily, persist into the present, affecting participant

experience (B. Good et al 2022). We therefore ask, how intimately is bereavement connected to a particular moment – in a person's life, or to the circumstances of a polity or people? Why, in what way, and through which media do laments "travel" digitally from a particular event and become part of a ritual calendar or liturgy? And are electronic efforts to scale-up expressions of care inimical to the work of grief? (cf. Seaver 2021).

We invite diverse conversations that examine communicative technologies as well as ethical and affective evaluations of "spectral" events in relation to shifting social and discursive scales (Seaver 2021). Examples include mourning during COVID confinement (Kuipers and Grinker, in press), the evolution of large scale public memorials for collective loss (Wagner et al 2023), and fears of "ghosting" and "missing out" among high school cell phone users (Bell and Kuipers 2018, Dent et al 2022), and how past memories about war dead continue to circulate and haunt Vietnamese everyday life (Kwon 2008).

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Joel Kuipers, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Roy Grinker, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Joel Kuipers, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Heonik Kwon, Alexander Dent, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Wagner, George Washington University, Joel Kuipers, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Michael Lempert, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): Ghosts and Homo Duplex

A village grandmother in central Vietnam joins the household ancestral rite together with her children and their families. When this is over, later at night, she goes out to the garden and offers incense and small food towards the street and the wider exterior world. The latter is nominally on behalf of the multitude displaced spirits of the dead that people perform as the double of their ancestors. The poetic tradition of Vietnam is strong in capturing such a ritualized moment, presenting the care for displaced beings as a constitutive human ethic. Drawing upon this tradition, this paper thinks through what Durkheim calls homo duplex and the related idea of social soul. It considers how the social in our social soul can change in scale as we move between the two sides of the ritual complex, between ancestors and ghosts.

Presenter(s): Heonik Kwon

FOMO – Ghosting and Missing out in the context of teenage cellularity

Teenagers are frequently excoriated for their "addiction" to their cellular devices. Much of this pearl clutching involves materialist simplifications of social process by way of neurotransmitters – the current going concern being "dopamine." In the context of widespread alarmism in psychology, media studies, and education, little attempt has been made to ethnographically understand the ways in which teenagers build complex digital ecosystems requiring intense attentional curation. One of the consequences of the materiality of cellularity – it's "always on" quality – is that young

people must learn to understand whether or not something is currently happening, or about to happen, that will impact their social, academic, athletic, or familial lives. This attunement involves care about the ways in which small-scale interactions can (or sometimes, must) multiply – either in terms of numbers of participants, or in terms of temporal impact. Fears of loss permeate these practices – such that young people come to regret not being included, or in attendance. Teenagers must therefore constantly balance multiple platforms, communicative genres, and cellular affordances in order to be in the world. This paper explores that complexity, and the thresholds it both fashions and encompasses.

Presenter(s): Alexander Dent

Co-author(s): Joshua Bell

Digitized Mourning: Marking COVID Death in Times of Contested Knowledge

Over seven million people died of the pandemic, 1.2 million in the United States. How does a society reckon with mass death of such scale and scope? This paper addresses efforts to materialize—render apprehensible and sensible—the enormity of loss through various examples of media, including attempts by major US news outlets to represent milestones of death marked in the hundred thousands, as both singular events and collective toll, as well by a public art installation hosted on the National Mall. Drawing on Levinas's ethics of the face-to-face encounter through which recognition is either given or refused, I explore what these interactive graphics and spaces tell us about the scalar challenges of conveying and acknowledging COVID death and its harms. The interactive public art installation, *In America: Remember*, with its ArcGIS-mediated "micro-eulogies" of dedicated flags illustrates how a technologically innovative digital/physical mirroring of individuated remembrance sought to present the specter of catastrophic loss to a nation experiencing the pandemic in split modes of mourning and revisionism.

Presenter(s): Sarah Wagner

Haunted Pixels - Scale, Loss and Ghostly Mediation in COVID-19 memorial practices.

In the face of loss of unimaginable scale, many mourners for victims of the COVID-19 pandemic confronted painful challenges: choose whether to violate lockdown restrictions and gather face-to-face but risk the lives of the vulnerable, or embrace affordances of digital technologies, but risk the haunting deficiencies of those mediations of grief. Drawing on data from memoirs, Zoom funerals, YouTube laments, virtual forensic recognition and outdoor public installations, and from multisited research in Washington DC, Guayaquil and Sumba, the paper analyzes the ways in which such efforts at mediatizing grief explore and deploy the affordances of what Jones and Schieffelin (2017) have called "inscriptive speech." These digital technologies, such as Zoom and other videotelephony programs, not only can communicate and mediate grief in meaningful interactive ways, but become "haunted pixels," creating a sense of interactive immediacy but also a spectral persistence of loss, mourning and memory.

Presenter(s): Joel Kuipers

Co-author(s): Maria Jose Pelaez

Discussion

4198 Blind Spots: Uncertainty and Alterity in Healing and Medicine (II)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how medicine, like any other social system, is always in flux and continuously grappling with the unknown. This panel is timely, given the increasing hesitancy around vaccine use and public health programs in both the Global North and the Global South. From anti-vaxxers in the US to patients resisting polio vaccines in countries like Pakistan and Nigeria, global health programs continue to grapple with issues of trust. In this context, we propose this panel to bring traditional anthropological concerns around efficacy and healing to the forefront, enriching our understanding of why people do or do not trust medicine.

In this panel, we bring together presentations to juxtapose uncertainty in the use of new medical technologies, such as artificial intelligence, prosthetics, precision medicine, and telemedicine, with uncertainties in traditional spaces of healing. We argue that by acknowledging blind spots in modern medicine, we can approach medical discoveries from a humbler vantage point, helping to dismantle rigid binaries between "science" and "superstition" as well as between "rationality" and "irrationality." By considering blind spots in a range of medical institutions and spaces, as well as indigenous healing practices, we argue that the contemporary medical landscape would benefit from more, not less, epistemic uncertainty. This panel attempts to diagnose the temptation to view medical discoveries as magic-bullet solutions and the projection of these inventions as complete and perfect, especially as media, start-up companies, and venture capitalists inflate solutions to conjure new expectations and raise capital.

The panel features ethnographic studies in clinical spaces to think about how imperfections, contingency, and unpredictability define clinical research as much as healing practices in a wide range of cultures. Instead of viewing this comparison as an attempt to discredit scientific practice, the comparisons can further help us understand the dynamic nature of social life and the ways in which it influences medical practices. By bringing together our interests in medical anthropology, religious studies, psychoanalysis, and kinship, this panel will explore how we as humans are continuously in the process of sublimating and displacing our feelings, and therefore the relationship between the self and the other becomes central to any inquiry into the complexities of healing and recovery -- whether this includes relations, drugs, or diagnostic media.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Muhammad Osama Imran , Sanaullah Khan, The University of Akron, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sanaullah Khan, The University of Akron, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ruoyang Wang, Syracuse University, Department of Anthropology, Shuzhe Wang, University of Oxford, Muhammad Osama Imran, Malia Piazza, Huzeyfe Kiran, Chinese University of

Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Tatiana Chudakova, Tufts University, Swayam Bagaria

Presentation(s): Body, Belonging, and Translocal Practices of Chinese Medicine Among Chinese Immigrants in New York City

Chinese medicine has a long history of being practised outside of China, and it is through these translocal encounters that Chinese medicine has been continuously (re)invented (Zhan 2009). What has come to be known as "Traditional Chinese Medicine" (TCM), then, is never a uniform or static corpus of medical knowledges and practices. It is these medico-political dynamics of "world-making" (Goodman 1978)—out of which unforeseen knowledges and practices (ontological and otherwise) emerge—that my research is concerned with. Specifically, my research investigates practices of Chinese medicine among Chinese immigrants who live in New York City, home to the largest Chinese immigration community in the US; it highlights how they make sense of Chinese medicine in relation to their bodily experiences as well as their translocal identities. My research is thus located at the intersection of body conceptualization and senses of belonging (or a lack thereof), both of which tie into but extend beyond the medical realm. Against the backdrop of American (bio)medico-political hegemony and, more recently, intensifying political precarity facing immigrants, this research also demonstrates how Chinese immigrants traverse cultural and political boundaries, and how they (re)position their identity—both ideational and embodied—in the interplay between history and power.

Presenter(s): Ruoyang Wang

Meridian Therapy and Temporal Agency in Post-COVID China

How do people respond when biomedical systems fail to provide the healing they need, physically, emotionally, and politically? This research examines why some in post-COVID China avoid hospitals, resist vaccination, and turn instead to meridian therapy as an alternative form of healing. Meridian therapy here involves pressing and scraping specific points along the body's meridians using tools made from bianshi, a therapeutic stone. The study will draw on a five-month fieldwork in a folk Traditional Chinese Medicine clinic in rural Shandong, northeastern China. Through engaging with daily practices of healers and patients, mostly women, I explore meridian therapy as a gendered, embodied technology and a world-making method. For these practitioners, care is enacted through intercorporeal and emotional connections. Meridian therapy becomes a collective effort to repair the institutionalized body shaped by state governance and biomedical discourse. At the same time, it reclaims a sense of temporal agency by redefining health and illness in ways that differ from dominant medical frameworks, offering tools for navigating the precarity of the present and uncertainty of the future. By focusing on this case, I aim to rethink technologies of health and care, and the possibilities of seeking trust and identity in times of anxiety.

Presenter(s): Shuzhe Wang

Between Science and Spirit: Menopause, Jinn, and the Limits of Biomedicine

This paper follows the life of a woman navigating the physical and emotional transformations brought on by menopause. Convinced that her hot flashes, suffocation, and night sweats are not only symptoms of her transition, she begins to visit an Islamic healer in Karachi, Pakistan to expel the presence of a jinn (evil spirit) she thinks has taken hold within her – all while continuing to accept and engage with biomedical diagnoses. Although biomedical frameworks and Islamic healing traditions conceptualize illness and affliction in distinct ontological registers, my research examines how individuals manage to move seamlessly between a physician's office and a healer's sanctuary. How do people straddle these competing or contradictory streams whereby they bring seemingly opposed epistemologies and alternative healing practices together? How does one follow these multiple lines of thought while holding variable attitudes of conviction, doubt, and suspicion toward each? I theorize how individuals make sense of the "excess" of medical diagnoses: those experiences and afflictions that resist neat categorization within biomedical parameters. These "blind spots" unsettle the totalizing authority of biomedical explanations and expose points at which people seek alternative healing pathways. My paper argues that it is these points that serve as "passageways" to multiple therapeutic worlds in which individuals move and respond to symptoms that defy straightforward resolution.

Presenter(s): Muhammad Osama Imran

A Touchy Subject: Trust and Suspicion in Therapeutic Collaborations between Clinical and Somatic Professionals

In the therapeutic practice of surrogate partner therapy (SPT), surrogate partners are professionals who help clients overcome challenges to intimacy through experiential relational skill-building and contextualized touch interactions. Clients also work one-on-one with a clinical therapist, and both professionals collaborate to discuss the client's healing process, forming a team known as the "Triadic Model." Drawing from our community-based research, we analyze trust among the members of the triad who may be haunted by suspicions toward the "other" due to biased societal parallels between SPT and sex work. Our analysis centers human needs for interpersonal intimacy as a blind spot in modern medicine. Despite the US government's 2023 declaration of a loneliness epidemic, modern medicine favors biological innovations and "first-line" pharmaceuticals with a focus on isolating the body or its parts. However, clinicians with experience in SPT's Triadic Model tout its efficacy for client healing, discussing limitations to other therapies. While SPT's efficacy is under-researched, there is also uncertainty in the efficacy of clinical innovations due to bias and restrictions in clinical trials. Our analysis juxtaposes SPT with the bureaucratic landscape of modern medicine to expose the biases within capitalist systems that cause clinicians to trust the technological over the interpersonal.

Presenter(s): Malia Piazza

Co-author(s): Brandon Hunter-Haydon

When No One Else Listens: Chaplains and the Ministry of Presence in a Safety-Net Hospital

Hospital chaplains operate at the intersection of biomedicine and spirituality as they are employed to provide 'spiritual care' to patients, families, and medical staff around the clock. Their 'spiritual' care work involves the immediate and challenging task of responding to moments of trauma, despair, and pain and addressing people's spiritual needs, vulnerabilities, and existential crises—a practice Winnifred Sullivan calls 'a ministry of presence'. Unlike many other medical professionals who may, by the nature of their work, bring in a form of medical gaze which may fixate care to curing, hospital chaplains offer an alternative and a contrasting form of care work—one that is aimed at spiritual healing. Through offering some kind of an emotional and spiritual break from the full-time work of being sick, chaplains characterize their care work as being present through listening to and praying for those in need. Based on ethnographic fieldwork shadowing chaplains at a large urban safety-net hospital in New England, this presentation explores the work of the chaplain through the personalized prayers they offer at the end of their patient visits, and how such prayers emerge as a dynamic practice that consolidates patient narratives or life stories, employs embodied techniques of intersubjectivity, and adapts to interfaith contexts where the chaplain has to bridge differences to find a common and safe ground for their spiritual care work.

Presenter(s): Huzeyfe Kiran

Discussion

Discussion

7103 Hauntings of Soundscapes in Educational Settings

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together research(ers) interested in the hauntings of soundscapes in educational settings. We take up hauntology (Derrida 1993) to explore the "always-already absent present" (Derrida 1993/1967) of the sonic landscape found in educational spaces. Panelist Allyson Compton critically examines the affective implications of using film to teach difficult knowledge and contends that we need to consider that, similar to seeing trauma, hearing it can be intensely destabilizing. Educational spaces can also be haunted by reverberations of what is yet to come. Futures haunt schools when time falls out of joint (Good et al. 2022) and optimistic attachments to imagined possibilities (Berlant 2011) are revealed as insubstantial traces. Co-panelists Laura Meinzen, Adria Padilla-Chávez, and Deborah Palmer explore research with a Newcomer Center in a US urban area, where they have co-created a Multilingual Student Advisory Council using Youth Participatory Action Research to reclaim soundscapes in partnership with youth. By focusing on soundscapes (Schafer 1977), we center the sonic environment that exists in shared spaces and look for meaning-making attributed to reverberations, sounds, and resonances. Since "sounds" are constitutive of identities, personhood and sociality (Walraven 2014; Stoeber 2016), we are interested in sounds as "a relational force that connects bodies" (LaBelle 2010). By being an "earwitness" (Schafer 1977/1994, 8) to the shared space of educational settings, we explore sounding citizenship (Western 2020) or sounding "imperial domination" as panelist Ian

vanderMeulen argues in his paper. Through research with a mass-based pedagogical project in Morocco, he brings to light the hauntings of previous domination as a means of religious and political strategizing through which the soundscape echoes imperial domination over West African Muslim voices. We draw upon literature at the intersection of sound studies and education (Brownell 2019; Wargo & Brownell 2021), to grapple with the multiple ways that iconic sounds of education become complicit in drawing "sonic color lines" (Stoeveer 2016) and ableist compartmentalization of sound productions (Gershon 2023). While panelist Maisie Gholson investigates a mathematics learning moment in an urban middle school classroom between Cameryn, a Black girl, and Ms. B., a White woman student teacher through intersecting notions of pedagogical hauntings with mathematical ghosts (Chen 2020), panelist Josefine Wagner explores how sounds carry connection when words are not accessible enough. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at an Irish secondary school, she shows how "nonlinear expressions" (Ben Gonzalez 2023) echoing, mouthing, clapping, self-soothing speech stretch the soundscape of the inclusive mainstream classroom to enable individual personhood across modes of expression.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Josefine Wagner, University of Luxembourg, Allyson Compton

Chair: Allyson Compton

Presenter(s): Allyson Compton, Laura Meinzen, Maisie Gholson, University of Michigan, Josefine Wagner, University of Luxembourg, Ian VanderMeulen, Brandeis University

Presentation(s): Sonic Dread: The Haunting Sounds of Gun Violence in Schools

Informed by research on teaching difficult knowledge and histories (Britzman 1998/2000; Epstein & Peck, 2018; Garrett, 2017; Miles, 2019) and sonic studies in education (Gershon, 2011/2013/2017; Goodman, 2002/2010), this paper critically examines the affective implications of a common pedagogical strategy used to teach difficult knowledge: film. Important studies of the use of film in the classroom (Anwer & Varner 2019) and Stoddard et al (2017), tend to prioritize analysis that examines how students encounter difficult knowledge ocularly. However, there is little research regarding the ways in which teachers and learners process the sounds of trauma in film—specifically the sound of a gunshot. In a moment when a shooting at school is not beyond the realm of possibility, educators must recognize that the eyes are not the only part of our bodies that experience the residue of violent events and seeing is not the only sense that absorbs the always flowing and constantly circulating forces in the spaces we inhabit. This paper explores the affective intensities that occur when particular sounds and noises are processed through epistemologies of hearing. Like spectors, sounds have a kind of persistence that "hangs in the air, in the room, in bodies" (Evans, 2002, p. 177). Such ghostly vibrations linger and recirculate in learning assemblages. Similar to seeing trauma, hearing it can be intensely destabilizing.

Presenter(s): Allyson Compton

Disrupting Hauntings of Linguistic Ideologies in Educational Soundscapes with Newcomer Students using Multilingual Youth Participatory Action Research

Multilingual newcomer students enter US schooling soundscapes, communicating ideologies about language and identity. Based on which languages they hear in which contexts, students feel either belonging in their new school context or stigmatization. Sometimes the racialized silencing of languages (González Ben 2023) conveys meaning to students, and connects to experiences of deficit pedagogies and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela 1999). How are white, monolingual ideologies haunting schooling soundscapes? What hauntings are students bringing from the geographies they left behind or migrated through? In a high school Newcomer Center in a Western US metropole, we've co-created a Multilingual Student Advisory Council using Youth Participatory Action Research to reclaim soundscapes in partnership with youth. Here, all our languages (Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Dari, Pashto) are welcome and valued; translanguaging being a common practice and pedagogical tool (García & Lin 2017). Students use language as a site of connection and relationship building, disrupting language ideologies in their broader context. We study (1) how students understand their context - "how children hear the world?" (Brownell 2023: 111) and (2) how students' reclamation of their soundscapes, developing agency, and critical language awareness (Fairclough 2014) might support them in addressing current power dynamics and language policies in their school district.

Presenter(s): Laura Meinzen

Co-author(s): Adria Padilla-Chavez, Deborah Palmer

The Haunting Voice of Mathematics: The Specter of Disciplinary Agency in Mathematics Learning Moment

Intersecting notions of pedagogical hauntings with mathematical ghosts (Chen, 2020), this paper explores a mathematics learning moment in an urban middle school classroom between Cameryn, a Black girl, and Ms. B., a White woman student teacher. Cameryn is engaged in a routine algebra problem, and over two minutes, Cameryn is interrupted eleven times by Ms. B. Half of those interruptions occur within 25 seconds, either through whispered talk, often connected to embodied action: Ms. B at one point takes Cameryn's pencil, makes an inscription on her paper, and says, "What are you going to do now?" Using microethnographic analysis (Streeck & Mehus, 2005) attending to silences, the disciplinary agency of/within the mathematics emerges as a specter—a ghost with its own devices and aims—animating the asymmetries of power between these two racialized and gendered bodies. Here the disciplinary agency of the mathematics, per Pickering (1995), can be understood as the seemingly autonomous or "routinized ways of connecting marks and symbols with one another" demanded by disciplinary processes and conventions, such as "in arithmetic one completes '3+4=' by '7' without hesitation, so in algebra one automatically multiplies out ' $a(b+c) = ab+ac$ '" (p. 115). As Ms. B breaks the silences of mathematics thinking and doing with talk, she conjures the disciplinary agency of the problem and arguably entangles Cameryn's human agency with the specter of the mathematics in a contentious way.

Presenter(s): Maisie Gholson

Stretching the Soundscape of the Inclusive Mainstream Classroom

Inclusive mainstream education changes the way that sound hierarchies in schools are upheld even if they continue to be haunted by regimes of silence (Daza & Gershon 2015). Taking on Anita Ben Gonzalez's proposal of looking for "nonlinear ways" through gossiping, nonverbal cues, motioning, mouthing (2023, 320), this paper argues that inserting oneself aurally in the public discourse of the mainstream may be a necessity for some students to claim personhood and existence in the mainstream classroom (Walraven 2014; Stoevers 2016). This paper investigates the relationship between sound/ silence productions vis-à-vis resistance, claiming, echoing through and within bodies, artifacts, and spaces. Building on ethnographic fieldwork at an inclusive secondary school in Ireland, I explore how sounds carry connection when words are not accessible enough.

Presenter(s): Josefine Wagner

Echoes of the Warsh Zone: Moroccan Islam and the Disciplining of West African Voices

How do voices from the past haunt educational projects in the present? For roughly a decade and a half, the Moroccan state's Islamic institutions have been promoting a "recitational revival" (*sahwa tajwidiyya*), an amass-based pedagogical project attempting to ensure that Moroccans recite the Qur'an, Islam's primary religious text, in a localized style known as Warsh. In the aftermath of the rise of ISIS and various affiliated Islamic movements across the African continent, however, the Moroccan state has turned this project outward, through organizations like the Mohammed VI Institute for the Cultivation of Imams (*Ma'had Mohammed al-Sadis l-takwin al-a'imma*), which aims to recruit Europeans and West Africans to learn the traditional Islamic disciplines in Morocco and become imams in their home countries. Though couched in a language of combating Islamic "extremism," I show how the Institute's promotional materials and media coverage also appeal to West African Muslims through a shared heritage of Maliki Islamic law and Warsh-based Qur'an recitation, while conveniently eliding the Moroccan Sultanate's histories of conquest that produced those relations. By attempting to reassert its authority over West African Muslim voices, I argue, the Institute not only excavates the "trace" of these histories, in Derrida's terms, but actually echoes the soundscape of this imperial "Warsh zone." The echoes of this conquest and its racialization of "African" Muslims thus continue to haunt.

Presenter(s): Ian VanderMeulen

5344 Commoning within and outside the state: building communities to respond to multiple crises

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the current context of polycrisis (Morin and Kern 1999) or multiple and overlapping crises (Fassin and Honneth 2022), grassroots initiatives proliferate with proposals to provide just solutions or alternatives to the sustainability and social reproduction crises. Some of them try to do so by building communities that intend to be outside the state and the market, like co-ops or

autonomous political organizing, while some others try to take the most from the channels provided by the state in order to push for changes, through mobilizing or participatory policies. It's also usual for some of them to combine both strategies, not without contradictions.

Sharing time, spaces and struggles can be very significant as a form of political education that transforms subjectivities and builds affinities and alliances that push for social change (Susser 2017, bergman and Montgomery 2017, Caciagli 2019). At the same time, in the quest for anti-capitalist alternatives many community-led economic and political models of commoning end up deeply intricated into the neoliberal logic of the market or get captured and redefined by the state-capital nexus through top-down policy or other forms of cooptation. It is important to explore who are the members of the community, who are they commoning for and how their actual practices adapt or depart from their discourses.

This panel brings together anthropologists who work on commoning initiatives that tackle the contradictions and tensions arising from building economic, political, and social alternatives in the present capitalist conjuncture. The goal of the panel is to explore the possibilities of just and sustainable practices in a world where commoning can be an alternative to the status quo, but also part of a corporate model of governance or a pastime activity or lifestyle for the middle classes. With the recent (re)turn to a global authoritarian capitalism, the panel includes contributions that highlight the emergence of new commons (Federici 2011) and how they are responding to the need for social and environmental justice.

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Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Ainhara Del Pozo Nogales, Universitat de Barcelona, Roxana Bucata

Chair: João França, Universitat de Barcelona

Presenter(s): Cansu Civelek, Roxana Bucata, Freja Bach Kristensen, João França, Universitat de Barcelona, Louis Vuilleumier, Ainhara Del Pozo Nogales, Universitat de Barcelona

Discussant: Ida Susser, CUNY, Hunter College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Commoning in Contested Times: Street Protests, Boycotts, and the Politics of Participation in Authoritarian Turkey

Amid Turkey's intersecting crises—authoritarianism, democratic backsliding, the criminalization of opposition, and economic precarity—grassroots mobilizations have gained renewed significance. The arrest of opposition figure Ekrem İmamoğlu has further exposed the fragility of democratic institutions, deepening public disillusionment with electoral politics. Acts of collective resistance—such as protests, university occupations, and boycotts—are emerging as forms of political commoning: efforts to reimagine the political and solidarity beyond state-sanctioned frameworks.

Guided by the anthropology of resistance and theories of the political, this paper draws on my ethnographic engagement in recent protest events that unfolded not only in major urban centers but also in smaller towns and less visible corners of Turkey. Protesters—from organized political groups to unaffiliated individuals—collectively rejected the normalization of authoritarian governance, generating ephemeral yet powerful spaces of dissent, solidarity, and political imagination. These moments of political commoning reconfigured relations of trust, resistance, and belonging across ideological divides.

While the movement's trajectory remains open-ended, I argue these actions are more than temporary disruptions. They represent experiments in collective agency and political subject-formation, rooted in shared acts of refusal and sustained through practices of resistance, alliance-building, and care.

Presenter(s): Cansu Civelek

Militant energy: Consumers, citizens, and commoning in France and Romania

Community energy is a fast-spreading global movement of citizen-led projects aimed at taking control of energy production and distribution. Described as both an environmental project which promotes clean energy and a political and economic shift towards a collective type of ownership and governance, community energy has various expressions: from a small group of neighbors who produce and consume their own renewable energy to the re-municipalization of energy production. This paper is based on an ethnography of two energy cooperatives in France and Romania that aims to uncover the tensions and contradictions deriving from practices of commoning energy within a global capitalist system. The two different socio-economic contexts where the energy cooperatives operate also inform the unfolding of these commoning projects: in France the energy cooperative is a bottom-up project which claims to be a political project against the State and corporate capitalism, while in Romania the energy cooperative is an entrepreneurial endeavor which tries to bring together household and mid-size renewable energy producers and align them to the top-down community energy principles outlined in the EU's energy transition policies. This paper is a contribution to a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations engendered by

commoning practices in their attempt to create an environmentally and socially just alternative to an inherently unequal and uneven capitalism.

Presenter(s): Roxana Bucata

'That kind of place' – acts of planetary care as negotiations of legitimate belonging in non-profit housing estates in Denmark

The 'green' agenda and the promotion of sustainable behavior is increasingly taken up by non-profit housing associations and associated local and national actors in Denmark. At the same time, the non-profit housing sector is targeted with a number of intrusive policies that position disadvantaged housing estates as nesting places for crime and social problems. In this paper, based on 11 months fieldwork in two disadvantaged housing estates in Copenhagen, I look at how residents mobilize the green agenda in an attempt to counter this narrative. More specifically, I show how acts of planetary care, such as building biodiversity beds, are taken up by residents to negotiate the perception of themselves and their estates.

Other local actors such as the urban development team and social workers also mobilize the green agenda, respectively, to frame the urban regeneration process as sustainable and to create exposure to Danish values and lifestyles. Practices that builds on and promotes the understanding of residents as problematic and in the need of resocialization in Danish society. To secure resources and support, the residents often collaborate with these actors. This paper thus highlights how residents, in their attempt to negotiate a legitimate belonging in the welfare state, inadvertently end up contributing to the very paradigm alienating them in the first place.

Presenter(s): Freja Bach Kristensen

From stopping evictions to building political organization: the case of the Network of Popular and Community Structures

In the wake of the financial crisis in Spain, a group of activists from Barcelona created the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (PAH, in Spanish) in 2009, an organization that fights evictions through mutual support. Since then, they have blocked hundreds of evictions and pushed for changes in the law. Its members have also been transformed through commoning in their everyday struggle.

Every local PAH node is autonomous and defines its own strategies and priorities. In Manresa, a mid-sized working-class city in the center of Catalonia, the local PAH emphasizes its anticapitalist character. In recent years they have been working to go beyond the fight for housing by building political organization in the city, with the creation of a network of organizations also focused on sexism, migration, workers-rights, or popular education.

Based on previous research on PAH in general and seven months of fieldwork with the local Platform in Manresa, this paper explores how commoning through the specific struggle against evictions made it possible to create organizations that bring different people together, from members of established political organizations—both socialists and anarchists—to Moroccan migrants—the largest group in the movement—who were not previously connected to political organizations in the city. This coalition building process has given rise to a new political actor in the city that both pressures the administration and seeks to organize autonomously

Presenter(s): João França

Requisitioning Immobile Commons: Squats as New Commons within Destitute Migrants' Journeys through Europe

Across Europe, destitute migrants confront a condition of permanent crisis—an enduring state of uncertainty and instability. While migration studies have extensively explored life within camps, post-camp conditions and trajectories remain significantly underexamined.

Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork across Europe—including 20 biographical interviews and numerous informal conversations with Sub-Saharan male migrants—this paper examines the immobility of those rendered hyper-mobile by European border regimes, and how marooned migrants navigate housing precarity while carving out spaces of autonomy.

Through small-scale, discreet acts of resistance—such as occupying vacant buildings—destitute migrants are able to requisition unused urban space to create immobile commons. These squats serve dual functions. On one hand, they operate as alternative social laboratories that challenge dominant norms of private property, neoliberal speculation, and the commodification of commons. On the other, they emerge as refuge-zones—direct outcomes of restrictive migration policies—providing both practical and symbolic grounds for asserting a right to remain and to live with dignity.

Amid these precarious spaces, marooned migrants cultivate self-organized forms of care, sustained by moral communities that foster sociability and a fragile sense of permanence. I argue that these new commons, beyond offering shelter, sustain hope and endurance in the face of endemic crises.

Presenter(s): Louis Vuilleumier

Epistemic Infrastructures of Resistance: Knowledge Commoning in Barcelona's Grassroots Environmental Justice Movements

Grassroots movements are increasingly shaping urban mobility by contesting car-centric cities and demanding safer, healthier environments for children. Drawing on two years of fieldwork, this paper examines the School Revolt and Bike Bus movements in Barcelona as processes of commoning, in which communities reimagine and reclaim urban space by organizing weekly bike buses and school street blockades.

Central to these movements is their capacity to generate and mobilize grassroots knowledge as a political instrument, using air quality and noise sensors, conducting mobility surveys, and visualizing data to contest dominant urban narratives. Strategic alliances with research groups integrate activist knowledge with scientific expertise, strengthening their claims and enabling their participation in formal institutional platforms where urban policy is debated.

Building on the notion of commoning, this paper explores how these movements produce, defend, and expand urban commons—not only in physical space but also through epistemic practices. However, I argue that as their political relevance grows, so does the risk of co-optation—including their demands, methodologies, and even leadership—by institutional actors who may adopt their discourse without altering the dominant logics of urban governance. This tension underscores the complex negotiation between grassroots autonomy and institutional engagement in contemporary environmental justice struggles.

Presenter(s): Ainhara Del Pozo Nogales

Discussion

8507 Voices of Power: African Diasporic Women's Leadership Through Ritual, Music, Language, and Healing

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines the critical roles of women in preserving, transforming, and transmitting spiritual and cultural traditions across the African diaspora. Ingram's research investigates how the baptism ritual in African American Baptist churches influences women's identity formation, revealing ambiguous connections between the rite and Christian identity, limited understanding of baptism's purpose at participation, and the significance of family expectations in ritual engagement. Johnson explores how gospel music functions as a community-building force in Zachary, Louisiana churches, highlighting Black women as the backbone of gospel ministries who comprise up to 90% of choir membership while serving as cultural bearers who transmit traditions across generations. Valunzuela-Hernandez analyzes how Senegalese women strategically navigate multilingual environments, employing Wolof as a lingua franca while maintaining heritage languages tied to ethnic identities, demonstrating how language choices both reinforce and challenge traditional gender roles. Jackson's ethnographic study of three women healers in Rufisque, Senegal examines the Ndepp healing tradition where song compositions serve as repositories of medicinal knowledge and vehicles for spiritual communication, revealing how these women's ritual authority provides unique social positioning within otherwise patriarchal structures. Collectively, these papers illuminate how women across the diaspora exercise agency through spiritual practices, musical leadership, linguistic choices, and healing traditions, serving as vital bridges between tradition and innovation while negotiating complex social and cultural expectations that shape their communities.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Joyce Marie Jackson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Chair: Joyce Marie Jackson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Joyce Marie Jackson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Latasha Valenzuela, Louisiana State University, Miracle Johnson, Antonia Ingram-Basby

Discussant: Joyce Marie Jackson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Shrine Keepers: Dialogical Performance and Representation with Three Women Healers in Rufisque, Senegal

It is increasingly clear that modern medicine is taking a more active role in interfacing with alternative medicine. To this end, there is a manifest desire to learn more about the role of indigenous healers and the multiple cultures, languages and spiritual traditions in which they live and work. This study presents an exploration of traditional healing practices from the lens of the "shrine keepers", three women healers in Rufisque, an ancient fishing village in northwest Senegal consisting of a large population of the Lebou ethnic group. In this community, the ritual ceremony during which the healing takes place is called Ndepp. It focuses on an individual's spirit and how to maintain a healthy relationship with one's community and one's ancestors. During Ndepp rituals, practitioners honor ancestral spirits called rab through ritual drumming, dancing and chanting. Central to these ceremonies is the dialogical performance between healers, drummers, dancers, the patient, and community participants—a dynamic exchange where each actor contributes to and responds within the ritual framework, creating a communicative circuit essential for spiritual healing to occur. My main concern is with the three ritual healers, or shrine keepers, and their song compositions and performances as instruments of spiritual power, agency and a unifying cultural force. This ethnographic data collected during multiple years of observation reveals how these women's ritual authority provides power.

Presenter(s): Joyce Marie Jackson

Co-author(s): Antonia Ingram, Miracle Johnson, Latasha Valenzuela

Language, Identity, and Gendered Experience: Women's Multilingual Practices in Senegal

This paper examines the complex interplay between language practices, cultural identity, and gender among Senegalese women. Drawing from qualitative interviews with women from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds in Senegal, the research investigates how women navigate multilingual environments and how these linguistic choices shape their identities and social relationships. The study explores three key dimensions: (1) the hierarchical organization of languages across different domains (home, education, work, and ritual spaces); (2) the strategic deployment of linguistic resources for identity construction and cultural maintenance; and (3) women's role in intergenerational language transmission and their decision-making processes

regarding language use with children. By focusing on the intersection of language, gender, and identity, this study contributes to our understanding of how women in multilingual African contexts exercise agency through their linguistic choices while negotiating complex social and cultural expectations.

Presenter(s): Latasha Valenzuela

Harmonies of Hope: Gospel Music and Community Building in Zachary Churches

This study examines the central role of gospel music in cultivating community cohesion, spiritual upliftment, and intergenerational continuity within African American churches in Zachary, Louisiana. Grounded in qualitative interviews, participant observation, and archival research, the findings reveal that gospel music is more than a form of sacred expression—it is a living tradition that binds generations, preserves cultural identity, and sustains emotional well-being. At the heart of this tradition are Black women, who make up the overwhelming majority of church choir members—often as much as 90%—and serve as the backbone of gospel music ministries. Their leadership as choir directors, vocalists, mentors, and cultural bearers is both historical and contemporary, shaping the sonic and spiritual experience of worship across decades.

Black women in these church communities not only maintain the continuity of musical expression but also anchor the emotional and spiritual life of the congregation. They transmit oral traditions, guide youth in gospel participation, and hold space for worship through song that is emotionally rich, theologically grounded, and socially resonant. Their voices lead the call to worship, their labor organizes rehearsals and performances, and their presence ensures the endurance of gospel music as a sacred ritual that is central to the Black church experience, not just on special occasions, but as a consistent part of weekly worship.

Presenter(s): Miracle Johnson

TAKE ME TO THE WATER: THE BAPTISM RITUAL EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

How is the movement into womanhood influenced by the participation in the baptism rite of the African American Baptist Church? Christian baptism is a baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. This change of significance shows how the practice and interpretation of baptism have been transformed across generations. With an awareness of the impact of women within the Baptist Church, the true meaning of baptism should be interpreted and reimaged for the contemporary Church that suffers from divisive ideologies around gender roles because, at its root, baptism signifies union. This study intended to understand how participation in the Christian rite of baptism, leading to initiation in the Baptist church, influences the identity development of African American women to be interviewed. Three themes emerge from the interviews. The first theme revealed an ambiguous connection between the baptism rite and Christian identity. The second theme pointed to a lack of understanding of the purpose of baptism at the age of participating in the ritual. The

third theme expressed the importance of family expectancy in the rite participation. This study shows that after more than two decades, these women bond their identity to events that occurred following their baptism rite. Further research could look at how the meaning of the baptism rite is conveyed in the larger Church congregation.

Presenter(s): Antonia Ingram-Basby

Discussion

2749 Ghostly Visibility: The Impact and Challenges of Anthropology Journals outside the United States and United Kingdom

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropology is taught, written, and published around the world. In fact, there are many anthropology journals outside the U.S. and the U.K., but they are often not known at all in the U.S. and publishing in them often fails to bring fame or credit to authors, even in their home countries. We can say that they are not exactly invisible, but that they suffer from relative invisibility in the world of anthropology. This Roundtable will discuss their existence, their relative invisibility, the geopolitics in which they operate, and the conditions of their production and reproduction. Some participants will also make suggestions about making them more visible and, in many ways, more in harmony with contemporary anthropological values.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Virginia Dominguez, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Carmen Rial

Presenter(s): Emily Metzner, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Caroline Schuster, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology, Matt Tomlinson, Australian National University, Clint Westman, University of Saskatchewan

Discussant: Carmen Rial, Virginia Dominguez, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

2919 Peripheral Hauntings: Presence and Possibilities from the Margins

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Many people living on the margins today experience situations of vulnerability and violence. Yet, while relegated to the literal and figurative margins, their very marginality continues to exert a spectral presence on the centers from which they are structurally excluded. The margins are never erased; rather, they continually haunt the minds and imaginaries of those who are not marginalized.

What possibilities, then, come from the margins? What ontological opportunities might the margins hold for those who inhabit them and how might these spectral plausibilities offer us new ways of writing anthropology? How does the possibility of contesting the present and living moral lives

amidst limiting situations for those on the edge haunt those who hold power, turning their privilege into an unsettling topography where the center, the core, is under scrutiny? In a time of increasing fascist, nationalist, and authoritarian resurgence, where more and more categories of people are discursively made marginal, what can we learn from those who have remained engaged in defiant living, within lives constrained by the structures of the world that places them on the periphery? As bell hooks argues, occupying the margins provides those who live in neglect "a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that sustained us, aided us in our struggle to transcend poverty and despair, strengthened our sense of self and our solidarity" (hooks 1984, ix).

Emphasizing that marginality is not simply "a site of deprivation" (hooks 1994), this panel brings together contributions that render an account of how individuals who live in the margins are also agents of radical possibility. To inhabit the periphery also represents the possibility of transgression and an unexpected potentiality. Persons living in situations of marginality overcome, endure, or cope with adversity crafting new alternatives for better lives and developing reservoirs of navigational capital (Yosso 2005) to draw from when faced with new precarities. Despite occupying contingent positions and becoming the bogeymen of an aggrieved center, people fight to live a better life within the limits that confine them, forging new vectors of belonging and destabilizing an idea of what life on the margins must be. How do the margins and those who reside there actively haunt the center, simultaneously being relegated to the outside while also being rendered hyper present as people and places of danger and threat? The current political, economic, and social global moment demands this question to be answered.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University, Magdalena Zegarra Chiappori, University of Cambridge

Chair: Magdalena Zegarra Chiappori, University of Cambridge, Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Mary Pena, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology, Alexandra Diana Hanae Sastrawati, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Miranda Garcia, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, Juliana Valente, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Uros Kovac, University of Groningen, Magdalena Zegarra Chiappori, University of Cambridge

Discussant: Joao Biehl, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Haunting the Urban Center: Spectral Materiality, Architecture, and Afro-Caribbean Diaspora

In the 1970s, state-led tourism development in the port city of Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, authorized new waterfront construction that transformed the sandy shoreline with a concrete walkway. This project coincided with the forced displacement of Pie del Fuerte, a multi-ethnic, Afro-Caribbean neighborhood of stilt and wooden houses. Today, residents connect the past built environment's features to New Orleans' architecture and building practices. Though tourism infrastructure has effaced physical structures, the absent presence of this coastal community

persists in the landscape. Regional music has popularized expressions that evoke sensory memories of salt and sun "hidden in a conch," surfacing marginalized histories of Black diasporic inhabitation and migration between the Caribbean and Gulf coast region. Taking cues from urban residents' narratives, this paper casts attention to Black migrant lives by linking archival fragments with shifting sand movements. What can spatial traces and moving sands, shaped by development and geophysical activity, tell us about the tangible residues of socio-ecological violence? What does it mean when granular forms haunt the spatial imaginaries of civilizing urban centers?

Presenter(s): Mary Pena

Edgework Aesthetics: Art, Memory, and Survival at Singapore's Margins

This paper explores how life at the margins is shaped not only by constraint but animated by improvisation, intimacy, and form. Through a street-level urban ethnography of Singapore, I follow queer individuals and migrant workers whose everyday gestures—ritual, poetry, performance, walking, language—elaborate an aesthetic of survival within the city's tightly managed exclusions. These fleeting gestures offer insight into affective textures of persistence cultivated at the edges of power. Guided by bell hooks' framing of the margin as "a site of radical possibility," and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's idea that "edges are interfaces," I attend to the artistic, affective, and spatial peripheries where people find meaning amid systems that render them disposable. These are not stories of thriving or victimhood, but of ongoing recalibration—where memory, labor, and expression become means of endurance. I trace how a lesbian artist heals estrangement through ritual; how a Bangladeshi poet and construction worker writes exhaustion into lyric; and how Singapore's precise yet permeable built forms hold the sediment of control while offering stray passages for improvised life. Rather than offer a panoramic view, I follow the city on foot—attuned to its silences, moods, scars, and beauty. What unfolds are scenes of urban life composed in the key of the minor: emergent, collaborative, unresolved. This is edgework as method, where constraint gives rise to inventive forms of living.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Diana Hanae Sastrawati

Rethinking from the Margins of Socialism and Capitalism: New Visions of Business in Cuba and its Limits

Ten years after the unprecedented expansion of private enterprise in Cuba, prominent business owners began crafting a new vision of the Cuban private sector, one that merges personal profit with social responsibility and collective enrichment. This paper argues that this new formulation on the island stems in part from Cuban entrepreneurs' liminal positionality that offers a unique vantage point from which to think about themselves, business, and Cuba in novel ways. For this analysis, I revisit Victor Turner's writings, particularly his focus on "the margin" or liminal period in Ndembu rituals during which individuals momentarily break free of existing social structures, a separation pregnant with possibility. Like Ndembu initiates in puberty huts outside everyday village life, Cuban entrepreneurs similarly sit in liminality's "fruitful darkness" (1979, 243) that invites a reconsideration of existing values and ideals. But being liminal or in the margins comes with its

challenges, particularly in Cuba. Proponents of socially responsible enterprise are routinely accused of lying, fabricating a false narrative to appeal to government officials weary of neoliberal capitalism or as a dog whistle to foreign entities bent on undermining Cuban communism. Such accusations by everyday Cubans, diaspora members, and popular figures alike illustrate the limits of ideation and discourse possible in a transnational community plagued by Cold War logics and deep-seated suspicion.

Presenter(s): Miranda Garcia

“The Favela Won”: use of identity documents by criminalized youth

This paper explores how criminalized youth at the margins of the state negotiate and produce conflicting understandings of their role within the Brazilian nation by engaging with mutating ideas of citizenship, rights, and belonging (Collins 2015). My discussion is based on ethnographic research in the city of Campinas (SP) in which I followed as youth obtained their identity documents. I will describe how Daniel, a black trans man in his 20s, went through great lengths to rectify his name and gender identity on his birth certificate. When Daniel finally received his amended document, he exclaimed that "the favela triumphed". Though ostensibly an object that represents an individual self in the eyes of the state, at that moment the birth certificate was celebrated as Daniel positioned himself in relation to his community, identified in this case through the territory of the favela. This paper thus attends to the margins, and state attempts to pull margins into its orbit through its bureaucratic practices, to illustrate how states enter everyday life (Das & Poole 2004). Furthermore, I consider how Daniel challenges some of the normative standards of citizenship to which he was subjected to. In so doing, he crafts a livable life and future for himself that fails to fit neatly into definitions of either resistance or domination (Biehl & Locke 2017).

Presenter(s): Juliana Valente

Elusive dreams: football aspirations among west African migrants in Europe

Global football is saturated with narratives of dream and aspiration. Transformed into a global business, the football industry is encouraging countless West African young men – often from underprivileged backgrounds – to chase elusive dreams of playing, migrating to Europe, and earning through the sport. The dreamers, however, are confronted with a competitive industry that demands young bodies and with restrictive border regimes that push them toward irregular migration routes, societal margins, and susceptibility to exploitation. This paper examines African migrants' reflections on the dream of playing football for a living, especially as the enticing possibilities of sport careers start diminishing. It draws from interviews with migrants in Europe (2024) and fieldwork on football aspirations in Cameroon (2014-16) to analyze how elusive dreams are re-negotiated by the dreamers themselves. A key finding is that the men do not simply consume and chase the dream of sport success and stardom, nor do they outright reject or abandon it. Rather, through migration and sport, they redefine the meaning of a life worth living. The paper examines the footballers' trajectories to reveal how people transform meanings of a better life in the

midst of "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) of late neoliberal capitalism. It also explores the potential of conceptualizing Europe – as some footballers do – as a "golden prison" (prison dorée), a place of simultaneous opportunity and entrapment.

Presenter(s): Uros Kovac

Lessons from the Margins: Vital Acts and Intimate Hopes

In the post-political present, forged in the absence (and fall) of utopian horizons, many are grappling with the difficulties in trying to articulate an alternative vision for the future. This paper explores the possibilities cultivated among those who have lived in society's margins and developed ways of living and making life fueled not by grand visions of revolutionary change but by belief in and connection to intimate hopes. We draw from ethnographic work conducted among the indigent older adults living in dilapidated care homes in urban Peru and with marginalized, excluded youth living in gang-controlled neighborhoods in semi-urban Honduras. The abandoned older adults develop "vital acts," strategies to cope with an overwhelmingly bleak present, in order to find possibilities to live otherwise. Meanwhile, excluded youth pour their energy into all-but-impossible dreams, insisting on their possibility despite all information to the contrary. In both cases, we find that people whose lives are structurally precarious and literally at risk cultivate "aspirational capital" (Yosso 2005) by forging near-future oriented narratives, close-by horizons of hopeful moments, and small but firm beliefs in affective entanglements and the possibility of their world-making meaning.

Presenter(s): Magdalena Zegarra Chiappori

Co-author(s): Amelia Frank-Vitale

Discussion

5008 The Anthropology of Engineering, Authoritarianism, and Nationalism: US Institutions Shift, but We Have Been Here Before

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Shifts in institutional investment in the US are having serious consequences for academic studies, collaborations, and teaching. As the executive branch of the United States government takes radical steps to transform national culture, higher education has been dramatically impacted. As we find our resources, safety, and relations changing, Smith et al. remind us in a 2025 editorial for the journal Engineering Studies that, "we have been here before." We have observed and documented many ways that authoritarianism and nationalism have engaged engineering. We are cognizant of how engineering knowledge can be mobilized in techno-optimism to exclude, to surveil, and to harm in contexts like these.

Anthropologists attending to engineering and commercialization have developed insights for practice. These insights may be related to teaching critical perspectives on technology, to developing and maintaining support for our activities, to building solidarities across radical disciplinary difference, or to collaborating with students, professors, and practitioners who imagine different worlds and work to pursue them. This participatory round table brings together anthropologists who study, work with, and teach engineers and engineering and entrepreneurship. From diverse institutional positions, we consider such topics as research, collaboration, teaching, and activism in engineering contexts.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Elizabeth Reddy, Colorado School of Mines, Sarah Appelhans, Lafayette College

Presenter(s): Caitrin Lynch, Sarah Appelhans, Lafayette College, Sayd Randle, Angela VandenBroek, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Yunus Doğan Telli, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Coleen Carrigan, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Discussant: Jessica Hardin, Rochester Institute of Technology

7971 Ghost Ecologies: Erasure, Return, and the More-than-Human in the Ruins of Progress

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the spectral dimensions of environmental governance. Public decisions erase, displace, and ghost human and more-than-human lives, while simultaneously creating the conditions for their return. From community gardens in post-industrial cities to Amazonian monocultures, these papers move across different geographies and lifeworlds (seeds, sea, soil, ruins). We ask: whose lives, voices, relations, and ecologies become ghosts in the making of public policy? And how might we attend to their reappearance and new forms of relationality, not as remnants of the past, but as agents orienting toward unfinished struggles, renewal, and possibility? Drawing from Derrida's concept of hauntology (1994), we consider ghosts not as metaphors of loss, but as persistent presences that unsettle linear temporality and rational planning. Infrastructures, environmental policies, and scientific discourses often ghost communities, kinships, ecologies, and spiritual ontologies, rendering them invisible or irrelevant. Still, these ghosts return, demanding recognition, relation, and repair. Haraway's idea of staying with the trouble (2016) and her notion of sympoiesis call us to build worlds with, rather than despite, the entangled pasts that haunt us. On a different realm, Merleau-Ponty's chiasm (1968) offers a framework of intercorporeal entanglement, where humans and nonhumans are not separated by dualisms, but co-constituted through overlapping flesh, memory, and perception, and which might offer insights into how ghosts are part of that co-becoming. Through grounded ethnographic practices/engagement, this panel examines how ghosts are produced, resisted, and invited back into public life. We explore erased knowledge, species, and cosmologies that haunt environmental governance; relational practices (gardening, ritual, storytelling, protest) that summon ghosts into new forms; and the ways hauntings disrupt

development logics and linear notions of time, presence, relationship and power. Together, these papers trace the multispecies, haunted terrains of environmental politics and imagine possibilities for repair and transformation within and beyond the state.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Mariana Ribeiro Porto Araujo, Illinois Wesleyan University, Clara Randimbiarimanana, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology

Chair: Mariana Ribeiro Porto Araujo, Illinois Wesleyan University, Yu Luo, University of Puget Sound, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lulama Moyo, Mariana Ribeiro Porto Araujo, Illinois Wesleyan University, Yu Luo, University of Puget Sound, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Clara Randimbiarimanana, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Fionna Fahey

Presentation(s): You Killed Us But We Didn't Die: Ghosts, Land, and Black Agrarian Resistance

African American land loss in the United States is a ghost story—one of disappearance and defiance. Over 90% of Black-owned farmland vanished in the 20th century, yet its echoes remain in rituals, in foodways, and in the names still spoken. In Black agrarian traditions, to remember is to resist, and to invoke the dead is to keep them living. This paper explores how ghosts move through the afterlives of land theft, not as mournful specters but as agents of presence, protest, and possibility. Grounded in ethnographic storytelling and inspired by horror cinema and mixed media, I trace how Black farmers channel ancestral memory and spiritual connection to reassert land-based autonomy. These "hauntings" reveal a fight for food sovereignty and cultural survival where spirits linger not to haunt, but to guide. Reframing ghostliness as a refusal to disappear, this work examines how Black rural life defies erasure—insisting on lineage, legacy, and the radical power of remembrance.

Presenter(s): Lulama Moyo

Multispecies Ghosts: Land, Loss, and More-than-Human Reconfigurations in the Brazilian Amazon Oil Palm Frontier

This paper explores the spectral and multispecies dimensions of land transformation in the Brazilian Amazon, where large-scale oil palm plantations have reshaped traditional territories once inhabited by quilombola and riverine communities. Promoted as a model of sustainable development, the expansion of oil palm in Pará is accompanied by promises of progress and environmental recovery. However, these plantations rise over ghosted landscapes, erasing swidden gardens, ancestral forests, community kinships, and more-than-human lifeways. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork with affected communities and multiple stakeholders, I examine how agribusiness and state planning render local ecologies and histories invisible, while reconfiguring multispecies entanglements. These plantations are haunted by what they displace: cassava fields, soil microorganisms, spiritual guardians, and knowledge systems that persist in altered and insurgent forms. In collaboration with quilombola elders, smallholders, and their plant and animal companions, this paper contributes to broader conversations on multispecies justice, environmental memory, and the afterlives of neocolonial development in the Amazon.

Presenter(s): Mariana Ribeiro Porto Araujo

Weeds Don't Lie: A Suspended Infrastructural Ecology in Rural China

This paper draws on over a decade of ethnographic engagement in an ethnic minority village in southwest China to explore the spectral life of infrastructure in the wake of rural tourism development. In a landscape where infrastructural projects promise mobility, prosperity, and modernity, their frequent suspension—due to inadequate funding or shifting political visions—renders them not merely incomplete, but ghostly. Half-built facilities and abandoned plans linger as material phantoms, shaping villagers' desires and disillusionments. Rather than markers of linear progress, these suspended infrastructures become vessels of hauntological presence. They hold traces of speculative futures that never arrived, and in doing so, they continue to structure the present—calling into question what spectral development delivers, and for whom. Meanwhile, weeds reclaim spaces intended for tourists, and villagers repurpose ruins, blending dreams with everyday survival. These more-than-human entanglements—between plants, people, and remnants—suggest an infrastructural ecology that resists erasure and remains insistently alive. Infrastructural fetishism in the Chinese developmental imaginary, I argue, produces a double erasure: first, of the lived ecologies and relations that already exist; and second, of the communities' own rhythms and aspirations, overwritten by stalled visions of touristic prosperity.

Presenter(s): Yu Luo

The Sea is our Backyard: Co-becoming with water in the littoral Vezo

This paper explores how the Vezo fishers navigate the realities of living in changing coastal spaces. As a small fishing community in southwestern Madagascar, their cultural identity and livelihoods are deeply intertwined by the sea. However, as new forms of management and environmental change have reshaped the coastline, so has the Vezo's relationship to their marine ecosystem. It determines access to traditional fishing grounds, alterations in their fishing practices, and redefinition of sacred sites. At the same time, the water itself is constantly changing, both physically and metaphorically. The state of the water not only influences the types of interaction with the seascapes but also shapes its cultural significance. With a particular focus on the concept of co-becoming, this paper examines this dynamic interdependence between the Vezo community, coastal planning, and their marine environment. Through this lens, it reflects on the possibilities and constraints associated with reconnecting to physical and collective memory spaces that are increasingly transient and contested.

Presenter(s): Clara Randimbiarimanana

To what (seed) ends?

In February 2025, the Trump Administration released a series of federal budget cuts and layoffs (Stolberg and Qui 2025). One of the federal programs impacted by these austerity measures was the National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) (Hale and Kantar 2025). This system, enacted in 1898, is designed to protect and conduct research on plant germplasm, or seeds and other plant

materials. The recent decrease in federal funding poses uncertainty for the futures of these seeds, the scientists that care for them, and potential new crops. However, these collections of seeds are haunted by colonial extractivism and violence. Drawing on Boris Jardine, Kowal, and Bangham (2019), I ask how recent policy and social movements trouble seed collections' futures and ends. And how might endings or threats of endings affect relations to seeds and their violent histories?

Presenter(s): Fionna Fahey

2891 Ghosting the Past: Spectral Presences and Willful Erasures in Japan Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Ghosts haunt all of anthropology as a field that builds upon the shoulders of intellectual antecedents, even as it marks the shoulders we might dismantle. In the field of Japan anthropology, we are particularly haunted by cultural norms of ancestor worship, filial piety, male primogeniture, and other processes that assure a marked place for ghosts in the present. The theme of the AAA conference this year, Ghosts, provides a welcome opportunity to examine the pasts that haunt our field, as well as challenge it. As we enter disciplinary regimes, we encounter our seniors within and outside of Japan, who both teach and judge; we grapple with an existing literature, imposing and inspirational; and we accumulate our own field locations and interlocutors as sights and sounds that reverberate in our heads and hearts. How do we grapple with such spectral presences as we aspire to shape our scholarly identities? Do spectral presences provide succor or burden or both? How do we gain and sustain that elusive posture of standing out while fitting in? This roundtable offers highly personal, intergenerational renderings of this challenge. We raise our glasses to ancestral ghosts, past and present, that include teachers, iconic ethnographies, and the field of anthropology itself. Having downed the wine, we consider its aftertaste. What are some of the outcomes-spectral presences and willful erasures--of this ingested encounter? How might hauntings contribute to further fermentations and enrichment in thought, practice, and pedagogy? Do we ghost the past by its dismissal? Or do we bring living ghosts to life by incorporating their many whispers, their very aftertaste? And finally, in the midst of these ghostly encounters, whither Japan? What is the Japan that we ethnographers produce as a result of this yeasty mix? The roundtable raises these questions with senior and junior scholars as a means of summoning spirits within and around us, of handling the past palpably while retaining its ineffable spirit, and of embracing hauntings as the ghosts within us.

Japan, we should further note, among world ethnographic regions, is highly unusual for being so much in the popular imagination and political-economic attention of the West. Romanticized as Madame Butterfly, deified as spiritual masters, dehumanized in wartime propaganda, infantilized as Oriental children, roboticized as rule-bound automatons, celebrated as manga-maniacs-cultural stereotyping has been pervasive for 150 years. This imagery, as we discuss in the Roundtable, has been a haunting spectral gallery for Japan anthropologists. Contesting these and

other pernicious national characterizations has been a constant, felt responsibility in our teaching, writing, and speaking.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: William Kelly, Yale University

Presenter(s): Merry White , Gavin Whitelaw, Harvard University, Ryo Morimoto, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Hiroko Kumaki, Oberlin College

Discussant: Christine Yano, University of Hawaii, Manoa

2889 The "Ghosts" of Vic and Edie Turner

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel delves into the intersection of memory, history, and spirit in today's world by examining the enduring impact of Victor and Edie Turner. On the one hand, our aim is to explore the legacy of Vic and Edie within anthropology through their writings and published work (see for instance, Turner 1967, 1969, 1972; Turner and Turner 1978; Edie Turner 1987, 1992, 2011). Their research taught us to attend to religion, rites of passage, forests of symbols, theater and drama, *communitas*, and to the in-between spaces and ritual processes that shape our lives. Their writings were also a sustained challenge to the discipline's more positivist leanings. Fieldwork, Edie said, must be done with an absolute recognition of the life worlds of others, diverse ways of knowing, and our shared commonality as living beings. There are no peripheries to humanity – we must and do cohabitate the world. Our panelists will examine how this legacy speaks to the current moment, exploring how Vic and Edie's writings carry not only referential meaning, but also a powerful poetics of spirit and life force that continue to shape how we navigate the present. On the other hand, our aim is to move beyond the written word to take a broader inventory of Vic and Edie's legacy. Our objects of study include embodied memories, relationships, emotions, photos, artwork, heirlooms, and keepsakes that continue to evoke Vic and Edie in unexpected, and often, uncanny ways. For example, we observe the impact of fading photographs, weaves of fabric, smells, sounds and colors, the echoes of muscle memory, dreams, and senses of place, particularly the house on Carrsbrook Drive. These encounters are not entirely surprising to us – one of Vic and Edie's strongest contributions to the field was their acknowledgement of the reality of spirits.

The panelists for this session are comprised of Vic and Edie's family members (children and grandchildren), students, friends, and colleagues who call on personal experiences, new research on Edie and Vic's notes and letters, and archival research, as well as extensive knowledge of their legacy, to explore the ways in which memory, history, and spirit ricochet back and forth with the personal, political, and the anthropological. We ask: what can we learn from their writings, both from its meaning and its poetics? What can we learn from our uncanny encounters beyond the written page and from our acknowledgement of the reality of spirits in our own world making, theory, and activism? How does the legacy of Vic and Edie Turner remind us to embrace the possibilities of diverse ways of knowing, deeper engagement, cohabitation, activism, and repair?

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Rose Wellman, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Pamela Frese, The College of Wooster, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Rory Turner, Goucher College, Sociology and Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Susan Brownell, University of Missouri, St. Louis, Department of History, Pamela Frese, The College of Wooster, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Rory Turner, Goucher College, Sociology and Anthropology Department, Irene Wellman, Rose Wellman, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Department of Behavioral Sciences

Presentation(s): The Mystical Power of Cultural Performances: Reopening a Turnerian Line of Inquiry Closed Down by the Postmodern Turn

In the 1970s and 80s, Victor and Edith Turner, with collaborators, expanded ritual theory to a broader category of organized events labeled "cultural performances" – public events that provide temporally condensed moments to communicate core cultural themes and values, including theatrical plays, sport competitions, music concerts, festivals, weddings, and more. Milton Singer coined the term in the 1950s, arguing that such events could serve as basic units for the study of a culture. These theoretical explorations were largely dropped before their full potential was realized owing to the death of Victor Turner in 1983, and the arrival of new, Marxism-inspired concepts of power that came to dominate cultural anthropology in the postmodern turn of the late 1980s, as well as a focus on everyday practice (as opposed to extraordinary events set apart from mundane life) that entered the discipline along with practice theory. This presentation reopens the Turnerian inquiry into the role of cultural performances in social life and their capacity to facilitate social change. In line with the AAA meeting theme of "the eerie and evocative" is their conceptualization of the "power" in ritual, in which rituals themselves possess a kind of power, sometimes described in almost mystical ways, generated by their temporal and symbolic structures – a notion that contrasts with Marxist-inspired perspectives in which rituals serve the power of elites in a one-way direction.

Presenter(s): Susan Brownell

Ghosts, Memories and Enhanced Perceptions of Life

Ghosts, whether they are seen as spiritual entities or as embodied memories and lessons we carry with us, are a fascinating way to think about how we move through the world. Embodying the experiential understandings of the world, those lived lessons and moments passed down through shared experiences with Vic and Edie Turner do indeed create and retain "ghosts" of these two wonderful people. These two mentors and friends left lasting imprints on me. Their wisdom, advice, and scholarship continues to guide me even after they've moved on, and I carry forward their teachings, sharing them with others. Vic and Edie are a part of my intellectual fabric and as I share their ideas with others, these "ghosts" continue to live, allowing their teachings to continue to influence new generations and help others see the world through these valuable perspectives; especially the power of ritual, communitas, liminality, and shamanism and healing.

Presenter(s): Pamela Frese

Reckoning with the Traces

The smell of my father's comb after his death, the caked-up flakes caught between the teeth of the scuffed dark plastic. My mother's old well worn knit cap and her words. I wear that cap still, and her words have become part of my own. We are made by such things, echoes, traces of time, searingly concrete but also maybe not just that. Here I reflect on traces of my parents Vic and Edie Turner in my life, and hopefully something beyond that. The pair of them were passionate about the detailed particularities of things. Deft writers and ethnographers, they were humbled by the suchness of experience, this ritual plant, this squabble, this epiphany when something new and deeper was disclosed in word or action. And well trained in social anthropology, they were fascinated by the cut and thrust of social life and the statuses, interests, and conflicts that are social organization in action. But the account they made of the world was never complete without something more, something in the in-between space, gestured at, of *communitas*, anti-structure, the reality of spirits. The world in its manifold unfolding has its way with us, we are little but traces of traces, though something about this creation lives on. Considering the traces that have gone into my fashioning, I consider traces more generally, both that which passes, and that which may remain. How do things leave their mark? What might we be asked to notice, to remember, and to forget?

Presenter(s): Rory Turner

Excerpts from *The House on Carrsbrook Drive: Ghosts, Spirits and Sprites*, a Memoir

As the daughter of Victor and Edith Turner, I'm writing a memoir focusing on my time living in, or near my parent's house

from 2011 to 2021. My purpose here is to present some excerpts from my memories of that experience, as well as older

memories of being privy to their field work and life as anthropologists. I'll describe what it was like to experience the house near Charlottesville, VA as it welcomed family, friends, students, colleagues, and visitors, with an emphasis on my mother, Edie, after my father died. The house itself was unique in many ways and served as a place of refuge an inspiration for many, including myself as a poet, writer, and retired teacher. I'll show how that uniqueness contributed to the intellectual and social life of anthropology at the time, from my own point of view. I hope this presentation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the lives of Vic and Edie in the tradition of similar memoirs, such as, *With a Daughter's Eye: A memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson* by Catherine Bateson, Harper Perennial: Reissue edition (March 20, 2001).

Presenter(s): Irene Wellman

Edie Turner's Spirit and Political Activism: Rethinking Anthropological Futures

This paper focuses on Edie Turner to explore the way her spirit, presence, writer's voice, and activism appear in the teaching, research, writing, and politics of her family, former students, and colleagues. Drawing from my own personal experience with her legacy and work as her anthropologist granddaughter, but also from new ethnographic research on her ongoing presence

of spirit within the discipline, I aim to understand how presences of spirit can go beyond the written word or mere theoretical contribution to shape memory, politics, and our understandings of our possibility, potential, and anthropological futures. How do Edie's published works, letters and field notes written in her own hand, as well as her spirit expressed in interviews with students, colleagues, and family members, challenge our rigid perceptions of academia as a profane space and what can this do for our recognition, documentation, and confrontation of injustice in the current US political climate? What happens, moreover, when our personal life histories intersect with anthropology?

Presenter(s): Rose Wellman

5006 Haunted Infrastructures - Infrastructural Hauntings: Part 2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this panel, we think about haunted infrastructures and infrastructural haunting. Infrastructures are not only about moving matter forward (Larkin 2013), they are embedded in relationships of mutual becoming. (Re-)Structuring space, compressing time, erasing pasts and promising futures, infrastructures unfold in ways that are both material and durable as well as volatile and invisible. We propose these infrastructural transformations create actual and metaphorical ghosts: Place-bound, fleeting, yet persistent, referencing the past through the present, ghosts are at once tied to matter and in excess of it.

First, we draw attention to material infrastructures and their potentials for being enlivened or haunted by immaterial entities. Infrastructures are relational (Rest and Rippa 2019) and extend beyond the human through matter. Key materials in infrastructures, stone, water, minerals, are in themselves social agents. They are the communicating ancestors of people and the founding infrastructures of subsistence landscapes. The denial of the ancestral relationship between people and their infrastructure is infrastructural haunting.

Haunted infrastructure is enacted by ghosts and beings trapped in space-time. Drawing on Freud's exploration of haunting as 'Heimsuchung' (Freud 1919), we emphasize that the nonhumans haunting infrastructures are caught in a state of liminality from which they seek to escape. Taking the ontological status that ghosts have for our interlocutors seriously, we seek to illuminate what kind of social ontologies (Baumann and Rehbein 2020) are reproduced through infrastructures.

Second, through this juxtaposition of the material and the immaterial, we shed new light on infrastructure as it creates hubs of human-non-human interaction. If we take the colonized people seriously, the entire human-built environment is enlivened with entities that emerge through the energy released at production. Ghosts are invisible traces of what came before and is no longer remembered as part of what exists now (Tsing et al 2017).

Third, this attention to (im)materiality and space/place/time requires linking the haunted to temporalities of infrastructures. Infrastructural temporalities encompass maintenance and

entanglement amid the materially unfinished and crumbling, and the immaterial suspensions and anticipations they engender. Attempts to connect the different temporal registers with space and place, however, remain rare. By drawing together both the singular events and the deep time of infrastructures, we connect 'ghosts' to the matter that both enlivens and entraps them through the spectral lens of folded space/time.

We ask: What kind of infrastructures are haunted ? How does their materiality provide them with ghosts?

How do new infrastructures try to erase haunted pasts and make space for enlivened futures?

Does cross-time/cross-border infrastructural haunting create alternatives for analyzing bounded spaces?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Verena La Mela, Heidelberg University, Courtney Work

Chair: Courtney Work

Presenter(s): Courtney Work, Soma Basu, Tampere University, Cesar Giraldo Herrera, Somerville College, University of Oxford, Esma Berikishvili

Discussant: Guido Sprenger

Presentation(s): Transforming the Ancestors: Infrastructural hauntings and social becoming

Defining what is and is not infrastructure is political. It is also ontological in that infrastructures reveal social relations and those who are included and excluded from social interaction. This paper engages with infrastructures in an anarchically organized landscape as they are transformed and disciplined through imperial rationalizations. Based in long-term field research with people living in landscapes changing from forest to frontier, the paper situates non-human infrastructure as the foundation of human sociality in multiple ontological registers. Among the original animist inhabitants, the trees, rocks, metals, and waterways are communicating ancestors with whom resource use is negotiated. A bird's eye view of this landscape reveals how ancestors of water, stone, and tree shape the economic landscape for all biological actors. This 'effortless efficacy' of form (Kohn 2017), establishes the non-human hierarchy upon which all things rest. As infrastructural ancestors are extracted and mined, their social and thus ontological position changes. Their shape and function also changes and this paper follows the ontological shifts from karst to concrete, from tree to boat, from iron to rebar, in ways that attend to the social relations created and denied in the process. I argue that ancestors haunt the places where their agency is denied and that despite this disavowal, the moral economies through which they operate may not have disappeared.

Presenter(s): Courtney Work

Phantoms of the Drains: Imaginations of Conflict in Everyday Infrastructures

This article culminates from the sensory ethnography of two intersecting municipal drains that flow through the 2020 riot-torn areas of New Delhi, India. The riots had claimed 60 lives, with several

people still missing. During the six days of conflict between the majority Hindus and minority Muslims, the drains that appear like a cross on the map of the area were the dumping sites for several human bodies. These drains were built in the 1990s post-liberalization period as municipal aids to accommodate the burgeoning informal, displaced population and the decentered economy and waste. Three years after the riots, the cross of the two drains looms like a parable of the past. The urban infrastructure project has transcended into a boogeyman through constant media retellings and portrayals. As a medium of memories, trauma, and imagination, the drains have attained a different kind of mobility, replete with distinct cultural codes, as they feature innumerable different narratives and recollections, in person and online, lips to smartphone screens. The article explores how the drain, as a medium, absorbed the unease of the rushed post-violence normalcy efforts when stories of its phantasm and gore still circulated from pocket to pocket, finger to finger, and screen to screen through constant online mediatization. The sensory ethnography of the drains explores their transformation from mere objects of urban abuse to unforgettable urban legends in digital space.

Presenter(s): Soma Basu

More-than-human Infectious Diplomatic Infrastructures

In 2011, an Indigenous community learned that the National Infrastructure Agency (ANI) was planning to build a final stretch of Route 90 La Transversal del Caribe, connecting the Colombian Caribbean coast from in the build-up for the final stretch of the Pan-American Road crossing the Darien Gap to connect South and Central America. The project promised better access to services through access to the Port of Turbo and Medellin and jobs in the "sustainable tourism" industry. Under closer inspection, the community realized the planned path crossed through the sacred site of the Lord of Mumps, a tutelary being who inflicts a mumps-like disease (unrelated to the virus). The community asked for a change in the road's plans, but their concerns were dismissed as superstitious. Instead, ANI invested in a school for the community and paid for appeasement ceremonies in a show of multicultural tolerance. Nevertheless, workers were afflicted by the disease during the construction. A few perished, while others sought treatment with local medicine men. Public Health records indicate that at the time, there were bouts of unidentified fever syndromes, some with fatalities. The road was completed, the workers left, and the outbreak ended. Years later, the infrastructure of the road the Darien Gap into scenario of mass-scale human trafficking and a humanitarian crisis, calling for a closer look at these more-than-human infrastructures.

Presenter(s): Cesar Giraldo Herrera

Haunted Currents and Ghostly Remains: Infrastructural Ruins and Resistance in Georgia

Infrastructures are more than material assemblages—they are spectral landscapes where past and present entangle, generating sites of haunting, dispossession, and resistance. This paper examines the ghostly afterlives of infrastructure in Georgia through two case studies: the anti-dam protest in the Rioni Valley and the informal economy of scrap metal collection in Poti. Both cases reveal how

infrastructures—whether emerging, decaying, or contested—carry spectral traces of power, displacement, and endurance. The Rioni Valley Movement transformed the river into a battleground for ecological and political struggle, forging an "infrastructure of sociality" (Berlant 2016), while Poti's scrap metal collectors navigate Soviet ruins, reshaping abandoned infrastructures into precarious livelihoods. Building on infrastructural haunting, we explore how rivers, metal, and concrete act as residues of past systems and mediums for contemporary struggles. The Rioni River, threatened by the Namakhvani dam, bears the spectral weight of contested futures, while Soviet industrial remnants in Poti generate ghostly economies. How do haunted infrastructures unsettle dominant orders? How do spectral temporalities shape contemporary subjectivities? Through these questions, we argue that infrastructural hauntings in Georgia reveal alternative modes of being, belonging, and resisting.

Presenter(s): Esma Berikishvili

Co-author(s): Lika Jalagania

Discussion

7896 Climate Change in the Guianas: Adaptations and Landscape Transformations

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores challenges related to climatic and ecological change in the Guianas (particularly Guyana). This often-neglected region is a microcosm for global change and its varied impacts on human and more-than-human relations. This panel's papers examine how Guianese communities engage with these challenges within past and present contexts around the politics of developmentalism to religious movements. Adaptations and landscape transformations result from these engagements and highlight local strategies, cosmological orders, as well as forms of scientific and engineering-related knowledge. Both technoscience and traditional ecological knowledge are highlighted in these engagements in relation to climatic and ecological change. In turn, the more-than-human engagements in the Guianas provide anthropology with a perspective on global actions, local responses, and planetary crises.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: James Andrew Whitaker, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies, Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: James Andrew Whitaker, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies

Presenter(s): Ariadne Collins, Daniel Cooper, Lewis Daly, University of Oxford, Elliott Oakley, University of California, Santa Cruz, James Andrew Whitaker, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies

Discussant: Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley

Presentation(s): The Extractive Embrace: Shifting Expectations of Conservation and Extraction in the Guiana Shield

This paper demonstrates what the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative would have to do to satisfy the expectations of local stakeholders. It connects unmet expectations of REDD+ with a deepening reliance on extractive activity in the Guiana Shield. It argues that extractive activity, which has always been the most significant driver of deforestation in the ecoregion, is further overtaking REDD+'s capacity for meeting expectations and development aspirations due to the combined failure of REDD+ to deliver vast amounts of promised funding and subsequent announcements of major oil discoveries in the territorial waters of the Guiana Shield.

Presenter(s): Ariadne Collins

A World Full of Sin: Alleluia, Climate Change, and Millenarianism in the Pakaraima Mountains

Alleluia is an Indigenous Christian religion headquartered in Amokokupai, Guyana, within the Upper Mazaruni River basin of the Pakaraima Mountains. Scholars characterize it as a highland phenomenon, a revitalization movement, and a form of resistance to colonial and post-colonial intrusion. This paper presents Alleluia as a millenarian movement. It begins with a review of pantoni (stories) about Makunaima and his brother, Chiki, ancestors of the Alleluia who radically changed the world during pia'atai (a time of origin). It concludes with a discussion of how Alleluia views climate disasters as harbingers of another radical change that will bring back Makunaima, Chiki, and the Antichrist.

Presenter(s): Daniel Cooper

El Dorado 2: Indigenous Ecologies along Amazonia's New Oil Frontier

This paper examines Indigenous ecologies in relation to Guyana's development of a growing petroleum industry. This is a recent and emerging oil frontier in Amazonia that significantly impacts local Indigenous people. It is the most recent development in a long history of extractivism in Guyana. This new oil frontier and its implications constitutes an El Dorado 2.

Presenter(s): Lewis Daly

Local Ecological Knowledge at Landscape Scale: Regional Indigenous Exchange Networks in a Biodiversity Assessment of Southern Guyana

In the past two decades, Guyana has been a proving ground for novel conservation finance mechanisms. Carbon credit schemes and global 30x30 targets create new regimes of value and state control in Guyana's southern forests, one of the world's largest intact forest expanses. This paper examines the convergence of technoscientific and Indigenous knowledge in a recent biodiversity assessment in southeastern Guyana. It argues that even as local Indigenous peoples expertly trace ecological relations disrupted by anomalous seasonal variation, their expansive and

historically deep social relations across the Guianas shape the possibilities of Indigenous resilience in the region's shifting conservation future.

Presenter(s): Elliott Oakley

Climate Change and Ontological Relations in Guyana

This paper discusses Indigenous concepts and experiences related to climatic and ecological change in Guyana. Based on fieldwork in the Makushi villages of Surama and Yupukari and the Akawaio village of Kamarang/Warawatta, it describes unprecedented flooding in 2021, which was associated by many with climate change. It examines how discourses of climate change have been adopted from outsiders to explain various seasonal and ecological irregularities experienced locally in recent years. For Akawaio and Makushi people, the underlying causalities of these changes are often linked to imbalanced relations with more-than-human master/owner spirits, which control and protect aspects of the historical-ecological landscape

Presenter(s): James Andrew Whitaker

Discussion

6948 Towards an Engaged Anthropology on Wisdom

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Wisdom has long been a popular destination for anthropological inquiry. It reflects anthropology's reflexive scaling of its knowledge production beyond objective, scientific accountability towards a more people-relevant, sociohistorically precipitated, and morally concerned form of knowing. In particular, recurring crises in human history have propelled anthropologists to engage with wisdom—from World War I, which shaped the early trajectory of modern anthropology (Malinowski 1922: 517), to the current environmental-capitalist polycrisis (Krenak 2022, Stoller 2023). Yet, wisdom is not without its pitfalls. It risks becoming an empty moral ideal, a self-contained abstraction, or a tool for politically stabilizing the status quo. While acknowledging both the complex genealogy of anthropology's engagement with wisdom and wisdom's cultural specificity, this panel examines its situational politics and poetics with a vision for engaged anthropology.

We explore wisdom not only in its established domains—such as indigenous knowledge systems, and religious-moral traditions—but also in its emergent formations within feminist activism, moral economic dilemmas, and people's engagement to environmental and technological crises. By attending to the work and troubles of wisdom across these diverse contexts, we ask: When, how, and in what forms does wisdom emerge, relate, put into practice, or retreat to aloof ideas? What social, ethical, and epistemological dimensions does it entail? And how can anthropology engage wisdom critically without reducing it to merely a promise of this discipline?

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Yukun Zeng, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Chair: Kathleen Millar, Simon Fraser University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Yukun Zeng, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Kathleen Millar, Simon Fraser University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Yu Liang, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Abhishek Bhattacharyya, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Aaron Michka, University of Notre Dame

Presentation(s): The Promise of Wisdom and the Aftermath of Dao: Grassroots Confucianism and the Accountability of Wisdom Anthropology and Asian Values

Malinowski concluded *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* with a provocative comment on the ongoing WWI, urging anthropology to be accountable to the future of the world through the promise of wisdom. He called for going beyond objective knowledge production to learn from informants' ways of life. Since then, wisdom has been one of anthropology's ultimate promises. But how do we, as anthropologists, account for the situated praxis and politics of wisdom and avoid its being an empty promise ?

To establish accountability for wisdom is to break the veneer and gauge its depth. This paper explores this process through two complementary ethnographic phases that gradually revealed the depth of wisdom within *dujing*, a grassroots Confucian movement mobilizing people to intensively read classics for wisdom/dao . The first phase recounts how *dujing*'s wisdom, which initially appeared empty, became "stuffed" with meaning. The second phase documents its subsequent "agitation" and eventual "collapse." The final section reflects on the meaning and ethics of this fieldwork. Ultimately, this paper critiques the implicit solutionism embedded in Malinowskian promise of wisdom and develops a processual, critical yet sympathetic approach to establishing accountability for wisdom as well as its related cultural politics and knowledge economy.

Presenter(s): Yukun Zeng

The Wisdom of Living Wildly: Explorations of Crisis and Freedom

In 2020, Glennon Doyle—a former Christian evangelical who became widely known as the "Christian mommy blogger," published a New York Times bestseller, called *Untamed*, in which she narrates her journey of falling in love with the soccer star Abby Wambach, leaving her then husband with whom she had three children, and charting a new life course unshackled from the expectations of the heteronormative family. Doyle then went on to create a new podcast with her sister, Amanda Doyle and now wife, Abby Wambach, in which the three women discuss their midlife struggles including patriarchy and gender, addiction and trauma, parenting, feminist activism, and US politics. The podcast, *We Can Do Hard Things*, was named the #1 Top Show on Apple podcasts in 2021, the first year it aired, and it continues to reach several million listeners a week. While typically framed and critiqued in social science literature as "self-help" material, we argue instead that these discussions of crisis and freedom are fundamentally explorations of wisdom. Through a multi-sited ethnography that follows a conversation as it moves, is picked up, and transforms across media, group chats, friend discussions, activist circles, and self-reflections on making it through the everyday, we examine new forms of spirituality and ideas of freedom. Ultimately, we

consider the significance of these conversations for both the contemporary political moment in North America as well as for anthropology's engagement with wisdom.

Presenter(s): Kathleen Millar

Co-author(s): Jennifer Ashley

Wisdom in Situation, Indigeneity as Labor: Reworking Resistance in Taiwan's Heritage Regime

Since the 2016 presidential apology to Indigenous peoples, Taiwan has launched a series of cultural heritage initiatives under the banner of Indigenous transitional justice. Framed as interventions into conventional historiography, the bureaucratic, archival, and legal regimes surrounding these efforts re-narrate Indigenous agency and resistance through the moral lens of ancestral resilience and cultural continuity—acknowledging the past without unsettling present structures of power. Yet Indigenous actors critically reflect on what preservation and participation afford, and what they foreclose. As a result, their engagement not merely responds to state visions but also repurposes them, articulating forms of political subjectivity that emerge through negotiation, suspicion, and reappropriation. Drawing on "situated wisdom" (Haraway 1988), this paper argues that Indigenous actors generate epistemologies grounded in embodied experience, historical reckoning, and structural constraint. These practices do not reject heritage work outright but rework it from within, producing epistemological moments of "Indigenous resurgence" (Simon 2023): subtle, everyday refusals that exceed the institutional logics of recognition. In tracing how resistance is enacted and reimagined through intersecting regimes, this paper reconsiders the anthropological engagement with wisdom—not as cultural inheritance, but as contested political labor unfolding within and against settler governance.

Presenter(s): Yu Liang

The Wisdom of the Vanguard: The Progressive Organisation of Women and Revolutionary Selfhood in 1980s India

In his 1902 pamphlet, *What is to be Done?*, Vladimir Lenin wrote: "As I have stated repeatedly, by 'wise men,' in connection with organisation, I mean professional revolutionaries, irrespective of whether they have developed from amongst students or working men." While describing the various characteristics of the professional revolutionary, Lenin himself never wrote about such a person needing to be an emotionally aloof figure. However, his stress on a wholehearted devotion to the cause has often been interpreted in those terms. In a different vein, in this paper I discuss some ways in which women within Marxist Leninist parties expressed their desires and explored different kinds of relationships and intimacies, which brought into tension notions of an emotionally detached revolutionary self.

Founded in 1973, the Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) was the first separate women's organisation within the radical left 'Naxalite' tradition - which emerged since the late 1960s and remains a significant political force today. Drawing upon extended fieldwork over 2015-2022, in this paper I rely primarily upon the political activist Katti Padma's stories to argue for the important

epistemic contributions of political movements in fashioning new ideas of revolutionary selfhood and organisational structure in the late 1980s.

Presenter(s): Abhishek Bhattacharyya

Discussion

4417 Governing Data: Regulations, Rights, and Relations (II)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Data is increasingly recognized as a valuable global asset, sparking intensifying struggles over its extraction, accumulation, and regulation. Across the world, lawyers and policymakers are constructing new regulatory infrastructures to govern data. Yet in doing so, they often encounter deep tensions rooted in competing epistemologies and ontologies—fundamentally different ways of knowing and being through which 'data' is produced, interpreted, and contested. As data reshapes relations of power between individuals, communities, and states, it is also unsettling liberal frameworks—from rights and personhood to sovereignty and citizenship. This panel approaches data from an anthropological perspective, asking how cultural, socio-technical, and juridical forces assemble 'data' and, in turn, shape its governance. We invite abstracts that explore struggles over data, trace how it is reconfiguring power relations, and examine how new legal and normative frameworks are being articulated in an increasingly datafied world.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Matthew Canfield, Leiden University, Hayal Akarsu, Utrecht University

Chair: Roberto Gonzalez, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Goeun Lee, Jessaca Leinaweaver, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Hayal Akarsu, Utrecht University, Matthew Canfield, Leiden University

Discussant: Roberto Gonzalez, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Datafying People and Datafying Waste in China's State-led Environmental Sustainability Projects

In Shanghai, managing household waste has helped the state make the city more datafied in recent years, particularly through quantifying the quality of the residents and promoting the applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in sorting waste materials. On one hand, Chinese technocratic government apparatuses rendered urban civility quantifiable by creating, comparing, and evaluating numerical data about urban residents' behaviors related to their household waste management, often through collaborating with grassroots organizations and other third-party agencies who performed close monitoring on urban neighborhoods. On the other hand, the technocratic state equated the nation's progress and sustainability with advancing technology, often by collaborating with entrepreneurs who applied artificial intelligence to household waste management, especially sorting the waste into different categories such as recyclables and other waste. However, both endeavors of datification by the technocratic state—enumerating civility and

hiring machine-minds—silenced the crucial realities of waste management, especially the unpaid or underpaid labor in waste work and the messiness of the waste's materiality. Based on ethnographic evidence from 2019-2020 and analyzing documents from surrounding periods, this paper shows the complex relationship between technocracy and environmental sustainability and how it is reconstituted by datafying people and things.

Presenter(s): Goeun Lee

Counting Children

This paper takes up the multiplicity (Mol 2002) of data that is used simultaneously for case management, performance of technological best practices, and research. Following a path laid out by Sally Merry's work on classification and quantification (2016) and Matthew Hull's on databases (2012), I analyze processes, debates, and "common senses" that emerge in the divergent and multiple uses of data. I work with a database maintained by a large international NGO active in providing alternative residential care for children separated from their parents. NGO staff have commented in conversations about data quality that they want this data to be "as real as possible," evidence that the database is in part a project of legibility (compare Scott 2002). The possibility for a degree of "unreality" itself illuminates logistical and staffing challenges, inclarities and uncertainties in the data entry system, and cultural biases in assessing children's well-being. In this paper I am particularly interested in how staff talk about "feeding" data to the database, "stabilizing" the data, and not least, "protecting" the data. The production, management, and reuse of data by social workers, data analysts, child advocates, and academic researchers alike is central to how risk is construed for the young.

Presenter(s): Jessaca Leinaweaver

From Pixels to Data: Documenting Ecological Violence and the Politics of Remote Sensing

As wars and conflicts increasingly damage environments and more-than-human lives, satellite technology promises to make this destruction visible. Yet this technology is not neutral—operating as a sociotechnical assemblage embedded within colonial and military surveillance practices that determine what counts as ecological violence and whose suffering becomes visible. Through ethnographic engagement with PAX, a Dutch peacebuilding organization, this talk examines how satellite technology documents ecological violence in war zones. Drawing on fieldwork with remote sensing specialists and activists, the research analyzes how environmental impacts are made visible, quantified, and legitimized as evidence. The findings reveal how practitioners navigate between algorithmic detection and local knowledge, challenging binaries of expert/local and technology/sociality. Through "ground-truthing" processes, satellite data becomes meaningful only through engagement with local communities who train the satellite gaze, shaping what is observed as data and how it is interpreted. This collaboration transforms potentially extractive surveillance into an intersubjective practice that remakes environmental data through local ontologies and foregrounds affected communities' experiences.

Presenter(s): Hayal Akarsu

Data Governance and Peasants' Rights: The Emerging Anthropology of Fourth Generation Rights

Data Governance and Peasants' Rights: The Emerging Anthropology of Fourth-Generation Rights

The anthropology of human rights initially focused on the tensions between legal universalism and cultural relativism. Anthropologists examined how activists mediate between global legal frameworks and local sociocultural contexts, illuminating the power dynamics embedded in these translations. While this remains a critical area of ethnographic inquiry, a new generation of rights is emerging in response to the threats to privacy, autonomy, and knowledge sovereignty posed by advancing digital technologies. These so-called fourth-generation or epistemic rights seek to navigate between epistemic universalism and pluriversalism. Yet, rights discourses remain constrained by their roots in liberal individualism and state-centered frameworks. How do activists and communities negotiate these limitations while confronting the expanding digitalization of life?

This paper explores these dilemmas through the lens of agricultural data governance. As peasants, small-scale food producers, and Indigenous communities increasingly encounter the datafication of agriculture, they confront new power relations and contest emerging regimes of access, control, and ownership. Drawing on ethnographic and participatory action research in Kenya, I examine how actors are struggling to articulate competing grammars of justice that reconfigure the relationships between persons, technologies, and the state in div

Presenter(s): Matthew Canfield

Discussion

3698 Haunted epistemologies and ancestor afterlives: anthropology and interdisciplinarity in environmental sciences

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/20/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable examines the complexities of collaboration in environmental anthropology, with a focus on working across diverse communities, disciplines, generations, and activist-scholar partnerships. It examines the interdisciplinary future of these collaborations by paying close attention to disciplinary pasts. The ghosts of scholarly ancestors-scholars who mapped, categorized, and often commodified ecological knowledge-linger in present-day research, shaping methodologies that must contend with their legacies. At the same time, many marginalized scholars are haunted less by these spectres that roam the halls to which many barely have access and more by something all the more intimate. Else these scholars themselves become spectres, bridging spacetime with their overstretched bodies misshapen by expectation. Haunting, then, is not merely metaphorical but an active force that demands recognition of the dispossession and epistemic violence embedded in environmental knowledge production. This roundtable engages haunting not as an analytical frame that vaguely captures colonial presence but as something that shapes interdisciplinary environmental sciences.

Panelists will critically examine how collaborative approaches can foster ethical engagement, knowledge practices, and environmental justice efforts, while also attending to the challenges posed by disparities in wealth, funding, and power dynamics. They will explore how environmental anthropologists increasingly navigate interdisciplinary spaces: as a vehicle for mitigating extractive environmental data practices, and as a means of accessing additional resources typically reserved for "hard" sciences. Panelists will discuss collaboration with Indigenous, traditional, and other local communities, recognizing the significance of their knowledge systems and community-led and -owned research, while addressing issues of racism, extractive scholarly practices, and the inequitable distribution of research funding that can undermine meaningful partnerships.

In considering interdisciplinary collaboration, this roundtable will highlight both the benefits and tensions of integrating insights from the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Panelists will examine intergenerational collaboration and reflect on the role of mentorship and knowledge transmission in both shaping the future of environmental anthropology and contending with the discipline's past. An uncomfortable history and intimate familiarity lie beneath anthropology's ability to sharply identify and critique the colonial legacies and logics that natural sciences bring to interdisciplinary spaces. Rather than depict disciplines as positioned either side of some inherent moral boundary, this panel instead asks what environmental anthropologists ought to do with our own disciplinary "ghosts" as they follow us into interdisciplinary collaborations that are not only effective but also equitable, ethical, and transformative.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Lydia Gibson, Georgetown University, Paige West, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Amelia Moore, Cornell University, Nikhil Anand, University of Pennsylvania, Elena Burgos Martinez, Wageningen University, Mariko Yoshida

Discussant: Bonnie McCay

9073 Navigating Academic Publishing in Archaeology and Adjacent Fields: Luncheon Meet & Greet with Academic Publishers

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Special Event

AD sponsored hour-long luncheon where young scholars can interface with publishers to learn more about the academic publishing process. This mentoring event is oriented towards students and young scholars publishing in archaeology and related fields. Students and young professionals will get a chance to meet with several editors from major academic presses. Students and scholars will be able to think through 'What are archaeology publishers looking at today?' 'How do you build professional relationships with publishers?' 'What does book publisher shopping look like?' 'How do you transition from dissertation to a book?' and/or 'How do you write a book proposal?' This

mentoring luncheon is intended to give behind-the-scenes publishing tips and know-hows to democratize the publishing process for all young scholars.

*AD membership required

9072 Anthropology Matters for the World Today!

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Special Event

Dr. Gillian Tett, Provost of King's College, award-winning British journalist for the Financial Times and best-selling author of *The Silo Effect* and *Anthro-Vision* is a social anthropologist committed to keeping our discipline alive in the current AI, authoritarian and technological world. Indeed, she sees anthropologists as the "salt" necessary in all interdisciplinary endeavors where our voices need to be heard. Yet departments of anthropology are experiencing dwindling enrollments at a moment when our cultural expertise and local knowledge should have the greatest impact. In this talk, Dr. Tett discusses how to defend ourselves in these perilous times and answers questions from her unique perspective as an academic administrator, financial news expert, and journalist. She argues that "anthro-vision" can be a key to our success.

Bio of Gillian Tett:

In 2023, Gillian Tett was elected to serve as Provost to King's College, Cambridge.

Gillian also writes weekly columns covering economic, financial, political, and social issues for the US Financial Times and is the co-founder of FT Moral Money, a newsletter that tracks the ESG revolution in business and finance.

From 2013 to 2019, Tett was the FT's US Managing Editor, also serving as Assistant Editor for the FT's markets coverage, Capital Markets Editor, Deputy Editor of the Lex column, Tokyo Bureau Chief and Correspondent, London-based economics reporter and a reporter in Russia and Brussels.

Before joining the FT, Gillian was awarded a PhD in Social Anthropology from Cambridge and in 2024, was awarded an OBE for her services to journalism.

8530 Interest Group on NGOs and Nonprofits Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

Members who have indicated their interest in the Interest Group on NGOs and Nonprofits are encouraged to attend this business meeting. Following an introduction to the Interest Group and its past activities, attendees will be canvassed for input and presented with opportunities for becoming involved in shaping the IG's future. We are especially interested in communicating with members interested in becoming members of the IG's next leadership team.

8658 Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco (ADTSG), Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Special Event

ADTSG is a group for medical anthropologists and other social scientists with research focused on Alcohol, Drugs, or Tobacco to network, share information, and collaborate on potential projects. We typically host a gathering during the SfAA and AAA meeting each year.

8661 Critical Anthropology for Global Health (CAGH)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

CAGH is committed to an engaged anthropology agenda that embraces several different critical perspectives, including:

- *Political economy and political ecology;

- *critical biocultural anthropology and the lifespan biology of poverty;

- *ecosocial epidemiology and the study of syndemics; governmentality;

- *health disparities and medical citizenship; human rights and the health outcomes of structural violence;

- *gender, power relations, and health disparity ; critical discourse analysis of health and development rhetoric;

- *studies of marketing as this affects consumer behavior, resulting in defective modernization;

the production and distribution of dangerous commodities and materialist deconstruction of commodity chains linking the conditions of production to consumption; critical assessments of health policy;

- *the impact of sociocentric global warming on global health;

the implementation, accessibility and effectiveness of disease control and treatment programs.

8761 Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Special Event

Please join us for one hour of APLA-related activities and conversations. The winner of the 2024 APLA Book Prize in Critical Anthropology will be announced, as will the winner of the APLA Student Paper Prize. We will announce and welcome new APLA officers, and we will celebrate the service of outgoing officers. Finally, we will conduct a community check in to see how APLA, as the section devoted to the critical study of law and politics, can continue to support our community of anthropologists.

8678 Anthropology under Authoritarianism

SAE and CUAA

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Special Event

Anthropology and Engagement under Authoritarianism

SAE and CUAA

With the rise of authoritarian regimes and the escalating political repression of universities and those who work in them, what lessons can we learn from anthropologists around the world as we navigate these increasingly oppressive academic realities? This special event, co-sponsored by SAE and CUAA sections, will bring colleagues together to reflect on the discipline's role in the current political moment.

The format will include 5–6 speakers offering brief (5-minute) discussion points, with perspectives from both the U.S. and Europe. We are keeping presentations short as we hope for extensive audience participation. We're interested in discussing the following:

What can anthropology do under Trump and similar far-right regimes?

What futures are possible for the discipline within these political conditions?

What role should the AAA, play in responding to this moment?

8822 Board Meeting, Middle East Section

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Special Event
Board Meeting, Middle East Section

8719 AAA Treasurer's Annual Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 1:45 PM
Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)
Type: Special Event
AAA Annual Treasurers Meeting

8825 Biological Anthropology Section Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 12:45 PM
Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)
Type: Special Event
Biological Anthropology Section Business Meeting

8813 A&E Graduate Student Mentoring Workshop Day 1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 1:45 PM
Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)
Type: Special Event

Students will submit either: a dissertation proposal, dissertation chapter, or journal article for consideration. Students selected to participate in the workshop will receive feedback from an A&E member mentor and receive comments on their work before the AAA conference.

During the first session, students will present in their research or research proposal. A main goal is to practice communicating research concisely, especially to non-specialist audiences. Another goal is to foster feedback and critical questioning skills by having peers, previous cohort members, and mentors facilitate feedback on presentations

8689 Beyond "Retirement": Strategies for Successful Transitions to Works after Work.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/20/2025 1:45 PM
Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Poydras (5th fl)
Type: Workshop

The term "retirement" is defined by Miriam-Webster dictionary in two alternative parts, first by "withdrawal from one's position or occupation" or [withdrawal] from active working life. In this special mentoring event conducted by the Association of Senior Anthropologists (ASA), we reject the notion of withdrawal from active [working] life and the "R" word that characterizes this sometimes-maligned status, to explore the opportunities for "works after work."

8847 CAE Past President's Distinguished Lecture

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Annual address of the CAE Past President, along with opportunity for attendees to engage in dialogue about the ideas presented.

8638 Association of Black Anthropologists - Student Interest Group (SIG) Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Meeting for the Student Interest Group (SIG) of the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA). This meeting is open to all students who are members of ABA or are interested in becoming members of ABA.

8589 Annual Meeting - First Executive Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

First of two sessions of Executive Board meetings to be hosted at the Annual Meeting. This will be a hybrid meeting with some board members virtually attending but most attending in person. It starts with a lunch.

8618 CASTAC Invited Lecture

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Special Event

The Fragility of Promised Futures: A Case for Centering Maintenance in Nature Restoration

2025 CASTAC Invited Lecture, Dr. Syed Shoaib Ali, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi

The last century saw global recognition of multiple and rampant environmental losses, including irreversible changes to climate, atmosphere, terrestrial life, and the ongoing sixth mass extinction. It also saw a simultaneous rise of consecrated efforts towards environmental restoration and repair. The current frameworks for restoration, including the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 and the 2011 Bonn Challenge, have evolved from past experiments in conservation, cooperative forest management, and social forestry. While there is a growing recognition of the need to involve local communities and values in the design and management of restoration projects, we find that this commitment, even when well-implemented, is generally limited to a

small project duration. It is underpinned by a prevailing optimism that the successful implementation of restoration projects is, in itself, sufficient to ensure lasting socioecological benefits; assumed to set in motion a self-perpetuating trajectory of carbon sequestration, ecosystem resilience, and biodiversity recovery. However, our ethnographic account of restoration projects in the Western Himalaya challenges this sense of optimism.

Our study locates a widespread sense of fragility of the promised futures. To analyse the complexities of hope, necessity, and fragility associated with restoration we draw insights from maintenance and repair studies (MRS), a field of study primarily concerned with the stability and durability of social and technical infrastructures. While scholars of MRS have paid greater attention to the life of infrastructures and technical artefacts, we posit that many conceptual and organisational insights are as relevant for the study of nature-society relationships. We analyse our ethnographic evidence using three interconnected concepts from MRS: usefulness, failure / breakdown, and technical diplomacy. We propose - to look at restoration as maintenance opens important insights on the contingency of relations that restoration projects often assume as stable or take for granted. We further make a case for the kind of strategic and technical partnerships which will help strengthen the maintenance and durability of restoration sites beyond their project duration. Overall we argue that the oft-arduous and repetitive maintenance work is a critical site for nature diplomacy towards (re)shaping the agenda of restoration futures in the Global South.

4960 Friendships that Haunt: On the Relationships that Hide Within Ethnographic Texts

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The figure of the "key informant" has been a long used trope in literature on ethnography as a method. From the controversies over Margaret Mead's potential over-reliance on a certain interlocutor to the new momentum around the practice of "co-theorizing," the presence of specific interlocutors in ethnographic texts is a topic of perennial debate in anthropology. This roundtable discusses the role of friendships made in the process of ethnographic research and where they surface (and don't) in the practice of ethnographic representation. How do certain relationships that both center around and exceed the bounds of "interlocutor" show up in the process of analysis and what are the ways in which we can and should represent these relationships in text? What are the consequences of concealing the nature of friendship in the ethnographic process and what are the potentials of revealing it? How do recent approaches to "co-theorizing" and "collaboration" account for, use, or side step friendship as a mode of relatedness? This roundtable seeks to continue ongoing conversations about the messiness of the relationships made in the process of ethnographic inquiry, while also acknowledging the unique potential this messiness offers to ethnography as a method and form.

This panel will be run as a roundtable, attempting to model an ethic of friendship. Presenters will be asked to share their own reflections on the roundtable prompt, followed by a facilitated and

dynamic discussion with other panelists and audience members.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Katharine Lindquist , Sana Malik, Emory University

Presenter(s): Nadine Fernandez, SUNY - State University of New York System, Angela Storey, University of Louisville, Department of Anthropology, Sophia Balakian, George Mason University, Adeem Suhail, Franklin & Marshall College, Department of Anthropology, Hazal Hurman, Princeton University

Discussant: Anamaria Berbec-Chiritoiu, Uppsala University, Katharine Lindquist

301 Critical Urban Anthropology Association Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Rachael Stephens , Zhihao Tian, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Boris Koenig , Raul Lisboa Pereira Basilio , Timothy Karis, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Maya Padamsee , David Farrow , Justine Prince

Presenter(s): Rachael Stephens, Zhihao Tian, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Boris Koenig, Raul Lisboa Pereira Basilio, Timothy Karis, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Maya Padamsee, David Farrow, Justine Prince

Presentation(s): "I'm looking for a nice, quiet neighborhood": Denaturalizing property valuation--and race--in residential real estate

America's real estate markets are a battleground for heated debates about race, capitalism, and inequality. Critics note that minoritized--often "urban"--neighborhoods have been systematically devalued (e.g., Massey and Denton 1993; Rothstein and Santow 2012; Connolly 2014), and those devaluations coalesce in a inequitable distribution of property value that further reinforces cycles of accumulation and dispossession. While helpful for drawing attention to racialized inequities, these critiques do not illuminate how spaces get attached to racial categories or how that ascription relates to processes of devaluation. Since value, place and race are often assumed to be static or innate (Agha 2011, M'Charek 2013), there is little attention to the processes of value-, place-, and race-making through which residents produce the distribution of property value and its organizing categories (e.g. urban/suburban, white/Others). Shifting attention to these dynamic processes, this paper combines both material semiotics and historical materialism to examine residents' everyday practices of property valuation and their relationship to broader processes of race-making and capitalist reproduction.

Based on 24 months of ethnographic fieldwork with residents--including realtors, homebuyers, activists, public officials, and more--in Greater Hartford, Connecticut, I detail how residents value-- or differentiate and rank (Ferry 2014, Searle 2017)-- residential properties and the people and places with which they are associated. These property valuation routines are often driven by

the imperative to protect one's capital and well-being. Homebuyers search for signs of future risks to their capital (e.g., resale value) and to their lives (e.g. physical safety). In these searches, residents sift through a seemingly infinite array of direct sensory information or "object signs" (Agha 2006) -including the sight of pearl earrings, touch of laminate floors, smells of mildew, sounds of gunshots, etc.-as well as artifacts of other peoples' experiences (whether expressed as a fleeting comment, crime map, "School Ranking," etc.).

Drawing on Agha (2006), I denaturalize the "object signs with which my interlocutors link culturally recognizable "meta signs" (e.g., "urban," "whiteness,"). I also consider my interlocutors' heated meta-semiotic debates about when these valuations are "racist." I show how residents' property valuation routines and their anti-racist critiques both function as a kind of avoidance register that silences the material conditions in which ethno-racial taxonomies become associated with poverty/wealth and thus, with the likelihood of future risks to one's capital and well-being. This erasure helps explain why many anti-racist political projects end up encouraging recognition over redistribution and thus, speaks to long-standing anthropological debates about the relationships of race-making and capitalist reproduction.

Presenter(s): Rachael Stephens

After Moving Out: Revisiting, Photographing and Squatting in Redevelopment Bases of Gentrified Shanghai

This paper focuses on redevelopment bases in Shanghai's inner city, which are vacant residential blocks during the transitional period (typically 3 to 5 years) after original residents move out and before developers take over. These blocks, often decades to a century old, trace their origins to the colonial and planned-economy eras.

Unlike the "ghost cities" (guǐ chéng) discussed in existing literature, which refer to newly built but uninhabited towns resulting from overinvestment, Shanghai's redevelopment bases emerge from the gentrification and capital accumulation cycles in the inner city. Behind them lies the municipal government's ideological commitment to improving housing conditions for the downtown residents, a commitment realized through displacement.

Based on in-situ field investigations and in-depth interviews, this study finds that original residents displaced to the suburbs due to gentrification hold ambivalent attitudes toward the discourse of "ghost cities": some, grieving un-homing and criticizing displacement, label vacant redevelopment bases as such; others, out of a lingering sense of home toward the old neighborhoods, avoid the term.

The redevelopment bases are not devoid of human activity. Three types of practices are identified: revisiting, photographing, and squatting. Original residents and history enthusiasts regularly visit and revisit these downtown redevelopment bases to explore personal life histories and urban memory, photographing and sharing their findings on social media. Trespassing becomes necessary during these visits, often leading to encounters with migrant workers who collectively squat in a redevelopment base.

In sum, compared to the more common but historically shallow "ghost cities" found elsewhere in China, Shanghai's downtown redevelopment bases, with their historical depth, become sites where victims of gentrification seek identity and protest displacement: those who left keep returning.

Presenter(s): Zhihao Tian

Digital Romance Trickery and the Spiritual Infrastructures of Young Men in Abidjan

Amidst Abidjan's rapidly transforming urban landscape, a new generation of young men—colloquially known as *brouteurs-engages* in digital romance scams, navigating worlds shaped as much by intentional spiritual engagements as by tangible technologies. Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork conducted since 2012, this paper explores how purposefully constructed spiritual infrastructures—the trans-local networks, ritual practices, and strategic relationships that mediate access to invisible realms—intersect with digital platforms to shape young men's aspirations, agency, and lived experiences in contemporary urban Côte d'Ivoire.

The study foregrounds how *brouteurs* actively cultivate relationships with spiritual healers and ritual specialists to enhance the efficacy of their digital strategies and renegotiate their precarious, often ambivalent positions within unstable socio-spiritual contexts. Unlike frameworks of infrastructural haunting that emphasize spectral disruptions or historical absences, the concept of spiritual infrastructures developed here highlights purposeful, future-oriented engagements: *brouteurs* construct cosmotechnical pathways—ritualized interactions combining spiritual forces and digital technologies—to achieve materially consequential outcomes.

This perspective reframes current debates by presenting spiritual infrastructures as actively cultivated assemblages that enable agency across visible and invisible domains. These emergent configurations invite a reconceptualization of urban infrastructures not only as social and material, but also as spiritual and cosmological interfaces. Thus, digital economies emerge not as purely technological spheres, but as deeply entwined with localized spiritual logics and intentional cosmological strategies.

Presenter(s): Boris Koenig

From Colonial Ghosts to Contested Narratives: A Toponymic Inquiry into a Brazilian Neighborhood

Most toponymic explanations of *Recreio dos Bandeirantes* (in English, "Bandeirantes' Recess"), a coastal neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, appear logical but are not sustained by evidence. Common narratives trace the name to either (1) its supposed use as a resting place for *bandeirantes*, colonial-era explorers responsible for the geographical expansion of Brazil, or (2) the sale of land plots to *Paulistas* (residents of São Paulo, also known as *bandeirantes*) by the neighborhood's founder, the American venturer Joseph Wesley Finch. These explanations have been naively disseminated through real estate discourse, academic literature, and other products that superficially discuss the historical biography of the place. However, archival research reveals no concrete evidence supporting either origin story. Instead, it demonstrates how these stories carry partial truths that, when engaged within a situated historical context, can help deepen our

understanding of the neighborhood's symbolic and material development. Motivated by a desire to move beyond these generic and often romanticized claims, I conducted archival work investigating early-twentieth-century newspaper articles on the history of the neighborhood, the origin of its name, and what its urban development aspired to achieve. The results challenge prevailing discourses, offering an alternative explanation that puts certain ghosts to rest while evoking new ones. The content of this presentation emerges from a sense of curiosity and responsibility to interrogate local toponymy critically and to share findings that can meaningfully contribute to the historical understanding of Recreio dos Bandeirantes.

Presenter(s): Raul Lisboa Pereira Basilio

Inclusive Authenticity: Urban Redevelopment, Ethnic Identity, and the Search for the "Real" Orlando

Orlando is a city with an authenticity complex. Long defined by its larger-than-life theme parks and, more recently, self-contained and sanitized residential enclaves, the city's political and business leaders have recently sought to promote the "real Orlando" by highlighting the historic and eclectic neighborhoods in and around downtown, and by partnering with the Main Street America organization to rebrand and redevelop once blighted inner-city spaces. One such neighborhood targeted for redevelopment is the recently rebranded Mills 50 district immediately north of downtown. Once referred to as "Little Vietnam" by locals, Mills 50 has a high concentration of Asian-owned businesses and restaurants, inviting questions about the durability of its immigrant identity amidst an influx of new residents and investment. The architects of the Mills 50 rebrand have also studiously avoided focusing primarily on its ethnic character for fear of excluding other fixtures of the neighborhood: a prominent LGBTQ+ community, art studios and galleries, and the historic "mom and pop" shops enjoying a recent renaissance. In spite of these challenges, this presentation pinpoints features of Mills 50 that serve to inhibit the kind of large-scale gentrification and demographic replacement that can result in ethnic erasure. While many older Vietnamese-owned businesses have been priced out or left behind by trendy and fashionable cafes and restaurants, the latter are largely Asian-themed and owned and operated by second-generation entrepreneurs from the same community, drawn to the neighborhood by personal history and nostalgia as much as the investment-friendly environment. Further, while the goals, interests, and identities of the diverse stakeholders may be distinct, and while they might not agree on what makes Mills 50 "authentic," their values converge around the idea of authenticity, providing a bulwark against community displacement, and allowing the neighborhood to maintain its role as a preserve of the "real Orlando" amidst the gentrified and Disney-fied urban sprawl.

Presenter(s): Timothy Karis

Locating Living Histories in New Delhi: Heritage and Community Practice in the Aga Khan Trust for Culture

In the first few months of 2025, India experienced a wave of national protests which rallied against a proposed amendment of the Waqf Act of 1995 – a legal ruling regarding the management of Islamic

property, with its roots stretching back to the 12th century Delhi Sultanate. The current atmosphere of political protest has brought together a constellation of anxieties surrounding encroachment, corruption, inheritance, and land revenue – placing Indian Muslims at the center of entrenched debates on religious space and who may claim it. In an unprecedented age of bulldozer drives, demolitions, and socio-spatial violence against minorities in India's urban centers, so-called 'living' Indo-Islamic or Mughal-era heritage sites – especially those which host contemporary religious practices – have become increasingly precarious. This paper will examine the institutional narratives of one partnership project in the historically Muslim Delhi neighborhood of Nizamuddin basti, which is conducting both conservation and community development work in key heritage sites, in order to situate contemporary articulations of 'intangible cultural heritage' in the context of increasingly tense socio-political discourses around what constitutes a specifically national history. Building on recent historiographies and social scientific studies of the production of urban Muslim space in Delhi (Jamil 2017 and Parveen 2021), alongside scholarship on contemporary heritage politics (Pati 2019, Meskell 2020, and Rajagopalan 2016), this paper will examine the ways in which claims to religious space and archaeological histories of Muslim communities in Delhi are refracted through concepts such as 'living heritage' and national 'monuments' at the institutional level. Through analyses of oral histories, institutional accounts, and ethnographic fieldnotes from site visits to the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's (AKTC) managed monuments in Delhi, this paper considers how the wider Aga Khan Development Network's institutional ideologies are reconstituted through 'development' projects within Delhi's urban Muslim communities. I highlight, in particular, how Muslim space is discursively produced and subsumed within a particular narrative of urban history, arguing that heritage politics both plays a crucial role in negotiating national spatial imaginaries, and mediating tensions between what is 'living' and 'dead' history in Delhi's landscape. At a time in which urban life is increasingly precarious, these questions are crucial to our understanding of the relationships people have to their material realities – and what is at risk of disappearing under a new order of religious majoritarian structural violence and dispossession.

Presenter(s): Maya Padamsee

Thresholds of Care: Contradictions of House and Home within Brooklyn's Trans Punk Do-It-Yourself Venues

Within Brooklyn New York's punk housing collectives, the distinction between house and home erects thresholds of concern. Artists confront the collective effervescence of a party and the solitary ache of emotional and financial precarity. Through an ethnography of a do-it-yourself music venue and collective housing effort that existed for 18-months in a former industrial loft, this talk explores how queer punks reclaim post-industrial spaces to craft trans identities and to resist neoliberal planning efforts. Examining the echoes of Mayor Bloomberg's 2005 rezoning of the Williamsburg-Greenpoint waterfront offers insights into how struggles for affordable, quality housing are shaped within the civic demands of planning policy. Having existed on the waterfront, the venue's turbulent lifespan demonstrates how anarchists, punks, and queers deploy ephemeral occupations of space to challenge the distribution of public resources and care. Simultaneously,

artists and residents negotiated the nature of home as material needs for preserving the venue and intimate needs for affective support blur the distinction between art collective and family. Given its planned demolition to make way for luxury condos, the ephemerality of the venue reshaped the politics of resource redistribution and care as trans liberatory politics were formulated within the constraints of state-led rezoning efforts and real estate investment strategies. This tension raises questions for urban affordable housing movements as distinct experiences of the home as a site of care and the house as an object of political struggle shape how artists collaborate, conspire, and collectivize. These divergences reflect how gender expression is articulated as a personal versus a political project dependent on how trans communities express their gender when crafting shared social spaces.

Presenter(s): David Farrow

Vertical Access: A Critical Analysis of Design and Disability through the Elevator

"Disabled people are experts and designers of everyday life. But we also harness technoscience for political action, refusing to comply with demands to cure, fix, or eliminate disability" (Hamraie and Fritsch 2019). As described by disability scholars Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch, the fields of disability and design are deeply entangled: designers (should) consider disabled experiences when constructing an object or space and oppositely, the design of an object or space molds who is able to make use of it and their comfort when doing so. Anthropologists Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp emphasize the importance of world-building to the disability experience: "Instead, we stress how experiences of disability may incite everyday creativity and provoke new ways of understanding human difference in specific locations" (Ginsburg and Rapp 2024, 5). Through improvisation, people with disabilities thus design their daily experiences.

Within this larger frame of design exists questions around mobility and the built environment. In other words, how can the built environment be disabling? Accessibility is on the minds of New York City (NYC) administrators and designers. In 2019, the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) pledged to make all subway stations accessible by 2034. As of 2022, this estimate has been extended to 2054; now, the MTA aims to expand accessibility to approximately 95% of subway stations (i.e., most, but not all) by 2055 (Garcia and Greenberg 2022). Accessibility, by the MTA, is defined according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to their 2020-2024 Capital Program, disability is largely addressed through the addition or renovation of elevators and ramps, thus providing stair-free access to subway platforms.

Through my focus on the subway system of NYC, my presentation argues that these pieces of legislation place the elevator at the forefront of accessible transportation. Fieldwork conducted amongst advocacy communities in NYC, along with auto-ethnography, has informed my understanding of the social, engineering, and activism complexities that undergird accessible design initiatives. My guiding research questions are as follows: What does the elevator, as infrastructure and a tool, enable or foreclose? Similarly, how did the elevator become the archetype of assessing disability access and inclusion and what are the limits of reliance on one object as a model of accessibility? This presentation analyzes the misalignment between accessibility as it is

defined by policy-makers and as it is understood within disability communities in order to critically examine the concepts/categories of disability, accessibility, user, and inclusivity.

Presenter(s): Justine Prince

311 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Alessandro Angelini, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Erin Wimmer, Ivan Peshkov, Stephanie Khoury, Tufts University, Esteban Acuna Cabanzo, Bard College, Alex Blue V, Marianna Keisalo, University of Helsinki, Social and Cultural Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alessandro Angelini, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Erin Wimmer, Ivan Peshkov, Stephanie Khoury, Tufts University, Esteban Acuna Cabanzo, Bard College, Alex Blue V, Marianna Keisalo, University of Helsinki, Social and Cultural Anthropology

Presentation(s): "The Wargaming Encounter: Simulation and Dissimulation in Rio de Janeiro"

This presentation explores questions of suspicion and misrecognition in young working-poor residents' encounters with police. The conceptual boundaries between play and simulation, and where these two modes of engaging the world align and diverge, stages the matter of power over life and death. Ethnographically, the paper describes life in a Rio de Janeiro favela for a cohort of Afro-Brazilian youth who collaborated on building a remarkable 4,000-square-foot mockup of their city perched on the forested edge of their hillside self-built neighborhood. Within this miniature urban world constructed of brick, ceramic tiles, concrete, and other found materials known as Morrinho ('Little Hill'), they play a role-playing game that re-creates urban life by manipulating thousands of one-inch figurines. Morrinho is intimately concerned with surveillance and territoriality, with seeing bodies and spaces, and how identity is forged in a fluid nexus of the two. In Rio's favelas, and particularly the one studied here, military police surveillance is a mode of seeing that pervades social life and thus becomes productive of certain forms of sociability. The paper recounts a standoff when the Morrinho model became an object of intense scrutiny by police who were conducting tactical operations in the favela. Their suspicion that the play-thing was rather an elaborate map triggered the inference that inferred the youths they found at the site were drug-gang affiliates, using this map to plot future raids of other favelas. How this moment was resolved opens a grounded conceptual analysis of dissimulation in the face of a lethal kind of simulation, the arts of concealing oneself and one's knowledge from authority. The encounter brings into relief how what counts as play is presumed to be steeped in fictionality, while simulation is thought to be rooted in the real. The paper speculates that these distinctions are more often blurred than we imagine, and from there it considers what it means not only to think through the reality of play and the unreality of simulation but to live through it.

Presenter(s): Alessandro Angelini

Afterlives of high water: Hurricane Helene and experiences of displacement in Western North Carolina

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene rolled through Western North Carolina, carving out a trail of destruction in its wake. The mighty French Broad River jumped its banks, engulfing homes and businesses across the region. Gentle streams surged with enough force to wash away bridges in what has been called a once-in-a-thousand-year flood. Landslides carried entire sections of roadways down the mountains and massive trees toppled, crushing homes and cars beneath them. In the wake of Helene, those living in the region faced electrical outages, broken waterlines, food and gas shortages, and a complete lack of communication services. Many chose to leave the region immediately following the storm. Some chose to relocate entirely.

As a resident in Asheville, NC, I found myself hastily packing up my own belongings and forging an uncertain path out of the region. As a scholar of forced migration, I was continually reflecting on the uncertain journeys my own interlocutors had taken as they fled houses and regions which were no longer liveable. What emerged from a comparative perspective were questions of experiences of displacement. What counts as displacement? Are there scales of experience that distinguish one form of displacement from another? How does the literature on forced migration account for ease of mobility, temporal duration of displacement, or affective associations with the triggers of displacement?

It was clear that while my personal experience of displacement following Helene had some similarities to my interlocutors who were navigating European asylum systems, our experiences were also vastly different in significant ways. In this auto-ethnographic presentation, I reflect on these differences and on the questions they prompt for an anthropology of forced migration.

Presenter(s): Erin Wimmer

Agency of Unburied: Haunting, Spectrality and Impossible in (Post) Soviet Border Imagination

The center orientation and closed character of the Soviet space turned borderline areas into half-empty places remaining in absolute readiness for confrontation. Frontier forms of socialism were special not only because of the extremely intense implementation of Soviet methods of modernization, but also because they reached a particularly high level of political and social sterility of frontier population. The contradiction between political sterility of borderline population and the latter's emotional inclusion in border defense was dealt with through re-creation of confrontation mythologems whose performative power was able to combine temporal regimes and cast doubt on frontier loyalty of the local inhabitants. The most popular mythologems in Soviet people's collective imagination were the ones concerning three areas of political and ethnic confrontation: Bandera's Ukraine, Semenov's Transbaikalia, and Central Asia with the omnipresent Basmachi bands. The followers of Semonov and Bandera, as well as the Basmachi to a great extent established the geography of Soviet political demonology of the frontier. Contrarily to the 'classic' enemies of any Soviet citizen, the frontier imagined non-communities were in fact groups of distinct entities created from the many contradictions of the Soviet world. Using Braidotti's well-known

relation between metaphor and social place we can ask about the process whereby a metaphorical description of border space (as the place of political disloyalty) transformed into knowledge of real social sites in which the 'imagined non-community' was held to exist. Why did empty, sterilised border zones become the spaces for imaging cross-border networks of political (anti-communist) violence? Why did these legends create the effect of presence and have such force – such that some groups were not only conceptualised in the categories of a mythical vocabulary by others but also began themselves to see their own communities in that way, and behave according to these very schemes? Answers to these questions require paying attention to the specifics of the Soviet imagination of border zones that gave rise to feelings of danger and lack of trust.

The paper aims at analyzing the late Soviet discursive practices about disloyalty of fictional Cossack communities in Inner Asia (Mongolia, China, Transbaikalia) with their old style of living and strong anti-Soviet attitudes. Talking about the traumatic experience concerning the expansion of Soviet lifestyle models, the legends in question were a way of experiencing simultaneously cultural hierarchies, fears, and subconscious inner need for material existence of the enemy. Their borderline localization included them in the perspective of the Soviet border as an inevitable chance to contact the unknown and hostile.

Presenter(s): Ivan Peshkov

Appeasing the souls of the violently deceased and those who survived through contemporary arts.

April 2025 marked the 50th anniversary of the fall of Cambodia to the hands of the Khmer Rouge. This moment has been commemorated simultaneously and transnationally in Cambodia and in diasporic communities through in-person and online performances. Among the artistic processing of the genocide is the staging of *Bangsokol*: a requiem for Cambodia, a multimodal symphonic performance by composer HIM Sophy and filmmaker Rithy PANH. Premiered in 2017, the performance directly refers to the eponymous Buddhist funerary rite performed for the body of the deceased to facilitate the transmigration of the soul, a rite that is notably held in the absence of a body for the victims of the late 1970s' genocide. The 4 years of the Khmer Rouge regime led to the death of nearly 2 million people. Murdered, tortured, exhausted and starved to death, their bodies anonymously tossed in mass graves, the victims of the Cambodian genocide are considered wandering souls; haunting ghosts in need of help from the living among which they shall remain until they receive proper funeral care. Relying on the art production of *Bangsokol*, and the Cambodian spiritual considerations on death, this presentation discusses how contemporary arts uniquely enhances the memorialization of the lingering metaphysical presence of victims of mass atrocities by and for survivors, their descendants, and the broader public understanding of their journey through healing.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Khoury

Diasporic Specters in a Life Story: Tracing Romani trajectories in the Americas

Romani people in the Americas are haunted by mirages of their past and future. Ethnographers attempting to tell the story of their diaspora also contend with such apparitions. The reflections

contained in this presentation start with the untimely death of Uncle Toza, a fieldwork respondent who later became a dear friend. His passing in the United States years later could be read as the confluence of such hauntings. During his life in Colombia, Uncle Toza longed for the American dream, living in the shadow of some of his relatives who had migrated north in the 1980's. Instead, his siblings had chosen to stay in Colombia, taking advantage of their skills as metalsmiths to make a living and forge a home adapted to their needs. Later, Toza himself joined other Romani families in their push for recognition as an ethnic group by the Colombian state. But in spite of his push for ethnic recognition in his home country, he ultimately sought out a path that would leave him both unrecognized and undocumented. In his sixties he took a chance and followed his relatives' steps and left for California. But without proper access to healthcare, his health declined rapidly in 2019 and he spent his last moments in LA's sprawling suburbs, longing for the freedom he once had in the streets of Bogota's industrial zone.

This presentation argues for a better understanding of hauntings beyond the dichotomy of individual traumas and discursive phantoms. Toza's ghosts are better explained by a confluence of: (i) his own dreams and aspirations, (ii) his family's history of exclusion in Europe and the Americas, (iii) the ideas and representations about 'Gypsies' and 'Gitanos' that hung over his life decisions, and (iv) the powerful forces that shaped his life. This presentation is based on ethnographic descriptions gathered during the speaker's long-term engagement with Romani individuals and organizations in Bogota, Colombia's capital city, from 2006 until the present. Such insights will be complemented by trajectory ethnographies, which helped to trace individual and family experiences of migration throughout respondent lifetimes. Toza's story also became a way for the ethnographer himself to confront his own academic and personal ghosts and limitations: what could have been, what will not return, and what still remains.

Presenter(s): Esteban Acuna Cabanzo

Echoes: Ghosts, Repetition, and Remix in Detroit Hip-Hop

The track begins with an eerie atmosphere, repeated notes on a synth bass, wooshing ethereal sounds. A producer tag that I cannot yet decipher. The crowd instantly recognizes what is happening and lets out a collectively excited cheer as they rush back to the dance floor with cocktails in hand. Too new to Detroit and embarrassed to admit that I'm not in the know, I plead with my phone's song-identifying app to identify what I've missed. As the song plays, the crowd knows most, if not all of the words. Full-voiced, the people on the dance floor participate in the chorus: "These n*ggas want me dead! They put money on my head!" I stand motionless as the crowd echoes these audacious words in celebration; the words have stopped me dead in my tracks.

In this work, I reveal spectral manifestations formed within Detroit hip-hop - ghostly ways of sounding, embodying, and practicing with the dead. Three case studies orbiting around one song inform the basis of my exploration. To investigate these hauntings, I reflect upon my fieldwork experiences - at clubs, in my car listening to the radio, and listening repeatedly through headphones - hearing the prognosticating echoes in a song titled "Death On Me," by the late rapper Dex Osama.

Additionally, I turn my analysis to various reiterations of and gestures towards this song that exist primarily in online mediated spaces like YouTube. A number of artists have set out to remix "Death On Me," and have unintentionally invited Dex's ghost to perform along with them through silences that bear his presence. The interconnectedness of these examples reveals a common hauntology within the music, an ever-so-persistent ghostly presence that lingers within Detroit hip-hop showing the importance of death in the community of the living.

Presenter(s): Alex Blue V

Performing Perspectives: A Semiotic Analysis of Stand-up Comedy

This presentation looks at stand-up comedy as the performance of perspectives. I have been conducting ethnographic research on stand-up comedy in Finland since 2015, including performing myself at a semi-professional level, which has given me access to backstage spaces and the processes of creating and performing material. Stand-up requires the performer to have both a unique perspective and the ability to displace it, by the implicit or explicit acknowledgment of alternative perspectives. Since comedians often perform 'as themselves' and create original material, the stage persona is linked to the comedian's offstage persona(s), albeit in different ways. Comedians thus combine the continuity of a stage-persona with changing material, and it is the dialectic between these that creates comedy. This involves the performance of the main or default perspective of the performer as well as any alternative perspectives related to the material, such as characters in events. Given the openness of comedy as a genre, such characters may be actual or imaginary, human or non-human. Stand-up comedy jokes, 'bits' are usually created through a set-up and punchline structure, where the set-up presents a conventional perspective, which is then undermined by the punchline, which presents a new and inventive perspective on the set-up. My analysis asks, how are perspectives presented and performed, how does the comedian shift between them, and how can audiences look through them to see the humor and 'get the joke'? Given the ways perspectives are tied to persons, there are various personal, social, and political aspects involved, starting with the intersectional position of the comedian and audiences. What enables and constrains the 'repertoire of perspectives' a comedian can embody or reference? A semiotic anthropology of stand-up comedy can elucidate the inner workings of comedy, its social and political significance, and the underlying ideologies of personhood and communication.

Presenter(s): Marianna Keisalo

Residual data, student data, and the university

How do past data live alongside their contemporary and fleshy counterparts? Anthropology, critical data studies, and surveillance studies have offered rich accounts, theoretical and empirical, of "data doubles," or the datafied and bureaucratic digital doppelgängers that correspond to people, and how these doubles do and do not bear upon people's lives (Haggerty and Ericson 2000; Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017). Data doubles, conceptually, tend to be a temporally present, dynamic twin. What happens when people are haunted by their data—and data infrastructures—of the past? This presentation draws on ethnographic research with students at U.S.-based

universities subject to multiple, twisting forms of institutional data collection and surveillance, where data of the past—and data that, importantly, do not always match the present—echo into students' futures. Taking inspiration from the "stone tape theory" of residual hauntings in horror media, in which a fleeting present leaves a ghostly imprint and endures into the future via material infrastructures (Brown 2024; Kneale 1972), I explore how student data becomes spectral and residual yet no less present as students' presents diverge from their past data.

327 Association for Africanist Anthro and Association for Black Anthro Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Myeshia Babers, Western Washington University, Julia Caroline Wummel , Yaa Baker , Justin Coles , Aneta Stoker , Kennedy Opande

Presenter(s): Myeshia Babers, Western Washington University, Julia Caroline Wummel, Yaa Baker, Justin Coles, Aneta Stoker, Kennedy Opande

Presentation(s): Beyond the Schoolyard: Rosenwald Schools, Public Memory, and the Ongoing Fight for Black Educational Futures

This paper examines the preservation of Calvert Colored/W.D. Spigner School, a Rosenwald-era institution built in 1929 in rural Texas, is a case study in Black educational resilience and public memory activism. Drawing on archival research, oral history interviews, and four years of community-engaged preservation work, which culminated in a Texas Historical Landmark designation, I trace how Black communities have historically leveraged education as both a tool of resistance and a site of cultural self-determination.

Situating this project within the broader history of Rosenwald Schools, I argue that these educational spaces functioned not merely as schools but as foundational institutions of Black autonomy, built and maintained through community labor, financial sacrifice, and political negotiation. Even as physical sites, Rosenwald Schools embody a counter-archive: a living testimony to Black resilience in the face of state neglect and structural racism.

This paper explores how public memory work around Rosenwald Schools disrupts narratives of Black educational deficiency and recenters Black communities as active agents in educational history. It also interrogates the contemporary stakes of preservation in a political climate where legislation like Texas's SB17 seeks to erase Black history from public institutions.

Ultimately, the paper argues that the act of remembering and preserving Black educational spaces is a radical intervention against historical and contemporary erasure, keeping alive both the spirit of collective struggle and the vision for liberated Black futures.

Presenter(s): Myeshia Babers

H(a)unting Energy Futures: Geothermal Landscapes, Climate Crisis, and Kenyan Engineers' Dreams

This paper ethnographically explores how Kenyan engineers are tormented by uncertain and competing energy futures. Trained in Iceland and working in Kenya's geothermal fields, these engineers navigate landscapes shaped by both geologic activity and powerful imaginaries of the past and future. Bubbling mud pools and rising vapour have long been associated with ghostly presences, from trolls in Iceland to warrior spirits in Kenya's Menengai Crater. Yet these haunted landscapes also represent modernity, as their subsurface heat promises stable, green electricity. As Europe turns to Africa for green hydrogen and other renewable energy solutions, geothermal exploitation becomes part of a global scramble for resources framed as climate action. Kenyan engineers are key actors in realising these energy futures. Inspired by Icelandic models, they return home highly motivated but often encounter stalled projects, bureaucratic barriers, and frustrations when their adapted ideas remain unrealized. Feeling haunted by their own sociotechnical visions, some take action in their spare time, pursuing their ideals by helping rural communities use geothermal heat directly. But what happens when the just futures the engineers imagine threaten to become yet another extractive reality? Like the geothermal landscapes they work in, these engineers are entangled between global demands for low-carbon energy, systemic constraints, and the ghostly presence of the local futures they set out to build.

Presenter(s): Julia Caroline Wummel

Racism, Salvation, and Deaf Education

"Racism, Salvation, and Deaf Education" is a correctionist history of the appearance of Deaf education in the United States. The paper challenges the commonly told stories regarding Deaf education and contextualizes the existence of the first schools for the Deaf in American missionary and racial politics. I do this by investigating the educational background and network of the founder of the first permanent school for the Deaf in the US, Gallaudet, and analyzing his sermons that reflect the cultural priorities of the time of civilizing the heathen. Through this investigation, I find that schools for the Deaf are a part of America's missionary history, connecting them to the establishment of institutions like the first US penitentiary, the first private psychiatric hospital, and the first ABCFM Indian Boarding School, all of which were founded in the same year. Today, we do not think of schools for the Deaf as being related to their cousin custodial institutions, but through this corrective project, I explore the significance of their present and historical connectiveness as a part of America's broader missionary history.

Presenter(s): Yaa Baker

To Possess the Ghosts: Black Youth Aesthetics as (Re)memory and Haunting in Racialized Geographies of Terror

This paper theorizes a pedagogy of Black youth aesthetics as a paraontological and insurgent practice—an embodied, loving refusal of anti-Black constructions of knowledge, worth, and futurity. Drawing from over a decade (2013-present) of ethnographic research with Black high school youth across the United States—part of what Elizabeth Alexander (2022) terms the Trayvon Generation—I

explore how their aesthetic and literacy practices function as sites of cultural (re)memory and critical insurgency, actively ghosting the racialized geographies of Euromodernity. Black youth resist epistemic violence not only through reaction, but through creation: producing life texts that emerge from and exceed their social conditions. Engaging J. Kameron Carter's (2013) theorization of Blackness as paraontological and Christina Sharpe's (2016) wake theory, I argue that Black youth aesthetics is an appositional force—a love-driven aesthetic of radical becoming and possibility that unsettles anti-Black ontologies and refuses the logics that deem Blackness as brute, inferior, or dead. These aesthetic practices—through fashion, language, art, protest, poetry, and relationality—constitute what I call a Black reparative love praxis, refusing dehumanization and reshaping what it means to be human in anti-Black worlds. Black youth's expressive lives are more than resistance; they are acts of Black cultural preservation through spiritual and tangible processes such as worldmaking and curricular reimagination that must inform how we rethink pedagogical processes in state societies. In schooling contexts that often reinforce the devaluation of Black life, Black youth aesthetic productions reclaim and repurpose space, leading to the realtering of violent landscapes through enactments of counter-combative ontologies. To possess the ghosts, as I frame it, is to live with and through Blackness as love—an insurgent, always-becoming force that teaches us how to live otherwise.

Presenter(s): Justin Coles

Uncertainty and livelihood aspirations of smallholder farmers in context of food systems transformation: Insights from rural Malawi

Small-scale agriculture provides livelihoods for majority of population in Malawi and Africa. Smallholder farmers play a key role in food system transformation, with aspirations—understood as orientations toward the future—shaping their livelihood strategies, decision-making processes, and investment choices. Aspirations as analytic lens offer valuable insights into how individuals and communities navigate structural constraints and opportunities, interpret social norms, and envision a "good life." As such, they are crucial for analyzing the dynamics of food systems and the broader rural-urban transformations. While aspirations are increasingly recognized as important signifiers of future behavior, there remains limited research examining how these evolve over time, particularly in rural contexts of the Global South marked by high levels of livelihood uncertainty (including food insecurity). Emerging research highlights how people engage with uncertainty in diverse ways and emphasizes the importance of understanding aspirations in uncertain contexts as rooted in "situated agency." Yet, the contextual spatial-temporal experiences and conditions of uncertainty, including the role of food system policies and development interventions in exacerbating or reducing different uncertainties, remain underexplored.

This study investigates how perceptions of uncertainty—such as environmental change or market volatility— affect the formation of aspirations and livelihood decisions among smallholder farmers in the Zomba and Mangochi districts of Malawi. Using life history approach, we capture how aspirations emerge, shift, or adapt across life stages, and how structural conditions of uncertainty influence their (non)fulfillment. Life history interviews allowed participants to narrate personal

trajectories, situating key life events on timelines and reflecting on changes in aspirations in relation to their lived experience of uncertainty.

Findings highlight the centrality of perceived (structural) uncertainty-past and present-in shaping aspirations and livelihoods. We explore how uncertainty is navigated, produced, and reproduced structurally, and discuss tensions between policy-led aspirations for food system transformation and farmers' desires and conceptions of the present-future, including desires for stability. By engaging with cross-disciplinary understandings of uncertainty, this paper offers fresh insights into the dynamics of rural livelihoods and food system transformation. We argue that uncertainty is a shared condition that mediates the interplay between structure and agency across contexts-ultimately shaping how aspirations are formed and acted upon.

Presenter(s): Aneta Stoker

Co-author(s): Lenka Suchá

'The food within': vital units' movement and metabolic pathways among the Luo of western Kenya

Consumption among the Luo people of Kenya lies at the intersection of exchange of food and agentive potencies between human and nonhuman entities. That shareability is configured through a movement that typifies the flow of forces – both affective and agentive, interconnecting and constitutive of the species intentionality. The exchange of food and potencies occur across a cosmo-juridical framework. This article explores the exchange of forces between humans and nonhumans as a marker of life formation. The exchange signals a metabolic pathway that perceivably integrates the complex co-forming which builds from the food that is consumed and the forces exchanged between it, the people and nonhuman entities. Perspectives on the agentive potencies of food, people and ghosts are explored, their interactions and co-negotiations within their spaces. Food movement as a form of food conversion and indexing is revealed in the way food operates across the inside and outside of the human body. Cosmo-juridical framework unsettles cultural paradigms on foodways that emphasize the material essences of food and eating on growth, their nutritive and physiological aspects – and not how perceivable exchange reveals its agency in life formation.

Key words: Anthropology of life, cosmo-juridical framework, 'the food within', food force, Life, Kenya

Presenter(s): Kennedy Opande

2634 Ghosts in Our World: Intersections of the Spiritual with the Material World

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel invites exploration of how cultural beliefs about ghosts and spirits transcend time, influencing and shaping the present. It recognizes that "ghosts" are not just supernatural entities

but also deeply rooted in diverse cultural narratives and practices, carrying with them rich histories and meanings. From folklore to contemporary beliefs and practices, the concept of spirits and hauntings can manifest in various ways across different societies and cultures. These manifestations are a powerful lens through which the past is brought into the present, revealing how memories, trauma, and unresolved histories continue to resonate in daily life. Celebrating these varied cultural beliefs as "real" underscores the importance of understanding the emotional and cultural significance they hold for people. Ghosts can symbolize everything from the lingering influence of ancestral ties to societal reckonings with collective trauma, and the intersections of the spiritual with the material world. This theme invites us to honor these beliefs, acknowledging the intangible as integral to human experience.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Pamela Frese, The College of Wooster, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Pamela Frese, The College of Wooster, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): John Coggeshall, Clemson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice, Todd VanPool, University of Missouri, Department of Anthropology, Michele Hanks, Christine VanPool, University of Missouri, Julia Cassaniti

Presentation(s): Apparitions on the Landscape: Spiritual Encounters from the Southern Appalachians

Ghost stories of the Southern Appalachians entertain, enculturate, and engage long-term residents with the landscape their families have occupied for multiple generations. Based on fieldwork in upper counties of South Carolina, this paper explains the functions of these stories. While not every inhabitant in this conservative Christian area shared such stories, several did, and often attributed them to spiritual messages. These stories serve as entertainment and as instruction in appropriate cultural behavior. More importantly, these stories serve as another means by which inhabitants symbolically connect themselves to a landscape they view as close to them as another family member.

Presenter(s): John Coggeshall

The Mesoamerican Ball Court as a Ghostly Stage

Across Greater Mesoamerica, the ball court is commonly associated with death, dismemberment, and ritual human sacrifice. This association is codified in the Popol Vuh, a Mayan sacred text, and is made material in the presence of human sacrifices buried under the floor of ball courts across the region. Imagery and written records among the Maya, Aztec, and others further stress this association. Here we take an example from the Casas Grandes people of Northwestern Mexico to explore how ancestors, other dead, and death-related deities were used to create a ceremonial, performance-focused location where humans could transcend the mundane world of the here-and-now and interact with that which is typically unseen. At Paquimé, the ceremonial heart of the Medio period (AD 1200 to 1450) Casas Grandes religious system, the ball court was further integrated into other religious and elite-focused architecture to reinforce the psychological

influence of the lingering, physical presence of ancestors and the other dead. We then briefly consider how similar themes are embodied in the archaeological record across Mesoamerica.

Presenter(s): Todd VanPool

Animals Who Return: Kinship and Selective Memory in Contemporary England

In England, where over half of households include pets and many consider these animals to be family members, people's encounters with ghosts reveal complex patterns of human-animal relationships that persist beyond death. While most spirits are human, a small yet significant number of animal ghosts appear in both public heritage spaces and private homes. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in England between 2006-2015 with ghost seekers and spiritual seekers, this paper examines which animals become ghosts and what these spectral presences reveal about contemporary human-animal relationships. Animal ghosts emerge primarily from relationships of kinship and deep affective bonds - particularly pets who were considered family members during life. These ghostly presences continue to perform familial roles after death: deceased cats still curl up on their owners' beds, departed dogs check on their humans' wellbeing. Yet the marked absence of other animal ghosts - particularly those from agricultural or industrial contexts - reveals the selective nature of how we extend kinship to animals. By examining which animal-human bonds are considered strong enough to transcend death, this paper illuminates how encounters with spectral animals reflect and reinforce contemporary patterns of remembering and forgetting in human-animal relationships. These patterns of presence and absence reveal not just which animals we consider kin, but which deaths we consider "grievable"

Presenter(s): Michele Hanks

Magical Ghosts: The Deceased as Mediators in Magical Practices

This ethnographic study explores the relationship between ghosts and magic, positioning ghostly entities as key mediators of cultural experiences and social structures. Ghosts function as liminal beings that transcend boundaries, serving as transformative conduits—an axis mundi—bridging ordinary and extraordinary realms of human experience. Through comparative ethnographic analysis across diverse cultural contexts, we demonstrate how ghosts actively shape ritual behaviors, social norms, and belief systems. Examples from Brazilian Umbanda, Indonesian Iban society, Vietnamese traditions, and Diné cosmology reveal ghosts' multifaceted roles: possessing spirits facilitating "white magic," ancestral entities enforcing social order, restless spirits requiring appeasement, and malevolent forces demanding avoidance. These supernatural beings emerge not as passive remnants but as dynamic agents actively participating in cultural systems. Our analysis presents magic as a transformative process for negotiating relationships with the deceased. By examining how societies classify, interact with, and harness spectral power, this study provides insights into the interconnections between the living, the dead, and the magical, expanding our understanding of supernatural agency in cultural systems.

Presenter(s): Christine VanPool

Ghosts and the Mind: Morality and sanity in Thai Buddhist encounters with the supernatural.

Ghostly encounters in Thailand are often quite visceral and dramatic, unlike the metaphorical attention that they often garner in ontological and hauntological approaches to the anthropological other. In this talk I show how physical and psychological renderings of ghostly energies are tied in Thailand to particular, local theories of mind, and how these theories are implicated in constructions of health and wellness across transnational Buddhist worlds. Based on fifteen years of ethnographic research with rural Theravada Buddhists in northern Thailand, along with data from a focused interview project among people diagnosed with schizophrenia at a psychiatric hospital in Chiang Mai, I argue that the affective wildness of ghosts are directly counterposed to mindfulness and mental health in the region. I end the talk with a discussion of the implications of these findings for programs of global health, and the need for increased scholarship on ghostly constructions in the fields of anthropology and cultural psychology.

Presenter(s): Julia Cassaniti

3615 Politics of Spatial Absence: Ghosts and 'Places Out of Joint'

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts are the spatial remainder of the past. They call attention to unresolved histories, repressed memories, and unfinished struggles. This panel explores how memory and political meaning emerge from absent or disrupted spaces-sites whose spatial continuity has been fractured.

Drawing on ethnographic engagements from different sites, such as Diyarbakir/Amed in Kurdistan (in Turkey's border), New Cairo in Egypt, Sointula Island in Canada, and Shorebird flyways in the Americas, we explore the complexity of places that hold both past and present memories of what was destroyed and desires that were never fulfilled. Despite their different geographies and histories, each paper argues that these sites contain residues and traces of the aftermath of being 'spaces out of joint.' Here, we expand on Derrida's essay 'The Time is Out of Joint' (1995) to explore what might be considered 'disjointed spaces' with their spatial continuity interrupted and the everyday haunted by what has been lost, denied, or forcibly removed.

Ghosts demand accountability for what has been lost and what has yet to be reckoned with. We seek to identify those ghosts who refuse to stay invisible by asking: how do spectral presences unsettle the institutionalized historical narrative?

The papers in this panel explore how the politics of absence and erasure shape lived experience, memory, and belonging. We foreground embodied, relational, and situated approaches and methods in which the spectral is not only a condition of the past but also a force that reshapes the political possibilities of the present. We follow material traces to challenge the power of institutionalized memory in favor of those who carry memories in fragments and the landscapes in which they are embedded.

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Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Chair: Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Presenter(s): Idil Onen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Nehal Amer, Jesse McLaughlin, CUNY Graduate Center, Center for Human Environments, Irina Shirobokova, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Discussant: Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center

Presentation(s): The Debris of Memory in Surici, Amed

Near the Tigris River, next to a Kurdish burial site, on the outskirts of the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, sits a mound of rubble that was once an entire district of a city. This mountain of memories contains the demolished architectural remains of the historic city center of Surici, Diyarbakir.

In the 1990s Surici, Diyarbakir became a place of refuge for Kurdish citizens who were displaced from their villages. In 2015-16, this historic district became the site of a massive military operation coupled with a post-conflict demolition that destroyed entire neighborhoods, again forcibly displacing an estimated 24,000 people from their homes.

After the destruction of Surici, the rubble of the city was transported to a deserted area east of the Tigris River, next to a Kurdish burial ground. With it, urban memory became a pile of rubble—a forgotten monument of destroyed memory. In this paper, I analyze how the remnants of a ruined city becomes a topographical form—an inevitable trace of displacement and loss of cultural and urban memory. As Gaston R. Gordillo (2014) states in *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* "...spatial constellations are made up not only of inhabited places but also of the nodes of rubble they are enmeshed with" (20). The destruction of Surici is a sobering example of the intertwined relationship between 'inhabited places' and 'the nodes of rubble'.

Presenter(s): Idil Onen

Infrastructural Violence and the Politics of Spatial Rupture in Greater Cairo

This paper explores how Cairo's newly constructed highways generate a politics of spatial disruption and spectral presence. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with upper-middle-class

Cairenes who traverse the recently constructed extension of the Middle Ring Road connecting satellite cities to the urban core, I examine how infrastructural development fractures spatial and temporal continuity, creating disjointed spaces that are both materially new and haunted by what they erase. As highways carve through older neighborhoods, they displace not only physical structures but also the layered histories and social geographies embedded within them. My paper examines how space conditions the subjectivities of my interlocutors, and is experienced and moved through by them. Their daily journeys are shaped by the specter of violence of urban transformation that is visible yet unspoken. At the same time, they experience these routes as conduits of mobility and modernity, connecting them from their homes in a gated compound to a business complex or a shopping center. In conversation with Derrida's conception of time as disjointed and haunted, I illustrate how these highways function as spaces where the past persists in fragmented, unsettling ways. This paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how infrastructural development becomes a terrain for negotiating memory, belonging, and the contested politics of urban futures.

Presenter(s): Nehal Amer

Shorebirds, Memory, and Affective Knowledge Transfer in the Americas Flyways

Migratory shorebirds journey thousands of miles every spring and fall across the Americas, connecting actors and territories along what ornithologists have termed, "flyways." While a third of shorebird species in the Americas have experienced population declines of over 70% since 1980, remaining populations continue to return to key migratory stopover sites despite the widespread disrupted spatialities of coastal habitat for leisure or industry. In this paper, I argue that shorebirds' globalized, transboundary ecologies contribute to the transfer of knowledge across the Western Hemisphere, specifically regions with high-density shorebird habitats. Drawing on archival research and semi-structured interviews with shorebird biologists working in the United States and Honduras, I interpret the study and conservation of migratory shorebirds along their flyways in the Americas as a form of affective knowledge transfer with a focus on local ecological memory and erasure. From the Honduran-mangroves-turned-shrimp-farms to The Rockaways of New York City, shorebirds like the American Oystercatcher become traces of pre-industrial histories and ecologies. These birds, their flyways, the embedded stopover sites they depend upon, and the professionals who study and protect them create novel formations of memory and affect, making their configurations a promising zone of inquiry for studies of science, space, and mobility.

Presenter(s): Jesse McLaughlin

Ghostly Matters of a Utopian Settlement

Sointula is a small utopian settlement established in Canada in December 1901 on Malcolm Island on the Indigenous Kwakwaka'aka land. Sointula, from Finnish, means a 'Place of Harmony' and refers to principles of 19th-century utopian socialism that originated with the ideas and experiments of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. It was built by Finnish coal miners who worked in dangerous and exploitative conditions around Vancouver Island and other Finns seeking refuge from Russian rule

in Finland. Everyone had an equal salary, and emphasized women's rights and the creation of communal infrastructure for social reproduction. Like many utopian projects, it was considered a 'failure' due to financial difficulties and mismanagement (Lindström, 2000). Following bankruptcy, key leaders left Sointula with a significant group of followers. Still, the rest of the community persisted, upholding some of the utopian principles, including self-government, strong social ties, care, and cooperative everyday practices. How does this short utopian past haunt Sointula's present? What part of history is getting reproduced, and what remains (un)intentionally "forgetful"? (Leinonen, 2022). How do the narratives of "utopian dreams" and "unique history," along with the ultimate "failure of the experiment," contribute to the disavowal of the Indigenous presence or even ghostly Indigenous matters that haunt the everyday? Following Derrida's hauntology (1994), in this paper, I look at the complexities and

Presenter(s): Irina Shirobokova

Discussion

503 Society of Medical Anthropology Flash Session #4

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Meenal Rawat, University of Edinburgh, Travis Hedwig, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Beatriz Reyes-Foster, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Annie Preaux, Appalachian State University, Gurjinder Kaur Brar , Michèle Barrière-Dion , Giovanna dos Santos, Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Presenter(s): Meenal Rawat, University of Edinburgh, Travis Hedwig, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Department of Anthropology, Annie Preaux, Appalachian State University, Gurjinder Kaur Brar, Michèle Barrière-Dion, Giovanna dos Santos, Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Presentation(s): "Between Deity and Society: Rituals, Power, and Identity in the Context of Mental Health and Healing"

Ritual healing is deeply embedded in many societies and cultures, making it an important aspect of people's lives. While the specific forms and practices vary across regions, rituals are often sought for the purpose of healing and well-being. Healers who perform them are consulted by community members for a wide range of concerns, from financial hardship, marriage troubles, difficulties in childbirth to afflictions like evil eye, emotional distress, household calamities and sudden deaths, in the hope of their delivering relief. Rituals plays a significant role in fostering resilience, promoting a sense of community, belonging, and well-being. In times of uncertainty and hardship, rituals also provide vital coping strategies, offering individuals a way to navigate their distress.

This study examines ritual practices in Indian Himalayas, particularly in Munsiyari, Uttarakhand, India. Ritual practices in this region are largely centered around deity worship and are integral to the mental and physical well-being of the local communities, including the Shauka tribal group and

other disadvantaged caste groups. Deity worship typically involves two main actors: the medium, who serves as the vessel through which the deity manifests, and the drummer, who plays instruments to invoke the deity. Among the Shauka people, a third key figure known as the Dhami also plays a central role. Although not a Brahmin, the Dhami performs many ritual functions typically associated with Brahmin priests, thus complicating conventional caste-based distinctions of ritual authority.

This study highlights how ritual healing practices are embedded in complex social hierarchies of caste, gender, ethnicity, and class. Access to ritual authority and care is negotiated through these intersections, shaping how individuals seek and receive treatment for mental and emotional suffering. The paper argues that ritual healing is not merely symbolic but constitutes a legitimate and effective mode of care one that must be taken seriously within mental health discourse and policy.

Presenter(s): Meenal Rawat

Ecologies of Wellness and Prevention: Adapting the Icelandic Prevention Model in Alaska

This paper explores the cultural politics of adolescent substance use prevention through the early-stage implementation of the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM) in Alaska. Framed by critical medical anthropology and interdisciplinary public health, we examine how community-driven adaptations of a global prevention framework intersect with local ecologies of knowledge, data sovereignty, and culturally specific logics of care. Engaging four Alaskan

communities-Seward, Homer, Ketchikan, and Mat-Su-our collaborative project facilitated readiness assessments and intensive training in the IPM, a theory-based model originally developed in response to youth substance use in Iceland.

More than a programmatic intervention, this effort constitutes a site of epistemological and methodological negotiation: between community-based practices of wellness and dominant paradigms of public health surveillance such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). We interrogate cultural constructions of substance use, the inadequacy of epidemiological models in addressing structural and relational determinants of health, and the persistence of settler-colonial logics in statewide prevention efforts. In doing so, we highlight how prevention itself becomes a contested terrain-one where control, resistance, and emergent strategy converge.

We argue for hybrid approaches that center local meaning-making, socio-environmental influences, and shared protective factors. The Alaskan adaptation of the IPM offers a case study in the challenges and possibilities of reconfiguring substance use prevention as a community-engaged, culturally responsive, and politically situated project. We conclude by advocating for deeper anthropological involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public health interventions, especially those targeting youth wellness in rural and Indigenous contexts.

Presenter(s): Travis Hedwig

Listening to the Living: How Treatment and Recovery Narratives Can Transform the Response to the Opioid Epidemic in Central Appalachia

Since the late 1990s, increases in opioid use disorder (OUD) – defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a "problematic pattern of opioid use that causes significant impairment or distress" – and related overdose deaths have resulted in a national opioid epidemic. However, certain regions, including Appalachia, have been disproportionately impacted. The South-Central Subregion of Appalachia, which encompasses Western North Carolina, has experienced disproportionately high rates of OUD and overdose deaths compared to non-Appalachian regions of the United States. In 2021 and 2022, settlement agreements were reached with pharmaceutical distributors, pharmacy chains, and manufacturers to resolve opioid litigation for their role in the marketing, distribution, and sale of over-prescribed prescription opioids. As a result, over \$50 billion will be distributed to state and local governments for opioid remediation activities, including \$1.4 billion distributed in North Carolina. By and large, opioid users themselves have had little part in the decision-making processes related to the use of these funds for public health programs. In Western North Carolina, a team of university-based researchers, a local health department, and community health center are collaborating to better understand the lived and living experiences of opioid users in the region to improve treatment and recovery services. To achieve this work, we worked with health department employees and Peer Support Specialists who work directly with opioid users in three counties in Western North Carolina. The Peer Support Specialists themselves have experience with substance use and recovery and are trusted members of the communities they serve. Together we co-developed a semi-structured interview guide. We plan to conduct interviews with individuals who have lived and living experience with opioid use during April and May of 2025. The interviews focus on individuals' lived experiences with opioid use and treatment and recovery services, as well as past and present experiences with support systems, housing, and economic opportunity. We draw on Bourgois et al.'s Structural Vulnerability Assessment Tool for part of this interview. We also intend to ask individuals about their current motivations, advice for others who use opioids, their ideal treatment and recovery programs, and what they would like decision-makers to know about their experiences. The goal of this work is to use these narratives to better understand the experiences and values of opioid users in the region, communicate their values and experiences to those in power, and facilitate the use of these narratives to inform equitable and effective programs.

Presenter(s): Annie Preaux

Co-author(s): Martie Thompson, Adam Hege, Ben Alexander-Eitzman

Neuroanthropological approach of Culture, Biology and Brain

The extent of our physical ability and cultural development is determined by our brain and its associated neural network. In anthropology, biological anthropology deals with our human brain, as a biological component, whereas social (cultural) anthropology deals with our culture and ignores the brain most of the time. There seems to be a gap between these two parts of anthropology. In order to answer this question, Daniel H. Lende and Greg Downey, about a decade ago, proposed a

new path of study within anthropology, named 'Neuroanthropology', that sought to bridge the gap between biology and culture in anthropology by keeping the brain at the centre. Neuroanthropology believes that our brains not only influence our culture but our culture influences our brains as well, in a cyclic process. This article provides an insight into Neuroanthropology, how it came into being and how it can be used in academics as a tool in order to give us a better understanding of ourselves. It also highlights the fair share of criticisms and obstacles it faces and what lies in the future for neuroanthropology.

Presenter(s): Gurjinder Kaur Brar

Outside the haunted house: Representations of the mental institution among community caregivers in the autism world

What is a mental institution, and what is it not? The common sense, as well as biomedicine, have a quite clear and dichotomic view opposing institution and community, whereas the institution refers to the hospital, and community, all the rest. However, there are many nuances and in-between states and spaces between the two. One of those spaces is the residential facility.

This presentation is based on my doctoral research among staff and autistic adults with challenging behaviours living in such residential facilities. Those residencies are situated in-between the locked units in the psychiatric hospital and the community residencies or family homes. They are located in-between, as they act as both points of exit for long-term patients in the locked units, who cannot be "cured" by medicine, and points of entry for children, teenagers or adults who have been living at home but whose challenging behaviours have evolved to a point where families are no longer able to care for them. The passage, for a person, between those two spaces, is thus less an in-and-out but more a bureaucratic trajectory, with many micro-steps and forms to be filled along the way. They are also "in-between" the institution and community, because they are located in regular homes on the streets, but are, at the same time and to some extent, regulated and living by the rules and regulations of the health care program. The staff is present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is employed by the provincial health care system, with an intensive rehabilitation mission. One of the main goal is to lessen the challenging behaviours to a point where the person can live in a regular community facility.

The staff working in those residencies have many representations of "the institution", some that are more general and gleaned from the popular history and culture, and others that are specifically taken from their own direct work experience with residents that they worked with. To different extents, some of the staff actively anchor their work in a process of distinction from, and opposition to, the institution in a broad way but also in very concrete and daily details. These processes of distinction from the institution are articulated along three themes: who is the patient (what are his needs? What can we expect from him or her? where will he go after "here"?); power relationships between staff and residents (including notions of trust, fear, control, and the use of physical and chemical restraints and isolation); the physical space (an institutional space versus a "less-institutional" space). Those processes of distinction are rooted in a vocation to act as a tool for the

emancipation of the residents, which they believe have rights, and are more able, free and part of this world, than sick, passive and in need of being cared for.

Presenter(s): Michèle Barrière-Dion

Tap to Relax: Meditation Apps and the Production of Ethical-Aesthetic Dispositions

This paper examines the intersection of religion, spirituality, technology, and mental health through an ethnographic engagement with mobile meditation apps. Rather than treating these apps as static tools or neutral technologies, I approach them as active mediators that shape not only the therapeutic practices they promote but also the very subjects who use them. By focusing on apps such as Headspace and Medito, I investigate how they configure specific modes of engagement with meditation, well-being, and the body.

Drawing on literature that challenges the views of technology as static or passive, I explore how these apps generate ethical and aesthetic dispositions that exceed the common critique of their neoliberal underpinnings. While recent scholarship has highlighted the rise of "therapeutic pills" in digital form—often understood as commodified responses to the pressures of neoliberal life—I argue that this interpretation, while useful, remains partial. These apps not only cater to desires for self-optimization and control, but also open up spaces for introspection, experimentation, and bodily awareness, which may or may not align with neoliberal rationalities.

In these platforms, users can choose how they want to feel—relaxed, less anxious, more productive, sleepy—and select meditations accordingly. They can track emotional states, set challenges, and navigate an array of guided practices that reflect their lifestyle and personality. These choices, however, are not neutral. They are shaped by the app's interface, aesthetics, and embedded assumptions about what it means to be well.

Through interviews with users, participant observation in online communities, and a close analysis of app design and content, I map the ways in which digital meditation becomes entangled with broader regimes of care, embodiment, and self-making. This work contributes to anthropological debates in the fields of science and technology studies, medical anthropology, and the anthropology of ethics and the body.

Presenter(s): Giovanna dos Santos

2761 Open-access publishing and how to get published with the Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Conversation/Debate

Meet the editors of the Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology (OEA, www.anthroencyclopedia.com), one of the most widely read open encyclopedias of the social sciences, and learn how to get published with us. We will start by debating why open-access publishing matters, before explaining

how peer-review works, what the differences are between the OEA and other open-access journals and how to come up with entry ideas. After this brief introduction, this session will mostly be open for questions, so you can ask the OEA's editors anything. We will ensure to cover how to get published in anthropology more generally, as our editors are also happy to draw from their own experience as authors and peer-reviewers. We will make this session as interactive as possible and look forward to meeting you.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Felix Stein, University of Amsterdam

Presenter(s): Riddhi Bhandari , Hanna Nieber , Rebecca Tishler

Discussant: Felix Stein, University of Amsterdam

2495 The Afterlives of U.S. Aid in Africa

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Before the close of the first weeks of his second term in office, President Trump and his newly ordained Department of Government Efficiency had identified their initial target of government waste: USAID. USAID, the U.S. government's international development agency, was to be almost immediately dismantled, throwing into disarray tens of thousands of health and development programs worldwide that had been reliant on U.S. funding. From the distribution of anti-retrovirals to treat HIV, to projects supporting democratic reform and free elections, to food aid and anti-hunger programs, USAID partnered with thousands of non-governmental organizations in over 100 countries worldwide. Perhaps no world region has been more impacted by this dramatic roll-back of health and development funding than Africa, making African communities important vantage points for understanding these transformations. What happens when funding for global aid projects vanishes overnight? What is left of a vast international bureaucracy devoted to social, health, and economic reforms when its benefactors withdraw?

In taking up the AAA theme of "ghosts," this roundtable considers the spectral presence of USAID through the lens of its recent, dramatic demise. The impermanence of aid programs is hardly a new experience for African communities, but an erasure on this scale is unprecedented. USAID was not simply a funding stream, it was its own bureaucracy, whose tendrils extended in ways big and small into government clinics, vaccine programs, domestic violence outreach, and community organizations big and small. Anthropologists have long explored how aid, especially on the level represented by USAID, was more than money. The form and structure of these programs gave rise to particular forms of solidarity, advocacy, and care in communities, at times aligning with and at times reconfiguring local experiences agency and authority. In the wake of USAID's withdrawal, many of these programs continue to exist, in depleted, partial, and phantom forms. African health workers continue to collect vaccine data, even in the absence of vaccines. AIDS advocates continue to counsel community members, even in the absence of ARVs. What forms of power remain when the politics of aid shifts so rapidly? What kinds of relationships fill the sudden void?

The end of aid also raises questions about the evolving shape of global mobility. When the flow of international funding is newly blocked, what and who continues to move across borders and within communities? Considering such questions, the panel asks how this moment illuminates liberalism's long-standing policy infrastructures at a moment of rapid transformation and dissolution. The six roundtable participants will draw on long term research on health and development in Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania to examine the shape of global aid and community experiences of health and social advocacy in the wake of USAID's erasure.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Lydia Boyd, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presenter(s): Cal Biruk, McMaster University, Department of Anthropology, Ramah McKay, Erin Moore, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Noelle Sullivan, Northwestern University, Claire Wendland, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lydia Boyd, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

3857 Anthropology's Ghosts: Ethics, Power, and Pedagogy in Departments of Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This Town Hall explores how anthropology is haunted by the past—the legacies of our field's institutions, the ghosts of anthropology—and how we grapple with such a haunting as we work to shape the future of the discipline.

Events of the past several years and months have upended settled practices in anthropology, disorienting understandings of education and intellectual pursuits across academia. As we try to regain our bearings after witnessing the spectacle of an attempted coup; the urgency of Black Lives Matter activism in the context of global pandemic shut down; the rise of right wing nationalism; and authoritarian modes of governance with deep consequence for higher education, scientific research, and civil rights, we are called to reimagine a more engaged, humane, and liberatory vision of anthropology both as a scholarly discipline and as a professional institution.

The proposed Town Hall will be the culmination of a year of conversations in which 39 current and former anthropology department chairs, from public and private institutions across the U.S. and from Brazil and South Africa, share experiences of leadership and think collectively about the role, responsibility, and future of anthropology departments at this historical moment. Funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, this initiative has been structured to strategize about the specific responsibilities department chairs may bear in reconceptualizing pedagogy, power, and ethics in this arena. This work aims to think comparatively and holistically to address the positions and experiences (e.g. minoritized, raced, gendered, regional, transnational, historical) of all members of our academic and larger communities, including the geographic

spaces where our institutions are located and those in which we conduct research but especially adjuncts, pre-tenure faculty, students, and students and scholars from the global south.

Many ghosts require continued confrontation: the specter of biological racism and eugenics; collections that deserve repatriation; gendered and racialized opportunities; the lure of corporate research funding despite likely strings attached. This Town Hall brings our conversation to the wider membership of the AAA to consider: what are the various responsibilities and opportunities for each of us, as anthropologists and as academics, as we confront the challenges of this moment from our varied vantages and positions of power, with uneven access to resources? What may be learned—about this cultural moment, and about anthropology—by viewing the contemporary academy, and the state of anthropology within and beyond the academy, through the lens of anthropological critique?

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Karen-Sue Taussig, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): John Hawks, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Department of Anthropology, Stacie King, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Rebecca Lester, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Deborah Thomas, University of Pennsylvania, Roberto Gonzalez, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology, Juliet McMullin

Discussant: Heather Paxson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Danilyn Rutherford, Wenner-Gren Foundation

7322 “Condemned as Ghosts, Mourning the Unseen: Necropolitics, Necropoetics, and the Discourse of Reproduction in Queer Afterlives”

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Conversation/Debate

Our conversation interrogates how racialized queer, trans, and Indigenous bodies are condemned as ghosts through necropolitical systems that erase, mis-name, un-name, and delegitimize life—both in death and in discourse. Drawing from our dissertation research on linguistic and symbolic violence, alongside Lipan poetics and Conocimiento Transcendente Autohistoria Teoría (CTAT), we explore how colonial archives, medical discourses, and state institutions enact reproductive necropolitics: a systemic containment of life through the haunting absence of names, bodies, and histories. Trans individuals misgendered in death, Indigenous maternal bodies erased from birth and death records, and queer lives invoked only as cautionary tales or DEI talking points—these are the material consequences of eugenics, settler memory, and cisheteropatriarchal violence.

In conversation with Jeong-eun Rhee's (2021) concept of rememory and haunting and Achille Mbembe's (2003, 2019) concept of Necropolitics, we engage haunting as a decolonial methodology and necropoetics as a form of resurgence. Through poetry and visual interventions, we resist archival silence by actively communing with the dead—to reclaim their presence as political,

embodied, and agentive. Ghosts, in this framework, are theorists of refusal and caretakers of collective memory. Our conversation invites community to mourn the unseen and listen to what ghosts reveal. We imagine queer afterlives that refuse to forget and reject colonial narratives that seek to define whose lives-and whose deaths-matter.

We invite community members, scholars, activists, artists, and ancestral kin to engage in conversation with us as we witness the spectral traces of those erased by colonial, racial, and gendered violence. By reinscribing the ghosted, the mis-named, and the un-named, we create space for a relational praxis that honors the dead as collaborators in our present struggles for justice. These conversations are critical for challenging dominant narratives that treat queer, trans, and Indigenous lives as disposable, and instead center the power of haunting as a method of refusal and reworlding. In sharing stories, theory, and creative expressions rooted in necropoetics and rememory, we build a living archive of resistance-one that refuses silence, reclaims voice, and insists that the unseen will not remain forgotten.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Jerry Romero Jr , Jennifer Yanez-Alaniz

Presenter(s): Jerry Romero Jr , Jennifer Yanez-Alaniz , Olga Estrada

Discussant: Jerry Romero Jr , Jennifer Yanez-Alaniz

3357 Colonial Hauntings in Anti-colonial Research: Are Ghosts Useful to the Living? Part 2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology is haunted by our colonial past. Colonial tools: from institutional grant writing to data production and dissemination, to the machete and the plow, are threaded throughout our research, our lives, the lives of the communities whose voices we seek to illuminate. This panel interrogates colonial tools and the role they play in our tangled lives and livelihoods. The papers ask and answer questions: Can colonial tools actually be reframed? Is this a useful endeavor? Does it lead to constant critique but little useful action or change? Do we really seek to build anticolonial approaches? Is the unimaginable actionable? Through wide ranging ethnographic examples, the papers in this panel interrogate the complexity of anticolonial approaches in a world shaped by colonial tools. These reflexive understandings open anthropological possibilities, moving beyond guilt and lip service to furthering intentional transformative actions. (Part 2 of a double session)

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Kristina Baines, Guttman Community College, CUNY, Ranya Perez

Chair: Ranya Perez , Kristina Baines, Guttman Community College, CUNY

Presenter(s): Allison Mickel, Elana Shever, Colgate University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Karina Edouard, Sarah Smith, SUNY, Old Westbury, Yasmine Lucas, Knox College

Discussant: Maria Vesperi, New College of Florida

Presentation(s): Decolonize! Corporatize! Cultural Heritage Practice in Jordan

Efforts to decolonize archaeology have focused in part on the need to recognize historically invisibilized contributions by local communities to the excavation, conservation, and management of cultural heritage. In Southwest Asia today, one of contemporary archaeology's inheritances from its colonial origins is foreign archaeologists' reliance on a local "fixer" for a range of arrangements such as accommodation, food, transportation, translation, and labor recruitment. The fixer is largely an informal role—a paid one, but without clearly delineated responsibilities or a recognition of the role as expert or skilled labor. One effort to change this is reflected in the work of Sela, a private nonprofit company founded by Jordanians in Petra in 2015 with the aim of training and certifying local expertise in archaeology. Sela works with archaeologists and transnational heritage organizations like UNESCO, and drafts contracts that document, remunerate, and formalize the role of the "fixer," and also ensure fair pay and safe working conditions for all workers employed on the project. In their hiring practices, Sela employs a system that aims to spread the material benefits of archaeological employment as widely as possible through the community. Is decolonial heritage practice possible through a private, corporate formation if it is locally imagined and implemented?

Presenter(s): Allison Mickel

Anticolonial Rehearsal: Steps Toward an Anticolonial Public Science Education

What should anthropologists do when the participants in their research—about whom they care deeply, and to whom they are indebted—perpetuate colonialism? I face this question after having conducted research with a NGO that is dedicated to public science education. Its employees and volunteers do important work teaching people young and old about paleontology, evolution and the history of life on earth, inspiring curiosity about the nonhuman world, and helping create a sense of place in a rapidly changing region of the western United States. Yet they also present a racist narrative of the history of paleontology to the public. This paper is an anticolonial "rehearsal" in a double sense. First, I will preview the presentation I plan to give to the staQ and volunteers at this organization, explaining how they are perpetuating a racist narrative of white science as a heroic and moral endeavor to save nature and produce knowledge of it. It will explain how the stories they tell about the first paleontologists in the region erase paleontology's dispossession of indigenous land, knowledge, and labor. Second, I will retell the history of paleontology in a manner that highlights how scientists helped advance, and justify, settler colonialism in the western United States. My aim is to turn anthropology's anticolonial critiques into practical tools that this organization's members can use to retool its public science education.

Presenter(s): Elana Shever

The Case for a Slow Anthropology: Reflections on Linearity and Time from the Field

The reproductive justice movement notably moves beyond a pro-choice/pro-life binary, focusing attention on birth parents' right to both give birth under the conditions they seek and to raise their

children in environments free from violence, toxins, and harm. At the core of these principles are temporalities that defy linearity—simultaneously calling back to ancestral wisdoms and pressing forward towards new Black maternal futurities. By locating the tenets of the reproductive justice movement as an exercise in temporal non-linearity, this paper will examine the role of time in anti-colonial anthropological research methodologies. Through an ethnographic foray into the work of a reproductive justice collective in Massachusetts, this paper grapples with the push and pull, the poke and prod, of productive time as a colonial research tool, asking: What is the anti-colonial researcher's relationship with time? What methodological lessons can be gleaned from the organizing and healing strategies of the reproductive justice movement? What might slow research—indeed, a slow anthropology—reveal about the hauntings of the discipline's colonial past?

Presenter(s): Karina Edouard

Haunted by our predecessors: Interrogating the Ghosts of U.S. Imperial Anthropologists in Micronesia

Anthropologist Catherine Lutz (2006) advocated for more ethnographies of empire, and I answer her call by exploring anthropology's role in U.S. imperial expansion. Micronesia is haunted by many colonial powers, most recently the U.S., and anthropologists supported their occupation in powerful ways in the mid-twentieth century. The Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology (CIMA), developed post-WWII, was one of the largest government-sponsored anthropological projects in US history. Supported first by the US Navy, and later, the Department of the Interior, anthropologists descended on Micronesian communities to support U.S. occupation, and the specters of these anthropologists remain present in policy, practice, and memories today. Their body of work makes up the most substantive anthropological literature in the region, which still informs development agendas, often understood to be a modern form of colonialism. What do we do with this knowledge obtained through imperial means? Drawing from my recently published book, *Forgotten Bodies*, this presentation will consider what power to give their findings in our own work, and how to represent anthropology in Micronesia. I ask the question anthropologists have been haunted by since at least the 1980s, but never completely answered: How do we correct the haunted legacies of these projects in spaces in which we work? I will provide some of my anti-colonial strategies, and interrogate whether they are remotely sufficient.

Presenter(s): Sarah Smith

Heidegger's Ghost, and Its Political Afterlives in Anthropology

Anthropology's engagement with Martin Heidegger's philosophy has often centred on his concept of being-in-the-world to examine human entanglements with others and their environments. Focusing primarily on the first division of *Being and Time* and his more impressionistic works, many anthropologists have sidestepped the political implications of his thought. While Heidegger's affiliation with Nazism does not render his philosophy void, a deeper reckoning with its political resonances can be both intellectually and politically productive. My research on historical trauma

among children of Holocaust survivors in North America demonstrates how Heidegger's ideas expose the micro-logics through which right-wing ideologies emerge and take hold. Rather than sidelining the troubling aspects of his work, this approach critically interrogates how Heideggerian thought might be unwittingly reproduced in ways that naturalize problematic logics. In doing so, it reflects on the broader question of whether certain philosophical tools—deeply entangled with colonial and reactionary histories—can be repurposed for a transformative, decolonial anthropology.

Presenter(s): Yasmine Lucas

Discussion

2615 Fleetfooted and Eclectic anthropology roundtable: ways of living with theory ghosts. Alternatives to the spinning tops of 'one turn after another'

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Are there alternatives to theory-fashion? Rather than moving from one turn to another this roundtable will consider ways of being fleetfooted and taking an eclectic approach to theory.

We might want to think about theory hauntings, or about ghost theories – and how eclecticism might help us manage being residents in haunted houses, learning ways of living with ghosts rather than trying to exorcise them.

David Zeitlyn's 2022 book 'Anthropological toolkit' introduces 60 different ideas without endorsing any. They are good to think with - a position that anthropologists should be happy with! We need productive ideas or frameworks. Single theories - particularly mutually exclusive ones - may not be helpful when dealing with the messy and uncomfortable encounters that are common in anthropological research.

The philosopher Isaiah Berlin wrote an article (mainly about Tolstoy) called 'the fox and the hedgehog'. Berlin gets his title from a fragment of text attributed to an Ancient Greek poet Archilochus: "a fox knows many things, but a hedgehog knows one big thing". It's a lovely idea but what does it mean in practice? My answer is that we should pick the conceptual tools that help the tasks at hand. And for this having a wider rather than narrower range of conceptual tools available is a good thing. So the toolkit book introduces a wide range of concepts drawn from many different disciplinary traditions. This is about helping researchers to become better foxes.

Michael Carrithers (2000) discusses Berlin's foxes and hedgehogs article. For him, the idea of society, the idea of 'a society' as an entity is an instance of hedgehogish thinking. On his account when people think of their contemporaries (using Schutz's contemporaries vs consociates distinction) as potential friends, mates, rivals they are thinking like hedgehogs, imposing the frame

of 'one big thing' to make sense of the wider social arena. Foxy anthropologists, (and not just anthropologists, traders, missionaries, diplomats, voyagers of many varieties) have to deal with multiple such ideas, so they end up knowing many things.

To know many things it might help to have many ways to frame that knowledge. Hence the eclecticism of 'Anthropological Toolkit' and of the roundtable.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: David Zeitlyn , David Henig

Presenter(s): John Jackson, University of Pennsylvania, Carole McGranahan, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Laura Meek, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies, Talia Dan-Cohen, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Michael Herzfeld

521 Archaeology Division Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Presenter(s): Xiomy Hernandez, Megan Victor, CUNY - Queens College, Daniel Pierce, Ramie Gougeon, University of West Florida, Department of Anthropology, Christopher Bodine, University of Arkansas, Department of Anthropology, Kevin Cupka Head, Matthew Selheimer, University of Leicester

Presentation(s): A Vessel for Ethnic Expression: How Pottery Reflects Identity in the Residential Areas of Chan Chan

This study investigates the role of pottery in expressing social identity within the residential neighborhoods of Chan Chan (1050/1100 - 1450 CE), the capital of the ancient Chimú civilization on the North Coast of Peru. The research examines a collection of 255 ceramic fragments excavated during the 2022 field season under the direction of Professor Gabriel Prieto. Previous excavations at Chan Chan have uncovered non-local materials such as featherwork, textiles, and food, reflecting the importance of Chan Chan as the center of an imperial polity, and the presence of diverse ethnic groups within the city. How these groups functioned in Chimú society is still under speculation, but the material evidence suggests production of local and non-local styles was contemporaneous in the city. While prior studies have extensively examined wares from the Small, Irregular, Agglutinated Rooms (SIAR) of Chan Chan, this research uniquely focuses on the expression of ethnicity through ceramic decoration. The materials reveal the production techniques and artistic styles of residents from the BJ unit, a neighborhood part of the SIAR that housed the majority of Chan Chan's population and potentially served as a dynamic space of cultural interaction. By analyzing stylistic attributes, surface treatments, and decorative elements through a

comparative lens informed by the archaeological context, this study aims to uncover how pre-Hispanic artisans expressed local and non-local identities in the great urban metropolis.

Presenter(s): Xiomy Hernandez

Co-author(s): Gabriel Prieto

Big Easy in Big Sky? Hunting for Spirits in a Ghost Town

The weather-weary remains of Highland City, Montana linger amidst the jagged pines and empty mine tunnels, long-emptied of their natural riches. Frost-cracked, fire-stained ceramic sherds lay scattered in the dry grass where busy streets used to churn. A gold mining ghost town, Highland City's ruins lie at an elevation of roughly 10,000 feet above sea level in western Montana. A few battered and boarded up buildings squat on the site next to a yawning ore chute, all that remains of a location that was once home to at least a tenth of Montana Territory's population.

Prospectors and miners left nearby settlements and crossed the continent for the gold, silver, and garnets of the Highlands. From 1866 to 1872, the placers and lode mines around Highland City yielded a steady supply of gold and the City's population swelled to 2,000 individuals, making the boomtown the largest settlement in southern Deer Lodge County. At its height, Highland City's residents had access to ten saloons, five dance halls, several general stores, at least 300 wooden cabins, a cemetery, and a sprawling tent settlement that connected to nearby Red Mountain City and its sawmill. A total of \$2.3 million in gold alone was torn and crushed from lodes around the settlement, but by 1882, Highland City, the tent corridor, and Red Mountain City were nearly abandoned. By 1915, the last ore mill fell silent. A lone miner lingered, ghost-like, in his cabin until he passed away in 1925, having outlived the very town to which he'd dedicated his life. Despite its notable population and wealth, there are few primary or secondary sources on Highland City. The ghost town's dead were left in silence by the 20th-century theft of their headstones.

Archival work and oral history collection helped to hunt this ghost town's history, but the exhumation of Highland City's narrative has fallen most to archaeological work. A combination of survey and test excavations have brought glints of clarity about the lives that once inhabited this mountain town. In particular, a domestic area and a commercial area with a dance hall, a hardware store, and a saloon have indicated the presence of Euro-American miners, an Overseas Chinese community, and – most recently found – a group of individuals from southern Louisiana. This latest demographic have been located through artifacts associated with commensality, especially liquors and bitters from New Orleans. The data from these ghost-town spirits has given new clarity on the lived experience of the inhabitants of Highland City.

Presenter(s): Megan Victor

Coamiles: Ceramic Trade and Production in the West Mexican Aztatlán Tradition

During the Early/Middle Postclassic (AD 900-1350), the Aztatlán Tradition spread throughout Western Mexico and grew to be one of the most influential cultures in the region. This culture is perhaps most well-known for its expansive trade networks, with its cultural core centered on the

coastal plain of Nayarit and numerous major population centers taking part in the widespread exchange. One such major Aztatlán site is Coamiles, excavated between 2005 and 2010 by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). From these excavations, tens of thousands of obsidian and ceramic artifacts were recovered. Previously, regional obsidian analysis demonstrated widespread trade of distant obsidians into Coastal Plain sites despite local variants being available. However, to date, similar trade patterns have yet to be observed with ceramics. In this study, ceramics from Coamiles were geochemically sourced through Neutron Activation Analysis to explore the production and potential trade of ceramics at this important Aztatlán center. To accomplish this, ceramic compositional data was compared to data collected at other Postclassic regional centers. These analyses illustrate a ceramic industry that appears largely reliant upon local production with little, if any, ceramic trade. Ultimately, the pattern of ceramic production and use at Coamiles is similar to preliminary results from elsewhere in the region. Nonetheless, given the monumental architecture at Coamiles, it provides a window into Aztatlán material culture at one of the tradition's largest population centers. Overall, Coamiles was a paragon of Aztatlán culture. In this way, the ceramics of Coamiles is an ideal case study for better understanding this prolific tradition.

Presenter(s): Daniel Pierce

Smothered, Covered, and Increasingly Concerned: Results of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference Heritage at Risk Survey

In fall 2023, the Southeastern Archaeology Conference (SEAC) Heritage at Risk Task Force launched a survey of its membership and the broader archaeological community to learn more about experiences and needs in addressing climate change impacts to the practice of archaeology and the cultural resources we study. A total of 106 archaeologists from the southeastern United States and beyond completed the survey. Follow up, informal interviews were conducted at the SEAC 2024 annual meeting to gather additional data about perceived changes to archaeological fieldwork and threats to resources in the face of climate changes. Quantitative and quantitative assessments of responses reveal shared areas of concern for professional archaeologists. Of all participants, 97% are noticing impacts of climate change within the areas they work, 76% have observed impacts to archaeological curation practices, and 86% noted concern over health and working environments. Respondents were primarily concerned with impacts to their personal health and safety, largely noting hazardous working conditions. In contrast, fewer respondents indicated direct concerns to cultural heritage resources, such as eroding NRHP-eligible sites or damages to curation spaces. Increased global temperatures and higher relative humidity, in the southeastern U.S. in particular, were identified as contributing to increasingly dangerous summer field conditions for students and field-based archaeologists. Many respondents identified the numerous strategies they use to keep field crews from suffering heat-related injuries like heat exhaustion. Identifying ways to effectively convey the "real-world implications of climate change" to non field-based archaeological stakeholders and mitigate potential harm is a primary need stated within the archaeological community. Additionally, archaeologists are seeking formal and informal

guidance to communicate the past, present, and future implications of climate change on modern communities and past cultural resources.

Presenter(s): Ramie Gougeon

Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) Remote Sensing in North American Archaeology: Past and Present Barriers and Future Perspectives

Image processing of remotely sensed data has proven extremely useful to archaeologists in recent years. Most importantly, remotely sensed data allows archaeologists to explore and locate sites in a nondestructive manner. Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) is one such powerful form of remote-sensing. SAR imagery has recently seen a surge in popularity in Old World archaeology. However, in North and South America, archaeological research has traditionally favored optical imagery due to the limited availability and complexity of SAR data. The use of SAR datasets in archaeology has also been limited by the low spatial resolution of the satellite SAR sensors necessary for archaeological prospection and detection in the North American context. For these reasons, optical imagery has typically been preferred over spaceborne SAR data in the Western Hemisphere. However, satellite SAR has now entered into a new era of applications mainly due to the increased access to data archives and various satellite platforms. This progress is largely attributed to the expanded public availability of SAR data, encompassing both free sources like Sentinel-1 and high-resolution commercial platforms such as TerraSAR/TanDEM-X and Ultra-high-resolution satellites from Capella Space and Umbra. These systems now offer sub-meter resolution, coupled with multifrequency and multipolarization capabilities, vastly improving detection and analysis of human soil interactions. The development of user-friendly software has further democratized SAR data processing. The use of multifrequency, multisensor, multitemporal, quadpolarization SAR data is now providing powerful information for archaeological investigations in the New World. Throughout North and South America, SAR data is now enabling detailed investigations of archaeological landscapes, reconstruction of paleo-environments, detection of buried and surface sites, and effective monitoring and preservation efforts. This technological leap has provided archaeologists with a powerful tool to overcome the limitations of optical data, unlocking new potential for revealing and understanding past human activity.

Presenter(s): Christopher Bodine

The Connected Country: Revealing Material Patterns in Rural Social Networks through Text-Aided Archaeology

The proliferation of network-oriented perspectives in archaeology and beyond underscores the interpretation of complex webs of material, information, and practice. To this end, social network analysis (SNA) is attractive for its functional diversity, scalability, and suitability for relational archaeologies. This presentation considers SNA as a means of establishing household-level archaeological data within neighborhood, community, and landscape contexts. Using data mined from technical reports and archival sources, SNA was applied to a sample of nineteenth- and twentieth-century rural domestic sites in the Lower Ohio River Valley. Comparative metrics and

data visualizations generated via SNA and software packages and GIS illustrate the feasibility of the method, its drawbacks, and its potential.

Presenter(s): Kevin Cupka Head

The Ghosts of Planning Past: Morphological Regions in Pompeii and Ostia

The well-preserved ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Ostia, like most cities, were not built all at once but evolved through a combination of planned and organic development over time.

Morphological regions, a concept from the academic discipline of urban morphology, reveal the echoes of past planning in the preservation of physical forms, most notably the layout of street networks and city blocks. In this flash presentation, I will review hypothesized morphological regions for both cities, and what they can inform us about past urban planning as well as alignment with organic development processes. The session will also briefly showcase how statistical regression analysis can be employed to treat morphological regions as a dependent variable for predicting the use of space at intersections in these ancient Roman cities.

Presenter(s): Matthew Selheimer

3680 THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CRAFTING

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Crafting has seen a renaissance in recent years. Crafting encompasses activities like making, remaking, repurposing, upcycling, or repairing. People knit, sew, cook, do woodworking, work with beads, leather, and many other materials. They maintain vegetable, fruit, or flower gardens. They upcycle used items and salvaged materials. Crafting activities, materials, and products are endless. People craft to save money or avoid consumerism. Others craft to make a living. They craft for communal experiences, as a means of political resistance, or for fun. Anthropologists have said little about crafts, crafting, and recent crafting developments. This panel addresses this void and contributes to an anthropology of crafting. Papers include empirical contributions that map the landscape of popular and professional crafts and crafting across time and space, and address critical theoretical issues about the social, economic, political, ecological, and artistic role and contribution of crafts and crafting.

The panel examines crafting as activities that are open to all regardless of skill level, financial means, and access to professional tools and materials, and as a trade/income-generating activity. Popular crafting differs from professional crafts because there is no control over quality or standards. Popular crafting requires no certificates or licenses. Yet the lines between professional crafts and refined hobby crafting are vague and individuals often cross these lines in one direction or the other. Papers on the panel explore both types of craft work.

Discussing examples like the crafting of dolls in Chile, building practices in India, food production among Syrian refugees in Turkey, fabric production among historical Mississippian

cultures, crafting with sea glass in the USA, and mixed crafts and sustainability activities in the USA, contributors analyze the role of crafts in the lives of individuals and groups across time and space. They ask questions like, what motivates people to start or continue their craft practices? How are craft processes structured? Do or did crafts reflect larger belief systems? What special value do particular crafted items have for their owners and in their larger cultural contexts? Is crafting a communal experience? Is crafting political? Is crafting an act of social, economic, or ecological resistance?

This panel maps elements of the global landscape of popular and professional crafts and crafting. Papers describe and analyze concrete activities and the motivation of crafters. Theoretically, papers engage debates about the social, economic, political, ecological, and artistic impact and relevance of crafting. They ask questions, among others, about crafting as a political activity, an act of resistance in a world of hyper-consumption and corporate greed, an income-generating practice in the context of economic inequalities, an act of sustainable consumption, and a shared activity that builds solidarity and community.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Petra Kuppinger, Monmouth College

Chair: Petra Kuppinger, Monmouth College

Presenter(s): Samantha Martin, University of South Carolina, Maureen Meyers, Petra Kuppinger, Monmouth College, David Kneas, University of South Carolina, Sharmeen Dafedar, Sofya Shahab

Presentation(s): Community Crafts and Crafting Community: Interweaving the Personal and the Political in Chilean Feminist Handmade Art

This paper contributes to the existing scholarship on women and crafting practices in Latin America by exploring two types of crafts that I encountered during 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork with a feminist organization in Santiago, Chile. The first type are arpilleras, colorful, sometimes three-dimensional art textiles on burlap, historically made by groups of women during the Chilean dictatorship to protest state violence. The second type are handmade gifts, such as a doll with feminist iconography and a small book with drawings and embroidered pages, given by an activist to her compañeras for birthdays or other life events. My analysis is informed by my embodied experience and Sliwinski's (2024) reflections on gift-giving between an ethnographer and their friends from the field, as I was the recipient of several handmade crafts from my compañeras and attempted to reciprocate with gifts of my own. I analyze the semiotic characteristics of the crafts, the social practice of creating and displaying or gifting them, and conversations about them, arguing that while the arpilleras are the more obvious type of feminist crafting that serve as political acts of resistance and storytelling, the personal gifts between one activist and another are also an important site of social interaction and political craftivism, as they simultaneously reflect a self-care practice on an individual level and a solidarity practice on a community level.

Presenter(s): Samantha Martin

The Role of Belief Systems in the Crafting and Labor Organization of Fabric Production: An Archaeological Example from the Mississippian World

Crafted items can possess special significance and even power based on where and how they are made. These items are often created according to community beliefs that include spiritual understandings of the world and specifically of the items found in certain landscapes. These rules can dictate which items are made together or in opposition to one another. When crafted items require multiple stages of production, these cultural rules often guide the order and the location in which the stages of production occur. In the thirteenth-century Mississippian world, a frontier chiefdom located in southwestern Virginia, the Carter Robinson site, contains evidence of fabric production in one structure that was devoted exclusively to crafting. The archaeological record here contains evidence of fabric spinning, weaving, dyeing and adornment. The placement of these multiple craft stages within one house belies the larger worldview of Southeastern Natives. This paper will present evidence of fabric production and its organization within the structure and discuss how belief systems informed that organization and imbued the fabric with value in the Mississippian world.

Presenter(s): Maureen Meyers

Crafting Politics

After years of declining interest, crafting is back on the stage of popular activities. The quest for sustainability, the impact of COVID, and rising consumer prices have contributed to these changes. People craft for fun, as a communal activity, to avoid consumerism, save money, or make money. They craft for mental health purposes, and increasingly as a political grassroots project or means of political resistance. Some crafters seek to escape hyper-consumerism and the human exploitation and environmental degradation that are part of contemporary capitalist production. Many upcycle used materials. Drawing on experiences of a private crafts group, upcycling activities in a sustainability-themed college class, and the work of upcycling crafters on the Internet, this paper analyzes crafting at a tense historical moment. I revisit crafting and analyze its role in a critical social, cultural, economic and political landscape. The paper illustrates aspects of the social, economic, political, political, ecological, and artistic contribution and relevance of crafting, outlines the potential of crafting to create solidarity and community, and reflects of reality and potential of crafting as a political and politicized voice. Theoretically, this paper seeks to formulate an anthropology of crafting that positions diverse crafting activities in critical social, cultural, economic and political debates.

Presenter(s): Petra Kuppinger

Crafting Sea Glass: Nature, Narration, and the Affordances of Jewelry

This paper examines how the crafting of sea glass – waste glass molded by the sea – into jewelry transforms both the value of the sea glass and the identities of those who work with it. Drawing on ethnographic research in jewelry workshops and with beachcombers in the UK and Europe, I examine how their artisan work has changed the way that they see and work with sea glass material, how they creatively craft jewelry to bring out particular material effects or qualities of sea glass, and the types of social and economic capital that they derive from it. Since social media sites

like Instagram are as significant for the cultural practices of beachcombing as the beach itself, I also trace the representation of this crafting work in those online spaces. I explore how the crafting of sea glass jewelry allows for particular types of imagery and narration on Instagram, namely the presence of labor and work which are typically eschewed among beachcombers who prefer to present their work as a hobby or pursuit of joy (even as it may be an important source of income). In examining not only the craft of sea glass, but also the representation of this craft within social media communities, I highlight how the affordances of sea glass as a material resource intersect with the affordances of Instagram. In this way, I consider the situated agency of crafting and how craft allows for a particular type of positioning within beachcombing communities and sea glass narration.

Presenter(s): David Kneas

Crafting Resilience: Exploring Cultural Building-Craft Practices and Socio-Urban

Narratives in Srinagar's Built Environment

Based on ethnographic research conducted amid the Kashmir conflict in Srinagar, India, I examine how craftspeople employ traditional building-craft practices as tools for survival and community resilience. These crafts continue amid decades of political turmoil, economic hardship, and chronic resource scarcity and are acts of resistance and preserve cultural knowledge and local identity. The paper highlights women's central role in this craft economy, which is often overlooked in formal narratives, as skills are passed down through intergenerational collective workshops that foster mutual support networks and communal solidarity, but in a male-dominated workspaces. These workshops embed cultural narratives into the urban fabric. With scarce resources and damaged infrastructure, these practices feed into sustainable architecture and low-cost post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Framed within anthropological discussions of crafting and material culture, I investigate what motivates artisans to persist under adversity, how local material practices shape the city's social fabric and urban landscape, and how crafting negotiates the boundary between necessity and creativity. I argue that Srinagar's women-led craft practices operate as a grassroots engine of economic livelihood and empowerment, socio-political resistance, and community building. These practices illustrate the transformative power of craft in forging resilient, sustainable urban futures in post-conflict societies.

Presenter(s): Sharmeen Dafedar

Foodcraft, Resistance and Resilience Among Syrian Refugee Women in Turkey

Drawing on fieldwork undertaken with twelve Syrian refugee women living in Gaziantep, Turkey, this paper attends to the role of food as craft and 'crafting' in participants' daily survival, amid the hyperprecarity that results from temporal and spatial dislocation. It is particularly concerned with unpacking the inter-connections between food production undertaken for family, friends and income (in our participants' words, cooking 'with love') and the possibilities of resistance and resilience among those whose precarity results in legal insecurity, isolation, and lack of control over one's life (quite beyond their engagement in informal, exploitative labour markets). Through

practices of preparing and sharing food, this paper considers how artisanal crafts are shaped in relationship to heritages as well as the spatial environments in which they are conceived, and the affective resonances they engender. In so doing, it highlights processes of change consequent upon forced displacement and extreme precarity, and how difficulties may be at least partly mitigated through developing new ecological, social and economic networks. In this fashion, the women's crafting became a communal act of connection which both dissolves and performs temporal and spatial borders.

Presenter(s): Sofya Shahab

Co-author(s): Natalia Slutskaya

7171 Living Memory: Thinking With Medical Histories and Envisioning Health Futures PART I

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel is PART I of a two part series. At the junctures of institutional healthcare, traditional modes of healing, and everyday life exists an ongoing reckoning with manifold histories of the globalization of biomedicine. With the intention of creating shared insights into relationalities of health knowledges, infrastructures, desires, and embodied experiences, we seek to complicate teleological ways of thinking about time, instead positing that medical pasts, presents, and futures co-constitute one another in entangled and dynamic ways. In this panel, we draw together scholars working at the intersections of critical medical anthropology, archival scholarship, public health and epidemiology, and historical analysis to explore how legacies of interconnected medical pasts reverberate through contemporary health landscapes. We consider how institutional and local medical histories shape both the provision of care and lived health experiences, illuminating how past structures of harm are often reproduced in current health outcomes, policies, and data. Apparent "emerging" patterns in health-such as racial disparities in maternal mortality or the uneven effects of pandemic response-frequently reflect a repackaging of historical marginalization rather than novel phenomena. Additionally, varied local histories of community and individual engagements with medical institutions, practitioners, research, and care continue to shape subjective experiences around medical decision-making, care seeking patterns, and perceptions of medical expertise and authority. We trace how communities understand and respond to medical institutions and interventions through historically grounded frameworks of mis/trust, risk, hope, and accountability. Together, we discuss the interrelated webs of meaning-making, power and inequity, and experiences of wellness and illness that come to light when tracing diverse medical histories and their afterlives in the present.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Jessica Dailey, University of Notre Dame, Simona Spiegel, University of Notre Dame

Chair: Jessica Dailey, University of Notre Dame, Simona Spiegel, University of Notre Dame

Presenter(s): Emilia Guevara, University of Maryland, College Park, Madalina Alama, Sergio

Lemus, Shana Harris, University of Central Florida, Nerli Paredes Ruvalcaba, Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology, Ale Barrientos, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Yvette Vasquez, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Contested Care: Chronic Illness and Virtuous Citizenship in Hidalgo, Mexico

In this paper I examine how circular migrant women in rural Hidalgo navigate imposed chronic illness identities while maintaining their self-fashioned subjectivities as *trabajadoras chingonas* (badass/powerful worker women). Through ethnographic fieldwork with women who move between crab processing in Maryland and their Mexican communities, I analyze how state health programs construct compliant chronic illness subjects through Foucault's concept of "pastoral power." In clinic-based support groups, healthcare professionals deploy moral frameworks to encourage women to embrace the *crónica* (chronic patient) identity as a form of "virtuous citizenship." These practices frame chronicity as individual moral responsibility, obscuring how structural conditions including racialized and gendered hierarchies, shape health outcomes. Women's narratives reveal forms of resistance as they selectively engage with these imposed identities while navigating complex systems to access care. By examining contested subjectivities at the intersection of migration, gender, and chronic illness, this paper illuminates how contemporary health in Mexico is shaped by historical patterns of marginalization that continue to reverberate through its healthcare infrastructure, challenging teleological narratives while revealing how communities respond to medical institutions through mis/trust and accountability.

Presenter(s): Emilia Guevara

With drugs the past is always present: Achieving wellbeing and building the good life while addressing opiate addiction

The paper explores how past forms of institutional care aimed at addressing opiate addiction in the American west shape lived experiences of health and wellbeing for people currently in recovery from opiate addiction. By focusing closely on the accounts of Northern Nevadan recoverees, the paper connects three themes: the subjective experiences of early life wellbeing and happiness (and lack thereof), a biomedical system of addiction treatment that very often deepens the addict's misery, and the addict's struggle to devise ethical lives for themselves in a landscape of care that is not designed to support efforts to achieve a sense of purpose and autonomy. In connecting these three themes the paper discusses the role of certain cultural values, such as pride and independence, and medicalization of everyday life in North America. It concludes by pointing to the problematic, but often fruitful connection between the recovering addicts' medical histories and their motivation to forge good futures for themselves and their loved ones.

Presenter(s): Madalina Alama

Haunting Uvalde: Necrolatinidades, Memory, and the Ghosts of State Abandonment

This paper explores the 2022 Uvalde, Texas school shooting as a haunting event that reveals the spectral traces of state violence and structural abandonment in ethnic Mexican communities of South Texas. Through the lens of Necrolatinidades, I theorize how the lives and deaths of Latinx populations are marked by a politics of disposability—made hypervisible in moments of tragedy, yet persistently neglected by the state. The massacre in Uvalde becomes a ghostly node in a long history of racialized biopolitics, where memory is both a burden and a tool of resistance. I examine how families and community members engage in spiritual, cultural, and transborder public acts of mourning that counter institutional erasure and offer pathways toward collective healing. These everyday practices—rooted in prayer, storytelling, and kinship—function as a counter-memory to the state's forgetting, insisting on presence, dignity, and care. In tracing how grief lingers and how memory is mobilized, I ask: how do communities live with ghosts that the state refuses to see? And what forms of knowledge emerge when the dead are honored not only as lost, but as teachers?

Presenter(s): Sergio Lemus

Hype, Hope, and History in Psychedelic-Based Drug Treatment in Mexico

The study and use of psychedelics to treat various conditions has risen immensely over the last 20 years. As such research progresses and information about new treatments emerges, hype around the "revolutionary" therapeutic potential of psychedelics also increases. This hype grows even greater as testimonials of "successful" treatments circulate through social media, news outlets, and interpersonal networks. Such hype is accompanied by a high level of optimism among prospective patients, a hope that psychedelic-based therapies will provide relief from what ails them. In this paper, I explore hype and hope in the context of psychedelic-based drug treatment in Mexico. I focus on the use of a psychedelic called ibogaine for "addiction interruption," as a way to reduce drug cravings and withdrawal and to facilitate self-reflection about one's drug use. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at ibogaine centers in Baja California, I examine the relationship between hype and hope for people who use drugs at these centers. I discuss their hopes for a "clean" future by situating them in the context of the promissory claims of ibogaine's therapeutic abilities and addressing how hype and hope relate to their drug treatment histories, often characterized by negative experiences with medical institutions and "unsuccessful" interventions. In doing so, I show how this psychedelic-based care is recognized and pursued as a potential means to restore hope among those who use drugs problematically.

Presenter(s): Shana Harris

The spiraled legacies of obstetrics and gynecology in relation to experiences of obstetric violence and infant feeding practices

The professionalization of obstetrics and gynecology has contributed to the systematic attempt to displace midwifery in Mexico, leading to a cultural ethnocide and high rates of obstetric violence. This legacy continues to impact the experiences of birthing people, including how they feed their infants. Present public health emphasis on increasing breast/chest-feeding rates has led to increased demands and pressure on birthing parents to breast/chest-feed. Yet, few efforts have

addressed the systematic barriers within the biomedical system to increase breast/chest-feeding rates. The aim of this study was to apply an approach of embodiment to breast/chest-feeding to examine how experiences with obstetric violence that result from the historical displacement of midwifery, impact infant-feeding practices. This study draws upon an analysis of policies that continue to restrict the labor of midwives and the analysis of semi-structured interviews with mothers in Mexico regarding their experiences during birth and the post-partum period in relation to infant feeding practices. Results suggest that despite the efforts towards "humanized" biomedical practices, the eerie historical legacies of biomedicine become materialized through obstetric violence, particularly the perpetuation of guilt for birthing people unable to breast/chest-feed. These findings contribute to an understanding of infant feeding practices in relation to the spiraled legacies of obstetrics and gynecology.

Presenter(s): Nerli Paredes Ruvalcaba

Haunted by policy: health seeking in the shadows of trump era immigration

Between 2017-2021, Donald Trump enacted immigration policies that negatively impacted Latinx immigrants, intensifying health inequities. Family separation under zero tolerance inflicted psychological trauma, largely on children. Beyond borderlands, Latinx communities are entangled in surveillance, arrest, and institutionalized hostility. Heightened interior enforcement and raids in Latinx communities deterred care-seeking due to fear of deportation. While not unprecedented, immigration control in the U.S. has consistently prioritized securitization. The legacies of prior policy eras continue to shape how these communities experience institutions and care in the present. Few studies examine how Latinx immigrants in mixed-status households, adapt, resist, or navigate care in everyday life. Little is known about how fear, stigma, and legal precarity shape trust in medical institutions, care-seeking delays, or reliance on informal networks. This gap is tackled through ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Latinx communities in 2024, between Trump administrations, offers insight into the healthcare experiences of Latinx immigrants in the PNW. These stories are embedded in past traumas, revealing how being caught between legal statuses, administrations affect decisions around care. Findings offer insight into how policy and transnational identity intersect with care access, providing a roadmap toward more responsive, equity-driven healthcare for Latinx groups in a post-Trump society.

Presenter(s): Ale Barrientos

Discussion

5532 Daughters of Gold: A Table Read of an Ethnographic Play in Progress

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The intersection of ethnography and theatre is an exciting area for developing experimentation and

arts-based community engagement. In this roundtable event, scholar-performers explore scenes from a new work-in-progress theatrical play based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted by Cassandra Hartblay in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan 2022-2025. The work to date has been developed by Hartblay in collaboration with ethnographic theatre practitioners Giordano and Pierotti in their method of Affect Theatre, and playwright Sean Dixon. The roundtable offers an opportunity to develop a work in progress, to model for conference attendees the process of developing ethnographic theatre, and to foster collaborative creative ethnographic praxis. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to discuss and consider the subject matter and content of the work.

"Daughters of Gold" (or "Altyn Kyzylar" in Kyrgyz), is a play about a feminist activist and civil rights lawyers who take on an increasingly autocratic Kyrgyz state in a trial about the rights of parents to name their children with a middle name patronymic based on a mothers' rather than father's first name. The naming system in Kyrgyzstan reflects a history of Turkic linguistic heritage, Russian colonization, Soviet bureaucratic practices, and emergent heteropatriarchal competitive autocracy, as the Kyrgyz government (once a haven for civil society in post-Soviet Central Asia) has turned increasingly toward Putin-style governance in recent years. How do those who stand up to a bully-autocrat withstand the emotional toll and public fallout when the results of their trial about naming practice becomes a surprise national scandal nearly causing a constitutional crisis?

(1) Introduction (15 minutes) The ethnographer-playwright will introduce the concept of the play; roundtable participants (who have received their assigned parts in advance) will indicate the character in the script that they are playing; 3-5 audience members will be invited to read smaller roles; scripts will be offered for audience members to follow along.

(2) Reading (30 minutes) The performers will read 2-5 scenes from the play. They may bring theatrical movement or elements of the stage into their reading.

(3) Discussion and Re-Reading (45 minutes) Discussion to reflect on the reading: Discussants will reflect on ethnographic themes in the work. Panelists will reflect on the reading in the mode of artistic critique: What did you observe? How did it make you feel? What didn't work or lost you? What kind of sense did you make of what you observed? Audience members will be invited to respond. After an initial consideration of the performance itself, audience members and participants may also ask clarifying questions of the ethnographer-playwright and panelists about broader project and ethnographic theater in general. The group may re-read or re-stage excerpts to consider how they might be revised or performed differently.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Cassandra Hartblay, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Nelli Sargsyan, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies, Cristiana Giordano, David Syring, University of San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Cassandra Hartblay, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Alexa Kurmanov, Megan Moodie

7829 What ideas do: Celebrating James Ferguson

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together anthropologists influenced by Jim Ferguson to reflect on how his distinctive approach to social theory, history, and ethnography continues to shape us. Much of Jim's teaching and scholarship asks, "What do ideas do? What real social effects do they have?" (1995, xv). By examining the underlying concepts that permeate the foundations of social science and the potential interventions stemming from them, Jim was a model for generations of anthropologists. We invite everyone who has been shaped by Jim's work to come together and commemorate his vibrant influence.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Esteban Salmon Perrilliat, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Austin Zeiderman, London School of Economics, Dean Chahim, New York University, Kevin O'Neill, Robert Samet, Union College, Department of Anthropology, Vivian Chenxue Lu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Adela Zhang

2496 Ghosts of Climate Pasts and Futures

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable draws inspiration from the theme Ghosts to examine how the specter of the climate crisis-shaped by histories of colonialism, exploitation, and environmental degradation-continues to haunt both the present and our imaginations of the future. These "ghosts" not only represent the legacies of past injustices but also the active, present-day forces that seek to suppress and erase the narratives of environmental collapse, pushing back against meaningful action on the climate crisis. Anti-climate and justice-adverse administrations that attempt to outlaw or silence these narratives create a haunting presence-one that is both pervasive and destructive, threatening to eliminate the voices and stories of those most affected by climate change.

Despite increasing efforts to deny climate science, dismantle environmental protections, and ignore the realities of climate change, research continues. Anthropologists, in particular, play a crucial role in documenting the impacts of the crisis on communities, ecosystems, and livelihoods. We rise like ghosts-persistent, defiant, and resolute-refusing to allow the erasure of human experiences and struggles. In the face of climate denial and political subversion, anthropologists remain committed to telling the stories of those most affected by climate change, emphasizing the human dimensions of environmental collapse.

This roundtable calls for anthropologists to articulate new narratives for the present moment. How can we continue to focus on the climate crisis while confronting the growing political barriers and denialism that seek to impede meaningful action? How can anthropology, with its deep engagement in cultural histories and embodied experiences, use its unique approach to human storytelling and knowledge co-production to resist the erasure of climate realities and inspire transformative change? How can anthropology collaborate with communities and partners to revitalize our climate imagination, while harnessing the power and creativity of anthropologists and collaborators to challenge and reimagine the political and ecological futures we face? How can we mobilize the human stories and experiences we learn from to reinvigorate our visions of a post-carbon future?

The haunting violence of environmental collapse demands our attention, and as we acknowledge this ongoing crisis, we also recognize that these "ghosts"-the forces trying to silence us-will not succeed. Together, we can rethink the future, offering not just a critique of the present but a vision for a just, sustainable, and livable world for all.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Emily Hite, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Adam Fleischmann, University of Ottawa

Presenter(s): Emily Hite, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Jamie Haverkamp, Bates College, James Blair, Cal Poly Pomona, Department of Geography and Anthropology, Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley, Frances Roberts-Gregory, Harvard University

Discussant: Eduardo Romero Dianderas, McGill University

3853 Future Speculations and Haunting Legacies: An Anthropological Approach to FemTech

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Social scientists have increasingly examined the emergent domain of FemTech through the lens of surveillance, legal regimes, and digital health. This roundtable broadens the anthropological discussion of FemTech beyond simply "tracking" or digital health to trace out the generative effects of Fem+Tech and its antecedents as domains of future speculation haunted by past legacies. We place considerations of FemTech in conversation with the terms "spectre" and speculation, examining how imaginations of uncertain and future potential become harnessed into digital technology.

Drawing on original research, participants in this roundtable will discuss how FemTech projects take shape materially, technologically, and rhetorically amidst existing assemblages of bodies, technologies, and politics. In convening scholars across rank, geographic region, and disciplinary backgrounds this roundtable addresses the questions: what does an anthropological approach

have to offer to the study of FemTech futures and what do critical analyses of FemTech writ broadly have to offer anthropology? Asking these questions through the lens of spectres and speculations, we situate FemTech projects' culture-making dimensions within legacies of racial capitalism and ethics, reproductive governance and liberation, and the labor of digital technologies. Although FemTech industry proponents garb themselves in the spectacle of novelty and innovation, participants in the panel will discuss to what extent these assemblages are "old wine in new bottles." Not simply reifying or critiquing the fem, the tech, and capital, this roundtable will look at the generative effects of this domain of embodied and mediated experience.

Thinking across a range of ways that the gendered body, blood, hormones, microbes, and other everyday technological objects are mobilized, contributors to this roundtable will be asked to consider the legacies that haunt FemTech and its mode(s) of potential through the following lenses: property and regulation, racial capitalism and ethics, quantification and financialization, reproductive surveillance and liberation, futurity, disability and health, and prosthetics and subjectivity.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Megan Tracy

Presenter(s): Danica Facca, Western University, Chloe Curtis, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Odia Kane, Jess Newman, Cornell University, Sharra Vostral, Northwestern University, Marie de Lutz, University of Edinburgh

Discussant: Rebecca Howes-Mischel, James Madison University, Andrea Ford, University of Edinburgh

7254 Pasts That Never Left: Materiality and Repetition in the Folds of Time

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Past-ness" stresses a quality of the past that is sensed and felt, rather than merely narrated. Dawdy (2016) describes it as the sensation of being surrounded by a world belonging to a time prior to the present. While this sense may not always be easily articulated in words, it emerges through interactions with landscapes, built environments, atmospheres, patina and objects. The ethnographic studies on past-ness presented in this panel foreground the everyday practices that deliberately-or at times unwittingly-cultivate this sensation. They trace the concrete and tangible ways in which people engage with the sensed and felt past-ness embedded in landscapes, ruins, architectures, and environments. These socio-cultural processes create space for both involuntary and intentional provocations and disruptions, through which human actors confront, encounter, and engage with traces, indentations, and remnants. The papers showcase how these encounters generate affects and imaginaries, that give rise to new forms of politics, subjectivities, community, and historical narratives. They think about remnants through Morris's (2000) notion of specters that

"testify to the folding and possible multiplicity of time," as pasts continue to recur in different forms, shapes, and dimensions.

Burcu's paper explores how the disrupted flow of the Tigris River mediates multiple temporalities of state violence, folding them onto one another, as recurrent flooding uncovers human remains and cultivates affective hauntings that give rise to new forms of witnessing, archiving, and remembering. Onaiza's paper reveals how walking in old Lahore—through visceral encounters with architectural patina and ritual pathways—not only navigates, but actively produces spatio-temporal multiplicities, transforming material remnants into co-conspirators that arm layered pasts for today's struggles over who belongs. Alexander's paper follows how a revolutionary art school's iconic architecture activates the multiple pasts that continue to shape students' creative practice and self-understanding, illustrating how built environments embed, transmit, and unsettle contradictory historical sensibilities across generations. Leonor explores how anticipating El Niño floods in Peru's La Leche Valley requires both rational assessment and affective engagement with remnants of past destruction—through magic, ghost stories, and creative manipulation—cultivating alternative senses of time that challenge resilience narratives. In Busra's analysis of the national greenery project in Turkey, a Garden of the Nation site unfolds through overlapping temporalities—a mythologized environmentalist past, a perpetually deferred future beauty, and a stalled unsightly present—where populist aesthetic governance operates not through coherence, but through recursive cycles of anticipation, suspension, and ultimate incompleteness.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Burcu Ozdemir, Onaiza Arshad

Chair: Alexander D Werner

Presenter(s): Alexander D Werner, Burcu Ozdemir, Emine Busra Unluonen, CUNY, Graduate Center, Leonor Lamas, Onaiza Arshad

Presentation(s): Too Late: Architecture, Art, and Historical Memory in Post-Castro Havana

Walking into the high, brick-vaulted studio, Julia, exhausted, declared: "I feel I arrive late everywhere." Like her fellow visual arts students, she had missed the golden years of the Cuban University of the Arts (ISA). This paper traces how the institution's multiple pasts continue to burden today's students. Focusing on three flashpoints, I explore how the social meanings of its famed domes—its cúpulas—continue to shape the present. Built in the utopian euphoria of the early 1960s, the domes were soon condemned as bourgeois escapism. A quarter-century later, under those same fantastical vaults, the avant-garde Cuban Renaissance of the 1980s developed and flourished—only to be curtailed during the post-Soviet crisis. During the 2014–2017 US-Cuba thaw, the domes again teemed with promise, as (now-absent) tourists came for the architecture and to buy student art. Drawing on fieldwork, archival research, and interviews, I read ISA's built environment as a ghostly palimpsest (Quiroga 2005), where conflicting memories, ideologies, and aesthetics accumulate—not only under its cúpulas but also in the layers of paint on studio floors and abandoned sculptures overtaken by the grounds' tropical vegetation. I argue that the material "patina" (Dawdy 2016) of these pasts haunts students as they select, reject, and rework second-

order reflections on Cuba's contemporary "post-post-socialist" condition (Buyandelgeriyn 2008; Bardawil 2020).

Presenter(s): Alexander D Werner

Sediments of the Tigris River: Water as Witness, Water as Archive

This paper examines how past and ongoing violence converge through river ecologies and continue to haunt the present, as Kurdish villagers affected by the Ilisu Hydroelectric Dam project in the Upper Tigris Basin navigate the disrupted flow of the river. Since the dam became operational, several villages have begun re-emerging each summer, only to be submerged again by early spring. When water levels recede, the river increasingly reveals human remnants, as it erodes the soil from previously submerged graves—generating a palpable sensation about interlinked pasts long suppressed by the dominant narratives of the nation-state. Ethnographically tracing the encounters of villagers with the human bones along the Tigris River during the dry season, this paper demonstrates how interactions with river ecologies cultivate affective resonances and material effects of inextricably linked sediments of violence (Biner 2020; Altuğ 2021; Suni 2023; Yıldırım 2023). These sediments mark layered histories, including the genocide of Armenians and Assyrians in the 1910s, and the killings, enforced disappearances and mass displacement of Kurdish populations in the 1990s. Following the everyday engagements with the Tigris in the wake of the dam, the paper shows how water becomes both an archive of destruction and a repository of lives lived. It argues that destruction does not solely manifest as erasure, but also gives rise to new modes of witnessing archiving, and remembering.

Presenter(s): Burcu Ozdemir

Always Arriving, Never Here: Aesthetics Governance and the Politics of Suspension in Turkey

This paper traces the life of a "Garden of the Nation" in a small town in Turkey's Black Sea hinterlands, where the promise of beautification takes ghostly form: always arriving, never here. Framed as environmental restoration and moral renewal, the garden projects draw on imagined Islamic-Turkish past urban gardens, yet materializes instead as dirt, rubble, and half-finished paths. Regardless of political alignment, all participate in the production of mess—anticipating a cleanup that never comes. This is not failure, but a mode of governance rooted in suspension: an affective-aesthetic atmosphere through which the populist regime conjures and consolidates its hold.

Drawing on Ghertner's (2015) concept of "rule by aesthetic," I analyze how the garden reconfigures what can be seen, said, and lived. I argue that populist aesthetic governance in contemporary Turkey lies not in Ottoman-Islamic imagery or direct appeals to "the people," but in how it operates through sudden interventions that spark anticipation, only to lapse into lackadaisical disinterest and decay—until the next cycle of grandiose attempts. Mess accumulates, deadlines pass, and no one is surprised; suspension prompts shrugs, jokes, and a casual willingness to ignore. As residents say, "It'll be swifted up soon enough," signaling dismissal, familiarity, and ongoing entanglement with the incomplete garden. Ultimately, populist aesthetics here do not impose unity—they manage its absence.

Presenter(s): Emine Busra Unluonen

Living with El Niño: Endurance, Atmosphere, and the Afterlife of Ruins in Northern Peru

The El Niño Southern Oscillation is a cyclical yet unpredictable atmospheric phenomenon that brings either flash floods or long droughts to Peru's northern coast. In the La Leche Valley, people have endured its destructive force many times. In 2023, I visited the house of Gol to ask about his experience with this unruly force and about the precautions his family was taking to avoid having their home destroyed again. He shrugged and pointed to the sacks of sand piled by the door. "We'll do what we always do. Try to survive," he said. Then he gestured to a nearby huaca and added: "In the worst case, we'll take refuge with the dead." His words captured the anxiety and resignation that often characterize contexts of slow violence (Nixon, 2013) or routine crisis (Muir, 2022). But his gestures also pointed to a deeper relationship with the rubble of past disasters as traces of older forms of coexistence with catastrophe. This paper explores how atmospheric phenomena—both in the meteorological and affective sense—produce enduring moods and social relations in the valley. Building on 6 months of fieldwork in the La Leche valley, I examine how collective modes of sensing, waiting, and surviving cultivate relationships with the landscape and with pastness that are neither nostalgic nor purely anticipatory. Instead, they offer speculative ways of being-with vulnerability, and modes of endurance that are creative, ambiguous, but not necessarily emancipatory.

Presenter(s): Leonor Lamas

Processions, Performances, and Pedestrian Rhythms: The Competing and Embodied Temporalities of Andaroon-Shehr, Lahore

Building on Munn's (2012) conception of spacetime as constituted through embodied practice, this paper examines how walking in Lahore's historic Andaroon-Shehr serves as both an involuntary evocation of layered memories and a deliberate political act (Bonilla 2011). Through ethnography, the paper reveals how walks mobilize competing spatio-temporal orientations, each generating distinct affective engagements with the past that, in turn, shape contemporary political dispositions. Government-run tours theatrically "recreate" a nationalized, consumable past through spectacle and costumes. Meanwhile, amateur historians guide tourists through the same alleys not to perform history, but to excavate it through chance encounters and exploratory wandering. Beyond these touristic practices, the paper analyzes residents' everyday footfall, marked by their pragmatic navigation of the space, and annual Shia religious processions, whose ritualized pathways collapse sacred history into the present through mourning practices. These practices—performative, critical, habitual, and devotional—engage the neighborhood's ruins through divergent spatial encounters, generating affects ranging from nostalgia and reverence to dissent and defiance. The resulting temporal bricolage, woven through with spatio-affective entanglements, renders legible how walking in Andaroon transforms "pastness" (Dawdy 2016) into a visceral terrain for ongoing struggles over belonging, heritage and identity.

Presenter(s): Onaiza Arshad

2001 Innovation: Exploring Great Transformations as Ghosts and Inspirations from the Local Past

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Innovation is often framed as a rupture, including breaking with the past, cutting off ties, and forging new ways of being in the world. Yet, innovation does not necessarily dissolve existing practices, socio-political or kinship relations, but sometimes transforms them at a different pace. This session explores how different communities conceptualize, implement, and experience innovation across regional and continental contexts, bringing together socio-cultural anthropological and archaeological perspectives to interrogate the processes that drive and constrain change. Innovation is considered in its broadest sense, including but not restricted to technological innovation, changes in modes of production, and scientific innovation. Innovation is frequently described as leaving the ‘ghosts from the past’ behind, yet frequently, it presents a recombination of the old and the new. Such a conception of innovation resonates with the uncanny that permeates the quotidian, closely relating to this AAA meeting’s theme.

What defines innovation? Is it a momentary spark or a slow, cumulative process? How does innovation intersect with invention, creativity, and tradition? From a long-term geo-historical perspective, environmental and social pressures and changes, such as the end of the last Ice Age and the Little Ice Age, have stimulated new extractive and subsistence strategies. However, do crises or favourable conditions foster innovation? How does innovation happen? Why do some communities embrace change while others resist it? Why is innovation considered as progress in some contexts, whereas in other contexts it is perceived as a form of loss or deterioration? Finally, what kind of understandings underlie the promotion and/or advocacy of innovation of research?

Archaeology offers long-term perspectives on innovation, traditionally categorized through the Three-Period System—Stone, Bronze, and Iron—initially suggesting a linear progression of technological development. Such a conceptualization of innovation is another ghost of the past. Today, archaeology provides ample evidence for innovation not unfolding in such clear-cut stages but in slow transitions that highlight complex and overlapping processes of social and material transformation, often closely related to each other. How do past infrastructures shape what is perceived as new, and how do archaeologists and socio-cultural anthropologists theorize it? In turn, despite a digital transformation that allows us to connect across the world in real-time, socio-cultural anthropology provides a valuable record of the continuous diversity of being in the world. Facing the environmental and climate disaster, what are the ways in which innovation may lead to more sustainable and just futures?

This session includes papers that examine innovation as a social and cognitive, material, and historical phenomenon, to evaluate how scholars thought of innovation in both ancient and contemporary communities.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Sabina Cvecek, Field Museum, William Parkinson

Chair: Sabina Cvecek, Field Museum, William Parkinson

Presenter(s): Andre Gingrich, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Barbara Horejs, Austrian Academy of Sciences - Austrian Archaeological Institute, Tarini Bedi, Arkadiusz Marciniak, William Parkinson, Sabina Cvecek, Field Museum

Presentation(s): Like a Ghost: An Innovation Caused by Alien Insights into Nothingness

Between the 10th and the 13th centuries CE, mathematics and astronomy in the Arab-speaking world went through important phases of unprecedented scientific innovation. To an important extent, this was made possible by the ways in which Middle Eastern mathematicians and astronomers absorbed and integrated a much earlier and profoundly radical idea from South Asia. There, basic insights into "Nothingness" and ensuing principles of the figure Zero during their emergence a couple of centuries earlier had been deeply connected to specific traditions in India's philosophical and religious history. The idea that Nothingness could be envisioned at all represented a counterintuitive provocation to most monotheist thinking at first, until Arab mathematicians found out how to usefully put this innovative idea into ways of practical operation that eventually would contribute to major transformations in Circum-mediterranean and European worlds. - This case has been analyzed by many other fields, while the present talk will discuss how socio-cultural anthropologists and archaeologists may learn from it. To this purpose, it is suggested to transcend sterile dichotomies between "relativism" and "universalism" by absorbing the insight that socio-cultural phenomena such as innovation always contain both at the same time, incomparable as well as comparable dimensions. By consequence, this leads to a confirmation and elaboration of what Ulrich Beck once addressed as the epistemological necessity f

Presenter(s): Andre Gingrich

Shaping a New World? The Invention of Stone Axes and its Social Impact in Southwest Asian and European Deep History

The fundamental transformation of hunter-gatherers into sedentary farming communities is widely regarded as a period of innovations in human history marked by the emergence of numerous innovations and the adoption of new common practices. This transition is exemplified by the development of new technologies, a new economy, and the establishment of permanent settlements, also referred to as the "Neolithic Package". This transformative process was initiated by communities in the Fertile Crescent of southwest Asia around 11,500 years ago, and it reached the European continent with its primary inventions approximately 3,000 years later after a process of expansion and adaptation. The stone axe is a rudimentary, yet highly specialized implement that is intimately intertwined with these economic, social, and cultural transformations. It forms the core of this paper as representative and symbolic object. While the typo-technological details of this first implement in human history that utilizes a long haft for chopping and its classification, function and deposition modalities have been exhaustively examined in archaeology over the past century, the broader societal impact of this invention requires further investigation. The symbiotic relationship between the novel technological tool and the communities' practices, such as forest

clearance for agriculture, construction of dwellings, and resource exploitation, is evident, suggesting an overlapping process of social, material, and te

Presenter(s): Barbara Horejs

Cars, Technology and Social Techniques in 20th Century India

Through the lens of the automobile industry in 20th century India this paper examines Indian automobilization as a domain of both technological and relational innovations. I argue that coherent, technological histories of national innovation and technological progress often underestimate what I call "social techniques" that underlie the possibilities and the limits of narratives of innovation. I read the historical archive of technological innovation of the automobile ethnographically to trace how Indian technology was pieced together from new material, adaptations of older technologies and messy transnational social relations between powerful men in India, United States and Europe and different incarnations of the national and local states that governed them. Through these distributed, social and political histories of technology and automobilization in India I depart from the dominant focus of discussions of innovation on the object of innovation itself to focus instead on the social relations that underlie technological innovation.

Presenter(s): Tarini Bedi

An Unwanted Innovation: The Cattle Story at Neolithic Çatalhöyük

The Neolithic settlement at Çatalhöyük was occupied for almost a millennium, and its development had an arrhythmic form. It consisted of sequences of short bursts of intense development followed by long periods of stabilization and then abrupt disappearance. The most distinct burst occurred right after the middle of the occupational sequence. This rapid acceleration involved complex and overlapping processes of social and material transformation. The arrival of domesticated cattle was one of the major triggers of this process, but the consequences of their arrival have not been systematically studied. Contrary to previous assumptions, Çatalhöyük was not a centre of cattle domestication. Cattle were domesticated elsewhere and introduced to the site around the middle of the seventh millennium BCE. Cattle appear to have been an unwanted innovation, as evidenced by the considerable delay between their appearance in the region and their introduction to Çatalhöyük. In this paper, I will examine the arrival of domesticated cattle in the settlement and how their arrival was conceptualised, implemented and experienced by the inhabitants. I will also discuss the circumstances under which Çatalhöyük reached a peak of development shortly after the arrival of domesticated cattle and the extent to which their presence contributed to the rapid decline of the local community shortly afterwards. Domesticated cattle functioned alongside non-domesticated breeds also for ritualized hunting.

Presenter(s): Arkadiusz Marciniak

Ghosts of the Ancestors: Thomsen, Childe, and the Copper Age in Europe

Innovation sparks the technological changes that underlie archaeological chronologies. The archaeological models archaeologists build to understand the past are constructed upon, and take for granted, the innovation of different technologies within regional sequences. Once established, these regional sequences then form the framework within which later archaeological discoveries are discussed. But what happens when later discoveries bring into question the integrity of the original model? In this paper, I discuss how the discovery of the Copper Age in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century challenged not only the widely accepted archaeological chronology of the continent (i.e., Christian Thomsen's 'three-age' system), but also the fundamental paradigmatic principles about culture that the chronology itself was based upon, in particular the explicit assumption that all significant technological innovations occurred earlier in southwest Asia and were, only later, adopted in Europe. The discovery of the European Copper Age forced scholars like V. Gordon Childe not only to reconsider the integrity of the three-age system, but also to make room for different models of cultural change and innovation. This historical case study demonstrates how the models constructed by our intellectual ancestors continue to influence how we interpret the past today.

Presenter(s): William Parkinson

Innovation and Kinship: Childe, Gimbutas, and the Binary Logic of Relatedness

Technological changes and changes in modes of production provide essential evidence for explaining social change, including changes in social organization and kinship, in archaeology. For example, based on the evidence for metalworking in southeastern Europe, V. Gordon Childe proposed that smiths were the first to abandon kinship ties as the male smiths became the first full-time craftsmen. In contrast, Marija Gimbutas argued that with the arrival of Kurgan people, the wheel, and the wagon into what she called the "Old Europe," kinship changed: the Bronze Age patrilineal systems replaced the Neolithic matrilineal systems of kinship. However, except for a few weak correlations, a century and a half of research in socio-cultural anthropology has not succeeded in demonstrating a strong relation between changes in subsistence practices and changes in kinship systems. Additionally, the new evidence of metalworking within Early Bronze Age communities in western Anatolia and new archaeogenetic results provide a new basis for theorizing change in which variability of kin-making within the "Old Europe" rather than linear change over time becomes apparent. This paper demonstrates how the binary logic of kinship as either present or absent or matrilineal or patrilineal has obscured the ethnographically grounded understanding that different ways of becoming kin may exist side-by-side rather than one replacing the other according to a chronological and/or technological sequence.

Presenter(s): Sabina Cvecek

4533 Ghosts of the Entrepôt: Infrastructure, ecology, and the politics of opacity

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Postcolonial port cities continue to be haunted by the racialized materialities of empire. Once important nodes of empire, they are sites where the imperial extraction and trade of goods and people continue to be enacted in and with the militarization and augmentation of coastal ecologies. Today, their coastal ecologies continue to be drastically altered to accommodate the expansion of global capitalism through racialized hierarchies of life and labor. They are also places where the partition of land and water is continually enacted through these racialized systems in tandem with urban infrastructures that are imagined through the fallacy of emplacement on an inherently mutable shore. As harbors have been deepened, waters have been polluted, fishers have been displaced, and land has been filled into littoral regions, urban coastal ecologies today are also critical zones in which the intersecting crises of climate change and unequal exposures to waste are most deeply felt.

In this roundtable, we ask: In what ways does the ongoing manipulation of coastal ecologies for port infrastructure continue to enact colonial, racialized, gendered, and class violences? When and why does the social life of port infrastructures become visible to broader publics, and what political claims are generated by their representation? What kinds of knowledge and ways of being in the world continue to be threatened by the destruction of amphibious ecologies and the expansion of industrial ports? We are particularly interested in providing space to discuss the ways that the political and social life of infrastructure and remnants of empire remain mutable or opaque despite their permanent and irreversible materiality.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Matt Barlow, University of Pennsylvania, Nikhil Anand, University of Pennsylvania

Presenter(s): Matt Barlow, University of Pennsylvania, Soha Mohsen , Ashley Carse, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Nikhil Anand, University of Pennsylvania

2579 Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller's Humanistic and Public Anthropology. Part I: Wellbeing in West Africa and Beyond

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Bringing together scholars from around the world, this double session honors the scholarship of Paul Stoller and his influence on the anthropology of West Africa, humanism, wellbeing and the senses. Representing Part I, this panel brings together leading ethnographers of Africa and medical anthropologists to comment on Stoller's influence on their work on healing, spirit possession and wellbeing. For four decades, Stoller conducted fieldwork among the Songhay of Niger and, later, among the West African diaspora in New York. Captivated early on by Songhay spirit possession troupes, Stoller was taken under the wing of a sorcerer and a possession priest, as well as the ethno-cinematographer Jean Rouch. Stoller's life and fieldwork shifted dramatically after a series

of illnesses, first in Niger, where he was told bad magic was being cast on him, and again after a cancer diagnosis in the early 2000s. His resulting works are humanistic in nature, holistic in their treatment of sensory engagement, and accessibly written. Stoller is particularly renowned for his unique writing style, having pioneered the "ethnographic novel"-readable, yet instructive academic work. He has been a regular contributor to the Huffington Post and Psychology Today, bringing anthropological insight to a non-academic audience through the publication of over 100 articles. For this, the American Anthropological Association awarded him the Robert B. Textor and Family Prize for Anticipatory Anthropology in 1994, honoring those whose significant contributions affect policy decisions; and the Anthropology in the Media Award in 2015. In addition to fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, he was awarded prestigious Anders Retzius Gold Medal in Anthropology-the discipline's "Nobel Prize" given by the King of Sweden every four years. He now travels around the world giving writing workshops and transmitting the knowledge of the Songhay ancestors to a new generation of students. Panelists' papers represent original research in their fields, discussing the ways in which Stoller's varied contributions to humanistic, sensory and public anthropology have impacted their own work.

Section: Association for Africanist Anthropology

Organizer: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Chair: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Presenter(s): Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Conerly Casey, Rochester Institute of Technology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Scott Youngstedt, Sergio Gonzalez Varela, Laurian Bowles, Davidson College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Surrounded by the Spirits: An Introduction to Paul Stoller's Influences and Influential Work

Based on oral histories collected by the author and West Chester University anthropology and museum studies students, this paper introduces the special double session, "Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller's Humanistic and Public Anthropology" by presenting a snapshot of Stoller's life and the varied influences and experiences that shaped his scholarship and research. Apprenticing with Songhay sorcerers and possession priests in Niger, working the stands of diasporic West African merchants in Harlem, practicing a range of wellbeing practices amid his cancer journey, and teaching and mentoring decades of students and colleagues, all have contributed to the humanistic and accessible nature of Stoller's scholarship that has shaped contemporary anthropology. A pioneer of the "ethnographic novel" and an active public anthropology - and public university instructor - he has brought complex, often difficult-to-conceptualize ideas to scholars and lay audiences alike. In line with Stoller's immersive, sensory public anthropology, this talk finishes with a 3D virtual tour of the West Chester University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's year-long exhibition, "Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller and the Songhay Journey Towards Wellbeing" and includes short snippets from the student co-curators who were inspired by Stoller's life story.

Presenter(s): Michael Di Giovine

A Soothing Voice, or a Hot Slap: Sensory Intimacies with Bori Spirits of the Sahel

Paul Stoller's groundbreaking work in Niger with Hauka, Songhay-speaking people who were possessed by French colonial spirits, shifted anthropological attention, in the 1990s, from visual representational readings of spirit possession, to our sensing bodies. Stoller urged us to use our own bodies in scholarship – to enter new sensory relations of bodies and beings, to forge rather than sever their interconnectedness, sensibility and intelligibility. In this talk, I draw on Stoller's work to consider sensory intimacies with Bori spirits of the Nigerian Sahel, and to explore the emergent ecologically infused sensations, sensitivities and relations that draw attention and forge connections. Whether through relationships or multisensory signals of communication, the vibrant visceral exchanges of spirits and humans as they take something lively from one another offer critical insights to healing in ways that extend beyond bodies, into social and political lives and healthy environments. These situated exchanges furthermore affect time-space connections in and across beings and things at a distance, as we sense, perceive, imagine, remember, and move about, or in and out, in ways that may be habitual, sediment and thick with affective relational density, or entirely new. Finally, I will point to critical entanglements of ethics, ontologies and epistemologies that may shape future research and practices of healing.

Presenter(s): Conerly Casey

The Ghosting and Expulsion of the Spirits in Niger: Implications for Health and Well-Being

Paul Stoller and many prominent social scientists including Conerly Casey, Wendy Wilson Fall, Rahmane Idrissa, Murray Last, Kristín Loftdóttir, Adeline Masquelier, Guy Nicholas, Brian Nowak, Susan Rasmussen, and Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan have meticulously documented that people of Niger and Northern Nigeria are surrounded by spirits across Songhay, Zarma, Hausa, Mawri, Fulani, Tuareg, and various other ethnolinguistic and regional contexts. Nigériens and Northern Nigerians have for generations acknowledged the reality of the spirits and the importance of maintaining harmonious balanced relationships with spirits for personal and community health and well-being. This balance is currently being disrupted by intersecting precarities including climate change and deforestation and the loss of spirit habitat, regular lethal attacks along Niger's borders, and migration. Most importantly, the rise of conservative, reformist Salafist interpretations of Islam in the region is simultaneously pushing people to completely ignore the existence of spirits while aggressively marketing a variety of medicines to expel or kill spirits. Some Nigériens and Northern Nigerians attribute that multiple hardships they are facing to the communal loss of communication with and respect for spirits. This paper draws from my own ethnographic experiences with spirits in Niger over 37 years as well as the literature developed by Paul Stoller and a host of scholars on this panel I have recognized.

Presenter(s): Scott Youngstedt

Living Between Two Worlds: The Radical Anthropology of Paul Stoller

This presentation analyzes the impact of Paul Stoller's work within the anthropology of religion. It emphasizes his humanistic approach to fieldwork and his focus on the senses. It argues that Stoller's work challenges us to radically question our certainties about the world by exploring new forms of knowledge and innovative ways to engage with theory and practice. Attributes such as respect, tolerance, patience, and humility are essential for both short-term and long-term apprenticeship processes. Stoller's body of work provides insights into the complex dilemma anthropologists face—living between the world of academia and the world of alterity. Ultimately, his contributions teach us the importance of taking others seriously and encourage us to find creative solutions for understanding their lives, moving beyond conventional ways of perceiving the world.

Presenter(s): Sergio Gonzalez Varela

Feel a Way: Ethnographic Friendship and Anthropological Futures

Paul Stoller consistently exhorts anthropologists to embrace embodied method and sensuous ethnography. Often articulated using theoretical throughlines to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Rouch's cinematic realism, and Morrison's narrative power, Stoller positions intersubjectivity as a core analytic and storytelling as the driving force of ethnographic practice. I trace Stoller's relationship with his teacher-mentor, Adamu Jenitongo, a sohanci (master healer) descended from 15th century healers of Sonni Ali Ber's Songhay Empire. Their relationship highlights Stoller's effort to doubly recast anthropology. First, Jenitongo's teachings, rooted in the gustatory, irrational and divine, allows Stoller to instantiate reflexivity and storytelling as formidable anthropological inheritances. Second, as a heckle of positivism, their foray into ritual and possession, as well as Stoller's battle for wellbeing in the "village of the sick" vividly renders how hiding in plain sight becomes a source of agency and power. Jenitongo's teaching unfurl, pause, and occasionally haunt Stoller's work, and the sapience of their relationship is instrumental in my work with women migrants in Ghana called kayayei (head porters). The emotional toll of their gig economy labor shows up in multilingual, protracted stories fraught with contradictions. Yet sensory experiences — taste, smell, touch, and sound—initiates the body into a slow anthropology becoming a way of being and an ethic of care.

Presenter(s): Laurian Bowles

7807 Ethnographic Insights into Place, Culture, and Identity: Exploring Community-Centered Agency and Development in Early Childhood Environments

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Conversation/Debate

This conversation will attend to community-specific pedagogies, curriculum, and communal engagement that inspired young children to embody culturally-specific competencies often pathologized by the white gaze. Often, engagements in early childhood spaces are examined with

lenses that ascribe to narrow binaries (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Dumas & Nelson, 2016), (re)produce racialized discourses (ross, 2020), and privilege the autonomous child (see Kanyal & Gibbs, 2014; Correia et. al, 2019). These perspectives can lead to limited, individualistic, and colonial understandings of child agency.

The presenters will draw from four sites in a larger comparative multi-sited ethnographic study to discuss how various cultural communities define, value, and support young children's agency. We will address targeted and intentional practices - employed by communities whose identities and cultural norms have been historically excluded from traditional systems of power - that created identity-supportive pre/school ecologies (Frazier, 2016). The sophisticated embodied practices and pedagogies documented through ethnographic methods within these community-centered ecologies disempowered perspectives that often label cultural practices as "inferior" or "inappropriate" (Moss, 2016; Dahlberg, et al., 2013) and reconceptualized children's agency away from individual-centered Eurocentric frameworks (Pérez, 2019). We will explore classroom practices that privileged belonging, participation, and safety over individual rights to choice and decision-making (Battiste, 2019). We will highlight how the four classrooms serving young children looked beyond versions of agency rooted in Western values and norms (Varpanen, 2019) and took a holistic, long-term approach that expands notions of agency for young children.

The data drawn on to guide this conversation comes from four classrooms serving young children that were created out of an urgent community need to empower child identity: 1) a Garifuna home-based preschool to foster cultural identity, 2) a Jewish home-based preschool to strengthen religious and cultural principles, 3) a community-based summer school program to empower Black identities and critical literacies, and 4) a public preschool offering a comprehensive early childhood program that includes individualized teaching, along with community and agency centered ECE experiences.

Each presenter will show short video(s) from each of the four sites to engage the audience in a conversation about culturally-informed ECE practices that build community and support cultural identities. Presenters will also draw on ethnographic data sources, including participant observations, field notes, teacher interviews, researcher reflections, photographs, and videos of young children from each classroom to add depth to this conversation. The goal is to invite the audience to engage with the videos and other data to reflect on the practices.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Shubhi Sachdeva, San Francisco State University, Natacha Jones, University of North Texas

Presenter(s): Shubhi Sachdeva, San Francisco State University, Natacha Jones, University of North Texas, Amber Fowler , Nnenna Odim

Discussant: Molly McManus, San Francisco State University

6417 Fentanyl: Toxic and Intoxicated Worlds

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM through 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

A substance that is both toxic and intoxicating, this roundtable discussion explores how fentanyl is mobilized across distinct scales of worlding projects, from intimate realms of bodily agency, intention, and desire as well as global national security assemblages involving systems and political economies creating the conditions of possibility for fentanyl's widespread discursive and material circulation. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, approved for use as anesthesia and pain medication. However, fentanyl is also widely available in the street drug market—typically from clandestine labs in China and Mexico, becoming a central figure in the third and fourth waves of the opioid epidemic as it has replaced heroin and prescribed opioids. Our discussion grows out of the work of the Toxicity/(In)toxication Working Group, examining the interconnections between pharmaceutical and toxic substances and the socialities they help produce. To date, pharmaceuticals have been bracketed off from discussions of toxicity, including those focused on worlding. This roundtable seeks to bridge discussions of toxicity and fentanyl by examining how the languages of exposure that surround fentanyl move across different scales of environments, populations and atmospherics. In her essay, "Worlding Refrains," Kathleen Stewart describes worlding projects as apprehended in the shimmery, slippery moments "accreted out of opening events" (343), the "shift in the sensorium, or the stink of some national transformation settling over the hollers, or the sheer weight of power coming down, or the weirdly giddy possibilities that popped up." How can we trace fentanyl across geographic, economic, and affective landscapes in rural and urban America, through experiences of opening events, shifts, weight and possibilities?

As a counterpoint, in the introduction to her edited volume *Worlding Cities*, Aiwa Ong employed worlding as an analytic at a global scale, to explore the particular ways in which in urban life, "worlding practices are constitutive, spatializing, and signifying gestures that ... articulate disparate elements from near and far; and symbolically re-situate the city in the world" (12). Critically, she argues that "worlding projects remap relationships of power at different scales and localities" (p12). We move across scales to explore worlding projects in bodies and mundane encounters, as well as the orchestrated efforts of elites in their projects of making and remaking power through property and policing. How is fentanyl mobilized in the making of exclusionary urban worlding projects and emergent national security and surveillance practices? How can analyses of fentanyl toxicity and intoxication contribute to theorizing the US polycrisis, toxic afterlives, organized abandonment, and emergent global security assemblages?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Winifred Tate, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Roberts, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Winifred Tate, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Katherine Hendy, University of Michigan, Sean Muller, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Kelly Knight, University of California, San Francisco

Discussant: Catherine Fennell, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

1946 Possessed by the Past: Institutional Perspectives on the Contemporary Relevance of the History of Anthropology (Part I)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The history of anthropology as a field of scholarly inquiry gained formal recognition with the 1962 Social Science Research Council's Conference on the History of Anthropology—a watershed moment that linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes described as a "definite shift [affecting] the interests and fortunes of all anthropologists" (Hymes 1962, 25). Six decades later, the History of Anthropology Network (HOAN) organized the First International Conference on the Histories of Anthropologies (2023), focusing on "the methodological and theoretical, pedagogical, and ethical aspects of the histories of anthropologies" with an eye toward building a "sustainable global community of historians of anthropologies."

This expanding global interest in anthropology's histories has emerged alongside renewed calls for disciplinary reinvention in the United States, exemplified by Akhil Gupta and Jesse Stoolman's much discussed "Decolonizing US Anthropology" (2022). Such calls depict anthropology's past as haunting the present in consequential ways—a haunting so profound that some argue for radical solutions, as in Ryan Cecil Jobson's call to "let anthropology burn." This stance has sparked debate about the utility of disciplinary history and how to reckon with its ghosts. While many argue that the discipline remains possessed by its past, requiring exorcism as a necessary step to realize a more just and liberatory anthropology, Herbert Lewis offers a prominent counterpoint, arguing that while "the moral center and the concerns of the discipline have changed... It does not follow...that the anthropology of half a century ago and more impedes the work of current anthropology" (2023, 182), and that other uses of the history of anthropology are possible.

This roundtable brings together representatives from key institutions shaping the history of anthropology including HOAN; the History of Anthropology Working Group of the Consortium for History of Science, Technology and Medicine; BEROSE: International Encyclopaedia of the Histories of Anthropology; the History of Anthropology Review; the Histories of Anthropology Annual; the American Philosophical Society; and the AAA's History of Anthropology Interest Group. Through their institutional perspectives, we examine a central question that persists in both anthropology and the history of anthropology: what is the relevance of anthropological history for contemporary practice? While not a new question, examining it through the lens of these contemporary institutions offers fresh insight into the field's past trajectories, current state, and future directions.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Nicholas Barron, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Anthropology, Grant Arndt, Iowa State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Cameron Brinitzer, Harvard University, Adrianna Link , Ira Bashkow, University of Virginia, Department of Anthropology, Rosanna Dent , Christine Laurière, National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Fabiana Dimpflmeier

Discussant: Grant Arndt, Iowa State University, Department of Anthropology

7818 Indexical (mis)recognition: Part I

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel applies the theory of indexical (mis)recognition (Barrett and Hall 2024) within linguistic anthropology. The framework of indexical misrecognition focuses on cases in which speakers/listeners do not share knowledge of the indexical meanings associated with a given linguistic form. The framework of indexical misrecognition presumes that indexical meanings are dependent on specific ethnographic contexts that relate indexical signs to particular cultural contexts of language usage. The model also addresses cases in which individuals claim to use indexical meanings in opposition to normative interpretation of indexical signs. Building on this model, the papers in this panel use wide ranging sets of language data to demonstrate the role of normativity (and antinormativity) in the interpretation of language with a given interaction.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Rusty Barrett, University of Kentucky

Chair: Rusty Barrett, University of Kentucky

Presenter(s): Maria Garcia, Yuki Tanaka-McFarlane, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, PraiseGod Aminu, University of Pittsburgh, Katherine Arnold-Murray, University of Colorado, Boulder, Jacob Henry

Discussant: Rusty Barrett, University of Kentucky

Presentation(s): The Place of Love and the Complicated Politics of Misrecognition

In this paper, we extend a recent overview of the connection between indexical misrecognition and sexuality discourses (Barrett and Hall, 2024) to the landscape of language use, immigration, and documentation status in the United States. We focus on examples from discussions of a public engagement ceremony – a *pedida de mano* – that took place shortly before the 2024 presidential elections in a small, rural town in Northeastern Ohio and was attended by over 100 members of Maya Guatemalan diasporic communities in the United States. Like many major *ixil* life events that happen in both the United States and in Guatemala, this event was also livestreamed to Facebook. Because this was the first *ixil pedida de mano* that anyone had heard of happening in the U.S., it was streamed, shared, and re-shared thousands of times, and became the subject of a hotly contested online debate. We consider the negotiation of indexical meaning within and across immigrant and non-immigrant communities, and we highlight two instances of indexical misrecognition in the performance and online distribution and consumption of this event, including: (1) responses to the public gathering of a community with mixed documentation status

and (2) the significance of the public nature of the gathering and its documentation online. We suggest that this indexical complexity complicates ideas of power and resistance in the politics of indexical misrecognition.

Presenter(s): Maria Garcia

Co-author(s): Maria Garcia, Laura Horton

Nothingness is everything: Japanese magic lanterns

The focus of this paper is on the analysis of Nishiki Kage-e (Japanese magic lantern), one of the traditional theatrical arts in Japan whose performing style resembles a shadow play. Unlike its European equivalent, Nishiki Kage-e utilizes multiple hand-held wooden magic lanterns and various glass-made trick slides, whose images are painted with light transmissive dies and edged with black paint. Explanatory images are often cut off to the utmost extent so that the screen would not brim over with images. This minimalism highlights the contrast between u 'status of being' of the floating colorful images and mu 'nothing' on the background. However, the Japanese aesthetic views the space of mu 'nothing' not as emptiness but rather as fullness, and thus the empty darkness on the screen of Nishiki Kage-e is recognized as the space filled with kehai 'a sign of presence' of invisible characters and of supernatural beings as well as that of lantern performers. The magic lanterns result in contradictory patterns of indexical misrecognition of possible markers the meanings associated magic lanterns (Barrett and Hall 2024). Simultaneously, the emptiness evokes audiences' imagination, allowing them to transform darkness into various buildings, landscapes, or any spacetime and to construct a multi-layered narrative space.

Presenter(s): Yuki Tanaka-McFarlane

Indexical misrecognition as a technique of deracialization

Variation in indexical inventories is contingent upon individual experiences, as language users encounter diverse form-meaning relationships throughout their lifetimes (Barrett & Hall, 2024). (Non-)immigrants are likely to cause such variation in indexical inventories since they are characterized by indexical relativity. (Non-)immigrants are, therefore, likely to disrupt norms in particular spatiotemporal contexts at different semiotic scales. As many Africans come from countries with a non-racial approach to social categorization, they are confronted with race in the US and either challenge or reject processes of racialization. From a 14-month ethnographic observation, this paper focuses on instances where indexical meanings are unevenly distributed, and more specifically, where these Africans challenge or reject the normative indexical meanings embedded within racialized discourses. For instance, when they say they have "mixed" children from an African father and African American mother, they use linguistic forms with social meanings to produce non-normative interpretations that disrupt the normative processes of racialization. Additionally, when they say they are "dark-skinned," they claim ignorance to the indexical possibilities of their racialized "Black" skin in the US. As contemporary discussions of race in the US often exclude engagement with Africa, this study demands (racio-)semiotic attention to cases of misrecognition in which racialized speakers do not share (or

Presenter(s): PraiseGod Aminu

Childless cat ladies in the 2024 US election: The construction of gendered political identity by JD Vance, Taylor Swift, and Swifties for Kamala

This paper performs a multimodal discourse analysis of the construction of "childless cat lady" identity during the 2024 US election, inspired by JD Vance's characterization of Democrats as "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives". I investigate the subsequent formation of "childless cat lady" as a gendered political identity through an analysis of its use by Taylor Swift and grassroots group Swifties for Kamala (S4K). Viewing identity as emergent in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), I trace the roles of Taylor Swift and S4K in forming this political identity, examining Swift's endorsement of Harris, S4K social media posts, and ethnographic interviews with S4K members. Specifically, I employ Barrett and Hall's (2024) notion of indexical misrecognition to examine the differential semiotic processes whereby political actors construct the social meaning of "childless cat lady" to serve their own aims. I consider JD Vance's "cat lady" comments an act of indexical presumption that upholds a negative stereotype of an older, undesirable white spinster to serve his pronatalist agenda and shame child-free white women. In turn, Taylor Swift and her fans in S4K engage in indexical inoculation through sign use, as they enregister "childless cat lady" identity as smart, cool, young, and sexy—a feminist site of resistance against restrictive ideas regarding women's role in society.

Presenter(s): Katherine Arnold-Murray

"Just act gay:" Indexical Inversion and the Queer Perceiving Subject in RuPaul's Drag Race

While many scholars across disciplines have taken a critical lens to examine the ways in which the reality competition RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR) polices the bodies of its contestants in an effort to make them ideally feminine (Edgar 2011), ideally Westernized (Willard & Dubrofsky 2024) and even ideally anglophone (Hermes & Kardolus 2021), few have examined the ways in which the series enforces certain ideologies of queerness vs. heterosexuality writ large. To that end, this paper examines the depiction of and discourse surrounding the first cishet male queen on the program, Maddy Morphosis, who was lambasted both on and off the show for her performance based on her heterosexuality, under the assumption that she lacks a necessary "camp sensibility" (see Barrett 2017). I show that through processes of indexical inversion, RPDR can craft and then project a kind of indexical "misrecognition" (Barrett & Hall 2024) to its imagined queer audience, using the purposefully ersatz portrayal of Maddy to tacitly argue that straightness entails an inability to do drag. In this way, the show articulates what I have deemed a "queer perceiving subject." I also situate the discursive power of RuPaul's Drag Race as a site of ideological emanation within larger frameworks of capitalism and neoliberalism, understanding the show's proliferation of the queer perceiving subject as a method by which audience engagement - and thus, social and economic capital - can be accrued.

Presenter(s): Jacob Henry

Discussion

3989 The Ghosts of Anthropology Past: Decolonizing the Discipline

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Decolonization has been a buzzword in anthropology for decades, but remains difficult to grasp and to achieve. According to Lynne Boiles (2023), decolonization involves "taking seriously the critiques and theories of anthropology's peripheral allies, such as feminist activists and policy makers...(incorporating) the idea that global racial apartheid is the foundation of social, economic, and gender inequality...". But how can we break from anthropology's deep alliances with of colonization? Haunted by the ghosts of anthropology's unsavory past, this roundtable considers the work of decolonizing for a discipline so steeped in colonialism as anthropology. Thirty-two years after the publication of Faye V. Harrison's edited volume, *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology of Liberation*, a new work "Decolonizing Anthropology" by Soumhya Venkatesan, makes us consider the question of decolonization anew, not merely as a neo Marxist political perspective, but as the grounds for a reflexive and interpretive ethnographic analysis that recognizes and confronts the discipline's colonial legacies towards a liberatory practice. As Venkatesan notes, the language we use to discuss decolonization matters and terms like decolonizing may not resonate with all audiences or adequately capture the complex processes of dismantling entrenched power structures. Starting from the assumption that anthropology is worth saving, the panel considers various ethnographic case studies to show how ethnography needs to be and do better. Our panel of emergent and legendary scholars articulates fresh ways of thinking about the relationship between anthropology and colonialism, and how we might move towards a radical liberatory ethnography of new methods and new knowledges. The conversation focuses not only on ways of decolonizing anthropology but also on the potential of 'a decolonizing anthropology' for the future.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Tulasi Srinivas, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies

Presenter(s): John Mathias, Florida State University, Justin Haruyama, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies, Jessica Greenberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Tulasi Srinivas, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies, Naisargi Davé

Discussant: Soumhya Venkatesan

4664 Emerging Forms of Autocracy: Insights from the Anthropology of North America

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Throughout its history, the discipline of anthropology has theorized and critiqued many of the core

concepts and highly contested terms at the center of emerging forms of autocracy in the United States: ethno-nationalism and imaginaries of the nation; state power, citizenship, and surveillance; white supremacy, settler colonialism, and empire; and formations of race, gender, and sexuality. This roundtable convenes anthropologists whose work centers on these ideologically contested phenomena – and the ways these concepts have been leveraged towards the consolidation of executive power in the contemporary United States.

First, presenters will look historically to the ways anthropologists have participated in and responded to similar moments of rising ethno-nationalism, the expansion of empire, and state censorship – and the ways we can and should contend with these ghostly presences. Then, panelists will draw from their own contemporary research, conducted in whole or in part during the first Trump administration within the North American context, to suggest future directions for anthropological inquiry in this present historical moment. In so doing, the roundtable will open up questions about the ideological underpinnings of our current political conditions, as well as the everyday strategies and practices that have furthered or sought to respond to these conditions. What ghostly policies and projects can be found in these political formations? How can and should anthropologists sustain and advance ethnographic inquiry in this moment? What are our ethical obligations to our interlocutors under increasingly autocratic conditions? What creative forms of political claims-making have emerged to challenge surveillance, on the one hand, and erasure, on the other?

Roundtable presenters will share insights from a variety of field sites and topics, including: tensions between state recognition and surveillance among social service practitioners attempting to enroll LGBTQ+ youth in state-funded housing programs in Detroit, Michigan (Berringer), the ways imperialism and settler colonialism are refused, resisted and circumvented in the circumpolar north by Nunatsiavummiut (Gilheany), the material and ideological construction of the "good life" in housing development projects for white middle-class Americans in the American West (Howard), how forms of athletic practice in the American South contribute to the formation of whiteness, masculinities, and contemporary fascism (Mulvey), and the mobilization of policy quagmire to undercount noncitizens in the U.S. decennial census and deepen political exclusion (Norwood). Our discussant, Nicholas Caverly, will bring his own scholarship on political ecologies of racial capital across North America, as well as public responses to these conditions, into conversation with panelists to consider future directions for anthropological scholarship on and under autocratic political conditions in the United States.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Kathryn Berringer, University of Kansas, Hannah Obertino Norwood

Presenter(s): Kathryn Berringer, University of Kansas, Hannah Obertino Norwood, Aspen Mulvey, University of Michigan, Emma Gilheany, Harvard University

Discussant: Nicholas Caverly, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

5455 Ghosts of Higher Education's Present: Discussion of Higher Education's Purpose in the US and Globally

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallery

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In an article on higher education and the public good, Simon Marginson (2011) suggests that institutions that lose their sense of purpose and stand for nothing greater than mere instrumental goals, tend to disappear quickly. He talks about how in a period of 10 years from 1529-1539 the great monasteries of England were dead and gone left only to haunt the countryside. In this roundtable, and to Marginson's point, we ask: what is the point of higher education, and can higher education avoid a ghostly future where there is nothing left but an apparition? Can we move toward some larger purpose in our colleges and universities? And if so, what is that larger sense of purpose? Does our sense of purpose come from, or relate to, other models of higher education found elsewhere in the world or from other time periods? How can our local senses of goals and purposes contribute to the betterment of higher education in general as we move from a neoliberal focus on monetary values to a greater sense of societal purpose that may include monetary values but go beyond the instrumental and address more important human visions and needs. Each of the presenters in this roundtable will talk about ways in their own practice, or from the ghosts of their past, they have sought to contribute to a greater sense of purpose and value in higher education.

In this roundtable discussion, Antonella Pappolla will address the Argentine far-right administration's recent attacks on public universities amid a broader effort to dismantle the state and discredit the idea of the public good. Once a regional outlier with its predominantly public, tuition-free higher education system, Argentina now faces a rapid shift as public universities struggle to remain relevant and afloat in the current political climate. Wes Shumar will discuss what if the "learning" is the way we name the meaning-making that happens in the interactions between students, and between students and teachers. With this view, the unity of teaching and research, understood by the scholars who formed the Humboldt University, comes back into view and helps provide a greater sense of purpose to the work of the university. Jessica Garber will discuss how the relatively short history and structure of higher education in Cambodia has created a dual sense of both opportunity and constraint for students and the lecturers who teach their classes. Drawing on fieldwork in Central America and social movements in the US, Chelsea Abbas will examine manifestations of the border on college campuses. In particular, she will consider ways in which the "la universidad es del pueblo" and discuss the role of the university in regard to student movements, free speech and the increasing criminalization of students and faculty by ICE.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Wesley Shumar, Drexel University, Antonella Pappolla

Presenter(s): Antonella Pappolla , Jessica Garber, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Chelsea Abbas, Widener University, Department of Anthropology, Wesley Shumar, Drexel University

Discussant: Jen Stacy, University of New Mexico

5616 "Other"worldly Methodologies: Queer and Crip Embodied Methods

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel is concerned with embodied methodologies for ethical and non-extractive research. In opposition, and in addition to, the traditional methodologies that continue to haunt us, queer and crip methods are continuously created and live in our very flesh. Queer anthropology, while rooted in understandings of sexuality, gender, and LGBTQ2+ worlds, can extend to all knowledge-making that deconstructs binaries and disrupts the "normal." Queer ethnographic method is a call to reimagine normative anthropological ways of knowing (Weiss 2024). All knowledge is "situated" in space and time (Haraway 1988) and shaped by power; queerness disorients and opens expansive ways of encountering the world (Ahmed 2006). Queerness rejects individualism and insists on relationality, prompting us to ask ourselves how we extend these understandings beyond theory and into methodology.

The four panelists all grapple with the role and methods of anthropologists in times of crisis. As we practice "othered" methodologies in our research, we address topics including violence against land and people, climate change, Indigenous displacement, and reawakened eugenic acceptance in regards to queer and disabled bodies. We collectively assert the importance of knowledge that is created from marginalized bodies, in collaboration and conversation with more-than-human life.

Two panelists focus on the embodied practice of walking as methodology, foregrounding relationality between the researcher's walking body, land, and animal, plant, and elemental interlocutors. One panelist theorizes hiking as methodology, based on 1,500 miles of "hiking ethnography" in conversation with hikers, body, movement, and land. This hiking methodology is queer in extending relations and knowledge beyond the human to encapsulate multi-species becoming. The second panelist presents walking as queer method in photographic anthropology, in which the body and camera witness, sense, and interact with surroundings. This methodology reorients "the field" as a porous, affective terrain where anthropologist and landscape co-constitute meaning.

The two other panelists consider disability and queerness in the process of research. One examines biomedical negotiations of disabled and queer reproductive choices and asks how experiences of disability impact agency, autonomy, and future-self in a time of increasingly restricted individual rights. This research addresses ableist institutional practices, centering queer and disabled scholars to begin rectifying an extensive history of exclusion in the field (Durban 2024). The final panelist uses the arts-based methodology of body-mapping to trace the lived experiences of Exvangelicals with autoimmune disease. This approach emphasizes the need for co-production of knowledge in trauma-informed research by centralizing marginalized bodies and voices throughout

data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Mary Bannister, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Shayna Diamond, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jan Brunson, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Mary Bannister, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Shayna Diamond, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Brush, University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Discussant: Christopher Zraunig, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Hiking as Methodology: Land, Bodies, and Queer Ecological Relations

This paper theorizes hiking as methodology, based on 1,500 miles of ethnographic walking on the Pacific Crest Trail. I consider long-distance hikers' bodily, sensorial, and emotional embeddedness within the more-than-human world. Research often depoliticizes place (McKenzie and Tuck 2014) and fails to recognize the agency of places as active ethnographic collaborators. Similarly, anthropological personhood commonly fails to extend fully to more-than-human life, silencing the centrality of non-human agency in Indigenous worlds (Todd 2016). I take seriously knowledge learned through "situated" (Haraway 1988) bodies, and from and with mountains, weather, plants, and animals. I explore how relationships and queer entanglements create knowledge.

This hiking methodology is queer in extending relations beyond the human to encapsulate multi-species becoming. In the process of research, natural elements expressed agency in interviews held on mountain-tops and while watching streams or stars. And the non-linear and non-binary characteristics of ecosystems (Parreñas 2024) shaped hikers' embodied understandings. Moreover, hiking is a cultural activity which praises some bodies and excludes others. My own (white, female, queer, cisgender, able-bodied) body facilitated every aspect of my research. Movement can be thought of as a conversation with space and ability (Queer Nature 2024), and this research formed through collaborations between land and bodies in motion.

Presenter(s): Mary Bannister

Interview Methodologies for the Queer and Disabled

In a time of varied (and intersecting) crises, we are challenged to reflect on our methodology and approach practical work not as extractionary but inclusive and reciprocal. Conducting ourselves with intentional compassion encourages us to account for factors like queer and Crip time (Kafer 2013) as well as physical, mental, and emotional considerations which are essential for facilitating clear, painless communication for all participants. This can be done through deliberate conversations with those with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ2+ community regarding best practices, particularly when approaching them to act as interlocutors.

Being disabled and queer, I have experienced a multitude of such techniques when acting as both interviewer and interviewee, ranging from successful to discouraging, which have highlighted the

need to address anthropology's historically ableist, exclusionary institutional practices. Centering queer and disabled scholars allows us to begin rectifying an extensive history of exclusion in the field (Durban 2024) and ask ourselves important questions. How does queer time and Crip time change standardized expectations for progression? How might prioritizing reciprocity in relationships change the process of interviews? Do experiences of disability impact agency, autonomy, and future-self in a time of increasingly restricted individual rights?

Presenter(s): Shayna Diamond

“Your body is a temple, and God is abandoning mine”: Exploring lived experiences of

Exvangelicals with autoimmune disease through body-mapping

Christian Evangelicalism depicts bodies as temples for the Holy Spirit to reside in, created in the image of God. However, bodies also serve as vessels for temptations of the flesh, and in the Bible, sickness is often interpreted as an external manifestation of sin or even a test of faith. These coexisting beliefs are especially salient for those living with chronic and invisible illnesses like autoimmune diseases. With the growing numbers of Evangelicals leaving their faith over the last fifty years, we must consider how religious deconstruction involves beliefs about bodies and illness that become exemplified in the flesh. Drawing upon feminist, trauma, and disability theologies, we discuss the role of hermeneutical injustice and body theodicy in the lived experiences of Exvangelicals with autoimmune disease. Through the reflexive arts-based methodology of body-mapping, this project visually represents embodied experiences in tandem with participants' spoken testimonios. This approach emphasizes the need for co-production of knowledge in trauma-informed research by centralizing marginalized bodies and voices

throughout data collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Brush

Discussion

1414 Ghosts of Immigration Past and Present

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

This roundtable examines the spectral dimensions of migration and border regimes, exploring how ghosts-both literal and metaphorical-emerge in the lives of im/migrants, our communities, and the policies that seek to contain or expel them. How do migration policies and enforcement practices produce spectral presences through the erasure, detention, devaluing, and disappearance of bodies? How do the indelible marks of immigration-related state violence haunt the U.S. body politic? Indeed, policies that criminalize and dehumanize migrants create new specters of fear and uncertainty, as families are torn apart and communities struggle against constant surveillance and threats of deportation. These contemporary hauntings intertwine with historical legacies of

exclusion, racialized violence, and xenophobic nationalism, and reinforce longstanding patterns of state violence toward the immigrant Other.

Moving beyond conducting an autopsy of state violence, though, this roundtable foregrounds the ways migrant communities and their accomplices and allies organize, resist, and create spaces of sanctuary, care, and solidarity despite systemic oppression. Drawing on ethnographic research, legal services, and activist engagements in California, Oregon, Colorado, Texas, and Louisiana, we consider: How can engaged anthropology contend with the hauntings of colonial legacies, racial capitalism, and exclusionary nationalism in contemporary migration governance? In what ways do we resist, organize, and build alternative spaces of belonging that challenge state violence? Anthropologists and legal practitioners share how they build networks of mutual aid, establish cultural and political movements, and harness histories of resilience to imagine and enact new futures. Panelists discuss their work with unaccompanied children, undocumented students, deportees, organizers, abolitionists, among other individuals and communities adversely impacted by US immigration policy. We seek to illuminate not only the ghostly traces of violence but also how im/migrant communities reclaim agency, foster connection, and challenge the structures that seek to render them invisible. In this moment of intensified anti-immigrant policies, surveillance, and bordered violence, we ask how an anthropology attuned to spectral presences can illuminate both the violences of migration governance and the possibilities for resistance and solidarity.

Organizer: Whitney Duncan, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Anthropology, Lauren Heidbrink, California State University, Long Beach

Presenter(s): Mariela Nuñez-Janes, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, Cecilia Vasquez, University of California, Riverside, Susan Coutin, University of California, Irvine, Whitney Duncan, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Anthropology, Lauren Heidbrink, California State University, Long Beach, Raquel Fonte

Discussant: Lynn Stephen, University of Oregon

3415 Apparitions of Abortion in the Wake of Dobbs

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Since the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision removed federal protections for abortion rights in 2022, the United States has experienced ripple effects across not only abortion access but all forms of reproductive care. This event has been a rupture for anyone studying reproductive health ethnographically, whether in the US or globally.

We take this year's theme as an invitation to ask a diverse set of researchers to reflect on what "haunts" ethnographic research on abortion and reproduction in the post-Dobbs era. In what ways do legacies of racism, eugenics, and genocide in U.S. history, and our own discipline, haunt what is and is not talked about when we talk about abortion? How do the spectral (and material) geographic lines from redlining, gerrymandering, the legacy of chattel slavery, and the Civil War

overlay the unequal map of abortion access in the U.S. today? How are contemporary anthropologists of reproduction drawing new inspiration from foremothers and ancestors in anthropology, social theory, and especially those in areas of work that has previously gone unrecognized as scholarship at all by the formal disciplines? What might be beyond the bounds of where ethnographic research on abortion and reproduction should ethically go, given these conditions? If we concede that, what do we miss? What ghosts do we create, to continue to "haunt" the canon of the anthropology of reproduction because we didn't, couldn't, wouldn't study it, look at it, give it the attention it deserves?

This roundtable brings together a group of scholars linked by ethnographic research agendas impacted by the material realities of the Dobbs decision in the United States. United by this commonality, we represent anthropologists from advanced graduate students to senior scholars, from diverse regions of the United States including multiple areas of the South that are severely impacted by the Dobbs decision, from medical schools, small liberal arts schools, and large research institutions, and representing scholars of color, scholars who are first gen, and scholars who are parents. Our identities as researchers have shaped decisions of what we study, leaving imprints of ghostly paths not taken, research not chosen, whether because of clouded lenses of privilege or the inaccessibility of research for ethnographers with marginalized identities.

Crucially, inequalities of race, social class, gender, abilities, and sexualities also increasingly impact our interlocutors, meaning that ethical considerations about how to research are increasingly important for new and ongoing work in this field. How do we protect our more vulnerable interlocutors from criminalization and ensure that anthropological research does not amplify these negative effects? We ask this in the context of a U.S. where digital surveillance is increasingly used against women of color to criminalize their pregnancy outcomes.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Brenna McCaffrey, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Sophie Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Mara Buchbinder, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Hannah Thorpe, Dana-Ain Davis, CUNY, Graduate Center, Elise Andaya, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology, Alyssa Basmajian, Hanna Amanuel, Jessi McNeill

Discussant: Sophie Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Elise Andaya, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology

3457 Transgender Rights Under Siege: Global and Domestic Impacts of Recent Anti-Trans Executive Orders and Policies

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In the first 65 days of his second term as President of the United States, Donald Trump signed over 100 executive orders. Several of those executive orders rolled back the rights of transgender people

and severely curtailed research on sexual and gender minorities broadly. Further, the Trump administration has also advanced numerous actions limiting transgender rights and research on transgender people. In this roundtable, we discuss the global and domestic implications of the Trump administration's anti-trans policy agenda. Specifically, we examine topics such as how recently changed global health policies undermine HIV prevention and treatment among transgender people in the Global South, threatening advances in queer health and human rights generally. Additionally, we explore how legal attacks against transgender people strategically leverage inaccurate and infelicitous language, such as "protecting women," and also restrict use of preferred pronouns.

Further, we discuss how research on transgender people has been terminated or stifled due to recent changes at the National Institutes of Health. The impacts on transgender immigrants and international students are also considered, highlighting the unique challenges they face. Lastly, we address the precarious position of trans individuals within academic institutions, where political turmoil and budget cuts threaten their employment and safety. Overall, we suggest the harms recently enacted policies and executive pose on all people, not just transgender individuals, and suggest possible interventions.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Nolan Kline, University of Central Florida, William Robertson, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Eric Plemons, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Lal Zimman, University of California, Santa Barbara, Matthew Thomann, University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Anthropology, Amy Brainer

Discussant: William Robertson, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Nolan Kline, University of Central Florida

3634 Heritage Language, Racialization, and (Post)colonialism, PART I

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What is heritage language, and how do framings and contestations around notions of "heritage" inform, reproduce, and confound ways of organizing difference and belonging in what are claimed to be 'post'colonial contexts? What institutions, practices, and actors have a stake in defining heritage and the value of particular languages and dialects for demarcating contemporary ways of organizing around difference and similarity, and in relation to which social, political, cultural, and economic projects? We attend to (the specter of) colonial relations as they become manifest in (shape) shifting "heritage" languages that may evoke indigeneity, migration, nostalgia, purity, and collectivity. Our analytic frameworks entail ethnolinguistic racism, revitalization, tourism, media analysis, pedagogy, policy, ideology, and (hauntings of) fractal recursivity. We also approach these dynamics with the understanding that coloniality continues to loom over such practices-almost as a kind of phantom-haunting institutional efforts, identity projects, and ideologies of language in

uneven and often unacknowledged ways. The papers offer diverse epistemological standpoints and theoretical and methodological approaches on the question of heritage language, racialization and postcolonialism, including but not limited to areas such as: applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, autoethnography, postcolonial semiotics, critical discourse analysis, language policy and planning, and classroom discourse analysis. A focus on the robust analysis of language and discourse in relation to social and cultural processes unites these papers with respect to our chosen themes.

In this double panel session, we propose to examine how notions of heritage, language, and race become bundled together in educational and other settings in ways that can reproduce colonial hierarchies even when projects attempt to legitimate themselves as multicultural and/or as post-, de-, or anti-colonial. Each of the nine papers in this double session examines these questions and issues in different ways, culminating in comprehensive remarks by our co-organizer and discussant Jennifer Delfino. In line with the panel's focus on how language intersects with power and the making of social difference and inequality in relation to history, colonialism, and capitalism, this double panel brings together papers that problematize the production of "heritage language" as a means for the reproduction or contestation of racializing ideologies and processes in relation to postcolonial nation-building and other political, economic, and social projects. Our work spans nine languages (in order of presentations): Tagalog, Tamil, Modern Standard Arabic, Quechua, North African Arabic, Portuguese, Taiwanese, Kreyòl, and Kichwa; as well as eight ethnographic sites (in alphabetical order): Canada, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, France, Peru, Taiwan, and the United States.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Chantal Tetreault, Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology, Jennifer Delfino, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jennifer Delfino, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Sonia Das, New York University, Chantal Tetreault, Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology, Anne Marie Creighton, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, Axelle Houbani

Presentation(s): Colonial Spectres of Authenticity: Delineating the Tagalog Heritage Language Speaker

In the first Tagalog class I attended as a participant-researcher interested in exploring how Filipino Americans orient to learning a heritage language, our instructor, Kawagi, gave us a short lesson on the topographical features, geography, and cultural history of the Philippines. At the beginning of our first lesson, teacher and students co-constructed discourses about the Philippines as a homeland full of resilient people despite challenges Filipinos have faced due to its precarious geographical location and history of colonization. His point was the following: if Filipinos can face these challenges, you can learn Tagalog. An experienced first-generation instructor, Kawagi seemed to know that second-generation Filipino Americans approached this task with the fear of "failing to be Filipino," as one student confessed nervously. Drawing from an ethnographic study of two

Tagalog language courses, this paper explores how pedagogical spectres of "raciolinguistic authenticity." I examine how raciolinguistic authenticity reproduces and yet transforms wider U.S. racial ideologies of diversity and multiculturalism. As racial ideologies, diversity and multiculturalism position racialized minorities within the impossible task of being both authentic (foreign language speakers) and assimilable/assimilated (monolingual English speakers). While raciolinguistic authenticity constitutes a decolonial response to white supremacy, it also reanimates racist colonial logics of difference.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Delfino

Heritage Language and Social Identity: Shifters of Colonialism and Racialization

After 47 years as a heritage language learner, researcher, and/or teacher, I evaluate whether "social identity" is a useful framework for assessing efforts to inculcate the value and use of a heritage language across post/colonial settings. Using Cummin's (1983, 1995) definition of heritage language as a school "minority language" and He's (2012) as "inherited from home," I analyze how heritage languages function as "shifters" indexing colonial and postcolonial processes of racial exclusion. My longitudinal research draws on autoethnographic, ethnographic, and linguistic data that also constitutes a cross-cultural corpus of experiences of colonialism and racialization in South Asia, Canada, and the U.S. since the period of British colonial rule. Employing auto-ethnography, I explore the different ways in which South Asian and French Canadian heritage languages function as signs of social identity in Canada and the U.S. I also draw upon ethnographic and linguistic fieldwork conducted in Québec among Tamil-Canadians learning their heritage language in public and private schools, despite tracing their shared ancestry to postcolonial India and Sri Lanka (Das 2016). Finally, I share observations of my own efforts to teach my White-presenting children their heritage languages. Heritage languages and the value of social identities are jointly forged through processes of exclusion, with important differences due to the experiences of racialization and colonialism.

Presenter(s): Sonia Das

"Arabic is for White People": Racializing Ideologies for Teaching Arabic in France

Contested heritage landscapes for Arabic learning in France reveal a duality of exclusionary adversity and privileged access, evoking "postcolonial semiotics" (Reyes 2021). Whereas French language as cherished national heritage, contemporary Islamo-linguistic-phobic discourses (García-Sánchez & Tetreault 2024) situate Arabic's place in a post-colonial France not as le patrimoine but rather as aligned with communautarisme (communalism). Thus French is cast as productive heritage (Geismar 2015) and construed as culturally available to all French citizens, Arabic is framed as destructive heritage contributing to religious, ethnic, or cultural enclaves, potentially leading to "Islamic separatism." I use lingual life histories (Krosrity 2021) of advanced heritage Arabic language learners to examine how they navigate these educational landscapes that cast Arabic(s) as both racialized (suspect) heritage and privileged knowledge for elite "white people" as one student noted. An ideologically laden diglossic landscape frames Fusha (MSA) as

morally superior to Darija (North African dialect), leading to the simultaneous valuing and de-valuing of Arabic language learning in France. Purifying Fusha depends upon racializing North African dialect(s) as "street language" that is "not even real Arabic." Such fractal recursivity (Irvine & Gal 2000) correlates with the racialization of North African heritage students learning various Arabic(s) in France (Das 2016; Rosa 2016).

Presenter(s): Chantal Tetreault

Language, Evangelical Worship, and the Scales of Self-Identification in Colca, Peru

In small, non-denominational evangelical churches in greater Arequipa, Peru, indigenous congregations in the rural Colca region have innovated worship practices that use Quechua as a heritage language for older people. Amid an ongoing language shift to Spanish, urban volunteers lead Sunday school lessons in Spanish for children and adolescents, whereas adult services in evangelical churches of Tuti and Sibayo emphasize Quechua for singing hymns. Although congregants have access to published Quechua Bibles, services feature elders spending up to forty minutes extemporaneously translating passages from a Spanish Bible. This paper explores the development and consequences of generationally limited worship practices that use Quechua to a locally unusual degree. At different, overlapping, scales of racialization, the congregants of Tuti and Sibayo could self-identify as Indigenous, as members of indigenous ethnicities in Arequipa, or town residents. I show that while the Quechua worship practices in these evangelical churches at one level claims indigeneity for the congregations, these practices fundamentally construct their older participants as residents of Tuti or Sibayo. Although the generational separation of younger people into Spanish-language contexts limits the reach of these practices, for middle-aged and elderly people, they valorize multiple scales of indigeneity and localness, as well as valorizing Quechua as a constitutive element of those self-identifications.

Presenter(s): Anne Marie Creighton

Rediscovering Arabic as Jewish Heritage: Metalinguistic Perspectives Among North African Jewish Descendants in France

A recent resurgence of interest among North-African Jewish descendants in France focuses on Arabic as a linguistic marker of Jewish heritage, tracing how it reflects broader concerns with heritage, identity, and community belonging. I analyze the metalinguistic discourses of students and instructors in an association that frames itself as a platform for North-African Jewish descendants to engage with cultural heritage through language, founded in 2019 by two linguists who specialized in Standard Arabic and Semitic languages. Based on a sociolinguistic and ethnographic methodology (Heller, M., Pietikäinen, S., & Pujolar, J., 2024), I conducted participant observation in Standard Arabic and Judeo Arabic classes over a seven-month period in 2023–2024. For these second- and third-generation immigrants, Arabic—often described as the "language of the grandparents"—serves to navigate complex issues of heritage, assimilation, and solidarity within racialized communities in France. Rather than engaging in language revitalization or activism, students appear to utilize the association as a space for cultural preservation and

collective solidarity, fostering a unique form of cultural and religious entre-soi. This study contributes to understanding how linguistic choices and metalinguistic reflections among North-African Jewish descendants in France negotiate collective memory, intergenerational identity, and ethnic plurality within the contemporary French socio-cultural landscape.

Presenter(s): Axelle Houbani

3616 Honoring Lynn M. Morgan, Winner of the 2024 SMA Career Achievement Award:

Part I The Politics of Fetuses, Bodies, Abortion

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In Part 1 of this two-part session, we honor medical anthropologist and feminist science studies scholar Lynn M. Morgan and her pathbreaking work on the beginnings and ends of human life, the nature of subjectivity, and the links between a society's understandings of fetal bodies as biological substances and their construction as social subjects. Morgan has brilliantly illuminated changing social and scientific meanings surrounding embryos and fetuses. At a time when advances in reproductive medicine are challenging fundamental assumptions about biological essence, identity, and humanity, Lynn Morgan has added critical depth and breadth to these debates. Her recent work on global implications of the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court's decision overturning federal abortion rights has shed important light on a critical divide between countries adhering to international standards for human rights and countries that do not, and in so doing explicated some likely consequences for advocates on both sides of this divide.

Papers in Part I will reflect upon Morgan's paradigm-defining work on fetuses, bodies, and abortion, including how contemporary discourses about human biology have been shaped by technoscientific idealizations of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and stereotypic representations of Indigenous people, and how the historical assignment of value to embryonic and fetal remains has been a "carefully crafted techno-political project." Two presentations focus on fetal personhood and another considers dementia in the contexts of notions of governance and personhood at the end of life.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Carole Browner, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Chair: Mara Buchbinder, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presenter(s): Beth Conklin, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Monica Casper, Risa Cromer, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, E Singer, Janelle Taylor, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Lesley Sharp, Barnard College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lynn Morgan, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Romancing the Transcultural Scientist

A distinguishing feature of Lynn Morgan's scholarship on the politics of gender and reproduction is her commitment to careful use of cross-cultural perspectives. Including non-Western comparisons in her work on fetuses, abortion, and the beginnings of life contrast with a literature focused almost exclusively on Western history and culture. At the same time, in "Romancing the Transgender Native," Morgan and Evan Towle criticized popular uses of images of "third genders" in non-Western cultures. While sympathetic to the desire for positive historical role models to critique male-female gender binaries, they showed how appropriating decontextualized imagery to support emancipatory political perspectives can foster reductionism and exclusion that harms the people it claims to represent. In the 2000s, their cautionary stance echoed warnings by me and others about the dangers of romanticizing stereotypes of Indigenous people as ecological savants or saviors. This paper asks whether similar considerations might apply to the current celebration in anthropology, STS, and elsewhere of Indigenous ontologies as forerunners to new Western scientific findings in biology, genetics, and human reproduction. Drawing on case studies from Native Amazonia, including Wari' ethnography which Morgan has analyzed in her writings, I explore the challenges for scholars and potential liabilities for Indigenous people of representing Indigenous science in critiques of dominant biomedical paradigms.

Presenter(s): Beth Conklin

The Flexible Fetus: Iterations of Fetal Personhood in U.S. Politics

Human fetuses have long been a staple of U.S. politics, from their contested role in ongoing abortion debates to their signature status in fetal tissue research and other scientific enterprises. Despite truth claims from various parties about fetal ontology – including essential humanness – fetuses are surprisingly plastic and flexible. Fetal personhood, fetal patienthood, and fetal viability have all been moving targets, with meanings shifting across time, place, and context. This talk explores these shifts, beginning in 1973 with *Roe v. Wade*, continuing through the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, and the rise of the Religious Right, and culminating in the current political moment under Trump 2.0 and Project 2025. Drawing on media representations, governmental documents, and scientific literature, I show how interested parties have positioned fetuses in ways that foster desired political agendas. Emphasizing fetal humanness and exceptionality, including fetal personhood, has been a core political strategy for decades. Implications for pregnant people, especially women, have been profound, ranging from limits on access to reproductive care to political disenfranchisement to diminished personhood. Flexible fetuses often mean inflexibility, even punishment, for those in whose bodies fetuses grow. Ultimately, I argue, fetal status fails to resolve divisive moral and political concerns because fetal status itself is a divisive moral and political concern.

Presenter(s): Monica Casper

The Person is Political: Feminist Anthropology for Fascist Times

Feminist anthropologists have been instrumental in tracing the central role of reproductive politics within the resurgence of far-right regimes and movements worldwide. Within this tradition, Lynn Morgan's scholarship has contributed foundational frameworks, from feminist approaches to fetal subjects to theorizing configurations of reproductive governance within far-right transnational movements. Drawing on ethnographic insights about the US religious right's embrace of embryo personhood to advance extreme conservative agendas, this paper amplifies the importance of Lynn Morgan's critical attention to the politicization of personhood as a locus for understanding what has conditioned the possibility for far-right, fascist politics around the globe and feminist responses to them.

Presenter(s): Risa Cromer

The Enduring Influence of "Reproductive Governance:" Personal and Intellectual Legacies of Thinking with Lynn Morgan

The concept of "reproductive governance" has been foundational to my thinking about abortion politics in Latin America, informing my scholarly work for the past decade. I have considered how the extension of abortion rights in the Mexican capital opened new avenues for reproductive care while also expanding processes of reproductive governance. Beyond transforming my own work, Lynn M. Morgan has left an indelible mark on the fields of medical and feminist anthropology through her invaluable contributions to the study of reproductive politics, the fetus, and abortion in the Americas. Through her mentorship, as well, she has shaped a whole generation of scholars, many of whom are on this panel. My paper reminisces on these personal and intellectual legacies, tracing Morgan's trajectory of thought, particularly in terms of the pioneering concept of "reproductive governance," but also the less visible inheritances that she has afforded me in the past fifteen years first as a student and now as a professional anthropologist.

Presenter(s): E Singer

Histories, Icons, Personhood, and Governance: Thinking about Dementia In Light of the Work of Lynn Morgan

This paper discusses how ideas and approaches developed by Lynn M. Morgan in her research into reproduction open important anthropological questions and perspectives in the quite different area of dementia. Specifically, I consider how Morgan's work addressing histories, icons, personhood and governance already has, and still could, inform and enrich dementia research. Illustrations are drawn from my own research on dementia and caregiving, as well as the work of other scholars. I conclude these remarks by commenting on how the influence and reach of her ideas also reflect the power of Morgan's feminist practices of teaching, mentoring, critique and collaboration.

Presenter(s): Janelle Taylor

Of Bodies Lost and Found: Caring for the Anonymous Dead in Carceral America

In the opening chapter of her groundbreaking book *Icons of Life*, Morgan writes of fetal "skeletons in the closet," detailing how the "social production of anonymity" (p.7) empowered scientific and other

efforts to reassign value to embryonic and fetal remains. As all of Morgan's projects teach us, the technical, religious, linguistic, and narrative management of human remains is always a carefully crafted political project, not only among key actors, but for the medical anthropologist, too. Inspired by Morgan, I address the preponderance of Potter's Fields that abut many of the thousands of prisons scattered throughout the US today, attending to the paradoxical nature of caring for the abandoned and anonymous dead who are interred within these carceral deathscapes. Of special concern are questions of what it means to "care" in these contexts, and who is at liberty, so to speak, to do so. In turn, I address the politics of memorializing the carceral dead and the dangers inherent in such projects.

Presenter(s): Lesley Sharp

Discussion

2808 Haunting Monoglossic Ghosts in the Education of Multilingual Communities

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Haunting Monoglossic Ghosts in the Education of Multilingual Communities" features studies that push spectral thinking in language, literacies, and educational practices. Drawing on Deumer(2022), with spectral thinking, we acknowledge that "The past is never the past – it leaks into the present, and the future; ghosts remind us that" (p.141). These ghosts, or substrate influences, affect current practices and open spaces for counter-futures. In multilingualism, literacies, and education, ghosts can resemble coloniality, post-colonial, decolonial, and anti-colonial practices and liminal linguistic spaces such as translanguaging and Ghost Englishes (Dovchin, 2020). This oral presentation invites us to reckon on the question of haunting, which, according to Derrida, is inextricably linked to every hegemony. In this line, the papers address how linguistic, educational, and political hegemonies haunt linguistic and literacy practices.

These studies revolve around reflection and action on linguistic, cultural, and institutionalized narratives and practices that have been erased, blurred, or made invisible by policies and teaching approaches. The first paper addresses how Afro//Indigenous/Brown Latina researchers bear witness to how the ghosts and sustos (Zepeda, 2020) inherited from colonial institutional violence (re)shape them as language educators/researchers while conducting a multiyear multilingual community-based research with bilingual Latinx families in the Midwest.

The second paper focuses on the experiences of high school newcomer youths, who are languaging (Swain, 2006) and are not always positive. These moments are not just harmful but acts of linguistic violence (Ek et al., 2013). These acts of linguistic violence reflect the dominance of English hegemony (Nieto, 2021) and work to perpetuate a larger raciolinguistic project that upholds hegemonic Whiteness.

The third paper is a critical ethnographic study that documents the persistent silencing and invisibility of multilingual Latinx children in K-5 classrooms in central Texas through mandated literacy curriculum and instructional practices in a specific post-colonial context.

The fourth study traces the colonized language learning narratives of language teachers and their repercussions on their teaching of English in Colombia. These studies offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of hauntology, coloniality, and linguistic hegemonies.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Rosa Medina Riveros , Luz Murillo, Texas State University

Chair: Luz Murillo, Texas State University

Presenter(s): Blanca Caldas, University of Minnesota, Sophia Ángeles, Pennsylvania State University, Luz Murillo, Texas State University, Rosa Medina Riveros

Presentation(s): Hauntology in Multilingual Education Research: Susto Stories from the Field

Understanding that "being haunted is not a metaphor" (Cho, 2008), we, a group of Afro//Indigenous/Brown Latina researchers, bear witness to how the ghosts and sustos (Zepeda, 2020) inherited from colonial institutional violence (re)shape them as language educators/researchers while conducting a multiyear multilingual community-based research with bilingual Latinx families in the Midwest. Through intuition, hunches, (inherited) memories, and downloads to guide our reflexivities and intentionalities, we center ghost-haunting or sustos in the research process to not only acknowledge and remember the historical linguistic and cultural violence exerted over us, our research partners, and our communities (the ones we belong and serve) and the damage inflicted into their futures, but also to release their silenced voices that shape research in multilingual education among working-class, Brown/Indigenous, Spanish speaking Latinx community in the US and conjure up future possibilities. We use Yoon & Chen (2022) process for witnessing (claims about who and what matters), memorize (what research forgets, memorizes, and re-memorizes), and dream/transform ("What are your ghosts planting in your dreams?" p. 86) to engage in otherwise research, adding a sorely needed layer of complexity as we hold ourselves accountable to the human, non-human, and ghostly participants in our research. Specifically, we capture intuitive moments through narratives, conversations of ghosts/sustos.

Presenter(s): Blanca Caldas

Co-author(s): Mariane Batista-McCulloch, Claudia Mesa-Villa

High School Newcomer Youth's Classroom Experiences: From Linguistic Violence to Linguistic Sanctuaries

High school newcomer youth's languaging (Swain, 2006) experiences are not always a positive experience. These moments are not just harmful but acts of linguistic violence (Ek et al., 2013). These acts of linguistic violence reflect the dominance of English hegemony (Nieto, 2021) and work to perpetuate a larger raciolinguistic project that upholds hegemonic Whiteness (Flores, 2016). Drawing from ethnographic field notes and interview data, this paper examines the linguistic experiences of three Latinx and Maya newcomer youth learning English vis-à-vis their peers and

classroom teachers. Informed by the theoretical lens of linguistic violence (Ek et al., 2013), I highlight how acts of linguistic violence perpetuated beliefs about whose linguistic practices were deemed legitimate. Extending the concept of "sanctuary" from the 1980s Sanctuary Movement, I invite educators to work towards creating linguistic sanctuaries or classrooms where newcomer youth can take refuge in languaging.

Presenter(s): Sophia Ángeles

Contesting the invisibility and silencing of multilingual children in the era of "science of Reading"

Despite years of research that documents and celebrates the creative language and literacy abilities of multilingual children, "new" reading programs under the guise of the "science of reading" continue to embody and enforce systems of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988) and oppression. This critical ethnographic study documents the persistent silencing and invisibility of multilingual Latinx children in K-5 classrooms in central Texas through mandated literacy curriculum and instructional practices. Our research in this specific post-colonial context draws on Deumert's theory of "spectral thinking", which "builds on a long tradition of paying attention to ghosts and their hauntings". Using spectral theory to emphasize the interconnectedness of literacy with children's social and material worlds, we trace the ghostly presence of the restrictive federal reading program Reading First and its present re-apparition in anti-bilingual literacy instruction under the guise of the Science of Reading. We juxtapose policy documents and training materials mandated by the State of Texas with teacher interviews and examples of children's reading and writing. As biliteracy researcher-educators involved in teacher preparation, we hope to give voice and visibility to the emergent bilingual children we teach and learn with. Our analysis suggests ways for teachers and researchers to employ the ghosts of local Englishes and Spanishes to haunt and contest the monolingual standards and expectations.

Presenter(s): Luz Murillo

The Ghosts of learning past: Tracing language learning stories of English Language teachers in Colombia

Using multimodal narrative analysis (Barkhuizen, 2013; Vitanova, 2016), this paper illustrates the co-construction of teachers' plotlines of language learning. The language learning experiences of teachers highlighted prevalent immersion and language separation environments, which promoted monoglossic pedagogies that often discouraged the use of learners' primary languages. Many narratives reflect a fear of translanguaging, which is used secretly among peers and in independent learning, perpetuating feelings of isolation, as seen in Maria's stories across multiple languages. Gabriel, one of the teachers, emphasized language separation, expressing frustration when lessons were not conducted in English and viewing too much use of Spanish as harmful. This inclination aligns with his role in training students for international English tests that emphasize comprehension by a monolingual examiner. Beto's account of learning from an "excellent teacher" who sounded like an "extranjero" foreigner further illustrates a preference for monolingualism, associating it with a European or Euro-American identity while overlooking non-white citizens from

the Global South. The challenge in the colonized language learning stories and the teachers' current practices remains to create a space that moves beyond these restrictive ideologies and practices, acknowledging the historical frameworks that shape perceptions of language and identity.

Presenter(s): Rosa Medina Riveros

8103 Sonic Traces of Possibility and Peril

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel listens to traces of sound and silence produced under contemporary political orderings. Sonic traces of possibility are detectable in migratory histories inscribed on cassette tapes, unofficial anthems that speak to removal and resettlement, and musical montages that produce imagined diasporic spaces. In the artifacts of analog tape, aural poetics of mourning and resistance, or affective intimacy of dance can be heard as a "sounding back" to state-driven politics of displacement, fragmentation, and enclosure. But the perilous conditions that produce such soundings demand their own practices of listening and modes of attention. Protestors singing chants and enunciating speeches are quite literally silenced, while activists subject to state surveillance live in paranoia that their voices will be overheard. Attending to hegemonic forces of constraint, coercion, and infiltration necessarily tempers the ethnographic reflex to affirm the political efficacy of sound among aggrieved communities. The political efficacy of sound is located in its very ambiguity.

Memories of movement, diaspora, and activism leave material remnants. Sounds may haunt, linger or return. In London, collectors, archivists and listeners reshape South Asian and Middle Eastern diasporic cultural memory through digitizing and "recollecting" obsolete media of cassette archives. In Rio de Janeiro, DJs create spaces of Black sonic diaspora and memory linking favelas to Miami, NYC, and LA. And in Puerto Rican Chicago, listening becomes an inherently political mode of attention for memory, space-making, and mobilization. Sound is ambiguous and practices of surveillance and silencing produce a politics of ambivalence, fear, and inaction. The soundscapes of dissent that resounded from encampments on college campuses were profoundly muffled or muzzled by stakeholders from across the political spectrum. Land defender activists in Canada are tormented by fear of wiretapping and auditory phenomena that may or may not be coming from outside. Contemporary political orderings produce traces of sound and silence that are saturated with peril as much as with possibility.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Alexandra Lippman, Pomona College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Matt Sakakeeny, Tulane University

Presenter(s): David Novak, University of California, Santa Barbara, Alex Chavez, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Matt Sakakeeny, Tulane University, Lee Veeraraghavan, Alexandra Lippman, Pomona College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Daniel Fisher, University of California, Berkeley

Presentation(s): Anarchive in the UK: Sound Collections as Diasporic Recollections

Sound archives turn up new possibilities for understanding the impacts of residual media on migratory histories and new forms of diasporic identity. In particular, "obsolete" forms of cassette tapes reveal the material interventions of generations of listeners, collectors, and informal archivists. How do digital migrations of analog tape both provoke and radically alter contemporary forms of cultural memory? Here I consider three London-based "recollections" – the Palestinian Sound Archive, the Tape Letters Project, and the Syrian Cassette Archive – as "anarchival" sources for migratory communities relocated to the United Kingdom from South Asia and the Middle East. If these projects demand particular and personal levels of knowledge, this is not a bug but a feature of cassette archives, which reorganize diasporic texts while refusing their inscription into a state-driven politics of recognition and digital access.

Presenter(s): David Novak

Black Flag

This paper explores the Puerto Rican diaspora in Chicago, taking as its point of departure the unofficial Puerto Rican national anthem "Boricua en la Luna," inspired by the poem of the same name written based on Chicago. This poetics becomes the envelope for listening to key historical events and social actors, specifically, mobilizations in the summer of 2019 in response to the PROMESA policy—which gives rise to the Puerto Rican black flag of mourning and resistance to austerity—and the Division Street Riots of 1966 in Humboldt Park. I suggest listening to Puerto Rican Chicago involves a broad range of non-auditory dispositions that overlap with wider social and affective engagements with experiences of space and memory: they broadcast historical experiences of settlement and integration amidst long-standing policies of removal and enclosure from the island to Chicago, and within Chicago neighborhoods. Listening to this community, in this regard, reveals itself as a political act comprised of historically situated modes of attention that circulate within social fields of meaning and power that include "model minority" and "culture of poverty" narratives.

Presenter(s): Alex Chavez

Sounding and Silencing in the Encampments

The politics of sound were a richly layered feature of the pro-Palestine encampments that occupied college campuses in April 2024. The chant "from the river to the sea" became a sonic and semantic lightning rod, igniting debates over freedom of speech. The participatory singing of freedom songs, Palestinian anthems, and prayers for the Sabbath were audible assertions of the right to peaceful assembly. Such songs and chants were part of a soundscape of dissent, including speeches amplified through bullhorns and portable loudspeakers, that could be easily slotted in to the current wave of protest ethnographies within sound studies. But far and away the most educational aspect of the encampments was how effectively they were silenced and shuttered. The profound

muffling or muzzling of dissent, imposed by stakeholders from across the political spectrum, serves as a powerful rejoinder to scholarship that relies upon liberal idealizations of "voice" to habitually affirm the political efficacy of sound. For some, the encampments may offer hope in the political possibility of unrestrained vibration, but what is largely missing from the ethnographic record is analysis of the constraints placed on sound and on freedom. What trace remains of sonorities of dissent, or indeed the demonstration itself, after silence and dispersal?

Presenter(s): Matt Sakakeeny

Sound and Silence in the Shadow of the Surveillance State

With the ability to be heard comes the possibility of being overheard. When secure communications are compromised, it can mean the difference between the success and failure of an endeavour. This is as true for insurgent movements as it is for business and military interests. My research grows out of activist ethnography with Indigenous and settler land defenders in Canada when the ubiquity of state surveillance in Anglosphere countries was becoming known. This paper begins from those moments when sound becomes a marker of danger—one that collapses distinctions between inside and outside, in-group and out-group. A phone rings and everyone in the room simultaneously knows without speaking that it is the police. Changing formations of officers at a blockade indicate that an activist meeting place has been bugged. Activists are tormented by auditory phenomena that may or may not be coming from outside. The epistemological uncertainty (let's call it paranoia) to which these examples attest is a response to the massive collection of data (let's call it positivism). Such an orientation toward the world of data, self, and others establishes conditions of possibility for the ethnographic encounter as well as a political program. This paper draws on studies of sound's radical ambiguity, its manifestations in data, surveillance, and military intelligence, to pose questions for an uncertain sonic episteme.

Presenter(s): Lee Veeraraghavan

Temporalities of Funk: Weaving, Cutting, and Imagining Future Time in Brazil

Music unfolds in time. Different modes of musical ownership produce distinct temporalities. In Brazil, funk carioca (Rio de Janeiro funk) began in the late 1980s and 1990s as local DJs chopped up, sampled, and performed popular Black and Latinx records from Miami, New York, and Los Angeles for MCs to rap over in Portuguese. The "dubbing culture" (Boellstorff 2003) enabled by appropriation, self-described piracy, and a commons that performs and produces imagined diasporic spaces of sonic memory in Rio de Janeiro. Diverse modes of ownership coexist, create friction and opportunities for harnessing the power of funk. In the commons, DJs produce a time that loops and weaves as they create live montages drawing from Miami Bass, Freestyle, and Electro records. The music belongs to community soundsystems and their publics who finance events, popularize songs, and circulate future hits. Impresarios, however, enclose music through copyright that cuts time short to churn out new hits and hot new artists every few months. Artists imagine future sovereignty as musicians through copyright ownership to undo legacies of slavery

which enrich white impresarios from the unpaid historical labor of Black musicians in Brazil's cultural industry.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Lippman

Discussion

7436 Shape Shifting Ghosts, Saintly and Devilish, Haunt Our Crisis

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the nineteenth century, about ghosts, it was written that a specter was haunting Europe. Now ghosts are haunting the US and through it, and its new allies, the world. Marx and Engels put wording in their Manifesto that suggested that their good ghost of communism was waiting in history, violently opposed by reactionaries, who were doomed to lose. Our situation of course is different. Our poly-crisis invites some interpreters to fear fascism, or in milder language, rapidly intensifying authoritarianism. Some commentators write or speak about emerging soft fascism. Mussolini and Hitler trouble our nightmares. To some, their ghosts may be coming to life. For others, a different updated crew of zombies could be assembled. In the US, ghosts from slavery persist as part of what some call neo-fascism. What are some of the characteristics of neo-fascism in this view? A peculiar type of capitalism is central as stressed by various authors including Slavoj Zizek. We note that a powerful capitalist nation-state continues in changed ways the racial capitalism which incorporated slavery. This nation-state is aggressive towards other political entities, so much so that it directs its aggressions even towards its internal political formations, such as California, or sanctuary cities, as well as external entities such as Mexico, Canada, and Panama, as well as its own citizens. The conflicts in such a situation apparently generate reliance by government on authoritarian religion to hold the society together. In the US this is white supremacist Christianity. In China, it is Confucianism. Examples abound. There is a reliance on extra-legal violence; in the US, the January 6th rioters, now pardoned, illustrate this. Violence against communities of color continues. Obviously, another feature of such soft fascism or authoritarianism is persecution of vulnerable minorities, as well as subordination or manipulation of women. Among the vulnerable minorities are various types of people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ persons, unhoused persons, etc. The onslaught of attacks on DEI and Critical Race Theory are exemplary here. In this session, we are also open to discussion of good ghosts, even saintly ghosts, who could guide the US or the wider world in non-authoritarian, anti-fascist directions, thus disconfirming what one Zizek prophecy pessimistically anticipates. An uplifting hagiography might include not only a familiar group such as FDR (for moderates), MLK, Sojourner Truth, Wilma Mankiller, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, and so forth, but also newly identified and so-to-speak resurrected ghosts. A risk here is that there are liable to be extremist efforts to erase or discredit such ghosts. Apparently, the King family is concerned that newly released biographical sources might be used to vilify MLK. The positive ghosts could well be not celebrated figures, but even people plucked from obscurity and presented to the consciousness of the living.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Betty Harris, University of Oklahoma

Chair: Edward Sankowski

Presenter(s): Edward Sankowski, Gwendolyn Mikell, Georgetown University, Department of Anthropology, Regina Gordon, Carolyn Martin Shaw, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Elisha Oliver, University of North Texas, Betty Harris, University of Oklahoma

Presentation(s): Ghosts, Slavery, and Authoritarian Militarism

The ghosts of US slave-owners and enslaved persons still haunt us at present in 2025. This paper focuses on interpreting, and one hopes, changing contemporary US cultural dynamics as regards relations between Black and White people. The obvious right-wing onslaught attacking Affirmative Action, DEI and Critical Race Theory is part of a strategy to continue racialized capitalism in which slavery has been succeeded by racial hierarchies in US education and work arrangements, including a militarized economy. Attacks on DEI at universities and colleges and in the military are part of a plan to combine white supremacist racial hierarchies in higher education with hierarchies at work, e.g., work in the military, a major employer of Black Americans. A concluding point deserves mention. Coalition-building among varied racialized groups, rather than exclusive focus on one racial category, is more likely to be effective. This avenue would require faculty to do their disciplinary anti-racism diligence, as suggested by CRT.

Presenter(s): Edward Sankowski

African Elders: Conversations with 21st Century Leaders

Traditional African cultural systems tend to celebrate the wisdom, leadership and mentorship of the "elders" as legacies for their offspring, national compatriots, and future politicians. Two renown leaders in the organization known as "The Elders" were Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, and they continue to provide inspiration and examples against which younger leaders are judged, and perhaps judge themselves. Here, we utilize the words and deeds of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (1997-2006) as the basis for two sets of imagined conversations with 21st century Ghanaian and Rwandan political leaders on the state and citizenship, war and peace, human rights and justice, or development and health. Such conversations can be amiable or contentious, inquisitory or congratulatory; and they grow out of my research, practice, or fieldwork experiences. We will see that these conversations also reveal how the changing African, western, and international contexts shaped the philosophies, expectations, and realities of Annan as well as the younger Ghanaian and Rwandan politicians.

Presenter(s): Gwendolyn Mikell

Spirits of the Hollow Chamber: Redefining Latinx Immigrants, Memory, and US Citizenship in Oklahoma

The Hollow Chamber (AD800-1450), containing a variety of ceremonial artifacts, is located in the Spiro Mound complex in southeastern Oklahoma. It served as a site for cultural exchange between

the people of the east and people as far away as the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of California. Descendants of the first inhabitants of North America, the Spiro people, and their indigenous neighbors, retreated into other realms - into the trees, the mountains, etc. - as the first Europeans arrived. The Hollow Chamber sealed the realm between the ghosts of the first inhabitants and the new European immigrants and colonizers. In the early 2000s when I conducted ethnographic research in the Oklahoma Latinx immigrant community, the September 11th attacks spawned a new era of American "outsider fears" and public panic about immigration. This resulted in a plethora of state laws challenging federal jurisdiction on immigration. My paper focuses on the intersection between indigenous memory north and south of the border, links with the past (the ghosts of earlier eras), arbitrary borders, and the emerging criteria for 21st century citizenship. I argue that recent political events, with roots in earlier 20th socio-political movements, are actively regenerating old patterns of American racism and models of power and control as Latinx migrants reopen older portals to actively resist oppression through the deep tentacles of traditional knowledge linked to earlier patterns of migration.

Presenter(s): Regina Gordon

Double Haunting: Reading Fiction from the Civil Rights Movement and Reliving It

In the last few decades anthropologists turned their attention to the experience of reading and began to study reading as a cultural phenomenon. These studies help me to understand how in reading Diane Oliver's posthumously published, *Neighbors and Other Stories*, I felt myself "inhabited by a consciousness that enhanced and tested me." But in my reading experience, Oliver stood beside me almost as a doppelgänger moving me to see the early 1960s in Virginia and North Carolina through both her and my own eyes. We were almost the same age when she died in 1966, we lived in neighboring states, and we were in college at the same time. Stories within this collection bring to life the everyday as well as the groundbreaking experiences of black women and girls at the end of the Jim Crow south. Oliver's prose is both lyrical and poignant, drawing readers into the richly textured world of her characters. Reading her stories, I am once more in Virginia where after graduating from high school my cousins find jobs working in the homes of white women, and where my mother taught me how to behave if I also had to do day's work. Through Oliver, I remember the fear and exhilaration encountering white coeds in my mid-western university. This is haunting by an activist ancestor I never knew I had and by the memories of a struggle that must be revived.

Presenter(s): Carolyn Martin Shaw

Saints, Specters, and Soft Fascism: Biocultural Memory and the Politics of Resurrection

This presentation examines specters as biocultural agents in moments of political crisis, exploring "good ghosts" as ancestral provocateurs who resist erasure. Drawing on Black geographies, decolonial feminism, and embodied memory, it interrogates soft fascism and repositions cultural archives as vital sites of resistance, rehumanization, and insurgent praxis. From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Zora Neale Hurston's conjure women and Hannah Arendt's warnings on banality

and totalitarianism, we are not simply haunted by history—we are shaped by it, blood and bone. Yet, even in this terrain of spectral violence, there are what I call ancestral provocateurs—good ghosts—who resist disappearing. These figures, whether canonized in history or whispered about in familial kitchens, hold insurgent possibilities for rehumanizing the present. Drawing from Black geographies, Indigenous futurisms, and decolonial feminist thought, I propose that we attend to these hauntings as sites of praxis. What happens when we consider the ghost of Sojourner Truth not merely as a relic, but as a political force? What of the unnamed midwife in Mississippi who caught babies and courage in the same hands during the Jim Crow era?

Presenter(s): Elisha Oliver

The Infusion of Apartheid Ideology: Seeking Afrikaner Immigrants to Consolidate American White Nationalism

President Trump is seeking priority immigration status for South African Afrikaners, who represent the remnants of the apartheid system, while he simultaneously seeks to deprive US minority groups of citizenship, voting rights, education, and employment opportunities. In the President's executive order issued on February 7, 2025, he highlights the South African government's "shocking disregard of its citizens' rights" in enacting Expropriation Act 13 of 2024, allowing the government to seize unused agricultural land without compensating owners. In the early 1990s, when negotiations occurred to end South African apartheid, white farmers had a strong lobby that allowed them to protect and develop their land to benefit from the lifting of economic sanctions and to engage in international trade. Nevertheless, there has been increasing pressure from Black South Africans to have greater land access in the three decades since apartheid ended.

The possible influx of tens of thousands of Afrikaners resurrects the ghost of apartheid's architect, Henrik Verwoerd. Verwoerd, a Dutch-born sociologist, socially engineered the apartheid system in which Black South Africans were deprived of South African citizenship and forced to live in small, fragmented, agriculturally unproductive homelands to eke out a living or to find a job for which they would need a pass to enter a city for employment. What are the implications of Afrikaner immigration for South Africans and for US minorities?

Presenter(s): Betty Harris

2897 Ghastly Histories, Ghostly Beverages

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What do we inherit when we share a mate, sip a mug of tea, or toast with a glass of wine or mezcal? These papers explore how beverages, framed as material-semiotic assemblages central to everyday life, carry their rich histories into the present and inspire a better future. They embody cultural heritage, evoke nostalgia and pride, become routinized, and foster conviviality (Brulotte, 2025; De Garine, 2001; Douglas, 1987; Gaytán, 2011; Hamrick et al., 2022; Manning, 2012). By offering a global scope on these dynamics, we examine how drinks capture the ghostly traces of the

past such as colonial violence and Indigenous dispossession, highlight modern processes like neoliberal globalization and the role of the state, and showcase potential futures of uncertainty and hope.

Rikki Brown's project on Georgian wine explores how imperial histories influence current-day technologies of winemaking, reaffirming historical practices and introducing new methods of production. These histories and technologies of winemaking create tensions in Georgia's wine economy that operate along political, social, and cultural lines.

Andrew Mitchel's research describes how beverages from the Mexican state of Oaxaca embody the idyllic Indigenous past, current market trends and gastro-tourism, and the uncertain future. His work examines how producers navigate these constraints and make drinks shaped by the interwoven effects of these timescales.

Amanda Kaminsky's work on Kenyan purple tea, a unique variety of *Camellia sinensis*, examines how the legacies of British colonialism overshadow tea innovation today. By turning to Chinese resources and Chinese tea culture, Kenyan purple tea stakeholders embrace both international connection and Afrocentric ideals, even as they remain constrained by the neoliberal realities of the global tea industry.

Jake Dean traces the spirited rise of mezcal across borders, following their haunted trail from traditional roots in Mexico to the smoky allure of U.S. cocktail culture. As consumers and bartenders conjure up cosmopolitan tasting experiences, the tension between honoring ancestral and traditional practices and chasing the boozy specter of the mixological cool continues to haunt mezcal's every pour.

Ana Fochesatto's analysis of yerba mate examines how its national and transnational representations are shaped by histories of settler colonialism, discourses of Indigeneity, and market narratives of health and sustainability. By tracing yerba mate's journey from Argentina to the U.S., her work reveals how beverages operate as hemispheric sites of meaning-making entangled in racialized histories of labor, land, and consumption.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Andrew Mitchel, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Jake Dean, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Amanda Kaminsky, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Rikki Brown, University of California, Santa Cruz, Andrew Mitchel, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Amanda Kaminsky, University of Michigan, Jake Dean, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology, Ana Fochesatto, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Discussant: Christina Collins, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Hazy Histories and Ghostly Undertones: Technologies of the Past and Present in Georgian Wine

For the last few decades in Georgia (country), winemakers have been revitalizing their traditional viticultural methods, that of fermenting wine on grape skins in large clay amphorae-shaped vessels called kvevri. These wines are often ghostly in nature, hazy, non-transparent colors filled with sediment, still alive and fermenting long into their bottled lives. Kvevri winemaking and the natural wines it produces have come to stand as a reflection of Georgia's sovereign national identity, one that has (and still is) grappling with ghosts of the past: the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and now current-day Russian Federation's long-term occupation of Georgian territory, culture, and politics. This talk examines how imperial ghosts continue to haunt Georgian wine in the present. By examining winemaking technologies in particular (natural and industrial winemaking and the use of oak barrels, stainless steel tanks, and kvevri), I reflect on how tangible materials have become politicized historically and how these historical politics are mobilized in the present. Vinicultural technologies are often a point of contention, wrapped up in connections to past industrialization and the claimed erasure of Georgian traditional practices. These technologies are reflected in the wines they produce, telling stories of pasts weaved into the present and shaping how Georgians produce and share their wine and their national identities.

Presenter(s): Rikki Brown

Ghosts of Oaxacan Beverages Past, Present, And Future

The southern Mexican state of Oaxaca's biodiversity and Indigenous heritage endow it with a unique cuisine that has brought both a gastronomic boom of global scale and an increase in gastro-tourism (Cant 2019; Chibnik 2003; Cohen and Schuster 2019; Hryciuk 2019; Matta 2019). This interest in Oaxaca is in part shaped by the astounding variety of locally available drinks. Based on three summers of ethnographic fieldwork, my talk focuses on how these beverages display vestiges of an idyllic Indigenous past; showcase the touristic, neoliberal present; and offer a hopeful yet uncertain future. Market women serving atole and champurrado display 'the past' as a simpler time of local abundance. Producers and companies promote world-famous mezcal and chocolate through the marketization of cultural products in 'the present.' Finally, restaurateurs and mixologists engage in the innovative reinvention of these drinks to capture the endless possibilities available in 'the future.' My presentation describes the constraints placed on Oaxacan ingenuity and creativity through the theoretical frame of culinary violence as they face down the ghosts of a colonial past and the ghostliness of imposed traditions placed onto the modern Oaxacan food scene. I conclude by discussing the agency and ingenuity displayed by producers of these Oaxacan drinks in the open-ended future where they take action to make what they please, so long as it's pleasurable and legible to consumers.

Presenter(s): Andrew Mitchel

The Colonial Specters and Postcolonial Aspirations of Kenyan Purple Tea

This paper examines how Kenyan tea manufacturing and traditional Chinese tea culture become entangled with postcolonial imaginings of health and national identity. These entanglements coalesce in purple tea, a unique cultivar of *Camellia sinensis* that comprises the central focus of

this talk. As a niche but promising entrant into Kenya's small but growing orthodox tea sector, purple tea has benefitted from Chinese investments at every step of its supply chain. At the same time, however, among its loyal devotees, purple tea is emerging as a potent symbol of Kenyan innovation and postcolonial national identity. Purple tea is regarded not only as an agricultural commodity, but also as a biotechnological accomplishment, a medical miracle, and a source of African pride. I argue that by treating Chinese-style teas as a panacea, industry stakeholders allow this sector to perpetuate many of the same patterns that have kept Kenyan smallholders impoverished and subordinated since the colonial era. At the same time, however, the complex entanglements of Chinese tea culture with Kenyan notions of health and wellness as decolonization serve to challenge any totalizing narratives of China as a neocolonizer. Instead, Kenyan orthodox tea offers a glimpse into an Afrocentric but globally interconnected postcolonial future.

Presenter(s): Amanda Kaminsky

The Cosmopolitan Spirit of Agave Alcohol Consumers

This paper builds on previous research into the socioecological dynamics of mezcal production in Southern Mexico through ethnographic interviews with bartenders and drinkers in Oaxaca, Cabo San Lucas, New York City, Tucson, and California's South-Central Coast. By tracing patterns of consumption, preference, and knowledge, it examines how cosmopolitan sensibilities emerge in relation to agave-based spirits—especially mezcal. While there may be a spectre of appreciation for traditional production methods and regional histories within Global North consumption, this interest is often reshaped and dominated by the lens of mixology culture, where expertise is located not in the spirit itself, but in the craft of cocktail-making. In contrast, the Mexican producers we have previously worked with center the spirit's flavor profile, terroir, and ritualistic modes of consumption. This paper investigates the tension between these forms of knowledge and practice, highlighting how agave alcohol travels through circuits of cultural prestige, authenticity, and global taste, ultimately embodying a cosmopolitan ethos in the Global North.

Presenter(s): Jake Dean

Colonial Aftertastes: Yerba Mate and the Hauntings of Blanqueamiento

Yerba mate, a popular beverage in the Southern Cone, has garnered increasing attention among consumers in the United States. This paper analyzes representations of yerba mate in Argentina and the United States through a content analysis of newspaper articles, online blogs, government documents, and corporate advertising, supplemented by fieldwork. In Argentina, yerba mate has historically functioned as both a symbol and tool of nation-building, helping construct a whitened national identity through the erasure and romanticization of Indigenous peoples. In the U.S., yerba mate's marketing draws on superfood narratives that promote its nutritional and medicinal benefits through an exotic portrayal of Indigeneity in ways that align with white settler colonial logics. I argue that contemporary representations of yerba mate, often framed through discourses of sustainability, health, and fairness, reproduce processes of blanqueamiento that uphold racial

capitalism and obscure ongoing violence against Indigenous communities, both its places of origin and the expanding U.S. market.

Presenter(s): Ana Fochesatto

Discussion

7269 Resistance and solidarity 'from the South'

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Resistance and Solidarity 'from the South'

How do we conceptualize and engage in resistance and solidarity when war and occupation are not an elsewhere but surround all our worlds - of home and research, teaching and community building? This roundtable stages a conversation about this question among anthropologists who have experienced and witnessed militarized displacements, and have studied various formations of resistance and solidarity, near and far. We propose that rethinking resistance and solidarity through a constellational analysis 'from the South' is a valuable framework for exploring anti-imperial, transnational, feminist struggles against the invisibilized nexus of war at home and war abroad.

The participants have lived and studied war, resistance, and solidarity in Lebanon, Palestine, Pakistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Egypt, the United States, the UK, Mexico, and Chile. We come together to reflect on and share insights on questions that matter to all our lives, making space for analyses that are often left unspeakable.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Saida Hodzic, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Madiha Tahir, Yale University, Saida Hodzic, Cornell University, Laura Menchaca Ruiz, Bard College

Discussant: Zainab Saleh, Haverford College, Department of Anthropology

3526 The Ghosts of Contemporary Environmentalism(s)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Re-restoration, re-silience, re-generation, re-composition, re-recovery, re-pair, re-wilding: environmentalist discourses and practices are everywhere animated by the logic of the -re-by ecological ghosts that beckon returns. These phantasmal relations to the environment are proliferating in an attempt to address crises that threaten human and nonhuman lives and livelihoods, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Through repetitions and other "processual terms without closure" (Thomas 2024, 102), a panoply of experts in sustainability and their partners seek to rectify or heal the "haunted landscapes of the Anthropocene" through

reconstructions of natures past (Gan et al. 2017), grappling with what might be desirable and possible future ecologies. From scientists and engineers to designers and planners, these professionals and their partners seek to revitalize the present by harnessing the agency of other-than-human beings in "nature-based solutions," whether directly through tree plantings (Greenleaf 2024), "living roofs" (Lorimer 2008), and "oystertecture" (Wakefield and Braun 2019), or indirectly through the imitation of biological form, function, and process (Fadok 2019).

This panel brings together critical ethnographic analyses of the "spectrality" of contemporary environmentalism(s) (Derrida 1993): their temporalities, their epistemologies, and their relationalities. How, for instance, are such environmentalisms based on the remembrance and idealization of historical ecologies as well as an anticipation of ecologies-yet-to-come? Whose natures are recalled, and whose are forgotten, ignored, and repressed? Why? How do developers of nature-based solutions evaluate the fidelity of their projects to natural models? Why might some present as "authentic" and others uncanny? How do those (human and nonhumans) impacted by ghostly imaginaries negotiate them in everyday life? What kinds of political governance and human-environment relationships are re-enacted and re-inscribed, and what kinds are foreclosed? How does the absence of certain environments re-surface unexpectedly? By revisiting the "politics of nature" (Latour 2004) through the figuration of the ghost, this panel aims to pluralize the "mononatural" phantom that has come to predominate environmentalism today (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018).

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Richard Fadok, Rochester Institute of Technology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Maron Greenleaf, Dartmouth College

Chair: Maron Greenleaf, Dartmouth College

Presenter(s): Richard Fadok, Rochester Institute of Technology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Maron Greenleaf, Dartmouth College, Arne Harms, Anne Rademacher, New York University, Kristina Lyons, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Commodity Animism: On the Magic of Mimesis in American Biomimicry

Marx identified the mystification of labor relations as "commodity fetishism": a trick of misperception in which articles of exchange appear inherently valuable, as if animated by some "phantom-like" force. This talk examines another kind of spectral economy in the "nature-based" design paradigm known as biomimicry. Since the 1990s, designers have limned biomimicry, the "conscious emulation of life's genius," as a panacea for our Anthropocene ailments. While dominant narratives of invention in the US have often discounted copying, counterfeiting, and other mimetic practices, these design professionals have recast the imitation of biological design principles, like the tectonics of a termite mound, as a path toward "sustainable innovation." In their romantic view of life, organisms have evolved in harmony with their environments; mimicking these principles, it is said, will sympathetically conjure a more harmonious planet. Drawing on fieldwork at a design competition in Berkeley, I show how a new kind of magical thinking haunts this species of nature-based solution. From the way that designers frame their work to the qualities of "good design" judges appreciate, the illusion of artifacts made without humans has taken hold of

biomimicry today. I read Marx's notion of the fetish with posthuman ideas about agency to theorize their emergent regime of value as "commodity animism": a phantasmagoric philosophy of technology that elides the very politics of design.

Presenter(s): Richard Fadok

Anthropocene Forests: Planting Trees in the Birthplace of Industrial Capitalism

Around the world, people are planting billions of trees as a "nature-based" solution to myriad environmental crises. These trees are not only being planted in monoculture plantations, but also in ways meant to restore landscapes by prioritizing carbon sequestration, biodiversity, ecological functioning, and human health. These trees, I argue, can be considered Anthropocene forests meant to address contemporary environmental issues. But what are all these trees doing, environmentally but also socioculturally? I address this question by studying what else people are trying to solve when they plant trees, besides environmental crises. I do so in the North of England—the largely deforested birthplace of industrial capitalism and a recent locus of struggles to figure out what can and should succeed it. I examine how people's efforts to restore landscapes there by planting trees have sociocultural goals as well as environmental ones. In some of the myriad Anthropocene forests now growing in this postindustrial landscape, volunteers, workers, and activists are planting and protecting trees not only to combat the climate and biodiversity crises but also to grapple with their own experiences of loss and promote their own wellbeing under the specter of England's deindustrialization and geopolitical decline. In doing so, the paper explores tree planting as a strategy for contending with what it might mean to live well on a small, nature-depleted island—and planet.

Presenter(s): Maron Greenleaf

Curating Abundance: On Circuits of Privilege in the Social Worlds of Regeneration

Alarmed by the unfolding environmental polycrisis, activists in Germany increasingly bet on regenerative approaches to ecological relations. That is, they intervene in multispecies enmeshments in ways that contribute to the flourishing of life, with the hope of thereby enabling less bad futures on a shared planet. These efforts are inherently political, and the question of what exactly is to be regenerated, by whom and for whose benefit, warrant attention. In this talk, I explore these questions by thinking through a composting project situated in Berlin. Established in order to take care of the wood-based cutlery used during one festival, the compost was set to produce fungal spores set to help regenerating degraded lands. Focussing on the deliberations on what to do with the spores, and what types of land to impregnate them with, I argue that such regeneration projects operate through, and reiteratively re-inscribe, circuits of privilege. That is, they direct care-full attention to specific spaces or specimens, often tied together through networks and subject to scaling ambitions. While, on another level, privileged activists ensure life's flourishing on privileged lands, hoping to contribute thereby to the task of enabling survival and, ideally, mutual thriving. Examining circuits of privilege reveals visions of socioecological change animated by pockets of abundance literally growing from the cracks, and guides attention to the politics of curation.

Presenter(s): Arne Harms

Recomposing an Urban Forest in Mumbai

What happens to urban landscapes when a species disappears? This paper explores how an urban forest with a long legacy as sacred territory was recomposed – that is, imbued with new narratives of purpose, meaning and value – in the aftermath of the near-extinction of Gyps vultures across India. Its focus is the social processes that galvanised in response to catastrophic vulture loss, and emergent environmental alliances whose mission served to re-narrate an urban forest and the scale and scope of urban environmental stewardship. By attending to the social process of recomposition, the paper points to ethical, political and territorial claims through which social agents redefined and renarrated the form, content and value of nonhuman life in the city – dynamics constitutive of moral ecologies of urban landscape. I suggest that recomposition is fundamental to the coproduction of ecological change: as social groups realign their relationships to transforming urban environments, they also transform the contours of their own claims to territory, belonging and stewardship of ideas of the greater urban good. Through the dynamics of recomposition, the paper shows how human-non-human relations are remade in the face of fundamental ecological transformation, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Presenter(s): Anne Rademacher

The ghosts of ancestral hydrogeologies: Rethinking territorial planning, risk management, and socioecological justice in Colombia's Andean-Amazonia

In the last decade, recurrent and torrential floods, drying wetlands, and episodes of drought have raised growing awareness of the need to understand the hydrogeological dynamics of the fluvial corridors connecting Colombia's Andes and Amazonian plains. These situations have created double victimization, where people affected by social and armed conflict—displaced female-led households, Indigenous communities historically dispossessed of their ancestral lands, and low-income families—experience greater vulnerability, generating scenarios of environmental and climate injustice. In this talk, I present situations where the memory of water in interaction with sediment and rocks is forcing human communities to rethink approaches to territorial planning along the Putumayo and Caquetá River basins. Through ethnographic engagement with the naming practices of Inga, Kamëntšá, and Siona indigenous peoples, I introduce the importance of recovering the ancestral significance of the region's water bodies to address what I call the "return of the ghosts of other hydro-geologies" or ancestral Andean-Amazonian hydro-geologies. I argue that community knowledges about the behavior of the foothills in relation to the rivers, streams, lagoons, and wetlands, in conversation with techno-scientific knowledges, has much to contribute to the formulation of risk management policy, planning processes, and climate change adaptability in the amphibious territory of the Amazon.

Presenter(s): Kristina Lyons

2566 Without, Beyond, or After China?: The (Geo)Politics of Ethnographic Research in China

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In recent years, the institutional, political, and ethical conditions for ethnographic research in the People's Republic of China have changed dramatically. In addition to the strict travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, enhanced state surveillance and geopolitical tensions across the world have reshaped the locales, scales, and modes of ethnographic studies in China, including displacement, discontinuities, and disorientation. While (geo)politics have always conditioned anthropologists' access to their fields, anthropologists of China (again) reach a point where they can no longer dismiss the challenges as tangential to their research. Therefore, we would like to discuss: How can we continue to study "China" ethnographically when our access to China is prohibited or seriously limited? How do anthropologists navigate emergent ethical conundrums of ethnographic research in China, protecting and allying with Chinese interlocutors and colleagues (Alperman 2022)? How do we embrace the challenges and rethink the modes of ethnographic inquiry and the boundary of "China"? This roundtable brings together ethnographers who would share and discuss their fieldwork experiences in China, especially on how multiple experiences of loss, closure, and change have reconfigured their research approach.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Heangjin Park, Loyola Marymount University, Britta Ingebretson, Fordham University

Presenter(s): Min Lee, University of California, Berkeley, Britta Ingebretson, Fordham University, Xiaobo Yuan, Whitman College, Department of Anthropology, Heangjin Park, Loyola Marymount University, Jerry Zee, Princeton University, Jing Wang

Discussant: Shao-hua Liu, Academia Sinica

2493 Reproductive Justice in the US-Mexico Borderlands

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The US-Mexico border region is an important site for understanding how various social inequities have a bearing on people's reproductive lives, including their abilities to make dignified decisions about having or not having a child and being allowed to parent in a way that aligns with their values and priorities. Gilberto Rosas points to the border as a place where a history of settler violence merges with the contemporary violence of immigration and border policies, casting the predominantly Latino/a/x population of the region as disposable, and subjecting border communities to myriad forms of state neglect and coercion. This pre-existing neglect and violence is now compounded by increasingly restrictive reproductive health and immigration policies, at both the state and federal level, in ways that may limit people's ability to achieve reproductive

justice. At the federal level, attempts to end birthright citizenship and efforts to create a deportation machine are creating fear and uncertainty in a region where the border artificially divides communities intimately connected by history, kinship, and culture. At the state level, Texas, for example, now has a near total ban on abortion, which has been directly tied to the premature deaths of at least three women and a 13% state-wide increase in infant mortality. Texas also recently passed a law requiring public hospitals to record the immigration status of patients at a time when the threats of mass deportation are being felt not only by individuals with precarious immigration status, but also those with legal status, their family members, and the wider communities to which they belong.

The papers in this panel consider a range of reproductive injustices that are occurring as a consequence of policies being enacted in the border region. They also grapple with how individuals and communities navigate this landscape in an effort to achieve reproductive justice. They look at how grassroots networks and communities work together in the face of state abandonment, intensive surveillance, and criminalization to actively contest exclusion from care, denial of services, and challenges to birthright citizenship.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Carina Heckert, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Heather Wurtz, University of Southern California

Chair: Heather Wurtz, University of Southern California

Presenter(s): Carina Heckert, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Deyanira Ibarra, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Milena Melo, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Cathy Roman, Heather Wurtz, University of Southern California

Discussant: Vania Smith-Oka, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Bordering the Safety-Net: Bureaucratic Exclusion from Publicly Funded Prenatal Care and Cross-Border Utilization of Health Services

Interviews conducted as a part of the Maternal Health and Emotional Distress on the US-Mexico Border Project reveal how bureaucratic mechanisms lead to systematic exclusion of US citizens and legal permanent residents from health services for which they would appear to qualify under Texas's Medicaid for Pregnant Women. This bureaucratic exclusion drives patterns in cross-border utilization of health services, with the Mexican health sector serving as a safety net for prenatal and postpartum care. This presentation considers how attending to the everyday workings of bureaucracy is revealing of how reproductive justice operates, but also, how women at times navigate their exclusion through strategically using their geographic location and their social position that enables them to cross the border. It also attends to the broader political economic injustices that result from the systematic exclusion of people from health care in the US, with resulting cross-border use of health services exacerbating inequities in access to care in Mexico. Finally, this work considers how the ability to transverse an international border is only an option for some women, as bureaucratic exclusion has the potential to result in both extreme and less

dramatic forms of reproductive harm for those who are unable to use Mexican services as a safety net.

Presenter(s): Carina Heckert

Birthwork in the Borderlands: (Re)configuring Infrastructures of Care

Historical exploitation and ongoing violence against marginalized groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, pervade American obstetrics and gynecology. Within this context, birthworkers feel called upon to create and sustain alternative reproductive care networks that respond to stratified reproduction while working within structural constraints. In Arizona, a region where governmental presence manifests contradictorily through both neglect of basic maternal health infrastructure and heightened surveillance of reproductive health, I ask: how do birthworker collectives expand our conceptualization of reproductive care paradigms, functioning as sites of relationality within an environment where conventional reproductive healthcare can be experienced as harmful and unobtainable? Drawing on autoethnography and participant observation with birthworker collectives in Tucson, Arizona, this paper examines how reproductive justice materializes not only as ideological commitment but through pragmatic, everyday actions of birthworkers of color as they reconceptualize (in)access to care beyond clinical, individual, or rights-based frameworks. I consider how the efforts of birthworkers both acknowledge the hostile reproductive landscape while also creating possibilities for more just reproductive futures.

Presenter(s): Deyanira Ibarra

Postpartum Care: Latina Mothers in the Borderlands of South Texas

Accounting for more than half of all U.S. births, approximately 300,000 births occur annually in the U.S.-Mexico border region. While reproductive outcomes vary by region, Texas border counties had the highest proportions of adverse outcomes. Latinas living in these border regions disproportionately experience structural determinants and conditions (e.g., poverty, low socioeconomic status, lack of access to health care) associated with shorter life expectancy and adverse health outcomes. The compromised health among U.S.-Mexico border populations poses a threat to maternal and child health in the U.S. Two-thirds of U.S. pregnancy related deaths occur during the postpartum period, marking critical life transitions for women that can be leveraged to prevent maternal health disparities. Furthermore, women living in border regions are twice as likely as non-border women to initiate prenatal care in the third trimester or not at all. These outcomes reflect the higher prevalence of chronic, mental, and infectious diseases experienced by these populations and higher rates of poverty and underutilization of health care services. By employing an interdisciplinary approach utilizing the ethnographic and qualitative skills combined with statistical and epidemiological methods, this paper captures the nuanced experiences and individual voices of Latinas living in the Rio Grande Valley borderlands of South Texas who qualify for CHIP perinatal coverage.

Presenter(s): Milena Melo

Bridges of Birth: Birthright Citizenship's Influence on Birth Center Business Models

This paper will discuss the influence of birthright citizenship on birth center business models at the U.S-Mexico border. Through participant observation at a Texas birth center located near the border, I will analyze the precariousness of these models, for both birthing parents and the business itself. With the current Trump administration's aggressive efforts to nullify birthright citizenship and existing stigmas against midwifery, financial insecurity for some birth centers at the border may be a possibility. For the people giving birth at these centers, and whose children are beneficiaries of the Fourteenth Amendment, their social and legal security is increasingly in question. In addressing questions about border birth centers' relationships to immigration and their perceived responsibilities to the protection of the rights of immigrants, I hope to explore how birth centers at the border and their clients may need to adapt in the face of volatile political climates and further understand the ethicality of this type of business model.

Presenter(s): Cathy Roman

The Abortion 'Infodemic' in a Post-Dobbs World: Perspectives on Misinformation and Abortion Care among Grassroots Activists in Texas

Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health, the US Supreme Court decision to remove the national protection of abortion, has given way to an abortion "infodemic," or the proliferation of false or misleading information about abortion access and care. Obstacles to obtaining accurate information threaten the ability of pregnant persons to control and make decisions about how to manage their fertility, fueling increased risks to maternal health and wellbeing. This study draws on interviews with grassroots abortion activists who support pregnant persons in Texas (N=15), where a near-total ban on abortion was implemented in 2022, to examine drivers of abortion misinformation, as well as consequences of the spread of misinformation on organizational services and support for people seeking an abortion. We first attend to the disproportionate impact of the abortion infodemic on marginalized communities, highlighting ways that intersecting forms of social exclusion increase vulnerability to misinformation efforts and exposure. We then explore how the spread of misinformation is affecting practices and personnel within grassroots abortion organizations. We consider evolving challenges for organizations to mitigate misinformation due to legal ambiguity of abortion laws and their concerns for personal security, as well as innovative strategies that activists employ for coping with and transcending misinformation barriers to providing effective support services.

Presenter(s): Heather Wurtz

Discussion

5074 The future is a foreign country: Operationalizing and acting on the world to come (Part 1)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In 2025, the futures for many look grim. Authoritarian forms of governance are gaining traction in much of the world, while for many people "getting by" (Kideckel 2008) and "making do" (de Certeau 1984) remain the norm. State and corporate colonialism continue to promote cultures of extractivism and frustrate grassroots efforts for sovereignty and self-determination. Climate disasters are increasing their severity and damage, forcing many to flee or abandon their homes, while the world experienced its hottest year on record in 2024. As a discipline that sheds light on inequality and oppression and seeks solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed, anthropology today often seems focused on the darker aspects of human existence (Ortner 2016) that lead to particular projections of the future, such as apocalypse.

While imagining a future in crisis can be productive for action, it runs the risk of forgoing the historical realities that lead to such framing. Further, affective reactions to an apocalyptic future may undermine the power of present-day actions, leading to the materialization of unwanted futures through inaction (Wolf-Meyer 2019). Alternately, far from encouraging paralytic inaction, anthropologists studying climate change, history and memory, speculative futures, and disasters can highlight the ways that various communities operationalize imagined and hoped-for futures. In this panel, we ask what futures people imagine for their communities and the concrete actions they take to materialize futures that at first appear spectral and uncertain. Inspired by conceptual engagements with the past, we take Keith Basso's placemaking lens to the future. Through placemaking our "country of the present" becomes suffused with historical imagination from the "country of the past" (Basso 1996, 5). If we come to understand and make our present through actions of remembering and imagining, how might those same actions help us to understand and make the country of the future?

Part 1 of this panel engages with imagining and operationalizing the country of the future through the lens of human-environment relations in diverse agropastoral and urban settings. Presenters challenge frameworks of despair by focusing on ways that communities imagine and enact their visions for a just future, whether Basque shepherds transmitting traditional agroecological knowledge (Welch-Devine) or Syrian refugees flexibly approaching their futures in Spain (Wagner). Panelists also address how delayed development futures can make room for new configurations of knowledge and place – challenging neoliberalism in Lima's seaside deserts (Skrabut), negotiating memories of authoritarian regimes between Uganda and South Korea (Yap), or examining the history of futures once imagined in Albania's rapidly changing urban environments (Rocker).

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Kailey Rocker, Wilkes University, Jonathan Eaton, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jonathan Eaton, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Meredith Welch-Devine, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Jacqueline Wagner, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Kristin Skrabut, Tufts University, Inhae Yap, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Kailey Rocker, Wilkes University

Discussant: Lisa Messeri, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): We get what we work for: Imagining and pursuing desired futures in a Basque agropastoral community

Basque shepherds in the French Pyrenees are facing an uncertain future, but they are doing so with great intentionality. Market forces, unfavorable public policies, demographic shifts, and changes in what young people consider "a good life" have worked together to erode pastoralism in the mountains of Xiberoa. Now, climate change is exacerbating these stressors, increasing concerns about drought, weeds, pests, and disease, and raising the specter of a future with no farms and no farmers... a future that would fundamentally change Basque culture and the landscape in which it has flourished. But people aren't (only) despairing. Imagining loss has sparked individual and collective reflection on what matters, what needs to be revitalized and maintained, and how the future should look and feel. This paper describes farmers' visions for a just and sustainable future, as well as the strategies they are using, or exploring, to create a new world out of past traditions and practices, present concerns and values, and future possibilities. It is part of a larger project examining strategies for maintaining a robust Basque socioecological system, including support for new farmers, the preservation and transmission of traditional agroecological knowledge, revitalizing and retooling mutual aid systems, and sustaining resilient ecologies.

Presenter(s): Meredith Welch-Devine

Co-author(s): Brian Burke, Jennifer Thompson

Regretting resettlement, holding onto hope: Syrian refugees' imagined futures in Spain

Refugee resettlement has long been an unlikely outcome for most of the world's refugees, with only one percent of refugees every being resettled. Such a rare chance offers resettled refugees the opportunity to imagine new futures of security and prosperity. Unfortunately, resettlement does not always deliver on these promises, especially within challenging local economic environments. In this paper, I examine how Syrian refugees in Spain came to regret their decision to be resettled, while also resenting the international system of refugee management, headed by the UNHCR, that effectively limits their choices and constrains their agency. Through these feelings of regret and resentment, refugees reflect on their pasts before resettlement as well as their present situations; however, they also simultaneously make plans for the future. Some consider leaving Spain, despite the legal and practical consequences, while others hold out hope for their lives in Spain, maintaining a sense of optimism and humor even in the face of great hardship. Resettled refugees must edit and reform their ideas of the future over and over again, demonstrating creative techniques of imagining and building new futures that may inform broader efforts to envision and bring about desired futures and avoid being paralyzed by inaction.

Presenter(s): Jacqueline Wagner

Mi papa pachacutana: Urban unsettlement, new natives, and growing futures in the meantime

This paper elaborates the uneven processes through which Lima's seaside deserts have become fertile grounds for remaking agrarian and indigenous futures. Twenty-five years ago, Peru's neoliberal president Alberto Fujimori relocated 25,000 squatters from an illegal land takeover in the south of Lima to an isolated desert in the city's northwestern periphery. Since then, the settlement has grown through fits and starts as inhabitants mobilize competing visions of the future and lay claim to land in contingent ways that upset urban planners' orderly development schemes. While waiting for these urban futures to materialize, settlers have found provisional ways to make do that, incidentally, leave behind residues. The waste, rubble, and gray water associated with uneven settlement have altered the desert earth, allowing transplanted species to thrive and fostering new ecological possibilities. As connections have increased between sites of stilted urban growth and rural areas of Peru, inhabitants have cultivated cross-cultural relationships and new ecologies. Comestible plants from the Andes and the Amazon travel across kin networks to be grown in a new kind of native soil, facilitated by delayed urban dreams and the everyday residues of those making places in the meantime.

Presenter(s): Kristin Skrabut

“We were once like you”: South Korean memory and the Ugandan future

In Uganda, the autocratic rule of Yoweri Museveni moves towards its twilight years as the resident ages; just as Museveni's military victory (1986) enabled some semblance of stability, the near-end of his rule – and the lack of a clear political successor – renews uncertainty about the future. The question of a political future is salient not only for Ugandans, but also a robust foreign development sector enabled by the regime. This paper is based on ethnographic work within a South Korean (ROK) agricultural NGO based in Kampala, where the question of futurity is explicitly framed by the belief that “we were once like you.” Because ROK's rapid development occurred relatively recently (~1960s-90s), Korean workers either experienced authoritarian rule and subsequent “compressed growth” firsthand, or inherited memories from their parents. For Koreans working in Uganda, experiences of this history are used explicitly as a template for development. As interlocutors articulate how Korean history is meant to “model” an African future, memories are repeatedly recalled, repurposed, and reimagined. This paper traces the kinds of future-oriented empathy, sentiment, and responsibility that emerge within a fraught political present.

Presenter(s): Inhae Yap

Making the Pyramid a place: Confronting alternative futures of urban architecture in Albania

In 2023, a long-derelict building colloquially called Piramida (the Pyramid) reopened in the lively capital of Tirana, Albania, as a youth digital innovation hub and a commercial center. Since its inaugural opening in 1988, Piramida has lived many lives: a memorial museum that celebrated the life and leadership of the country's former socialist dictator Enver Hoxha; an international community center where young adults could take art lessons in the 1990s; a NATO crisis center for the 1999 Kosovo War; and a defunct and ruined building that narrowly avoided state-supported demolition in 2011 when Tirana citizens gathered to ‘Save the Pyramid’. The recent reopening of the

building adds a new layer to Piramida's history and provides an opportunity to critically revisit practices of urban placemaking and futuremaking in Albania. In this presentation, I draw on ethnographic data from 2011, 2017, and 2024 to understand how my interlocutors who participated in the 'Save the Pyramid' protest are grappling with Piramida's present and future as a commercial and digital education center, over and against the futures that they had once imagined for it. Drawing on the concepts of placemaking (Basso 1996) and double exposure, or the layering of temporal and imaginative narratives on the landscape, (Messeri 2016), I explore how Piramida's many lives help to contextualize the imagined pasts and contested futures of urban Tirana through the reshaping of the built environment.

Presenter(s): Kailey Rocker

Discussion

4037 Anthropology & Environment Society Roy A. Rappaport Student Prize Competition Panel

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The purpose of this annual panel, which honors the legacy of Roy A. Rappaport, one of the pioneers of modern anthropology of the environment, is to help develop and showcase some of the best student work in this field. The papers in the panel are the product of a national competition held early in the year, based on submission of paper abstracts to an expert committee consisting of officers of the Anthropology & Environment (A&E) plus distinguished outside members. The five finalists in this competition are invited to develop article-length papers and are awarded partial support to travel to the AAA meetings and present them in the Rappaport Prize panel. One of these papers is selected for the prize, which consists of a cash award and is announced at the A&E Business Meeting. The selection is based on originality of the research and analysis, as well as its contribution to the field of environmental anthropology. The papers presented in this annual panel often anticipate new directions that this field will take. After the meetings, each panelist is paired with a member of the Rappaport prize committee to help them further develop and publish these works, in accordance with the ultimate aim of the prize competition to contribute to the mentoring of graduate students pursuing careers in the anthropology of the environment.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Alyssa Paredes, University of Michigan

Chair: Alyssa Paredes, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Aida Arosoaie, Lucas Eduardo Allegratti Prates, Andrés Caicedo, University of California, Berkeley, Mira Guth, Amelia Burke

Discussant: Ryo Morimoto, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Affective Indeterminacy in the Anthropocene: Sustainable forestry, angry spirits, and Orang Asli limbo in Malaysia

To Orang Asli Semelai, a forest-dwelling community in Malaysia, weather cues associated with climate change—such as bloodred sunsets and erratic rainfall—signal the unprecedented anger of forest spirits in the aftermath of deforestation. In addition to afflicting them with violent death, chronic disease, and suspended livelihoods, the spirits have cut off communication by refusing to appoint a shaman, leaving the Semelai in affective limbo. As community members speculate around the indeterminate nature of the spirits' anger and their own spectrum of possibility and accountability, their rumination brings into focus the diffused responsibility of interrelated practices of extraction in Malaysia and its indefinite effects. Drawing from research in the United Kingdom and Malaysia, this paper argues that the anger of spirits and its manifold implications manifest the affective indeterminacy of extraction and climate change. The paper examines the affects and effects that emerge from the practices of sustainable forestry and monocrop plantations motivated by ethnonationalism, as well as the uneven involvement of actors at timber concession sites. By attending to the diffused responsibility, opaque encounters, and hesitant futures of extractive practices, affective indeterminacy situates unseen ecologies and vernacular epistemologies of the Anthropocene to offer an ethnographic reconsideration of anthropocentric analyses of extractive capitalism, sustainability, and climate change.

Presenter(s): Aida Arosoaie

“I Think I’m Becoming an Environmentalist...” Market-Based Conservation and Environmental Becoming in Settler Amazonia

Amid climate collapse, protecting the Amazon is a global imperative. Yet, in Brazil's Amazonian frontier, the actors reshaping the region include large-scale farmers—settler-elites tied to deforestation and agribusiness. This paper examines their entanglements with market-based conservation, focusing on an initiative I call Preserv. Through Payments for Environmental Services, Preserv compensates settler landowners for renting out their forests, converting trees into carbon credits. I explore how Preserv transforms landscapes and subjectivities, producing what I call Environmental Becoming. I argue that PES initiatives are neither greenwashing nor silver bullets, but sites of material, affective, and political transformation. The program is susceptible to manipulation, selective compliance, and ingenious deception. Settler-elites repackage participation to enhance political capital, conceal infractions, and forge alliances. As settler-farmers don green vests and mimic sustainability talk, their claims—“I think I'm becoming an environmentalist...”—destabilize boundaries between conservation and extraction. These spark tensions around land, legitimacy, and environmental stewardship, intensified by Brazil's environmental governance. Preserv thus becomes a space where ecological futures are reimagined through a politics of becoming. This paper calls for rethinking who counts as an environmental subject and how contradictions shape efforts to preserve the planet's vital ecologies.

Presenter(s): Lucas Eduardo Allegretti Prates

Caring for Oil Palm Trees: The Gendered Politics of Plant Reproduction and Assisted Pollination in Tumaco, Colombia

The plant disease Bud Rot serves as my ethnographic entry point into plant-human intimacies, gendered labor regimes, plant reproduction narratives, and techno-scientific interventions in Tumaco, one of Colombia's major oil palm plantation zones. Bud Rot rose to notoriety in the early 2000s when it nearly collapsed Colombia's oil palm sector. In the last two decades, the country's scientific institutions spearheaded efforts to control the disease by designing a new species capable of resisting bud rot but highly dependent on assisted pollination. The new hybrid called the OxG cannot bear fruit if human hands do not spray synthetic hormones on its flowers. Scientists and managers claim they prefer to hire women and single mothers as pollinators, arguing their hand skills, values, and social conditions fix plant infertility, promote care-based work ethics, and foster racial and gender equity. Over 24 months of fieldwork, I engaged with scientists, managers, small Black farmers, and pollinators, focusing on gendered narratives of care, reproduction, plant infertility, flower abortion, and dexterity. I argue that assisted pollination, as a gendered and interspecies practice, generates uneven labor experiences and distinct plant-human affective relationships. I draw on feminist science studies, environmental anthropology, and interspecies literature to examine the gendered politics of plant reproduction sustaining plantations amid anxieties over unruly pathogens.

Presenter(s): Andrés Caicedo

Unraveling Intergenerational Trauma in California's Dairy Herds: The Promises and Pitfalls of Epigenetic Science and Practice

Dairy industry actors have recently turned to epigenetic science to address something akin to intergenerational trauma in commercial cow herds. Among humans, social scientists have charted how epigenetics—or the study of how "environmental" factors influence gene expression across generations—has the potential to both undo and reproduce biological determinisms (Lock 2015). While epigenetics exposes how unevenly distributed harms remake people's biologies, it may also reduce complex lived experiences and social differences to newly pliable genetic mechanisms (Murphy 2017). Keeping these threads in tension, my paper draws from dairy science publications and ethnographic fieldwork in California to probe what epigenetics comes to mean, support, obfuscate, and foreclose in industrial dairy worlds. Moving from the laboratory to the farm, I examine how the "epigenetic imaginary" (Richardson 2017) might reconfigure the factory's farm's debilitating effects on generations of bovine bodies and their caretakers. In farm settings, where human and animal exploitation are linked under racial capitalism (Blanchette 2020), epigenetics takes on an interspecies dimension that requires bringing animals into the fold of theorizing intersectional oppression (Jackson 2020). I suggest that while epigenetics seeks to remediate animal debility across time and space, it may foreclose more collective forms of responsibility for the industry's uneven, interspecies, and intergenerational cycles of harm.

Presenter(s): Mira Guth

Plotting the Commons: Divisibility and Distribution on Moroccan Mountain Rangelands

In summer 2019, a law was passed by Morocco's parliament that enabled the long-term leasing of some 37 million acres of common lands. While the legislation reaffirmed the indivisibility of the commons and their inalienable ownership, it opened them to leasing by non-rightsholders (including agribusinesses) – as long as rightsholders were able to 'benefit' monetarily. Instead of using these lands for their livelihoods, rightsholders now own individual shares of a corporate property, from which they receive uniform monetary benefit – a kind of corporate dividend.

This set off a firestorm of debate in rural Morocco: what did it mean to equitably share an infungible (Mateescu 2019) and legally indivisible commons? This paper provides an extended case study (van Velson 1967) of a conflict among three groups of rightsholders, considering competing local theorizations (Guyer 2004) of the lands themselves: as political (tribal) territory, as monetizable property, and as the means to a livelihood [rizq]. It argues that these were often delimited and marshalled strategically based on particular distributive politics – with divergent implications across class, lineage, and gendered belonging. Highlighting active processes of 'commoning' (Escobar 2015), this paper then considers the implications of this case of land rent and contestation for questions of a 'just share' (Ferguson 2015) of landed property, and contested attempts to render not just land, but its value, divisible.

Presenter(s): Amelia Burke

Discussion

8605 Council for Museum Anthropology Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Fall board meeting of the Council for Museum Anthropology. Private – invited guests (current and newly elected board members only).

8152 Digging: Socialities, Affects, and Epistemologies of the Underground

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Worlds below remain opaque; shrouded in sediment and soil - itself hauntingly unclassifiable - what lurks below resists sensorial engagement more than other planes of our existence. Yet, we dig. We unearth things of value - as treasure hunters and miners. We build relations across boundaries of life and death, human and non-human. We both uncover memories and histories - removing sediment as if it were the very materiality of forgetting - and bury things to store or hide. We construct underground infrastructures - sewers, tunnels, and wells - that we depend on daily, but keep separate and often obscured from our horizontal world. Anthropological inquiry normally treats these phenomena separately. For example, while treasure hunters, petroleum engineers,

undertakers, rescue teams, and sanitation workers have received significant ethnographic attention, considerations of their shared concerns as they engage the world below remain absent.

This panel seeks the possibility of a dialogue across different forms of digging. What relations are built in burying, uncovering, and inhabiting subterranean space? How do borders and boundaries between political entities, humans/nonhumans, Gods/spirits, living/dead, past/present take and change shape while digging? How do schemas of personhood, mutuality, and domination that are thought from the horizontal space of land change or reproduce themselves underground? What affects emerge in projects of making the covered visible or the buried hidden? What role does the secrecy, surprise, and expertise of unearthing play in regimes of value? As both an engagement with dirt and an attempt to order it, how do acts of digging fit into conceptions of purity and pollution? How do acts of digging contend with conceptions of the ground or earth as a metaphor for things shared or held in common? How can concepts and methods brought from other disciplines help us think about digging in anthropology?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jacob Bessen, Noha Fikry, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Noha Fikry, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Jacob Bessen

Presenter(s): Jacob Bessen, Noha Fikry, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Alaa Attiah, University of Toronto, Jesse Jonkman, Utrecht University, Shreyas Sreenath, Bowdoin College, Department of Anthropology, Tim Burger

Discussant: Farha Ghannam, Swarthmore College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Communities Of Soil, Bodies of Difference: Migration, Death, and the Ground of History in Central Sicily

Less than a century ago, the vast majority of Suterese were buried together in the ground. Now, only Muslims. This paper follows the small, mountaintop town of Sutura as it tries to organize funerals for its new Muslim members amid different understandings of soil in relation to bodily decomposition, property rights, and shared substance. First, my paper shows how Muslims attempt to create an Islamic space and affective environment through acts of digging. Second, it explores the historical tensions of these acts for Catholic Suterese. While sharing the sense that these subterranean funerals were very different, even exotic, they were also aware that their ancestors and the majority of their grandparents were buried in similar ways.

Presenter(s): Jacob Bessen

Digging for the Ancestors in Egypt: On Perfect Pasts & Future Perfect

In non-urban Egypt, many working and lower-middle class families keep food animals on their rooftops. Alongside food animals, many other nonhumans inhabit the landscape and play different roles in my interlocutors' lives. Centered around these other nonhuman presences, this talk asks: What forms of human-nonhuman relations emerge from/in underground? If rearing food animals at home is tied to the earthly, the ground, the food, feed, and fodder of the everyday, what does moving underground do? The talk centers on the continual efforts of my interlocutors in Lower

Egypt to dream of a better future. The dream is rooted in a perfect past, a long stretch to Pharaonic ancestors. As a space where Pharaohs used to live, my field site is a land of infinite possibilities to my interlocutors. Through adventures, failures, and attempts to dig underground, I argue that moving underground exposes a view of human-nonhuman relations in which humans inevitably depend on the help, guidance, and work of nonhumans. In particular, jinn – invisible spirits, that is – are the key actors who dig underground. As underground creatures themselves, jinn illuminate the ways in which nonhuman capacities extend beyond, exceed, and transcend human limited capacities. This shift to underground and its invisible nonhumans complicates how my interlocutors engage with nonhuman animals, since even food animals like chickens can see jinn and thus guide humans on where Pharaonic treasures could be.

Presenter(s): Noha Fikry

The Politics and Poetics of Digging: Unearthing Coloniality in Sinai

This paper delves into the seemingly mundane act of digging a well in St. Catherine, South Sinai, as a lens through which to examine the enduring coloniality of power in the region. Am Farag's arduous, manual well-digging process, constrained by prohibitions on both explosives (learned from Israeli techniques but now illegal) and large drilling machinery (permitted elsewhere in South Sinai), reveals a complex web of regulations and restrictions that shape the very possibilities of interacting with the land. Moving beyond the technical challenges, this work explores the "politics of digging," demonstrating how the division of the Sinai Peninsula into natural reserves, battle zones, mining zones, smuggling zones, and antique zones dictates permissible technologies and practices underground. By analyzing these varied "digging politics," the presentation unearths the colonial lineages that continue to govern the peninsula and its subterranean resources. Furthermore, the presentation considers how factors beyond state regulations, such as the purpose of digging (water, antiquities, illicit crops, land claim), influence methods, labor, and finances, revealing the "politics of water" and mobility within Sinai. Ultimately, this presentation proposes a theoretical framework contrasting "digging" – extractive practices often linked to capital accumulation – with "tunneling" – non-extractive, often clandestine acts of survival and resistance, inspired by examples like Palestine.

Presenter(s): Alaa Attiah

Making Mining Licit: Gold, Commodification, and the Legal Politics of an Underground Economy

Ethnographies of resource-making have shown that the extraction of resource value from objects is premised on forgetting the emplaced lifeworlds of objects before they entered financial markets. Much of this literature looks at such supply-chain disentanglement from the viewpoint of corporate and formal regulatory practices. Lead firms, legal regimes, and downstream consumer economies do the forgetting; disadvantaged people in production sites are being forgotten. Here I broach the question of commodification somewhat differently, as I focus on a gold frontier where variously informalized peoples are playing their own part in the forgetting. In the Colombian Chocó, small-scale mining participants create amnesias about the sociopolitical life of illegalized gold by

repurposing state symbols and structures. Through such appropriation, they performatively erase the illicit character of their economic dealings, and concurrently, render the mining and selling of gold perceptible as activities that are fundamentally quotidian and legal. I argue that when analyzing this metamorphosis of gold from an illicit into a licit resource, we need to account for not only the origin stories of miners and buyers, but also the precious metal's own properties of malleability and subterranean invisibility.

Presenter(s): Jesse Jonkman

Bangalore's Black Spots: Public Litter, Waste Work, and the Archaeology of Future Life

Black spots. This is what Bangaloreans call strewn garbage that clog city streets, narrow gullies, and storm water drains. They predictably accumulate in specific places yet pile up at uncertain times. Often, one taps into local know-how to suspect a littering 'type'. But few track down the exact culprits. Black spots viscerally tear through urban sensoria, souring the aspirational aesthetics of a 'global city'. But they also archive municipal corruption, disrupt relations of power, attract desecrated religious artifacts and icons, and engender relations of care and aversion. They mark the ecological consequences of capitalist growth and provide a material alibi for the routine, public performance of an ostensibly pre-modern practice—caste-based untouchability. This paper frames the caste-based labor that clears Bangalore's black spots as an archaeology of future life. Each morning, the city's 20,000 sanitation workers, who are overwhelmingly Dalit, toil to put together a city that breaks itself apart by nightfall. This cycle of destruction and reconstruction is indexed in the appearance and the disappearance of black spots, marking an everyday rhythm within which workers encounter an accumulated past in the everyday present. How might attending to black spots, and the labor that reworks them into a common future, enable ethnographers to locate the desires and debris of late capitalism within longstanding concerns in anti-caste thought?

Presenter(s): Shreyas Sreenath

The Poetics of Ploughing: Dialectics of Fertility and Decay in Azorean Soil

From the perspective of environmentalists, Azorean soils are improving. Digging up samples causes enthusiasm. After centuries of colonial settlement and monocrop extraction, the drastic depopulation of the last decades has freed soils from human cultivation. Gardens are rewilding, terraces are overgrowing, the earth is teeming with complex life. From the perspective of the remaining smallholders, Azorean soil is degrading. Whenever they turn up the earth, deploying their ploughshares or pickaxes in precarious, ever dwindling work arrangements, they encounter an unsettling, hostile ecology. Unruly soils threaten both livelihoods and spatial norms. When smallholders look into the upturned soil they glimpse at a history of decay, demographic decline and isolation, making ploughing a dense activity through which people navigate tensions between past and future.

Presenter(s): Tim Burger

Discussion

3359 Gaps and Convergences: Finding Analytical Traction in Environmental and Medical Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Despite overlapping concerns and subject matter, medical and environmental anthropology have long occupied distinct disciplinary traditions and approaches, mirroring the paralleling but often separate trajectories of health equity and environmental justice movements. Nonetheless, growing recognition of the health implications of climate change, natural and industrial disasters, toxic exposures, air pollution, noise, and other environmental factors has spurred greater attention to ecological entanglements in anthropology (Lock 2020, Lamoreaux 2022). Sites like New Orleans and the broader Gulf South, Japan, and Central America, reveal an urgent need for deeper and sustained conversation between these fields. In this context, fostering more cohesive interdisciplinary dialogue between medical anthropology and environmental anthropology has become increasingly important. For example, the body has served as both an ethnographic and theoretical framework bridging these two subdisciplines of anthropology.

This panel brings together papers that illuminate the productive disciplinary frictions and affinities of anthropological research that examines questions around environments, health, medicine and disease. These papers consider how the conceptual links between environment and health might be unsettled and re-imagined through a focus on illnesses and diseases as the embodiment of colonial legacies and environmental injustices; how diverging medical and environmental anthropological approaches to data provide analytical tools for addressing the double binds of evidence-based health advocacy; how medical practices in different cultural contexts reinterpret and reframe experiences of environmental toxins in the aftermath of disasters. These papers illustrate the double binds and productive frictions between medical and environmental anthropology, and opens up discussion of anthropological work that is attuned to the entanglements of bodies, ecologies, and the workings of power.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Ina Kim, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Margaux Fisher, University of California, Irvine

Chair: Kathryn Gougelet

Presenter(s): Margaux Fisher, University of California, Irvine, Ina Kim, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Kristen Kennefick, Colgate University

Discussant: Andrew McDowell, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Health Equity Advocacy In Murky Spaces: Confronting Data Denial And Double Binds

This paper, based on ethnographic research conducted primarily in Baton Rouge, articulates the connections between "undone science" (Frickel et al. 2007) and the perpetuation of health

inequities. I draw on the concept of undone science to consider how evidence is made and unmade in both Louisiana's legislative processes and advocacy contexts. I first discuss how government agencies and other political actors systematically engineer gaps in data infrastructure to deny accountability for public health. I then examine how public health advocates work with data to make visible the relationship between systemic inequity and health, even as they grapple with working in "murky spaces," that is, spaces in which the tools of open science and transparent governance are appropriated and misused. I use these ethnographic examples to demonstrate the productive frictions of an analytical approach that integrates medical and environmental anthropological literature on data: while medical anthropology has often approached the datafication of health as a mode of neoliberal subjectification (Foucault 1991), studies of environmental movements demonstrate how data technologies can be mobilized to promote social justice and collective action (Fortun 2016). I suggest that this contrast raises questions about the double binds of ethnographic engagement with data that are particularly pertinent following the coordinated removal of federal public health data resources.

Presenter(s): Margaux Fisher, University of California, Irvine

Radiation Exposure and Supernatural Bodies in Post-Nuclear Japan

Since the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, a wide range of scientific knowledge has been deployed to make sense of the bodily abnormalities attributed to radiation exposure from the damaged reactors. However, some phenomenological experiences related to radiation cannot be fully explained within the framework of Western-centered science. Drawing on ethnographic and archival research, this paper explores how the supernatural dimensions of radiation exposure are understood and experienced within citizen science, animism, and traditional medicine practices in Japan. For example, while contemporary biomedicine cannot explain why some individuals report physical pain in areas of high radiation or how others claim to prevent exposure through herbal remedies or hot spring therapies, such accounts persist and are taken seriously in local contexts. Whereas previous research on the bodily impacts of radiation in anthropology and the social sciences has often reinforced Western notions of rationality by emphasizing the scientific and medical legitimacy of knowledge, this paper seeks to decenter that perspective. Instead, it takes a holistic approach to examining the supernatural dimensions of radiation exposure through the narratives, practices, and ideologies that shape lived experiences in post-nuclear Japan.

Presenter(s): Ina Kim

Specters of Exposure: Chronic Illness Hotspots and the Afterlives of Plantation Ecologies

This paper conceptualizes chronic disease hotspots as sites of active ruination to examine how environmental harms are spatialized and embodied as chronic conditions. This idea is exemplified by Mesoamerican hotspots of chronic kidney disease of nontraditional origin (CKDnt), a form of kidney disease that develops without the typical precursors such as diabetes or hypertension. Despite existing research which suggests CKDnt is likely caused by occupational hazards, notably heat stress, the etiology is still intensely debated. The condition has impacted the region for several

decades, with pockets of increased prevalence called hotspots congregating around sites of monocropping agriculture. Referring to these sites as hotspots indexes how they consolidate a constellation of injustices produced by extractive agricultural regimes, disproportionate climate change burden, and insufficient data. The term "hotspots" also suggests a temporal dimension that is urgent, short-lived, and stands in tension with the illness experience of CKDnt. Thus, I suggest that the concept of hotspots as a productive means to unsettle, disrupt, and reimagine the spatial and temporal linkages between environments and health, highlighting the embodied impacts of colonial legacy and environmental injustice. Further, I contend that the ambiguity surrounding CKDnt underscores the difficulty in tracing environmental exposures along trajectories of chronic disease, inviting investigations of the spectral.

Presenter(s): Kristen Kennefick

Discussion

3724 We are Future Ancestors: Strengthening Collaborative Research to Exorcise Coloniality, Dismantle Environmental Racism, and Summon New Ways of Worlding

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This Town Hall builds on the ongoing work of the Anthropology & Environment section, and also on calls for ancestors in Indigenous and Black studies and other fields working in solidarity, to invite a lively, nourishing, and vital discussion about strengthening regional and transnational environmentalisms. As US electoral politics shrink from the transnational, relational, and responsible, we call on participants to imagine what "radical collaboration" is and might yet become.

Communities worldwide encounter the transformation of their homelands into deadening zones of settler colonialism and extractivist capital. Conditions of toxicity and dispossession are not specters of the past. They continue, embodied and materialized as (in)visible dimensions of structural violence and cumulative harm. The force of responsibility for generations past and future shapes emergent formations of "vital relations" (Dennison 2024) that resist, transform, and subvert statist and oligarchical harm. "Lens of futuring" (Harjo 2019) work entails thinking beyond the temporality of our own human lives – becoming ancestors – while also thinking with peoples targeted by eliminatory projects.

At this time, we need to both sustain the work and do it better. We need ancestors, and we need to be ancestors. We need to be mentors to the next generation of anthropologists, teaching them to be the next generation of ancestors. They will carry or resist the work - depending on what we build today.

By collaboration, we mean co-workings, and learning from those who have long informed our work but who are often obscured in anthropological writing, speaking, and teaching. We must acknowledge the accumulating knowledge established by past teachers, activists, leaders, and laborers whose epistemic and world-building work guide us in protecting human rights and ecological integrity today. As we recognize their influence we also aim to examine our own future-ancestral presence, to open the anthropology of the next quarter century to transformative change. These and other hidden histories are ghosted by eliminatory projects; we open a space in this discussion to bring those worlds forward and summon new ones.

To whom and to what are we obligated? How might these obligations exceed the present material world, to engage a relational ethics that entangle our ancestors with others?

What must we learn from the past and present? How might we reframe our practice to meet this moment as better collaborators, teachers, scientists, and people? How do we protect and ignite meaningful collaboration in and beyond the academy?

What colonial designs can collaboration even unwillingly perpetuate? What metaphors and practices, beyond "collaboration," "engaged," or "transnational" might better suit the uncertainty of the present?

References

Dennison, Jean. 2024. *Vital Relations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Harjo, Laura. 2019. *Spiral to the Stars*. Tucson

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Rebecca Witter, Appalachian State University, Amelia Moore, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Juliet Erazo, Florida International University, Shannon Clark, American University, Department of Anthropology, Yu Liang, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Michael Hathaway, Simon Fraser University, Rebecca Zarger, University of South Florida

Discussant: Dana Powell, Graduate Institute of Humanities, Taipei Medical University

8795 Teaching Intro to Cultural Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Workshop

Join Ken Guest for an interactive workshop to explore ways to make Intro to Cultural Anthropology the most important class an undergraduate takes in college. Strategize together to transform the classroom (in person and online) into a dynamic laboratory for developing and applying anthropology's toolkit and making anthropology relevant to our students' lives. We will also consider pedagogical strategies in the age of AI. Sponsored by the American Ethnological Society.

8758 Storytime for Anthropologists!

Start Date: 11/20/2025 1:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Join us at the Bar in the Lobby of the Sheraton, Thursday 1:15pm!

Stories are at the very heart of anthropology - learning from others, discovering our own, sharing with others. In this installation, four professional anthropologists will take turns telling short, intriguing, engaging stories. All stories will be brief and will follow good storytelling guidance. All will be intended to engage and entertain the audience while promoting the importance and power of a good story.

Organizer(s): Cathleen Crain, Nathaniel (Niel) Tashima, Tanya Rodriguez, Elisha Oliver

8659 The Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group (AMHIG)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 1:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 2:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

The Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group (AMHIG) provides a forum for anthropologists, scholars from other disciplines, and practitioners whose work focuses on the socio-cultural dimensions of mental health. In particular, AMHIG offers an organizational structure for scholars and practitioners engaged in this topic area to network, share resources, and develop new ideas.

8769 Museum Tour: Backstreet Museum- offsite

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This will be a guided tour of the Backstreet Cultural Museum:

<<https://www.backstreetmuseum.org/about-us>>. The museum focuses on "New Orleans' African American community-based masking and processional traditions, including Mardi Gras Indians, jazz funerals, social aid and pleasure clubs, Baby Dolls, and Skull and Bone gangs." The tour will augment a special event titled "Spirits, Stories, and Solidarity: Collaborative Ethnographic Encounters with the Mandingo Warriors & the Neighborhood Story Project," which is scheduled for the following day. The museum shares a connection with the Mandingo Warriors, and the event's organizer is a former member of the institution's board. The tour is planned for early to mid-afternoon on Thursday, November 20, in order to avoid conflicts with scholarly sessions or other ASA events. The Backstreet Museum is approximately a mile from the conference hotels, placing it within walking distance for many of our members. For others, transport will be arranged.

6860 UnCanon: Unsettling Anthropological Theory

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM through 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The past is alive in the present, and anthropology's disciplinary ancestors are no exception. This panel selectively revisits an assembly of relatively useful excerpts from anthropology's inherited canons, while also punching holes in their parameters and wrestling with their colonial contexts and other ghosts. Contributors were invited to think in relation to, and beyond, a specific text of their choosing from the history of anthropology (however they define it). In some cases, the historical essays that panelists selected may have been relatively overlooked in their time, often for familiar reasons that merit ongoing attention. In other cases, authors might choose to return to a particular text from inherited canons with fresh questions in mind, interrogating what they still find useful for contemporary social theory and living struggles today. Each panelist will reflect on related questions: what do they find useful in whatever text they chose for fresh thinking ahead? What compromised contexts and uneasy aspects need to be kept in mind? What recent writing or ongoing conceptual dilemmas in anthropology would they place the text in dialogue with?

Reflections include revisiting E. E. Evans-Pritchard to grapple with the first outbreak of Ebola in Azandeland, paired with Eslanda Robeson's travels in South Sudan (Benton); rereading early literary ethnography alongside Rachel Carson's largely forgotten interactions with her contemporaries in anthropology, and the questions raised by these exchanges for putting anthropological writing and structuralism in conversation with structural violence frameworks (Moran-Thomas); revisiting Sidney Mintz's work on sugar (and the rejoinders of his critics) to trace the kinds of politics that emerge along one chemical's commodity chain in the Caribbean across time (Agard-Jones); rethinking with Émile Durkheim's "On Suicide" to grapple with confinement and constraint against suicide in war among enlisted soldiers in the US military today (Chua); returning to "How Institutions Think" and foundational anthropological theories about institutions, in a moment marked by institutional erosion in US science and medicine on the global stage (Sangaramoorthy); and revisiting questions of class with entanglement theory and James Agee's "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men" at the mouth of the Mississippi River (McDowell). Each contributor will highlight suggested pages and historical excerpts they are thinking through/with/against in attempts to wrestle with contemporary dilemmas--offering fresh reworkings and adding to collective resources for teaching, relearning, and rethinking histories of anthropological theory and writing and their many possible uncanons.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Amy Moran-Thomas, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Adia Benton, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Adia Benton, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology, Amy Moran-Thomas, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Jocelyn Chua, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Thurka Sangaramoorthy, American University, Department of Anthropology, Andrew McDowell, Tulane University,

4045 Anthropological Session Title: Anthropological Approaches to Infrastructure in Africa

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The anthropological theorizing of the concept of infrastructure has experienced a tremendous boom in recent decades, with researchers focusing on its multidimensional nature and manifestation in societies around the world (Larkin 2013; Buier 2022; Smith 2022). Earlier anthropological scholarship conceptualized infrastructure as material transformations of the environment primarily provided and overseen by entities such as governments through administrative departments. Recently, there has been a shift from the conceptualization of infrastructure as material objects, such as bridges, to a more holistic focus on the multidimensional nature, including the social, political, and economic dimensions of infrastructure. Specifically, there is growing anthropological attention to the nexus between infrastructure and social exclusion, state-citizen relationships, and how large state-funded infrastructural projects cause the displacement of citizens.

Researchers utilizing a more capacious conceptualization of infrastructure have developed concepts and insights that have significantly contributed to our understanding of the ways in which people's lives are impacted via their interacts with infrastructure, especially in Africa. Notably, Von Schnitzler's (2016) concept of "techno-politics" theorizes how governments deploy infrastructure as instruments of inclusion and exclusion in social-political life in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Adunbi (2019) explores how the Lekki Free Trade Zone contributed to the displacement of people from their homes and spaces where they earn daily livelihoods.

As debates on infrastructure have unfolded, anthropologists (for example, Adunbi 2020; Storey 2021; and Smith 2022) have paid more attention to the strategies that communities utilize to create basic infrastructure in instances of governments' failure to provide essential services in the present neoliberal era. From the foregoing, it is evident that the concept of infrastructure can help us understand different social, political, economic, and environmental dynamics in Africa.

Consequently, this panel will bring together anthropologists whose work contributes to the holistic understanding of infrastructure in Africa. The panel seeks to address the following, but not limited to, questions: What are the extant conceptual debates and theoretical approaches to the analyses of infrastructure in Africa? How can anthropological praxis on infrastructure expand our understanding of the nexus between state-citizen relations, social inclusion and exclusion, claims to personhood, belonging, citizenship, social relations, and multi-species relations in Africa? How can new theoretical approaches and anthropological methods bring about novel ideas that will enhance a more holistic understanding of infrastructure in Africa?

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Ebenezer Adeyemi, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology, Theodore Powers, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sarah Raskin, Virginia Commonwealth University

Presenter(s): Rebecca Peters, SUNY, Oswego, Anthropology Department, Marit Ostebo, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Vaia (Yioula) Sigounas, Case Western Reserve University, Department of Anthropology, Venolia Rabodiba, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Ebenezer Adeyemi, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Omolade Adunbi, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): Rivers, Roadways, and the Shaping of African Infrastructure

This paper reviews work on African infrastructures of long-distance mobility as a comparison to work on urban household infrastructure. Railways, roads, and bridges traverse rural areas, bringing peoples and ideas into closer contact. They connect rural areas to urban ones and each other, but can just as easily serve as borders and boundaries, shaping the contours of states, regions, and economies. They are often so large ordinary people could not construct them, however their realization has historically depended on deeply local expertise and action that echoes the past in today's infrastructures (e.g., Park 2024). Finally, attention to the infrastructure of long-distance travel demands acknowledgement of the natural world as an essential actant in African mobilities, for instance where river travel is relied on or preferred over road or rail, challenging our analytical categories and conclusions. While anthropological attention to the urban infrastructures of daily life has revealed much, especially about political action and social inclusion, renewed attention to the infrastructures of long-distance mobility holds different promise, foundational to a holistic understanding of infrastructure in Africa.

Emma Park

2024 Infrastructural Attachments: Austerity, Sovereignty, and Expertise in Kenya. Duke University Press.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Peters

Walls and Corridors In An African City

In Spring 2024, the Ethiopian government launched the Corridor Project, a sweeping urban redevelopment initiative that is radically reshaping Addis Ababa. It's first phase – the demolition of the historic Piasa neighborhood – was executed at unprecedented speed. By early fall, the project had reached Kazanchis, another neighborhood where I spent much of my childhood. Drawing on four months of ethnographic fieldwork in Addis Ababa and adopting a partly autoethnographic approach, this paper explores the social and personal effects of the project, engaging debates on infrastructure, displacement and urban transformation in Africa.

Inspired by anthropological works on absence and loss, I analyze how the demolitions – and the uncertainties around what might be lost – brought me into contact with people who were present

yet largely invisible in my childhood: my neighbor Sara and security guards who watched over our compound, both then and during my 2024 return. While the Corridor Project has had devastating and still unfolding consequences for many, I also explore how brought visible and invisible walls, partly racialized and unequal relations, as well as new and old friendships into presence. By adopting an autoethnographic lens, I argue for the value of reflexive narratives to deepen anthropological engagements with infrastructure, not just as material transformation, but as a lived and deeply personal process.

Presenter(s): Marit Ostebo

When Social Infrastructures Build Material Infrastructures: The Priority Assistive Products List in Uganda

Historical, regulatory, and societal events over the past few decades have contributed to inequitable access to medical devices in the Global South. Using the example of wheelchair accessibility in Uganda, I contend that insufficient social and material infrastructures, regulatory interference by high-resource countries, and the inappropriate dumping of unsuitable devices have impeded access to medical devices. To address this situation, the World Health Organization (WHO) has turned to list-making as a technology of care. In 2016, the WHO published the Priority Assistive Products List, a list of fifty assistive medical devices necessary for improving the health and human dignity of people with disabilities worldwide. Drawing on interviews with wheelchair users, assistive device makers, health care providers, and employees of NGOs in Uganda, I argue that infrastructures supporting medical device access function on several different levels. Where material infrastructure is lacking, Ugandans with disabilities design social infrastructures to increase access to medical devices like wheelchairs. Ugandan disability rights activists contributed to the formulation, promotion, and implementation of the WHO's List. After the WHO distributed the List worldwide, Ugandan disability rights activists deployed the List as a blueprint for the material infrastructure that they expected the nation to provide.

Presenter(s): Vaia (Yioula) Sigounas

Infrastructuralization: Toward an ethnography of regional integration in southern Africa

Infrastructuralization makes intelligible the unprecedented investments in corridor connectivity projects happening in southern Africa. I reflect on the commissioning of a One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) at the heart of sub-Saharan Africa's largest trade corridor. Geographically, it is a node with connections to several countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and ethnographically, it is a node from where I study the experiences of regional (dis)connectivity; for the experts, it is a site for managing the everyday business of integrating southern Africa – through the facilitation of trade. This border concept proliferating all over southern Africa alongside major upgrades to transnational and intra-regional road and rail networks, when singularly spectacularized as an infrastructure, offers new perspectives on sovereignty and mobility. I nonetheless de-privilege the spectacular and sublime thing. I contextualized it as part of a series of projects aimed at making multilateral cooperation and regional unity in SADC infrastructural.

Analytically, infrastructuralization thus forgoes the temporal space in which "effects" – political, anti-political, techno-political, unintended, and otherwise – are often observed.

Infrastructuralization empowers an anthropological attunement to process and series, to still-becoming and ongoing-ness, to projects of rescuing past ideals and of bringing forth new ones. It brings the unit of the region into ethnographic analysis.

Presenter(s): Venolia Rabodiba

"Lagos is not solely for the Rich": Community-developed Infrastructure and Claims on Citizenship in Makoko, Lagos, Nigeria.

Based on data from interviews and participant observation, this paper presents strategies that residents of Makoko in Lagos, Nigeria, utilize to build infrastructure—including waste disposal systems- to reduce their exposure to malaria-transmitting mosquitos and reduce their exposure to the disease. Makoko is a government-marginalized informal settlement characterized by the building of houses with stilts over the water of Lagos Lagoon. Further, I show how Makoko residents use these community-built infrastructure (which I call community-developed infrastructure) to lay claim to citizenship in post-colonial Nigeria.

This paper seeks to advance debates in anthropology of (1) infrastructure and (2) citizenship. Scholars have shown that beyond being physical objects, such as roads, infrastructure can serve as instruments of inclusion and exclusion for the elites. Additionally, anthropologists have explored how post-colonial governments use infrastructure to create different categories of citizens through unjust urban planning policies that exclude poor neighborhoods from state-funded infrastructural projects. However, this paper advances anthropological debates on infrastructure by analyzing how marginalized communities build infrastructure to manage diseases in the absence of state funded infrastructure. Also, the paper furthers debates in citizenship studies by showing how marginalized communities use community-developed infrastructure to make claims on citizenship.

Presenter(s): Ebenezer Adeyemi

Discussion

303 General Anthropology Division Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Samuel Robson, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Emily Selby Smith, Syracuse University, Department of Anthropology, Ritwik Banerji, Iowa State University, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Emma Tran , Nona Moskowitz, Wittenberg University, Department of Sociology, Yizhen Chen , Franziska Zirker , Gabriele Kohpahl

Presenter(s): Samuel Robson, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Emily Selby Smith, Syracuse University, Department of Anthropology, Ritwik Banerji, Iowa State University,

Department of World Languages and Cultures, Emma Tran, Nona Moskowitz, Wittenberg University,
Department of Sociology, Yizhen Chen, Franziska Zirker, Gabriele Kohpahl

Presentation(s): Beyond the "Friendship Grind": Developing Affection for Fictional Characters in Stardew Valley

How do people experience, draw meaning from, and get affected by relationships they form with characters while playing single-player, role-playing video games? What does this have to do with the mechanics of specific games, i.e., the things players do? Drawing from ethnographic observations of two Twitch streamers who play the game Stardew Valley, in-depth interviews with five Stardew Valley players, and over 150 hours playing Stardew Valley myself, I argue that while the game's relationship mechanics are based on quantifiable inputs and outputs that lend themselves to playing within a neoliberal framework (which I call the "friendship grind"), players only sometimes play within this framework. Players can also develop connections with Stardew Valley's non-player characters that lie outside and even challenge this framework.

This result has profound implications for how we define games. If a game's static mechanics are met with multiple, diverse, even unpredictable modes of player engagement, how does one even begin to talk about what a game "is?" Taking inspiration from Thomas Malaby's semiotic contingency and Stanley Fish's reader-response framework, I argue that we might talk instead about what a game "brings," a word which allows us to integrate players' diverse reactions and interpretations into our understanding of games.

Presenter(s): Samuel Robson

Experiential Emptiness: The Srebrenica Memorial and Missing Graves

Every year, individuals from around the world gather at the Srebrenica-Poročari Genocide Memorial and Cemetery to finally lay to rest the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. Over 8,000 men and boys were killed when the Srebrenica enclave fell, and their remains were left in mass graves nearby. Since the establishment of the memorial and cemetery in 2001 over 6,500 victims' remains have been interred. Yet for some, this final interment has yet to come. An embodied emptiness is evoked when seeing the empty plots, knowing the landscape still holds individual remains that have yet to be identified. Through ethnographic research on the memorial's foot traffic patterns, this paper aims to highlight how loss reverberates through Srebrenica's empty plots. For those who have yet to be identified, their presence remains in their absence.

Presenter(s): Emily Selby Smith

Ghosts of Moral Shortcoming in the Uncanny Valley

What exactly produces the uncanny valley (UV), or the feeling of discomfort in encounters with machines that almost, but do not quite, manifest humanlike presence? While most theories of the UV assume that this uneasiness arises precisely because the humanlike object is a machine, I argue that the UV arises from the way that humanlike machines function as a ghostly presence that reminds the human interlocutor of moral failings they have previously encountered in other's

behavior. To do so, I draw on an experimental ethnographic methodology in which I have 1) designed an artificially intelligent virtual performer of free improvisation (a postwar avant-garde musical practice) based on participant observation as a performer of this practice and 2) subjected this system to the critique of human improvisers in Berlin, Chicago, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Many ethnographic interlocutors readily suggest that the system behaves as a phantom reembodyment of a human improviser who fails to uphold a central moral value that structures free improvisation: egalitarianism. More importantly, the claims interlocutors make about "egalitarianism" display a broad range of interpretations of this ideal. Furthermore, it is only in through encounters with a virtual improviser that these claims are openly enunciated, thereby indicating the presence of a variety of latent moral critiques that haunt improvisers in their ordinary interactions with one another. Moving beyond this immediately ethnographic context, I conclude on the question of where, how, and why ghosts of moral failure manifest themselves in humanlike technologies like artificial intelligence.

Presenter(s): Ritwik Banerji

Girls who grow up with ghosts: a hauntological approach in the study of right-wing politics among Vietnamese Americans

As critical scholars have long taught, the passage of time is neither linear nor aspatial, an important reminder for those of us who study the elements that give rise to ideology. The politics of the multiracial right especially necessitates a temporal alternative, given that our work must always take seriously local and co-constitutive formations of time, space, racialization, gender and many other axes of structural differentiation, for how an individual makes sense of this differentiation reflects in part with whom they link their fate. In this paper, I discuss how haunting can be a valuable framework for thinking about how time and memory are embodied across generations, and how those embodiments (i.e., ghosts) mold how an individual or community imagines their social worlds, especially if those visions are not collective or communal. I draw on preliminary ethnographic data to show the ways in which Vietnamese American girls who grow up in conservative Orange County, California, express being haunted by familial ghosts who experienced great suffering in various points throughout Vietnamese history. Inspired by Black and Indigenous feminist temporalities, necropolitics, and affect theory, I argue that anti-communist Vietnamese American families' perceived obedience to their ghosts have resulted, in part, in a toiling landscape in which their daughters are caught in and must negotiate multiple binds between local and societal expectations. I also show that in these binds, "cracks" appear in which possible futures are and have always been imagined. By amplifying these cracks, we may find opportunities to break from dismissing or pathologizing right-wing people of color, and to instead find opportunities to re-route pain and trauma into a politics of liberation made possible only through solidarity.

Presenter(s): Emma Tran

Haunting within Cosplay: Embodied Characters and Human Ghosts?

In Oshii's 1995 animated film "Ghost in the Shell," the cyborg Kusanagi muses on her individual humanity: "what if a cyber-brain could generate its own ghost, create its own soul all by itself and if it did, what's the importance of being human then?" In the film, the ghost refers to the human brain cells--the soul--of the human inserted into a synthetic body. The human haunts the machine; it is the diaphanous shadow of original human tissue lurking within the mechanical body. In Kusanagi's query and throughout the film, "Ghost in the Shell" asks, "what makes us human?," exploring this question along multiple dimensions.

If the cyborg is a unification of human and machine, what is the unification of human and fictional character? Using Oshii's metaphor, how do we understand the "ghost" in this particular "shell"? Cosplayers bring the lifeless to life. Are human cosplayers ghosts (or souls) within the characters they cosplay? Certain features of haunting, as outlined by Turner (2020)--suspending judgement between "real" and "unreal," a simultaneous presence and absence, categorical ambiguity when "ontological categories overlap" (p176), all of which may create an affective experience--describe cosplay. Cosplayers vary in the extent to which they are themselves philosophical about the union but, for some, cosplaying is an emotional experience. This presentation explores, philosophically, the dimensions of being human within the embodied characters of cosplay.

Presenter(s): Nona Moskowitz

Intergenerational Differences in Malaysian Chinese Identity from the Perspective of Connections with their Homeplace in China A Case of the Tan Family

Abstract

This study aims to examine the variations in the identities of Malaysian Chinese across generations and the process of identity mobility when they are connecting with their homeplace in China. This paper uses semi-structured interviews with ten Malaysian Chinese of different generations in one family to extract key codes through thematic analysis. The interviews address two main questions: firstly, to confirm and present their identity differences exist among different generations, and secondly, to conclude the main ways in which they connect with their homeplace in China and to delve into the process of identity reshaping during this connection.

Erstwhile most academic works on Malaysian Chinese identity have a macro-level perspective, focusing on the examination of social and political institutions while neglecting personal introspection and micro-level analysis (Yee Mei, 2023). This research will provide a micro-level perspective on the identity of Malaysian Chinese from different generations within a family in the context of family history, as well as exploring the possibilities of identity change for Malaysian Chinese in the process of connecting with the homeplace.

This study hopes to engage in a dialogue with several vital identity theory, as well as to explore the phenomenon of identity change among Malaysian Chinese in the new era, in the hope that it may trigger some new thinking.

Based on his experiences moving to Naples, Iain Chambers said that language, culture, and sense of belonging from hometown remain, but they no longer define life in a new location for migrants as him, instead, they haunt us with history, experience, voices, memories, and so on (Chambers, 1994). And this passage was quoted by Helen Guek Yee Mei to describe the identity situation that her father a second-generation Malaysian Chinese facing with (Yee Mei, 2023).

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Kuhn, P.A. (2009) *Chinese among others: Emigration in modern times*. Maryland, US: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

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Yee Mei, H.G. (2023) 'Examining the intersection of cultural identities: The Malaysian Chinese experience', *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue*, (23), pp. 55–71. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34074/junc.23004>.

Presenter(s): Yizhen Chen

Knowing Emergencies: COVID-19 Dashboards and the (Unavoidable) Politics of Situational Awareness

In an emergency, it is key to know what is going on. From government officials issuing orders to health systems rationing supplies, to individual citizens taking up protective measures, emergency response relies on a mode of knowledge called situational awareness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, one key way such situational awareness was achieved was through "real-time" epidemiological data, typically published in public dashboards. Such web applications, which showed the unfolding dynamic through graphs, lists, and thematic maps, became iconic and much-used representations of the pandemic. At the same time, the quality of their representations has been disputed from the beginning, with dashboards criticized for outdated or inflated numbers,

as well as for representing data in an affectively charged or misleading way. Drawing on 26 interviews with dashboard creators, my PhD research investigates the more-than-human constellations involved in this production of situational awareness, highlighting the contingencies, choices, and social and technological constraints shaping the capture and representation of the pandemic. It shows that because there is no such thing as an unmediated, direct knowledge of the unfolding emergency, what counts as "good" data is inextricably linked to what one intends to do with it. Building on STS research on representations in scientific practice and Critical Data Studies, I argue for recognizing the inevitable political aspects of producing this emergency knowledge rather than focusing primarily on the 'accuracy' of the data and its representation. Dashboards cannot provide a perfect, simultaneous depiction of an unfolding emergency. For a case to appear on a dashboard, it must pass through a long chain of mediators, each with its own limitations. This research illustrates that making an emergency understandable in real-time requires the interconnection of various elements that, through their mediation, determine how the emergency is ultimately captured and responded to. Since there is no perfect representation, the question of how to mediate emergencies becomes a political one. While the empirical study focuses on COVID-19 dashboards, the theoretical insight remains relevant in an era haunted by intense and ongoing socio-natural emergencies and crises. Following their extensive use during the pandemic, dashboards have gained the status of central media for situational awareness and are currently being adapted for various crisis dynamics. Uncovering the networks of human and non-human elements, as well as the social and technological frictions that shape these media and the situational awareness they enable, is crucial for finding ways of living with future (health) crises.

Presenter(s): Franziska Zirker

Moving On From Gang Membership in Los Angeles: Tattoo Removal

The presentation is based on evaluation research for a non-profit tattoo removal clinic which assists former Los Angeles Latino, Black and Asian gang members to erase the visual signs of their gang affiliations by removing their gang tattoos. The research shows how tattoo removal is a way of moving on from gang membership and leaving this part of the interviewee's lives behind. The physically painful and lengthy process of tattoo removal requires strong motivation and commitment to go through the process.

Individual interviews look at the hurdles and motivations to remove of Los Angeles ex-gang members to remove their tattoos. It sheds lights of ex-gang members individual aspirations for a different life style away from the violence of gangs and hope for a better future their children and the young generation of Angelenos.

Presenter(s): Gabriele Kohpahl

325 Association for Africanist Anthropology Flash Session #2- People and Politics

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Julian Murchison, Eastern Michigan University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminology, Raymond Awadzi, Florida International University, Saibu Mutaru, Siwei LU, Zixiang Wei, Christian Doll, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Queenie Collins, Lenka Suchá, Godfrey Maringira, Tanichéé Cain, Association of Black Anthropologists

Presenter(s): Julian Murchison, Eastern Michigan University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminology, Raymond Awadzi, Florida International University, Saibu Mutaru, Siwei LU, Zixiang Wei, Christian Doll, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Queenie Collins, Lenka Suchá, Godfrey Maringira, Tanichéé Cain, Association of Black Anthropologists

Presentation(s): "Anthropologist as Language Broker: Swahili Grants, Classes, and Politics"

Advocates for Swahili's recognition and expansion as an international language take pride in the breadth of the language's reach on the African continent and beyond as well as its adoption as an official language in a wide range of settings. UNESCO's declaration of July 7 as Swahili Day in 2021, the African Union's adoption of Swahili as an official language, and the growth of Swahili language offerings in African schools outside of East Africa are but a few examples of recent developments expanding the reach and influence of Swahili. The Tanzanian government in particular is invested in furthering this reach and the overall influence of Swahili and has sought to support and foster the spread of Swahili in various venues.

In this talk, I reflect on the relationship between these international developments involving Swahili and my own involvement in initiatives to support Swahili language training. From my own institution's involvement in a Title VI language grant involving Swahili language courses to the development of a course on "Swahili-Speaking Cultures" and a Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad Proposal to build capacities for "Swahili Studies" in the university and in local K-12 schools, I have increasingly come to occupy a role that might usefully be thought of as "language broker". Using this framework of language broker, I will reflect critically on what it means to be engaged in the larger international politics of Swahili expansion and how these international efforts relate to efforts and developments in the United States that often rely on or seek support from US government agencies. I will ask to what extent the US government has been an ally (witting or unwitting) in the efforts of Tanzania and others and how the moves by the current administration in the US to dismantle and remove funding structures might impact the future of these efforts and the US's relationship to Swahili as an international language. I will also consider my own role as anthropologist in these various efforts -- how my interests and efforts match up with those of either

the Tanzanian government or US agencies and how well these sorts of initiatives coincide with anthropological pedagogies and sensibilities. I will argue that, if the role of language broker is to be a tenable one for an anthropologist, it must include careful consideration of oneself as a purposeful actor in the language of politics in a way that offers opportunities for reimagining both anthropological pedagogies and public scholarship.

Presenter(s): Julian Murchison

"Reimagining a Homeland from the Diaspora: Navigating the African Diaspora Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology"

The notion about a homeland in diaspora studies provides an intriguing intellectual context for analyzing the African diaspora beyond the middle passage. The homeland is inextricably enmeshed with the diaspora phenomena in every significant way and has been construed in differently due to how both contemporary and middle passage-based African diaspora communities have affectively imagined it. While some diaspora groups perceive the homeland (continental Africa) as an imagined historical place of origin without any transnationally diachronic connections, a growing population of some diaspora groups have affectively reestablished varied forms of diachronic and synchronic connection with specific regions as in ethnicities, kingdoms, and countries in Africa for different reasons. Using the Council of Ewe Associations of North America (CEANA) as a case, this paper analyzes how an ethnically based contemporary African diaspora group is actively engaged several initiatives that signifies a reinventing the imagined Ewe ethnic homeland in West Africa. The research data which was gathered from some Ewe communities in West Africa and North America reveals that both the old and the new African diaspora groups have some connection with the African homeland. However, CEANA's diachronic and synchronic connection with the West African Eweland reveals how the group has deployed their cultural memory and related affect to reimagine and reinvent the Ewe ethnic homeland that transcend four nation-state borders. The research findings invite a critical analysis of the African diaspora phenomena beyond the middle passage epistemology. This will uncover the peculiarities that continue to define the Africa diaspora within a given historical context.

Presenter(s): Raymond Awadzi

Care as repair: ethnographic insights from a witch camp in northern Ghana

This essay explores the intersection of care and repair. Caregiving is a fundamental aspect of human societies, where individuals provide and receive care throughout their lives. This study examines care work as a form of repair, focusing on ethnographic research among women accused of witchcraft and their children in a northern Ghanaian witch camp. The witch camp provides a unique lens to examine care and repair dynamics. Caregiving among the accused witches and their families is understood as vital repair work, necessary for sustaining life and well-being within the camp. By examining the complex dynamics of care and repair, this essay seeks to deepen our understanding of care work in marginalized communities. The women and children in the witch camp face significant challenges, including poverty and social exclusion. Caregiving is critical for

survival, and individuals rely on each other for support. This study reveals care work as both practical and emotional labor, essential for maintaining social relationships and promoting collective well-being. This research contributes to a broader understanding of care work in different cultural contexts. It highlights the importance of considering power dynamics and social relationships that shape care work, particularly in marginalized communities. By exploring care and repair in the witch camp, this essay provides new insights into the ways care work is enacted, valued, and recognized.

Presenter(s): Saibu Mutaru

Granting a Man a House: Politics of Distribution in Senegal's Social Housing Project

Over the past decade, the African continent has witnessed a resurgence in the social housing agenda. States creatively utilize historical discourses to legitimize their actions, gaining cultural and symbolic capital in the process; they mobilize geopolitical resources to gain material capital and deliver decent housing to their people. Social housing is a large-scale social engineering project in most African countries. It has the potential to reshape state-citizen relations, create new social networks, and model new African urban citizenship. It is crucial to conduct empirical research to understand this engineering and determine its consequences.

Launched in 2019, Senegal's Social Housing Program of 100,000 units (SHP) is among the earliest and most ambitious. The SHP directly targets the urban poor, a class that had previously been mostly excluded from state welfare. The program provides the urban poor with a rent-to-own social housing scheme, where eligible citizens first rent a home at an affordable rate, and after making rental payments over an extended period, they gain homeownership. Independent of the SHP, Senegal has an emerging real estate market that attracts global capital speculating on it as an investment. The SHP encourages private companies to transform informal housing in slums into permanent high-rise, low-cost housing built alongside more upscale luxury estates. This results in a peculiar phenomenon where speculation takes place right beside the low-income social housing spots.

Senegal's social housing agenda then sits within two broader trends across Africa: first, efforts to extend social protection or welfare to those who had previously not had access; second, urban speculation and capital accumulation that in major African cities are attracting global real estate capital. How does the social housing agenda incorporate the social welfare intention with the speculative impetus? What are the assumptions and imperatives behind it? And on the ground, how has everything unfolded? What technologies or bureaucracies are people involved in with the latest social engineering, and how are they engaged with them? And how does the new social housing project reshape their household dynamics and everyday life?

My research answers these questions through a three-month ethnography exploring in detail the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of one slum-to-social housing project, the Baraka Cité. Led by state and international organizations and funded chiefly by an Egyptian real estate developer, Baraka Cité is the flagship project of the SHP, and its implementation is promoted

as a model example in subsequent social housing projects. My research demonstrates that the social housing project in Senegal is not only a pragmatic policymaking. It is more about the emerging new ways of reasoning about distribution and accumulation.

Presenter(s): Siwei LU

Haunting Wounds: Sexual Violence, HIV, and Embodied Memory among Women in Post-Conflict Tigray, Ethiopia

This study uses an anthropological perspective to explore the "ghostly" impact of sexual violence and HIV infection on post-war women in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. In the Tigray conflict from 2020 to 2022, systematic sexual violence was widely used as a weapon of war, and there is clear evidence of deliberate HIV transmission (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Drawing on structural violence (Farmer, 2004) and embodied trauma (Das, 2006; Fassin, 2007), this study analyzes how sexual violence and the resulting HIV infection continue to affect women's physical experience and social interaction as a "ghostly" existence. In the context of the collapse of the formal medical system, many survivors try both modern medical treatments and traditional or religious therapies, such as sacred water healing rituals (Gebremichael et al., 2023). These multiple medical practices reflect complex cultural logics and highlight women's agency and vulnerability in a context of scarce medical resources. The concept of "haunting" (Stoler, 2013) is used as a metaphor to explain how traumatic memories, shame, and unacknowledged community stigma profoundly affect the lives of surviving women, manifesting as physical pain, psychological trauma, and social silence (Gebremichael et al., 2023). In terms of research methods, this study combines ethnographic reports, survivor testimonies, and non-governmental organization literature to explore the intersection of violence, disease, and memory in a fragile post-war social environment (Human Rights Watch, 2021). By examining how the intangible legacy of war sexual violence is engraved on women's bodies, this study contributes to the extensive discussion in anthropology about the lasting impact of conflict and how communities face trauma and its "ghostly" aftermath.

Presenter(s): Zixiang Wei

Infrastructure of 'Incompleteness': Small-Scale Money Transfer in South Sudan

Drawing on ongoing collaborative ethnographic research, this paper offers an analysis of the history, context, and work of a locally-run money transfer organization operating at the center of this uncertainty in war-impacted South Sudan. The organization was founded by South Sudanese development professionals and entrepreneurs to link up and offer financial services to the people most impacted by recent conflict: giving unbanked, displaced, and disconnected communities a means to connect. The small-scale but widely dispersed alternative infrastructure has deliberately operated outside the purview and between the gaps of state-led and humanitarian aid initiatives. Its usage demonstrates how new forms of community, connection, value, and futurity are conceived and enacted both in the face of and through the conditions of conflict. Drawing inspiration from Francis Nyamjoh's notion of "incompleteness" and thinking with ideas of futurity and becoming, I suggest that the endeavor's success is attributable to its defiance of categorization and refusal of

extant frames for development, recovery, and peace-making. It offers a view into the means by which people navigate ever-changing (and seemingly impossible) circumstances and operate beyond the confines of humanitarian and state logics in ways productive for postcolonial theory.

Presenter(s): Christian Doll

Privilege or Pressure? Black American Migration to the Global South

Migration is often framed as either a forced response to hardship or a privileged choice enabled by economic stability. But what happens when migration is both? My research explores how Black Americans-particularly women-navigate this spectrum, balancing privilege with pressure in their decisions to leave the United States.

My study examines privileged migration, focusing on Black American women as a distinct subset of migrants who benefit from favorable legal, social, and economic conditions in host countries. While scholars such as Benson (2015) and Cranston and Duplan (2024) have examined how privileged migrants use their socioeconomic status to bypass bureaucratic barriers, fewer studies explore how race and gender shape these experiences. While some Black Americans relocate for leisure, others feel pushed out of the U.S. due to racial injustice, economic insecurity, and political instability. Rathod (2020) describes this as pressured exit-when migration is not legally forced but remains necessary for emotional, physical, or financial survival.

The "Blaxit" phenomenon-the voluntary migration of Black Americans seeking refuge from systemic racism-demonstrates the complexity of privilege. As Korpela (2020) and Croucher (2009) argue, Black Americans in Mexico experience a dual reality: their economic stability allows for relatively smooth integration into expatriate communities, yet their racial identity complicates full social acceptance. Hercog (2014) highlights how Black migrants must navigate Mexico's racial hierarchies, shaped by colonial histories and colorism, despite their financial privilege.

Additionally, digital platforms and expatriate networks facilitate privileged migration. Polson (2016) notes that geo-social media enables migrants to maintain transnational connections and construct identities that bridge their home and host countries. These online communities provide Black American migrants with vital support systems, helping them negotiate belonging in a new sociopolitical landscape.

My research also examines how migration policies reinforce privilege. Cranston and Duplan (2024) argue that visa systems systematically favor skilled professionals and retirees, creating structural advantages for those with financial capital. However, as Croucher (2012) suggests, these policies reflect broader global inequalities, granting mobility to economically valuable migrants while limiting opportunities for less privileged groups.

By integrating perspectives from anthropology, sociology, and migration studies, my research contributes to the discourse on race, privilege, and global mobility. It calls for further investigation into how intersecting identities shape migration experiences and urges policymakers to consider reforms that promote more equitable migration frameworks.

Presenter(s): Queenie Collins

The role of agriculture in small-scale farmers' aspirations under the paradigm of food system transformation: the case of East Usambara, Tanzania

Small-scale agriculture remains foundational to food systems across sub-Saharan Africa. However, the progressing climate and environmental crises and turbulent societal, economic and political changes pose interlinked risks to its future. In response, national and international development agendas increasingly advocate for food system transformation. Although food system transformation requires fundamental change in how the food system works, related policies often put the economic profitability at the forefront. Thus, food system transformation often materializes through top-down mechanisms, such as agricultural commercialization and the establishment of farming blocks, that require substantial shifts in small-scale farmers' (hereafter, small-holders) ways of life. Yet, the interests and aspirations of the small-holders are frequently underrepresented in such policies.

Our contribution critically explores how food system transformation aligns, or fails to align, with small-holders' aspirations. Drawing on the capability approach, aspiration theory and oral history interviews conducted in East Usambara, Tanzania, we unpack how the aspirations of small-holders evolve over time. Moreover, this approach enables to investigate the underlying values, norms and meanings that small-holders ascribe to agriculture and how they understand it in relation to their own aspirations and aspirations for their children.

Through this lens, our analysis reveals that small-holders predominantly aspire toward improving their farming practices, diversifying livelihoods, enhancing living conditions, and providing life opportunities for their children through education. Even when aspirations extend beyond agriculture, small-holders often frame their engagement in agriculture as critical for their achievements. For many, agriculture is not merely viewed as a means of subsistence and source of income. Instead, the life stories of small-holders unravel that it is deeply embedded in social norms, personal identities, and intergenerational expectations. Importantly, being a farmer is often closely tied to notions of self-reliance, independence, and agency. This is well demonstrated through exploration of small-holders' aspirations for their children. Although they desire good education and mostly non-agricultural employment for their children, small-holders often emphasize that they should maintain a connection to farming (although the forms of the engagement may vary from the present practice of the respondents themselves), recognizing it as both, the social safety net and the cultural anchor.

We argue that current food system transformation mechanisms, driven by economic restructuring and often premised on small-holders transitioning into laboring on large farms, might undermine the sense of agency that small-holders ascribe to their farming. Ultimately, such approaches may disrupt social fabric and reinforce dependency, rather than fostering empowerment and autonomy.

Presenter(s): Lenka Suchá

Co-author(s): Aneta Stoker

Wartime Ghosts: Zimbabwean Soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1998-2002)

War is not just about visible soldiers as perpetrators, but it is also about ghosts in the terrain of war threatening and intimidating combat activities. In this paper, I am interested in exploring how soldiers were made to believe in the existence of ghosts in the deployment of the Democratic Republic of Congo war. The subjective experience of ghosts in war, is not imaginary, but its realities is understood through the threat of death and dying. The paper draws from an ethnography of war, which understand the war from the vantage point of those who participated in it, and experienced it. The paper is based on Zimbabwean soldiers who were deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo war (1998-2002).

Presenter(s): Godfrey Maringira

“Every Reason Why My Ancestors Sent Me”: The Field School as a Rite of Passage and the Black Perspective Towards New (Bio)Archaeology.

The roots of anthropology grew from the seeds of colonialism and went on to sprout various branches that prioritized Western standards and intellectual thought. As the field works toward decolonization, diversification should be at the forefront. Black bioarchaeologists and biological anthropologists focusing on the African Diaspora work to tell the story of their ancestors, bridging the past and the present. As the field school is often required for a career in archaeology, it is vital to acknowledge that the experience during this rite of passage can affect a student's desire to continue this path. Black students interested in this work must consider the uphill battle of pursuing higher education in a field that was rooted in colonialism with the introduction of possible foreign travel and living amongst strangers. Further, the experience may be intensified if a student's first dig includes human remains and possibly working around the spirits of their own ancestors.

With the Kendrick Lamar lyric "every reason why my ancestors sent me", Black feminist thought guides my reflection on attending 5 (bio)archaeological field schools. Perspectives include my motivations for attendance, other students' motivations, as well as the motivations of directors to host a field school. Choosing my first field school, location was my main driving factor along with simply wanting to be around bones. Wanting to gain more experience as well as deciding to study the field school as a rite of passage, I found myself attending four additional field schools. From the first field school to my last, my motivations changed greatly after having met many students at various points in their educational journey as well as learning from various directors with different motivations and goals.

My travels included different styles of accommodations, weather, work, project types, and the full spectrum of learning environments, from the educationally focused to the 'frat party atmosphere' that many students and studies have reported. But at the forefront was a glaring lack of representation. In addition to my autoethnographic work, my research includes a survey and semi-formal interviews to understand the experiences of other Black archaeologists and biological anthropologists. Already found are common experiences related to racism, microaggressions, exclusivity, and other experiences that have caused Black students to leave their field school

prematurely. The goal is to analyze the collective voice of Black archeologists to identify the disconnect between field school diversification efforts and their perspective attendees in order to inform future field school directors and policy makers. Diversification efforts, motivations, and ethics should be revisited in regard to the field school as a community of practice and any field experiences that include the handling of human remains. If also accepted, my Poster would dive deeper into my data collection and analysis.

Presenter(s): Tanichéé Cain

4968 Life in Morocco: Helping Hidden Voices be Heard

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This paper brings together three ethnographic investigations that illuminate the lived realities of communities often marginalized within dominant narratives of Moroccan society. Focusing on the expression of Tamazight identity in and around Fes, the maternal health experiences of rural Moroccan mothers, and the evolving nature of religious education within homes and classrooms, this research explores how identity, gender, and belief are negotiated in everyday life. Through immersive fieldwork and interviews, we foreground the perspectives of individuals whose voices are frequently overlooked-Amazigh speakers asserting cultural visibility, mothers navigating healthcare systems shaped by both tradition and state infrastructure, and families adapting religious pedagogy to changing social currents. Together, these case studies reveal the complex ways Moroccans are engaging with questions of belonging, authority, and transformation. This project contributes to broader anthropological conversations on voice, agency, and the reconfiguration of tradition in North Africa.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: sadie smurthwaite , Mariah Hayes

Chair: Zaina Al-Sahili , Malie Niu, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): sadie smurthwaite, Mariah Hayes, Zaina Al-Sahili, Malie Niu, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Islamic Education Among Moroccan Youth: Imitation vs Education

Morocco has a long standing tradition of religious education woven throughout its history as a nation. Recent changes to governmental and pedagogical practices have altered many of these traditional rituals of teaching islam, causing waves of change within society and within the home. This study delves into the experience of Moroccan mothers, educational administrators, and K-12 students of Fes, Morocco in order to discern the effects of contemporary adjustments to Islamic education. This ethnographic study utilized numerous personal interviews, series of focus groups within classrooms, various free lists, and extensive participant observation within both households and secondary level schools, thoroughly recording and analyzing participant's unique perspectives. Findings revealed a complex merging of imitation and formal education within Moroccan society, and a strong dependence on Moroccan mothers to cultivate religious fidelity within their children

outside of the classroom. Our data also describes pedagogical reforms and the political influence that controls the educational realm here in Fes. The results derived from this research will further awareness of the effects curricular changes have upon the Moroccan household, namely mothers, as well as deepen understanding of possible reasoning and trajectories for the religious stamina of the rising generation.

Presenter(s): sadie smurthwaite

Title: The Amazigh Lived Experience of Navigating their Identity in Urban Fez, Morocco

This presentation explores the intricate dynamics of Amazigh identity in urban Fez, Morocco, a city where historical and cultural tensions between Amazigh and Arab populations intersect and coexist. Through in-depth interviews with Amazigh-identifying students, shop owners, families, and community members, as well as Arab-identifying individuals, this research examines the many meanings/definitions, identities and experiences associated with the term "Amazigh" in urban spaces. By investigating the perceptions, interactions, and everyday encounters between Amazigh and Arab individuals, this study examines the intricacies of how the Amazigh identity is negotiated, contested, and performed within Fez. It also examines how Arab-identifying individuals perceive and interact with Amazigh culture and identity, shedding light on the historical impacts, power dynamics and social hierarchies that shape their relationships. By analyzing the lived experiences of Amazigh individuals and their interactions with Arab counterparts, this study provides insight into the ways in which identity is constructed, performed, and contested in urban Morocco.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex nature of Amazigh identity and experiences in urban contexts, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the intersections between culture, language, and setting in Moroccan society.

Presenter(s): Mariah Hayes

Title: Divided by Distance: The Urban-Rural disconnection in Moroccan Maternal Health

This paper examines the disconnection between medical professionals - mainly trained and raised in urban areas- and the rural populations they service, with a focus on maternal health. Through ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews with women from different areas, midwives, gynecologists, and administrators, this paper explores how this divide is experienced on ground. For many rural mothers, their childbirth experience is shaped not only by geographical distances but also by differences in values, language, and expectations. The challenges these women face stem not only from limited access to services but also from systematic and cultural misalignments between provider and patients. These tensions are often expressed in feelings of mistrust and alienation. By focusing on the experiences of rural populations, this study sheds light on how the current definitions of authority and expertise in maternal health contribute to unequal healthcare delivery in Morocco.

Presenter(s): Zaina Al-Sahili

"We Are Each Other's Keepers": The Sociality of Motherhood and Communal Care in Rural Morocco

This paper examines the social dynamics of motherhood in rural Morocco, highlighting how knowledge, awareness, and care are collectively sustained among women. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, I explore how women—regardless of marital or maternal status—participate in everyday exchanges that transmit maternal wisdom and social awareness. These interactions function as informal, yet deeply embedded systems of education and support. Central to this study is the role of communal caregiving, in which women care for one another's children, tend to the sick, and mobilize familial resources for mothers in postpartum recovery. Such practices reflect a broader cultural ethos of shared responsibility and interdependence, challenging individualistic notions of motherhood. By analyzing these intimate, everyday acts of solidarity, this research offers insights into the ways sociality operates as both a survival mechanism and a moral framework in rural Moroccan life. It contributes to broader anthropological discussions on kinship, gendered care networks, and the politics of reproduction.

Presenter(s): Malie Niu

525 Anthropology and Environment Society Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Zeynep Selcen Boztepe , Thanzeel Nazer Vengalath, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Xuanyu Yang , Rachel DeMotts, University of Puget Sound, Stephen Locketto , Kymberley Chu, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Eklund

Presenter(s): Zeynep Selcen Boztepe, Thanzeel Nazer Vengalath, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Xuanyu Yang, Rachel DeMotts, University of Puget Sound, Stephen Locketto, Kymberley Chu, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Eklund

Presentation(s): Be(e)ing at the Borderlands

Honeybees constantly cross the sealed Turkey-Armenia border where humans are forbidden to do so. Although there are no material walls between two countries, people on both sides of the border have no physical contact with the other side as two countries sealed their border in 1992, the borderland is under military surveillance. Yet honeybees proliferate in this environment as border villages avoid environmental pollutants that can be toxic to honeybees. Honeybees cross the border like ghosts go through walls while the memories of political conflict haunts the populations in the borderland.

In this context, my research investigates (1) how do humans and honeybees interact in the Turkey-Armenia border? (2) How do these interactions construct different perceptions of state territoriality and the natural landscape of borderland? (3) How do ethnic belonging, class backgrounds, gender identities, and religious belief impact beekeepers' imaginations of the other side of the border?

This research brings together the conversations in environmental anthropology, more-than-human politics and border studies to examine human-animal encounters at the margins of nation-states. It analyzes how natural landscape and the state borders are constructed through relationships between humans and honeybees, and how such relationships can figure transnational set of meanings and narratives between different sides of the border.

Presenter(s): Zeynep Selcen Boztepe

Conflict as a Solution: Ethnographic Reflections of Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Kerala,
South India

In the twentieth century, agricultural development in Kerala was significantly facilitated by a series of state policies promoting sectoral growth. This agricultural expansion transpired in previously considered wastelands, especially in the forest-frontier regions of the state, which were transformed into agricultural fields and homesteads. State-making contributed to the emergence of a substantial population of small-holding agriculturists, commonly referred to as the 'peasantry,' who engaged in intensive land cultivation practices. Agrarian expansion in twentieth-century Kerala marked a substantial shift in land use, production dynamics, and environmental relations within the region.

Recently, the forest-frontier villages of Kerala, which house over 15% of the state's population, have become battlegrounds for conflicts between humans and wildlife. Agricultural stakeholders report significant economic losses from apex and meso-predators like elephants trampling fields, bison grazing on crops, leopards preying on livestock, wild boars damaging gardens, Rhesus monkeys, and Giant Indian squirrels foraging gardens. Alarming statistics from 2021 to mid-July 2024 reveal that these human-wildlife conflicts resulted in 316 deaths and 3,695 injuries. Human-wildlife conflicts worsen the challenges faced by farmers and impact various biodiversity species in ecologically sensitive areas.

This study examines the diverse techniques and experimental methodologies employed by agriculturalists to autonomously address their specific challenges while navigating the intricate landscape of government policies, non-governmental organizations, and legal frameworks. The paper highlights how agriculturalists' innovative experiments, particularly in developing repellents, contribute artistically to the landscape in which they operate. Therefore, my study underscores that the enactment of freedom, using the surroundings as the limit/source, equips people to install environmental solutions to the threats to livelihood they encounter.

Presenter(s): Thanzeel Nazer Vengalath

Double Ghosts in Post-Pandemic Shanghai: From Interspecies Encounters to the Raccoon Dog
Census

This study delves into the evolving dynamics of human-raccoon dog interactions in urban Shanghai after COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2022. As rare native animal, raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) have become increasingly prevalent in urban districts, while some residents view

them as unsettling intruders. Collaborative efforts between scientists and the public have sought to foster coexistence through initiatives such as the Raccoon Dog Census. This citizen science project engages residents in data collection, ecological knowledge sharing and policy development, echoing elements of Mao Zedong's legacy of mass science.

Specifically, in Shanghai, raccoon dogs shelter in artificial rocks and building crevices, feed at garbage sites and cat-feeding corners and have gradually woven themselves into the fabric of everyday community life. Yet this "integration" has brought discomfort as residents report their cries as "like babies in horror films," resent their competition with stray cats, and circulate stories of them "eating cats" or "hiding corpses in dens." Rumors of people eating raccoon dogs during the pandemic, amid debates around wild meat, further linked them to disease. Hovering between reality and fear, raccoon dogs have come to embody the figure of the "urban ghost": ambiguous, intrusive, and haunting.

This ghostliness reveals how humans, amid crises in urban governance and public health, assign cultural and moral meanings to nonhuman life. However, public responses have not been solely driven by panic. In collaborative efforts between scientists and residents, raccoon dogs have also entered a framework of participatory knowledge and negotiated coexistence. Ecologists in Shanghai founded the "Raccoon Dog Census" in 2022, an ongoing citizen science project, to protect the species and rebuild human-animal relations. The project bridges the experts and the public, fostering co-produced ecological knowledge. It also played a consultative role in drafting the 2023 Shanghai Wildlife Protection Regulation, embedding public science into policy.

In this context, this research proposes a second "ghost" alongside the urban one: the "ghost of Mao Zedong." Drawn from Chinese science history, this term refers to the lingering legacy of Mao-era mass science—a political ideal of breaking elite knowledge hierarchies and encouraging scientists to "follow the masses." The Raccoon Dog Census can be seen as a contemporary echo of this tradition, reactivating collective participation and undermining scientific elitism. The Maoist ghost here is not merely metaphorical but institutional—still structuring how science and society are imagined and enacted.

By tracing these two ghostly figures, I explore how wild animals in Shanghai have prompted new cross-species intimacies and revived historical forms of participatory science. This research highlights how nonhuman life mediates between memory, governance, and public knowledge in the post-pandemic city.

Presenter(s): Xuanyu Yang

Looking for Elephants: Farmers, Politicians, Conservationists, and Divergent Ideas About Charismatic Megafauna in southern Africa

African elephants are a complicated vessel for human interests, demands, needs, and values. As many disciplines turn to rethinking agency and value in the more than human landscape in which all living things reside, a deeper understanding of how differently positioned groups of people construct their understandings of relationship with nature also remains necessary. This paper

seeks to examine how different groups of human actors understand African elephants in the context of conservation initiatives to save them. Based on ethnographic research conducted over the past twenty years in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique, it engages with the contrasting narratives of conservationists, politicians, farmers, academics, and other participants. These richly divergent understandings reflect both shared and different values and lived realities, and shed light not just on philosophical engagements with the idea of nature, but practical realities of living in spaces where there is contestation for meaning and livelihoods. This paper, then, is not about elephants, but it is about what people think elephants are, and what dreams and nightmares they may reflect and engender. Rendered ghost-like even in their home territories by these overlaid discourses, elephants carry vastly different meanings that are crucial for navigating how to live with and near them, and human ideas of them, more equitably.

Presenter(s): Rachel DeMotts

Of Memes and Morphs: Cultural effects on biological perceptions of snakes

Snakes are at the top of American phobias. To what extent is it biological or cultural? Ethologist Lynne Isbell and others have argued for innate, brain-based mechanisms in primates that facilitate the detection of snakes, termed Snake Detection Theory (SDS). I argue that human attitudes towards snakes can be culturally manipulated. I present evidence culled from both digital and physical ethnography among herpetoculturists (reptile keepers and breeders) that complicates biological predispositions towards snakes. Specifically, the "snek" meme of internet fame and snake morphs (selectively bred color variants) serve as agents of change for their ability to frame snakes as more appealing to humans through anthropomorphism. Interestingly, a major reason for the changing perception of snakes is that their anthropomorphized appearance is a manipulation of Konrad Lorenz's Kindchenschema, where juvenile appearances promote protectiveness in adult animals. Thus, we have a cultural "tweak" of a biological perception of an animal, but this tweak is based on a biological mechanism itself. Ethnographic studies of petkeeping are an ideal window through which to explore the culture-biology interface as well as human-animal divide.

Presenter(s): Stephen Locketto

Seeing Primates, Making Primatology: Dialectical Encounters in the Patchiness of Peri-Urban Landscapes

Through deploying ethnographic fieldwork methodologies such as citizen science and semi-structured interviews, I examine how conservationist management of two different alloprimate species, such as dusky langurs (*Trachypithecus obscurus*) and long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*), in Malaysia's urban environments is unevenly shaped by anthropocentric prepositions, cultural perceptions, and primate biophysiological processes.

Structural ecologies are intimately and unevenly interwoven through animal sociality, anthropogenic activities, culture, developmental biology, diets, human histories, gastronomical politics, linguistic diversity, physiology, and other biocultural factors (Bateson 1972, Fuentes 2010, Malone 2021). Peri-urban landscapes combine urban and rural ecological features (Conolly 2020).

As a liminal space, these peri-urban landscapes facilitate novel kinds of human-monkey interfaces. Unlike rehabilitation centers and laboratories, peri-urban landscapes facilitate a wider continuum of socio-ecological conditions that unsettle dominant logics of utilitarianism as ways to manage the primate lifecycle (Braverman 2014, Salazar Parreñas 2018). Both individual monkeys and communal primate social groups experience a range of differential responses to anthropogenic food waste, urban development patterns, and other uses related to the development of compact peri-urban areas (Balasubramaniam et al. 2020).

As my ethnographic interlocutors demonstrate the various ways they enact daily routine sampling processes and produce material data such as primate behavioral observations, they situate citizen science as a dominant scientific paradigm and lived-experience. Overall, citizen science practitioners illustrate how symbolic and political representations of primate sociality drastically vary based on how scientists navigate a range of legal and political structures that shape their behavioral data collection processes.

Presenter(s): Kymberley Chu

Wives and Widows: Intersectionality and the Multiple Dimensions of Life Experiences Women Face in Tiger Territory

While intersectional approaches have greatly advanced complex relation of layers of privilege and marginalization between factors like class, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, race, and religion, there remains a critical gap about the impact of life events. Specifically, marital status for women typically simplified into married or single, but there are many ways a woman can move through social spaces as a single. In coastal Bangladesh the ethno-religious majority are Bengali Muslim. However, one underrepresented minority are the Indigenous Munda, a low caste Hindu. These aspects already intersect as multiple minority status. Women in particular are already disadvantaged in the region, but there are several ways a Munda woman can be functionally single. She may young and/or never married, find herself as a head of household while a (living) husband is away, or may become widowed (a further marginalized status). However, the Munda homelands are also near the forest habitat of the Bengal Tiger. The tigers of the Sundarbans are known to kill local people. But the impact can be felt by survivors. The "tiger widows" (swami khejos, literally husband eaters), a uniquely marginalized group of women who have lost their husbands to tiger attacks and are seen as a source of ill-fortune in their communities. However, as the climate changes, both tiger and marginalized communities of these coastal regions are becoming strained. This paper focuses on the mutual marginalization of both humans and wildlife struggle to survive as severe storms increase, sea levels rise, and coasts erode, not only increasing human-wildlife conflict, but how the impacts intersect disproportionately.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Eklund

Co-author(s): Saleh Ahmed, Sanaa Bashir

504 Society of Medical Anthropology Flash Session #5

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM through 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Monir Moniruzzaman , Konstantinos Mountrakis, Radboud University Nijmegen, Md Abdur Rahman , Sachin Ghimire , Wendi Xu , Jesse Bia

Presenter(s): Monir Moniruzzaman, Konstantinos Mountrakis, Radboud University Nijmegen, Md Abdur Rahman, Sachin Ghimire, Wendi Xu, Jesse Bia

Presentation(s): Buy or Sell: Advertisements for Human Organs in Print Newspapers and Social Media in Bangladesh

The medical advancement in organ transplantation, commercialization of healthcare, and polarization between the rich and the poor creates a rising but illicit trade in human organs, such as kidneys, livers, and corneas sourced from the poor sellers mostly living in the developing world. Bangladesh – where the market price for a kidney is US \$2500 – is known as one of the most widely reported organ trading countries in the world. Classified advertisements regularly posted by recipients, brokers, and sellers in national newspapers and social media have amplified the organ trade in Bangladesh. By covering five leading Bengali newspapers and three popular social media outlets, this paper presentation examines the variety of patterns, wide range of impacts, and contextualized meaning of posted advertisements for buying and selling of vital organs in a transnational market setting. In the past, organ buyers and sellers published advertisements in print newspapers, but nowadays they post ads on social media, and as a result, the online market in live organs is booming in Bangladesh. My argument is that social media has transformed, concealed, and normalized the organ trade around the world.

Presenter(s): Monir Moniruzzaman

Memento Mortuorum: The Necrosociality of Whole-Body Donor Remembrance Ceremonies

This study explores whole-body donor remembrance ceremonies as secondary mortuary rituals within medical education, analyzing their role in transitioning donors from educational tools to persons reintegrated into a framework of respect and reverence. Through participant observation, textual analysis, and symbolic interpretation, the research investigates themes of gratitude, personhood, and symbolic exchange. The ceremonies are contextualized within anthropological frameworks of liminality and necrosociality, highlighting parallels with global mortuary practices. We observe that these rituals serve not only as acts of commemoration but also as pedagogical tools, fostering professional empathy and reinforcing societal trust in anatomical donation programs. By addressing the social and ethical dimensions of body donation, the study emphasizes the ceremonies' role in humanizing medical education while affirming the cultural significance of death and remembrance. This work contributes to a broader understanding of the intersection between ritual, education, and the social construction of personhood.

Presenter(s): Konstantinos Mountrakis

Rethinking Retirement: Medicalization, Cultural Narratives, and the Anthropology of Aging

Abstract: This paper critically explores the anthropology of retirement as a culturally constructed and medically reinforced transition in later life. Drawing from interdisciplinary medical and cultural anthropology literature, the study interrogates how dominant biomedical frameworks and socio-economic policies shape public narratives that marginalize older adults and reinforce ageist ideologies. The primary aim is to analyze how retirement functions not merely as a life-stage milestone but as a mechanism of social control rooted in assumptions about productivity, dependence, and decline. The paper questions how retirement ideologies affect older individuals' roles, identities, and social contributions in diverse cultural contexts. This study employs a qualitative, secondary data methodology, reviewing key ethnographic texts, policy analyses, and cross-cultural case studies that address aging, retirement, and the medicalization of later life. Sources include peer-reviewed journals, anthropological monographs, and public health literature across global settings. This paper contributes to ongoing medical and cultural anthropology conversations by questioning the normative assumptions embedded in retirement ideologies. It emphasizes the need to reframe aging as a dynamic and heterogeneous process, resisting reductive labels such as "at-risk" or "nonproductive." The study encourages anthropologists to reimagine elderhood not as a period of loss but as one of redefinition, social potential, and cultural richness. By doing so, it advocates for more inclusive and empowering frameworks that recognize older adults' agencies, skills and lived experiences across cultural settings.

Presenter(s): Md Abdur Rahman

Social sufferings in Russia and Ukraine warfare : A narrative analysis of Nepali citizens exposed in Sordid Trafficking.

Though country has officially prevented to get involved in the Russia and Ukraine war, however to escape from the poverty and unemployment many Nepali reached the war following the international air routes guided by human traffickers and and lost their lives in the warzone of Russia. This ongoing war has created new kind of 'social-legal and emotional' realities where citizenship of Nepal has been continuously losing their lives, consequently, families are deprived from authentic information regarding the status of their family members in warzone . Returnees have grievances that many wounded are not adequately treated and it has raised legal challenges for family members to get the dead bodies and to complain the compensation. Additionally, unknown status, dispersed body organs and lack of the cultural respect for the dead bodies has intensified their social sufferings and raised the bioethical concerns. Though International Humanitarian Law (IHL) prescribes framework to obliged parties of armed conflicts to take all possible measures to search and treat dead bodies in a respectful manner and their graves respected and properly maintained, however there is a persistent need to review other related policies and their loopholes from the point of view of 'humanitarian forensics' . Following the framework of critical policy discourse analysis (CPA) this paper raise the humanitarian and policy

concerns of those Nepali families who have lost their member in Russia and Ukraine warfare and suggest the possible legal framework to ease the present situation of anomaly.

Presenter(s): Sachin Ghimire

The Peeking Ghost on the Deathbed: End-of-Life Care under the Promise to Modernity in China

With an aging population, the need for end-of-life care that can offer support beyond medical dimensions of dying is surging in China. Currently, professional end-of-life care in China concentrates in a few major cities, it is not a mature and consolidated enterprise but a highly fragmented practice. Financially, professionally and socially, it relies heavily on the complex network constituted by various entities such as philanthropic foundations, volunteer organizations, spiritual groups and palliative care units in public hospitals, etc.

Despite China's century-long modernist rejection of religion that can be dated back before the Communist China, current end-of-life care still has tenacious connection to folk religions. The affective and spiritual dimensions of the deathbed renders the tension between "superstition" (mixin 迷信) and the legitimized scientific biomedicine more uncanny. This research addresses end-of-life care as the contested terrain between the echoing anti- superstition rhetoric and the intimate space of dying in everyday caregiving practices. Drawing on fieldwork in a major city in Southern China, one of the first cities to officially introduce palliative care into hospitals Hong Kong, this research shows the dialectical relationship between these two forces. It is argued that in the context of post-colonial and post-socialist transformations, state rationalities exhibit a porous quality facing end-of-life care, while spiritual care practitioners are also constructing its legitimacy by strategically engaging with modernism narratives. These discussions extend beyond contemporary China, inviting broader reflection on how ghost of the past haunts the current regime of care in wider cultural contexts.

Presenter(s): Wendi Xu

‘What is Our Plan for Today?’: Dementia Caregiving in Tokyo During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

In Tokyo, where home caregiving for individuals with neurodegenerative diseases is common, the outbreak of COVID-19 presented novel challenges for dementia care. Rather than obfuscating the pandemic and its ramifications, home caregivers – both professional and familial – often found success increasing dementia patient agency and involvement in the planning and enactment of COVID prevention strategies and measures. When possible, incorporating pandemic management directly into care practice allowed a global catastrophe to be transformed into localized opportunity for personal empowerment and self-actualization for patients and caregivers alike. Resultant shared decision-making and collaborative situational engagement benefitted interpersonal relations, and frequently even improved familial communication from pre-pandemic standings. Numerous caregivers have now retained and/or incorporated similar strategies/perspectives into ongoing home care practices. Based on long-term fieldwork in Tokyo with the same families and caregivers both pre- and post-pandemic, this paper details how successful home care strategies

were revised and implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, and retained in its aftermath. It will illustrate how increasing the agency of individuals with dementia not only made the pandemic more manageable, but actively contributed to improvements in dementia home care going forward.

Presenter(s): Jesse Bia

2446 Haunted Resilience: Negotiating the Ghosts of Appalachia's Past Through Community-Engaged Ethnography

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Appalachia is an area haunted by extraction; left to die after the land and its people have served their purpose. While Appalachians are knowledgeable about their land and history, they are often unheard and stereotyped as "uneducated" or "close-minded." In this roundtable, student researchers will discuss their community-engaged ethnographies in Appalachia, revolving around the region's underrepresentation and resilience as communities respond to the challenges of extractivism, natural disasters, belonging, and public health.

We will consider the challenges of conducting community-engaged research, emphasizing the importance of place-based participatory methods beyond an ethic of extraction. Focusing on working with our interlocutors to achieve a common goal rooted in community knowledge, we will discuss how the ghosts of Appalachia's extractive past haunt communities. In recognizing and negotiating their haunted pasts, communities reject stereotypes and imagine alternative futures.

Community-engaged research is essential to better serving marginalized communities in Appalachia and beyond. Drawing on critical, feminist, and de-colonial approaches, participants in this roundtable represent and speak from various subfields, including sociocultural, linguistic, medical, and environmental anthropology.

"Rooted in Resilience"

Invasive species invoke hopelessness in many, but communities in Western NC have found optimism in Kudzu. Working with the plant to strengthen their human and nonhuman community, along with building climate resilience.

"Sustainable Storytelling: Ethnographic Journalism for Appalachia"

Appalachia is frequently misrepresented in national media, contributing to a skeptical attitude toward journalists. Learning from ethnography, journalists can restructure extractive reporting practices for community trust.

"Centering Life Stories"

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Eastern KY, I explore how feminist and disability anthropology and community-engaged public health can challenge cultural essentialism and center the life stories of disabled Appalachians.

"Invisible: Disasters & Central Appalachia"

Extreme weather events and critical infrastructure failures can continue to haunt communities for decades. Rurality and intersectionality can amplify local knowledge practices to help inform disaster policy.

"Shaping Space and Practicing Place"

Locally organized efforts in Central Appalachia seek to reshape and revitalize their communities. Linguistic anthropological methods assist attention to how residents imagine and enact Appalachian identity and futurity amidst the specter of the region's past.

"Crafting Landscapes of Care Amidst Housing Insecurity"

Housing insecure populations in Southern Appalachia face increasing climate and economic devastation, as well as criminalization of poverty. Community-engaged and arts based methods allow a clearer understanding of rural unhoused experiences

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Anna Harrison , Ella Adams

Presenter(s): Anna Harrison , Ella Adams , Taylor Gilliam , Michelle Roberts, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Nicole Marks , Ashley McGraw, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Anna Harrison

1893 Biodiversity Justice Beyond the Hotspot: Plurality, Plasticity, and Contradiction in Biodiversity Governance

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the fluidity and multiplicity of species' statuses beyond the bounds of biodiversity hotspots. While dominant conservation paradigms often seek to stabilize biodiversity through rigid classifications – e.g., protecting the "native" and expelling the "invasive," – this panel interrogates how policies and ecological governance engage with unstable, plural, and contested understandings of species, asking what a more just biodiversity agenda could look like.

Biodiversity has long been an object of concern within global conservation, often oriented towards maintaining a sense of 'stasis' (Kirksey 2015; Biermann and Mansfield 2014). Most biodiversity initiatives are sealed within legal and material containers protecting charismatic 'native' species in hotspots and reserves – artefacts of natural romanticism, modernity, and, in many contexts,

colonial dispossession (Heatherington 2012; Büscher and Fletcher 2019). These frameworks can reduce species' value to either admiration from a distance, or matter-out-of-place that must be expunged. Designations become foggier outside the simplified logics of sanctuaries as non-humans traverse porous boundaries, crossing between hotspots and 'ordinary' sites of production and human habitation, challenging fixed categories (Cattelino 2017). An endangered species may morph into a danger; a valued animal intruding beyond its bounds may be designated a pest; an 'invasive' species can enter commodification regimes and be autochtonized.

As calls for justice extend beyond the human into the more-than human, the species-out-of-place emerge as a site for negotiation away from static constructions and toward more plastic understandings of non-humans and more-than-human sociality (Chao et al. 2022). Governance must grapple with and adapt to these complexities, encompassing diverse and contradictory understandings of species, and craft policy and practices that foster plural more-than-human relations beyond biodiversity hotspots.

This panel aims to generate discussions around what a more inclusive and just biodiversity agenda could look like, appreciative of the contradictions of care and the complications that come with heterogenous relations with non-humans (Davé 2022). We aim to take seriously the potential threats posed by non-humans to particular valued forms (agriculture, human health, endangered species), but wish to consider the power-laden processes through which species' value emerges, who may construe a nominally invasive species as an opportunity, a pest, as a valuable resource, or, indeed, a 'contradictory' mix of the two.

We ask: how can plural understandings of non-humans be accommodated into biodiversity schemes? How can contentious and often violent more-than-human sociality be reckoned with through policy? What are the limitations and allowances of biodiversity as a matter of concern? We are motivated by the question of a pest, for whom?

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Emma Cyr , Gabriel Urlich Lennon

Chair: Emma Cyr , Gabriel Urlich Lennon

Presenter(s): Emma Cyr, Gabriel Urlich Lennon, Valentina Bonifacio, Sadie Hale

Discussant: Tomas Cole, Stockholm University

Presentation(s): Wasting Governance: How to Throw Away a Crab in the Venetian Lagoon

In the Venetian Lagoon, the blue crab – a recent arrival from the west Atlantic – defies categorization and challenges biodiversity governance. No one talks seriously about eradication; control and containment falter in practice. Commercialization has been proposed to replace lost fishing incomes and manage populations, with a problem: not many want to eat them. Instead, blue crabs mostly get tangled in fishing nets, wash up on beaches, and are unsold leftovers at the fish market. They become waste – facilitated by policy but not quite of its design.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this paper examines how waste emerges as a contingent and provisional mode of biodiversity governance. Classified as *rifiuti speciali* (special waste), blue crabs

must be disposed of by fishers at their own expense. Waste collapses the crab's other statuses – pest, resource, food – into a single, actionable form, while outsourcing ecological purification labor to precarious, semi-compensated fishers.

Unlike eradication campaigns, wasting is not a targeted strategy but an emergent effect of working in the lagoon in uncertainty – not so much a technique of management as a matter of excess. Yet some crabs slip outside this logic; given away, thrown back, or left to rot, these moments of non-waste hint at the instability of species' values and categorizations. In tracing how blue crabs are wasted, I ask what it means to govern a species through disposal.

Presenter(s): Emma Cyr

Governing Goats: Making and Maintaining a Pest

Goats were released in Aotearoa (New Zealand) by colonists who enlisted them as aids in the process of colonisation. Since then, their belonging in the nation has been contested, swinging between 'widely acknowledged as a menace', cherished as a resource, and seen as a familiar part of the environment. Now, they are variously culled in great numbers, herded for export, and kept on farms – a series clashing interpretations and practices. Their appetites do post significant problems for the slow-growing vegetation in Aotearoa, and there are now increasing ambitions to eliminate goats across the mainland that seek to standardise interpretations of animals to render them 'killable' as a pest species.

This paper will examine the power-laden construction of categories governing non-humans, such as pest and invasive, focusing on the contestations around governing wild goats. I attempt to think about how non-humans are constructed as a 'pest' by intentionally narrowing the scope of its relational possibility, silencing and excluding those who find alternative value and meaning in animals in favour of a singular threat – in other words, how 'pests' are made and maintained. I draw upon long-term ethnographic fieldwork with various actors engaged in the complex efforts to govern goats in Taranaki, Aotearoa, discussing how officials, goat herders, hunters, and others negotiate with and around feral goats to govern their future, both in formalised policies and informal practices.

Presenter(s): Gabriel Urlich Lennon

Other genes: Feral cattle and their opponents in the Parque Nacional los Glaciares, Patagonia

For about a century, feral cattle—known as [i]baguales[/i] in Argentina—have inhabited Parque Nacional Los Glaciares in Patagonia. Their presence in the national park is the result of the abandonment of cattle farms that once operated in the area. Although their arrival predates the creation of the park, [i]baguales[/i] are perceived by park authorities as a species out of place and are subjected to various forms of violent "eradication." Drawing on the insights of Argentine geneticist Rubén Martínez, with whom I've been traveling to Patagonia, I will show how a subversive reading of genetic categories can challenge this narrative and reframe [i]baguales[/i] as an

endangered species worthy of protection. Finally, I will describe [i]baguales[/i] as part of a wider inter-species collective ridden with tensions, unbalances and contradictions.

Presenter(s): Valentina Bonifacio

A walrus in the city

In summer 2022, a young walrus entered the fjord outside the capital city of Oslo, Norway. Ordinarily resident on the ice floes off Svalbard in the high Arctic Circle, 'Freya'—as she came to be known—had left her herd and gone astray. Freya nonetheless made herself at home, hauling out on vessels of wealthy boat-owners and sunning herself on beaches and jetties frequented by Oslo's summer swimmers. Freya quickly attracted a following, beloved for her 'subversive' spirit and the photo opportunities she provided.

It was sadly not to last: Freya was eventually deemed too much of a danger to people, and quietly euthanized by the authorities to considerable public outrage. This paper examines Freya's presence and death in terms of spatiotemporal ferality: a protected species from a protected habitat, Freya nonetheless became vulnerable once she migrated from her designated hotspot in Svalbard. Freya's southward migration and interactions with humans not only symbolized broader environmental, temporal disruptions caused by climate change, particularly the rapid transformations in the Arctic, but literally brought them to the door of the capital, where policies are made that are supposed to protect habitats like hers. Read as an emissary from the margins to the centers of power, Freya's unexpected appearance in the Oslofjord materialized habitat loss and the way species who leave such deteriorating hotspots are ultimately unwanted, interpreted as the 'wrong kind' of biodiversity.

Presenter(s): Sadie Hale

Discussion

4538 Irreverent Religion

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In a 2017 JRAI article titled "The Lapsed and the Laity: Discipline and Lenience in the Study of Religion" Maya Mayblin critiques what she calls the "earnest turn in the anthropology of religion, highlighting a tendency among scholars to overemphasize discipline in the formation of religious subject hood at the expense of mechanisms of leniency and compromise" (Mayblin 2017). Taking up Mayblin's provocation, we ask how anthropology's enduring preoccupation with discipline and piety (Asad 1993; Mahmood 2005) might be complicated by attending to more irreverent religious expressions and practices.

Rather than treating irreverence as a cynical stance adopted solely by religious "outsiders" and "exes" (e.g., ex-Christians, ex-Muslims, Off-the-Derech Jews), we explore how irreverence may

paradoxically occupy a hegemonic role within communities typically characterized by discipline and piety. Instead of opposing irreverence to earnestness, how might we conceive of these religious affects and dispositions dialectically? In what ways might irreverence actually serve to reinforce religious belief?

In this spirit, we invite papers that return to the idea of "serious play" (Huizinga 1950), the ludic and the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968), the aesthetics of "American stioib" (Boyer and Yurchak 2010), and the antinomian features of sovereign figures-such as Trump-who operate as "holy fools" or "stranger kings" (Graeber and Sahllins 2017; Gorski 2022) in the age of irreverent authoritarianism.

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Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Sam Shuman, University of Virginia, Saad Lakhani, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sam Shuman, University of Virginia

Presenter(s): Rachel Corr, Jan Jensen, University of Cambridge, Saad Lakhani, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Sam Shuman, University of Virginia, Emilio Spadola, Colgate University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Arsalan Khan, University of Tennessee - Knoxville | AnthroClub

Presentation(s): Priests and Shamans: Parody as Sacred Play in Ecuador

Indigenous people in highland Ecuador perform humorous parodies and games as part of sacred activities. Here I describe parodies I have observed during mortuary rituals and Catholic feast day celebrations, and people's explanations of the ritual performances. According to elders, parodies of Catholic priests and historical figures, such as coastal Black soldiers, can have effects in the afterlife. Parodies of Amazonian shamans reflect humorous mimicry of figures that are respected and feared in highland Ecuador. These performances show a combination of sacred ritual, play, and mimeses that can affect the living and the dead.

Presenter(s): Rachel Corr

Irreligious, irreverent: religious innovation and critique in charismatic Christianity in the Faroe Islands

Over the last ten years, members of City Church in the Faroe Islands have been engaged in a project of reassessment of their past practices. Seeing their own history as containing many instances of beliefs and practices which left many individuals and groups disappointed with the church. The way forward, they now say, is to do a broad sweep of self-reflexive critique in which a multitude of previous ideas about how to do things are tossed out wholesale. And in this process, one of the most central things that is confronted is the role of tradition and "the proper way to do things". The word religion in this instance comes to stand in for a negative and lifeless state of Christian faith that has no space for growth and/or to learn from its surroundings. Analysing this process, I argue for the re-evaluation of Pentecostal and Charismatic practice as aiming for a universal, ancient truth towards rather seeing it as a creative process in which old ideas and beliefs are always potentially cast aside in favour of new things that might move the faith closer towards the overflowing life as they are read in the New Testament.

Presenter(s): Jan Jensen

The Politics of Joking, Blasphemy, and Respect in Pakistan

Over the last fifteen years, the Tehrik Labaik Pakistan (TLP), an anti-blasphemy movement led by working-class men, has emerged as a formidable force in Pakistan. The mass appeal of the TLP lies in its framing of blasphemy politics as class warfare, pitting an 'authentically passionate' Muslim working class against a 'hypocritically pious' Muslim elite. For its supporters, the anti-blasphemy movement is, first and foremost, an avenue for 'the poor masses' to achieve respect and recognition by taking violent action against 'blasphemers' and Muslim elites perceived as their enablers and co-conspirators. This paper examines TLP's politics of respect and blasphemy through the anthropology of civility. Revisiting classical anthropological concepts of joking and avoidance, it proposes a framework for understanding everyday civility through a practical spectrum between joking and avoidance attitudes: joking denotes a sovereign disregard for formal norms, while avoidance reflects a deferential submission to them. The paper argues that TLP's blasphemy politics enables its supporters to demand respect as submissive avoidance, while simultaneously allowing them to adopt the sovereign attitude of joking disregard toward the dignity and sacrality of others. Through engagement with the Islamic concepts of adab (etiquette) and ishq

(passionate love), the paper traces the TLP's rise through Muslim contestations over the meaning and practice of respect, transgression, and divine agency.

Presenter(s): Saad Lakhani

Unlicensed Play: Fake IDs, Kabbalistic Amulets, and Irreverent Ritual at a NY State Highway Traffic Stop

In recent years, Hasidic young men in New York have filmed their interactions with police on dashcams during routine traffic stops. When asked to produce license and registration, they pull out passport photos of Reb Shaye (1851-1925), a dead Hasidic saint. They then curse police in Yiddish: "Reb Shaye, son of Reb Moshe, said, 'either bend to my will or die.'" One of these videos went viral across Hasidic social media, prompting the owner of Shaye's "guest house" in Hungary to sell fake driver's licenses featuring Shaye's icon, incantation, and amulet, as pilgrimage souvenirs.

In this paper, I pay particular attention to this video, and the responses it has elicited among Hasidic men at Shaye's pilgrimage site. I place it in contrast with dashcam footage showing the lethal consequences of routine stops for Black and undocumented drivers in the U.S. I argue that theorists who focus on the "subjunctive" mood of ritual (Seligman et al. 2008), who blur the boundaries between ritual and play (Cailliois 1958), offer a useful framework for understanding this phenomenon and a rejoinder to the overly earnest focus of religious studies today. There is a space for irreverence in their playful account of ritual, one which challenges cognitivist preoccupations with the "incongruity" of ritual and reality (Smith 1980), Protestant preoccupations with "sincerity," interiority and intentionality, and Foucauldian fixation with discipline, self-cultivation, and piety.

Presenter(s): Sam Shuman

Perverformative Religion; or, the Otherness of Orthodoxy

As a number of scholars have noted, anthropologists of religion over the past three decades or so (of Abrahamic religions especially [Asad 1993, 2018; Mahmood 2005, 2016]) have centered disciplined practice and pious subjectivity to the general exclusion of religions' more ambivalent and irreverent, to say nothing of perverse, commitments. Here I lend my voice to this chorus, but for reasons different to key critiques regarding Christianity and Islam in particular—that disciplined and lapsed Catholicism both constitute "living Christian form[s]" (Mayblin 2017), that fixation on Muslims' modern orthodoxies betrays Islam's premodern "culture of ambiguity" (Bauer 2021) and wealth of aesthetic "exploratory traditions" (Ahmed 2016), among others. For whereas these approaches suppose orthodoxy's dialectical opposition to or historical erasure of religions' other forms, here I argue that otherness beyond all opposition preconditions religions' at once most reverent and most perverse acts. Placing contemporary Muslim politics and practice in conversations with Jacques Derrida (1987, 1988, 1995) on the "perverformative" repeatability of formal inscription, I outline queries and possibilities that "perverformative religion" offers to

anthropologists of ritual and writing, subjectivity and responsibility in and beyond contemporary "religions of the Book."

Presenter(s): Emilio Spadola

Discussion

3004 Teaching Strategies Across the Five Fields

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this session, sponsored by the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges, presenters across the subfields discuss their approaches or ideas for engaging students in the learning environments of today. Students today tend to have different experiences and expectations of education than before, with significant changes brought about following the COVID-19 pandemic and the normalization of trenchant political discourse promoting misinformation. All of this carries profound implications for higher education as we have come to know it.

As we address these issues, we must remember that we face stiff competition in the battle for attention in an ever-increasing divisive climate. Already existing political divisiveness and media misinformation has only increased over the last few years. We propose that with engaging presentation and delivery of our material, we can achieve a broader appeal than we tend to get. In a divisive era of constricted media consumption and related over-simplification of complex issues relevant to matters long central to anthropology, it is crucial the messages we deliver are accessible to as wide a range of students as possible. Presenters in this session describe various practices they have employed to engage students in the classroom and beyond as we continue to transition into a future marked by these challenging circumstances.

Section: Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges

Organizer: Jennifer Zovar, Whatcom Community College, Department of Social Sciences

Chair: Evin Rodkey, Nikki Gorrell, College of Western Idaho

Presenter(s): Patrick Staib, Colorado Mountain College, Amy Snively, Arturo Marquez, Imperial Valley College, Nikki Gorrell, College of Western Idaho, Evin Rodkey

Discussant: Dawn M. Rutecki, Grand Valley State University

Presentation(s): Biological Anthropology Roadshow: Student-Led, Interactive Hominin Lab at Local K-12 Schools

Students at Colorado Mountain College have a unique opportunity to display their learning through instruction to younger students. Our college has an ample hominin replica collection that spans several periods of human evolution. We use these items throughout the semester in our laboratory sessions for general survey and analysis. These are useful teaching tools that allow students to directly engage with fossils and inspire the imagination towards questions of evolution, selection, migrations, and cultural advances. The culmination of the course is a visit to Steamboat Montessori

School to present on the Australopithecine, Early Genus Homo, and Neanderthal skulls, diagrams, and tool replicas to elementary school students.

In this presentation, I will discuss how students cover the course and program learning objectives through this activity. This is an example of a high impact learning practice that engages students through the process of preparing and then presenting in the BioAnth roadshow. I also discuss potential for greater exposure to biological anthropology through public presentations and engagement with a wide variety of learning contexts. This displays how our students learn through sharing their knowledge to a broader audience. The response to this has been overwhelmingly positive and requests from teachers to have our students visit are frequent.

Presenter(s): Patrick Staib

Teaching the Ethnographic Method via Autoethnography

Cultural anthropology is a class that is amendable to a variety of teaching formats ranging from completely online to completely in person. Whether teaching online or in person, I have traditionally situated intro to cultural anthropology classes around teaching the ethnographic method. I have normally scaffolded students throughout the quarter to guide them in ethnographic data collection that culminates in a written mini ethnography. COVID, however, brought about a unique challenge in how I assigned term projects. Data collection via observation and interviewing of the public became a bit contentious. Therefore, I made the "pivot" to autoethnography. Autoethnography is the practice of ethnographic writing from one's own emic perspective as part of a specific group. As in traditional ethnography, autoethnography requires data collection, but in a manner that focuses on reflexivity of one's own personal experiences. Students often find it hard to write about themselves in the context of culture. However, after some scaffolding, students can produce narratives about their personal lives while appropriately reflecting upon their place within a group. Many students find the process rewarding and as an instructor I find the assignment is effective in teaching the importance of ethnography as production of anthropological knowledge.

Presenter(s): Amy Snively

Motivating Ethnography: Student-led Ethnographic Projects along the US-Mexico Borderlands

Among the greatest challenges I have experienced teaching anthropology at Imperial Valley College (IVC) is the assumption students are passive learners. To address this, I have re-designed all my courses to emphasize students' role as active participants in knowledge production. In this presentation, I discuss the ethnography project in my Intro to Cultural Anthropology course in which students conduct ethnographic research in a local field site and collaborate with peers to critically assess their data based on what I call the 'areas of anthropological interest.' In the last two years, this ethnographic project has become the cornerstone of this course, drawing attention to facets of students' experience living along the US-Mexico border within a theoretical framework that is accessible and uncluttered. IVC serves over 8,000 students in a region of southern California bordering Arizona and Mexico known for its agriculture industry. By making ethnography central to the course, students are motivated to see themselves as active participants in knowledge

production as they gain valuable insights on their lived experience in a borderland context. This approach not only fulfills course requirements but also lays the foundation to motivate students to continue drawing from anthropological concepts beyond the classroom.

Presenter(s): Arturo Marquez

Ethnographic Fieldwork Intensive: A Project to Provide Students Field Opportunities at the Largest Basque Festival in the World – For Free

Boise, Idaho is home to the densest concentration of Basques anywhere in the global diaspora. This ethnographic field project will center on Jaialdi, the largest festival in the world dedicated to the promotion and preservation of Basque culture. Five College of Western Idaho students volunteering their time and talents will assist in a larger documentation effort by visiting colleagues from the Basque Country on this historic event that will see 50,000-70,000 revelers participating from the homeland and all over the diaspora. Students will be engaging in guided interviews, audio-visual recordings, and investigating themes such as shifting gender roles, Basque nationalism references, potential tension between homeland and diaspora demographics, and other insights that speak to the current political climate in the United States. The student findings will be organized and collected as part of the larger project that seeks to compare Basque Clubs in the diaspora to homeland communities as it relates to the tension between preservation and adaptation of traditional cultural heritage. This presentation will summarize the methods and results of the students' fieldwork and explore next steps in the ongoing research.

Presenter(s): Nikki Gorrell

Addressing the Mental Challenges of our Students: Building Understanding and Taking More Effective Approaches

In recent years a variety of issues in childhood and adolescent development affecting reading, attention span, and engagement have been adversely affecting the well-being and even mental health of many students, which pose challenges to college success. Excessive smartphone use and use of social media apps in particular have been major drivers of this. The new book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* is gaining a lot of attention for scientifically addressing this issue. Released in March 2024, this book by Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, analyses these issues in development, including smartphone and social media use. When this technology was new, it was being used by adults who grew through stages of childhood and adolescent development without it. But now this has become part of the development. The results, as many of us can see with many of our students, can be troubling. In this presentation, I will share some of the key points of this book to generate discussion on this sensitive and important issue, with the goal of building understanding and taking more effective approaches to working with and helping our students.

Presenter(s): Evin Rodkey

Discussion

4978 Student Organizing and Intergenerational Worldmaking

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Crackdowns on student organizing are severe and ongoing. In this context, students persist in the work of resisting and condemning state violence, building new care structures, and imagining and asserting their right to alternative ways of knowing and being. This roundtable brings together student activists and scholars to discuss the current state of student organizing and what we can do to support our students in this struggle. We draw on José Esteban Muñoz's concept of worldmaking as a framework for this conversation, with a focus on how worldmaking unfolds across generations of students and the political, intellectual, and creative works that inspire them. The roundtable thus engages the conference theme of 'ghosts' by reimagining the ghost as an ancestor or mentor from the past whose spirit is present in today's student organizing. Panelists will speak on queer Arab and Muslim community-building on campus in the present climate, anti-institutional racism, medical abolition, medical reparations, and decolonization of the health sciences, among other topics.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Amy Brainer

Presenter(s): Bri Matusovsky , Fatima Al-Bedany , Zana Al-Bedany, University Of Michigan-Dearborn | AnthroClub, Dina Alsaad

Discussant: Amy Brainer

6941 Hauntings: Anthropology's History of the Present

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The spectral theme of the 2025 AAA meeting, "Ghosts," invites us "to examine the ways that the past haunts the present, and that the immaterial becomes tangible to inflect the everyday." This panel, "Hauntings: Anthropology's History of the Present," sets itself against this invitation by crafting its critical entry points through two questions: first, what does it mean to be "haunted" and, second, what are the conditions of immateriality and tangibility that define particular histories as ghostly?

This panel addresses places where and people for whom the evocation of haunting obscures an ongoing political work of dispossession and disregard. What does naming New Orleans "the most haunted city in America" mean for those whose livelihood depends on the relationship between their race and the value of their labor? What does describing rural landscapes shaped by opioid addiction and overdose death as haunted and addicts as living ghosts foreclose for some and make possible for others when set against a pastoral national fantasy? What does the declaration of "the afterlife of mining" along South Africa's Atlantic coast mean for those who still live in former

company towns and eke out a living in the unrehabilitated ruins of decommissioned industrial mines? What spectral wraiths do wendigo infrastructures leave behind, and what traces of the violence of their creation are built into their machinery? How does colonialism haunt development discourse on the beaches of Puerto Rico? What possibilities do such conceptual frameworks foreclose?

Haunting conjures a sense of dissonance— that something is rotten; that a foundation has become unsteady. To be confronted with a ghost is to be transformed by the knowledge that what lies before us as the smooth surface of appearance has gone, in the words of Hamlet – disturbed by the revelation of his father's murder at the hands of his uncle – "out of joint." In turning to ghosts, we again confront Evans-Pritchard's warning that if anthropology is to remain relevant it needs to turn to history— a cautionary call which would reappear decades later as Eric Wolf's appeal, in *Europe and the People Without History*, for anthropologists to turn to the past as a bastion against the discipline's "descent into triviality".

Yet we struggle to articulate what is rotten in the present by glancing back towards, as Derrida describes in his landmark work on "hauntology", "what could be called the other time, from the other scene... [we] witnesses of history fear and hope for a return, then, 'again' and 'again,' a coming and going." To settle on our fields as haunted, this panel argues, is to discount how such haunting continues to be produced every day— "'again' and 'again'" – in the material conditions commonly described as the proper territory of ghosts.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Sean Muller, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sean Muller, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sean Muller, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Christopher Thompson, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Jonathan Cannard, Paulina Gomez, Rowan Claire Choe Maher

Presentation(s): Emptied Home as Haunted House: Abjection and Affluence in Late Industrial Landscapes

Sullivan County, in upstate New York, is a rural place caught between two appearances. Abandoned looking houses slowly collapse along roads that have recently become the object of federal anxiety grounding the county's designation as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). Along, and often across, the same roads real estate speculation and tourism thrive: luxury short-term rentals and newly renovated homes are regularly listed at over half a million dollars and advertise the county's close proximity to New York City. Drug overdose deaths in Sullivan County outnumber anywhere else in the state while small-scale artisanal agriculture operations, coffee roasters, craft breweries, art galleries, and coworking spaces that serve an emergent vacationing leisure class provide a constant influx of capital. The world shaped by fentanyl, the synthetic engine of America's opioid crisis, and deindustrialization seems to haunt the new world of at-last postindustrial recovery. Drug addicts and rural places are often described in the language of ghosts, characterizing them as already-dead or zombie-like subjects inhabiting a space where industrial decay is inseparable from its environment. This talk asks: what effects does this way of

seeing people and places as haunted have on the contested territory they occupy? What does it mean to be haunted? And what does an answer to this question reveal about how late industrialism and addiction are understood and managed in rural America?

Presenter(s): Sean Muller

“Playing in the Dark”: New Orleans Tourism and The American Anthropological Association

This talk takes as its central provocation a claim made by Toni Morrison thirty-five years ago, in *Playing in the Dark*: that the Enlightenment and racial slavery, mapped onto the historical geography of the American South, produced "a playground for the imagination...a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American" (38). Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in New Orleans, Louisiana, I discuss one such scene of national "darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire". This scene begins in the first years of the twentieth century, in the life of a Black New Orleanian named Cornelius Tillman, Jr., who created and performed an imagined American Indian identity as a method for self-dignification and escape. And then today, twenty years on from Katrina: an era in which the growing demands of a tourism economy bend those in the Black Masking Indian tradition, the very same one practiced by Tillman, Jr., a century ago, to the will of multicultural capital. Here, I discuss a history of the present; a history that organizes the present, perhaps, because it is operative. Not spectral; not ghostly; not a trace. By refusing the grammars of haunting so often applied to life in New Orleans, I ask, at last: what does naming New Orleans the proper territory of "Ghosts", land of the "eerie and evocative" (AAA, 2025), mean for those whose livelihood depends on the relationship between their race and the value of their labor?

Presenter(s): Christopher Thompson

Diamond Mines are Forever: Livelihoods in the Afterlife of South African Mining

Once known as the "Diamond Coast," South Africa's Namaqualand region was home to some of De Beers' largest 20th century diamond mines. The final closure of De Beers' west coast mines in the mid 2000s led to a mass unemployment crisis, and Namaqualand joined other parts of the country in what commentators have proclaimed as the "afterlife of mining." But closure also created the conditions of possibility for new livelihoods to emerge, ones that not only survive without the state and capital, but thrive in their absence. Artisanal miners have illegally occupied abandoned former mine sites, using hand tools to extract any diamonds left behind by De Beers' departure. But this practice is not a disorganized, instinctive response to unemployment, nor does it fit the model of "necessity entrepreneurship." Instead, Namaqualand's artisanal miners engage in the deliberate, calculated, and organized construction of alternative economies, a project that is possible only in the post-apartheid "afterlife" of mining. This paper seeks to understand the ways in which artisanal mining in Namaqualand is both made possible and haunted by the death of apartheid era diamond mining. What economic and political projects does the "afterlife of mining" make possible, and which does it foreclose? How, thirty years after apartheid, do gendered and racialized labor regimes

and patterns of accumulation haunt an illicit extractive industry that remains outside the purview of both the state and capital?

Presenter(s): Jonathan Cannard

The Specter of Spanish Colonialism on Puerto Rico's Coastline

Beach protests in Puerto Rico have proliferated around concerns of ecological protections, access to public property, dispossession, privatization, and displacement on coastlines. Protests have taken up the slogan 'Las playas son del pueblo' (the beaches belong to the people), calling back to the Spanish Ports Law extensive to Puerto Rico in 1886, declaring the beach an asset in the public domain. An assertion of public ownership informed by an old regime of colonial law, this slogan has now been adopted as a local common sense mobilized politically amidst questionable coastline management. I take up the beach as material object and ideological formation to approach nuanced questions of sticky imperial residues and political possibilities in the wake of protracted disaster. I understand Puerto Rico's coastline as a 'troubled space of ambiguous colonial lineages' (Stoler 2016)-- haunted by Spanish colonial pasts that are still present but rendered invisible by US imperial presence. How is the specter of Spanish colonialism made tangible and negotiated on Puerto Rico's coastlines? How might compounding colonialities complicate our temporal and historical frameworks, revealing their restraint on imagining nonsovereign island futures? By attending to imperial duress (Stoler 2016) on shifting shorelines, I aim to reconceptualize the seemingly neat historical ruptures between Spanish colonialism, US imperialism, and the current 'post-disaster' framework of Puerto Rico.

Presenter(s): Paulina Gomez

We Haint Never Been Modern: Specters of Marx, Market, and Empire in Formerly Soviet Central Asia

Modernity piles up wreckages; futures become passe. Tashkent, Uzbekistan, was laid waste by Ghengis Khan, before rising again as a Silk Road market and again as a Soviet metropolis. Today e-commerce startups are headquartered near its ancient bazaars, 'digital nomads' gather in coworking spaces with views of high pastures where shepherds tend their flocks. In Almaty, Kazakhstan, cosmonauts in Soviet murals look out on a city where AI labs are rising alongside the towering new Ritz-Carlton. The formerly-Soviet Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan are building a new future on the ruins of past forms of life.

Following independence, each republic, decoupled from the Soviet economy, pursued a different developmental path. Recently, all have curated a startup ecosystem as a means of social transformation. They do so among the shades of technological, and intellectual infrastructure built during the Soviet Union, Russian Empire, and the Islamic Golden Age.

Further ghostly presences are evidenced in the concept of the 'startup' being transplanted to these nations, a form which emerged directly from a specifically American (and Californian) history of land theft, western settlement, industrialization, and cold war militarization. Startups are

accompanied by economic and technical phantasmagorias, and inculcate an ideology shadowed by the modernizing projects that birthed it. A spectre is haunting Eurasia—the spectre of modernity.

Presenter(s): Rowan Claire Choe Maher

5536 The Privileges and Privations of Precarity

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In today's climate of political turmoil, the language of precarity has become both ubiquitous and contested. Once associated primarily with class positions shaped by the flexible, intermittent, and hyper-exploitative labor practices of informal economies under global neoliberalism (Han 2018; Standing 2011), the discourse of precarity now circulates across an array of social positions: from undocumented migrants and overworked students to corporate executives, cultural producers, and even racial supremacists and nation-states. This roundtable explores how precarity operates as a polyvalent register, deployed across the political spectrum to garner recognition, mobilize resources, and assert claims to care, security, and truth. As a discursive and affective resource, precarity invites critical reflection on how social hierarchies are imagined, negotiated, and reproduced—no less in its reframing of suffering as a marker of social identity or a modality of "elite capture" than in its shaping of critical consciousness, mutual aid, and redemptive witnessing (Táíwò 2022).

Rather than treating precarity as a fixed condition or universal ontology of late capitalism, this roundtable asks: What does precarity do, both for anthropologists and the subjects we study? What kinds of narratives and moral claims does it authorize? How is it aestheticized, instrumentalized, or commodified? What political and institutional frameworks does it challenge, and which does it reinforce? And how might we, as ethnographers embedded within precarities, distinguish between "precariousness" as a shared condition of human vulnerability and "precarity" as a historically situated, politically mobilized state (Butler 2004; Lorey 2015)? What stories remain untold in the archive, the art exhibit, the activist campaign? How do informal epistemologies—uncited choreographies, fleeting gestures, or everyday refusals—shape how precarious lives are represented, understood, or erased?

In an era of hypernationalism, economic volatility, and growing attacks on academic freedom, this roundtable reflects on an anthropology increasingly shaped by precarity, both in our ethnographic encounters and within the discipline itself (Santos 2025). Drawing on grounded fieldwork, participants explore precarity across diverse sites: from South Korea's gig economy to anti-intellectualism in U.S. universities, from undocumented migrant labor to the aestheticized "suffering subject" (Robbins 2013). We examine how vulnerability becomes stylized, commodified, or institutionalized—through poetry, dance, ethnographic prose, and social media—and how these forms may transform suffering into artistic, academic, or political capital. Through situated narratives and resistant examples, we ask how anthropologists can engage the politics of vulnerability without reducing it to victimhood, linear crisis, or singular truth, foregrounding instead

its contradictions, maneuvers, and moral complexities.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Wee Yang Soh

Presenter(s): Robert Gelles, University of Chicago, Timothy Hartshorn, Pitzer College, Wee Yang Soh, Sarah Elizabeth Stanley

Discussant: Ellen Kladky, College of Charleston, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

305 Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthro Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Presenter(s): Cindy Rauth, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Gabriel Torrealba Alfonzo, Illinois State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Erich Fox Tree, Wilfrid Laurier University, Elise Hjalmarson, University of California - Berkeley | AnthroClub, Claudia Zamora-Valencia, Temple University, Department of Anthropology, Caroline Watson

Presentation(s): A Tale of Two Sisters: Mestiza Consciousness in Family Negotiations of (Dis)ability in the Nuevo South

"I took his hair back to Mexico as an offering to la Virgen at the chapel of los milagros in La Catedral de San Juan de Los Lagos. I prayed for la Virgen to take care of Miguelito. To help him be a good boy. To develop well. To have good health," Tía Lupe explained to me in Spanish. Miguelito, an affectionate, energetic young child, was born hearing impaired to Mexican immigrant parents in Northwest Arkansas. From a Western, biomedical perspective, Miguelito is completely impaired in one ear and partially in the other. Over the course of a 14-month study, the maternal aunt, Miguelito's primary caregiver, described his hearing ability in varying degrees of severity, but never did she describe him as having a disability. Miguelito's mother, however, articulated a more medicalized understanding of her son's hearing impairment, and struggled with how to perceive and nurture his abilities, given that she was often away from the home. The two sisters' differing understandings of Miguelito's impairment created tension in their shared caregiving. The mother, who more often interacted with the medical providers, felt caught between two distinct, culturally informed ideologies of (dis)ability and child development and was conflicted about how to best help her son. At one point in frustration, she exclaimed, "If Miguelito were in Mexico, he would not be considered as having a disability since he can still hear with one ear and his language has developed well" (2024, translated).

This presentation provides an ethnographic account of one working-class Mexican immigrant family's experience of their child's hearing impairment within the highly institutionalized medical system of Northwest Arkansas, a region which has experienced exponential growth in its overall population and in its diversity over the last forty years. Based on extensive field research, I present an emic representation of the culturally informed, agentic ways in which one family nurtures their

child's development while navigating the institutions of health care and early childhood education. With this ethnographic account, I reveal the myriad, seemingly contradictory ways in which multilingual and multi-generational immigrant families straddle distinct ideologies of child development and (dis)ability. Drawing on the foundational work of Chicana feminist theorists Gloria Anzaldua and Chela Sandoval, I analyze the family's tactics through the framework of a mestiza, oppositional consciousness. This work expands our understanding of US immigrant family attitudes and practices regarding hearing impairment in cross-cultural contexts.

Presenter(s): Cindy Rauth

Ex-Invisible: The Mediatization of Kukama Indigeneity in Peruvian Amazonia

This paper explores the political and aesthetic dimensions of indigeneity expressed in Kukama media activism. I examine the way Kukama media-makers from a radio station called Ucamara use multiple digital and non-digital forms (e.g., radio broadcasting, books, music videos, documentaries, and social media) to counteract anti-Indigenous discrimination and strengthen Kukama linguistic revitalization in Peruvian Amazonia. By combining the theoretical frameworks of indigeneity studies and the anthropology of media, I argue that Radio Ucamara's multimodal aesthetics has become a vehicle to creatively reimagine Kukama identities and rework linguistic ideologies through mediatized performances of indigeneity. Radio Ucamara's media aesthetics is creating online and off-line performative spaces whereby Kukama identity is refashioned. In these mediatized performances, language and myth have become the most notable features of Radio Ucamara notions of indigeneity (Kukama or otherwise). The interplay between linguistic, meta-linguistic, and mythological discourses characterizes Radio Ucamara media production focused on the politics of indigeneity. Such interplay is enacted in media actions such as: 1) the broadcasting of radio shows in Kukama language; 2) the musicalization of Kukama language, meta-linguistic statements, and mythological narratives through hip-hop songs; and 3) videos visualizing experiences of forced assimilation. All these practices allow Ucamara activists to challenge tropes of cultural "invisibility" associated with Kukama experience and to promote novel notions of Kukama modernity.

Presenter(s): Gabriel Torrealba Alfonso

Pissing with the Ancestors: How a Maya Sanitary Superstition Promotes Communion with Ghosts Helps Sustain Traditional Ecology and Law

K'ichee'-Maya elders in Guatemala sometimes give local boys (and visiting anthropologists) an odd bit of sanitary advice: pee in as few places as possible, and make them worthwhile sites: places near family or beauty.

The advice seems obvious and likely has hygienic, ecological, and character-building benefits. Yet a folk-religious explanation also has surprising political and legal implications for identity, cultural traditions, and land tenure. This is because it is said that upon one's death, one will be denied Divine Judgement or entry into Heaven until one has spent a week, month, or a year wherever one has previously relieved oneself.

While exactly how such urinary Limbo works is subject to hilarious speculations, many Mayas find the tradition has a happy, but ghostly, silver-lining: if one repeatedly 'waters' the edge of one's cornfield, a mountain pass, or some cozy (often hidden) site along the road or near a workplace, one will be able to commune spiritually with descendants or the ghosts of long-dead ancestors who will make or made similar use of that site.

This paper explores this weirdly heart-warming tradition: one that purportedly allows people to commune with the spirits of ancestors who are trapped near the places they loved. Such beliefs have valuable political and legal consequences, since they encourage rural Mayas to hold on to sites of natural beauty, ancestral lands, agriculture, rural identity, local residence, and even small distant plots, in order to maintain the possibility of ghostly encounters .

This Maya folk tradition and its legal and ecological consequences contest the racist denunciation of indigenous folk-religion as worthless superstitions; the dismissal of indigenous sanitary practices as unhygienic or dangerous; and the rejection of indigenous land-tenure practices as irrational and uneconomical.

Presenter(s): Erich Fox Tree

"I Dance There Like I Dance Here": Emotions, Embodiment, and Belonging Among Diasporic Cubans in Spain

Affects, emotions, and the body are increasingly recognized as mutually constitutive of migration experiences, shaping not only people's physical journeys, but also influencing their sense of belonging, navigation of everyday dilemmas, and orientations towards the future. Informed by thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Spain, this flash paper explores the emotional and embodied practices deployed by Cubans to recreate the affective sensations of "home" and to continuously reconstitute their sense of themselves as diasporic subjects who maintain important social and cultural ties to the island. For diasporic Cubans, I suggest that the conjuring of "Cubanness" through the re-creation and embodied performance of "Cuban" activities functions to generate an affective ambiance and to close the spatial and temporal distance to their madre patria (motherland) – between their island and Spain, present and past, and their individual bodies and a collective, Cuban one. In such moments, an emotional regeneration occurs, preparing participants to return to the precarious grind of their everyday routines and to endure the loss and longing that permeate their lives far from Cuba. For some Cubans, and particularly for women, participating in the recreation of such culturally thick, affective ambiances and spaces of sociality is preferable to physically travelling to Cuba, allowing them to avoid the uncomfortable and often alienating renegotiations of transnational belongings and embodied autonomy that return frequently provokes. Ultimately, this paper tenders an original contribution to the study of transnationalism, embodiment, and belonging, shedding novel light on the tensions and continuities that emerge through diasporic living in its juxtaposition of individual and collective bodies, embodied desires and obligations, and "here" versus "there".

Presenter(s): Elise Hjalmarson

“Magnum Opus”: The Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the ghosts of modernity in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, Mexico.

In 2019, the Mexican government initiated the development of the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, a logistics and multimodal platform that connects the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico through the renovation of a 19th-century railway and two ports. The project aims to increase global connectivity by facilitating the efficient transportation of goods through the states of Veracruz and Oaxaca across the narrowest strip of land in the country. If completed, this platform could transform Mexico's role in the global transport system and, according to its proponents, turn the Isthmus into an alternative to the Panama Canal.

The Interoceanic Corridor is also an emblematic project of the country's "Fourth Transformation," an ideological and political initiative led by the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA), a self-defined leftist party and a new hegemonic force in Mexico. The party has pledged to reorganize the country's political economy and move away from the neoliberal policies of prior regimes. Instead, it has proposed a state-led approach to social and economic growth through populist programs, including direct cash assistance and substantial investments in public infrastructure, such as the Interoceanic Corridor.

Based on ethnographic and historical research, this paper examines how the location and geography of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec have generated repeated interest in the region, shaping the material and ideological values and meanings attached to transportation infrastructures. Specifically, it analyzes how the modernization of the trans-isthmian train and the seaport of Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, strategic components of the corridor, generate different ideas and experiences about development among institutions and communities that interact with infrastructures. Concepts such as modernity, efficiency, and connectivity have become "ghosts" in the region's collective memory and Mexico's development plans, legitimizing failures and perpetuating expectations of progress centered around the Isthmus' unique geography year after year.

Presenter(s): Claudia Zamora-Valencia

"What does ruin mean to you?" Investigating social futures of ruin materiality in Ponce, Puerto Rico

This presentation uses a visual anthropology approach to explore the intersection of aesthetics and ruination in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Recent disaster events like Hurricane María (2017) and a series of powerful earthquakes in 2020 have magnified underlying structures of disrepair in Puerto Rico. Moreover, these events are the starting points to an ongoing architectural decay and abandonment in Ponce's Historic Center. In this talk, however, I consider Ponce's decaying architectural patrimony to really be the visual transformation of dominant modes of history and identity that are becoming less accessible, as ruined materiality gives way to an ongoing disaster capitalism. First, I engage with the fragmented object (i.e., ruin) to understand how historical memory is both ossified into Ponce's Historic Center architecture and simultaneously challenged by its aesthetic alterity. Second, I ask how people world-build around disrepair in ways that signal decay is not just a prolonged disaster recovery but a material rupture of Puerto Rico's colonial trouble. Finally, this

presentation raises the question, 'Who gets to decide what a ruin is in Ponce?'. Showcasing a moment of ethnographic and community-participatory research at a crumbling house site, I will offer a powerful example of how some Ponceños challenge their city's ruination by offering memory and nostalgia as vehicles to refusal.

Presenter(s): Caroline Watson

3430 Anxiety/Aspiration: The Makings of Neoliberal Subjectivities and the Desiring Subject in Global Perspective

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In an era of economic precarity, intensified competition, and shifting moral economies of care, how are neoliberal subjectivities produced and contested across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts? This panel explores the interplay of anxiety and aspiration in shaping the "desiring subject"-individuals configured to want, strive, and adapt within uncertain futures.

We invite ethnographic contributions that examine how institutions, families, and individuals navigate the tension between cultivating ambition and managing the pressures of late capitalism. How do globalized discourses of success, crisis, and competition manifest in local contexts? When does the imperative to "desire" give way to strategies of refusal or disengagement? What alternative visions of the future emerge in response to these pressures?

Possible themes include (but are not limited to):

Moral economies of aspiration: How are "appropriate" desires instilled in children, workers, or citizens? What role do caregivers, educators, or states play in this process?

Gendered labor of subject-making: How is the work of cultivating desire distributed along lines of gender, class, or ethnicity?

Discourses of crisis and competition: How do narratives like "involution," "lying flat," or "the rat race" shape subject-making practices?

Transnational circulations: How do expert knowledge, educational models, or self-help cultures travel and transform local ideals?

Resistance and refusal: What forms does disengagement from neoliberal striving take, and how are these practices judged?

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Nehal Amer , Karen Hui

Chair: Karen Hui

Presenter(s): Scott Erich, Washington College, Michelle Patino, Karen Hui, Tierney Brown, American Museum of Natural History, Nehal Amer, Shanti Escalante-Demattei

Discussant: Sarah Muir

Presentation(s): 'Oil is annihilating us': Entrepreneurial Subjectivity and Fossil Capital in the Persian Gulf

Fishing, as a way of making money in the lower Persian Gulf, has a fairly low barrier to entry: prospective fishers must either buy or borrow a skiff, obtain a license (or not), and learn how to catch fish using time-honored artisanal methods which involve little-to-no machinery. In this region, rather than working for fishing "businesses," fisherfolk here are entrepreneurs and owner-operators of their own unincorporated enterprises: their profits come from how many fish they catch and what prices those fish fetch in the fluctuating prices of the (fish) market. Importantly, however, in order to catch those fish, artisans must also carry with them enough gasoline to fuel 12+ hour journeys on the open ocean; and increasingly, the volatile prices of gas in these oil-rich states has made artisanal fishing an almost untenable way of making a living. Drawing ethnographic and historical research, and inspired by a recent comment by a fisherman that "oil is annihilating us," this paper asks: what does it mean to be choked out by oil in a region paradoxically known for the abundance of this very commodity? How do fisherman-entrepreneurs manage to stay afloat, so to speak, in rentier states that have increasingly enacted structural adjustments that have weighed down the lowest rungs of the economic ladder? And finally, how have fisherfolk both looked to and fought back against fossil capital as the dominant economic paradigm?

Presenter(s): Scott Erich

From Zombies in Purgatory to Modern Citizens of Capitalism

The figure of the zombie as a metaphor for life under capitalism is exhausted. Literature, film, and vernacular forms of speech liken the undead creature to the oppressed laborer exploited by a capitalist system. Throughout my fieldwork in Havana, Cuba and Miami, Florida, the figure of the zombie under socialism emerged. The zombie, characterized by its lifeless, toiling body manifests as a popular graffiti motif, which interlocutors of mine identified with. Claiming a state of stagnation, oppression, and endless work with nothing to show for it, many express similarities with the zombie. The cure? According to some: capitalism. Some interlocutors express a desire to migrate to the U.S or Western Europe in order to reach self-fulfillment, like advancing in their careers and entering the international art market to achieve wealth. I focus on these narratives of self-making and migration vis-à-vis the current political moment in Cuba, paying special attention to how ideas of capitalism and Revolutionary socialism are constructed as a binary. Ultimately, I highlight similarities in the tensions that Cuban artists experience both in Cuba and once abroad, per my multi-sited fieldwork. In this paper, I substantiate my ethnographic data with local religious and cultural histories of the "zombie" in order to analyze Cuban artists' narratives of self-fashioning and temporality, teasing out the connective (t)issues that bind capitalism and socialism.

Presenter(s): Michelle Patino

Cultivating Desire: making middle class motherhood in Shenzhen, China

This paper examines how middle-class mothers in Shenzhen, China, navigate the moral and practical tensions of parenting amid economic slowdown and heightened precarity. Having benefited from Dengist reforms, these mothers now face the challenge of securing their children's futures in an increasingly competitive and uncertain landscape. I argue that desire—its recognition and cultivation—becomes the mother's responsibility, positioning her as both an architect of her child's aspirational subjectivity and an entrepreneurial subject herself. Middle-class parenting thus demands flexibility not only from children but also from mothers, who must reconcile humane parenting with the imperative to produce "talented," competitive future adults. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with middle-class mothers, I show how mothers deploy concepts like "nurture," "potential," and "direction" to mediate these anxieties, even as class disparities fracture the ostensibly universal middle-class identity. This paper highlights how parenting conjures particular mothering subjectivities, revealing the gendered burdens of producing neoliberal flexibility. Ultimately, the cultivation of desire serves as a contested yet collective response to precarity—one that reinforces the myth of Shenzhen's aspirational middle class, even as material inequalities undermine it.

Presenter(s): Karen Hui

Anxieties of Circulation: Managing the Sacred and Photographic in Bhutan

Bhutan is not camera-shy. With scenic hikes and stylish heritage, Bhutanese and chilean tourists alike enjoy taking photographs of the small Buddhist kingdom. Yet, in front of any temple in Bhutan tourists and locals alike encounter signs reminding them that photography is not permitted. In this paper, I consider how the restrictions, contradictions, and refusals around photography point to the capacity of photographs to enchant social relations. Images in Vajrayana Buddhism bear a potent possibility to invite divine inhabitants, yet this did not explain the patterns of which photographs were permissible, and which could not circulate—whether called out by offices or by fellow community members on social media. I follow the secular and security concerns about how images circulate to explore how restrictions on photography index Bhutanese relationships to globalization, mediatization, and economic concerns that the security that protected these sacred sites from growing concerns about theft and the economy. I draw on scholars of media, globalization, and ownership to explore the directions that the refusal of photographic circulation takes us. I examine how images bind together potentials and risks, and how Bhutanese policies managing photographic practices aspire to extend the network of relationships of obligation and interdependency that constitute the Buddhist subjectivity into the photographic realm.

Presenter(s): Tierney Brown

Hedging the Future: Real Estate, Anxiety, and Speculative Investment Amongst Egypt's Urban Middle-Upper Class

In the wake of successive currency devaluations that have caused the Egyptian pound to lose over half its value, many middle-upper-class Egyptians are turning to real estate investment in newly built satellite cities as a means of safeguarding themselves against economic instability. Drawing

on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in real estate showrooms and exhibitions, I examine how real estate investment is framed as both a rational strategy for navigating a precarious economic landscape and an aspirational project—offering a sense of stability, status, and intergenerational security amidst widespread financial anxiety. At the same time, my interlocutors express skepticism about the future and concern over the sustainability of Egypt's real estate boom, even as they participate in it. I analyze how neoliberal subjectivities are shaped by the dual imperatives to strive and to safeguard—reflecting a complex interplay of desire, doubt, and risk management. My research contributes to broader debates on how global economic logics are localized and contested, and how aspirations are cultivated in and anxieties are managed in contexts where the future feels increasingly uncertain.

Presenter(s): Nehal Amer

Luxurious Dependencies: The Anti 50/50 Trend, Linguistic Political Flares Among Dating Experts, and the Backlash to Neoliberal Feminism

Cishet womens' positions across the political spectrum in the US are changing regarding what aspirational divisions of labor look like as the financial threshold for having a family ascend and traditional gender arrangements take on the sheen of luxury. Through discourse analysis I examine how different commentators index their political allegiances by referencing conservative flares (biological gender roles), progressive flares (structural issues such as reduced access to reproductive care) and reactionary flares (Boyce Kay 2024) (intense heteropessimism) while prescribing the same solution for women's financial survival: marrying rich. These findings suggest that politics online are constructed through linguistic associations more so than any historical, material, or policy-oriented vision of politics. Across the anti-50/50 trend, women are encouraged to take on feminine performances in order to obtain financial security (Bell 2024) as opposed to taking on wage-labor, which is framed as unfair under the assumption that women perform the majority of domestic labor. This backlash to neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg 2013) is fundamentally shaped by the extreme financial stress on parents in the United States, the affordability crisis (Ensign 2025) and the luxury-consumption oriented messaging that occurs on social media (Creevey et al) which shapes responses to precarity as, yet again, a problem that women address through individual lifestyle decisions.

Presenter(s): Shanti Escalante-Demattei

Discussion

7172 Living Memory: Thinking With Medical Histories and Envisioning Health Futures PART II

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel is PART II of a two part series. At the junctures of institutional healthcare, traditional

modes of healing, and everyday life exists an ongoing reckoning with manifold histories of the globalization of biomedicine. With the intention of creating shared insights into relationalities of health knowledges, infrastructures, desires, and embodied experiences, we seek to complicate teleological ways of thinking about time, instead positing that medical pasts, presents, and futures co-constitute one another in entangled and dynamic ways. In this panel, we draw together scholars working at the intersections of critical medical anthropology, archival scholarship, public health and epidemiology, and historical analysis to explore how legacies of interconnected medical pasts reverberate through contemporary health landscapes. We consider how institutional and local medical histories shape both the provision of care and lived health experiences, illuminating how past structures of harm are often reproduced in current health outcomes, policies, and data. Apparent "emerging" patterns in health-such as racial disparities in maternal mortality or the uneven effects of pandemic response-frequently reflect a repackaging of historical marginalization rather than novel phenomena. Additionally, varied local histories of community and individual engagements with medical institutions, practitioners, research, and care continue to shape subjective experiences around medical decision-making, care seeking patterns, and perceptions of medical expertise and authority. We trace how communities understand and respond to medical institutions and interventions through historically grounded frameworks of mis/trust, risk, hope, and accountability. Together, we discuss the interrelated webs of meaning-making, power and inequity, and experiences of wellness and illness that come to light when tracing diverse medical histories and their afterlives in the present.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Jessica Dailey, University of Notre Dame, Simona Spiegel, University of Notre Dame

Chair: Jessica Dailey, University of Notre Dame, Simona Spiegel, University of Notre Dame

Presenter(s): Hilla Nehushtan, University of Pittsburgh, Daniel Hamilton, Case Western Reserve University, Department of Anthropology, Gabrielle Robbins, University of Oxford, Kartikeya Saboo, Wichita State University, Department of Anthropology, Lucian O'Connor, Jessica Dailey, University of Notre Dame

Discussant: Christopher Zraunig, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): From the "diabetic race" to negotiating diet culture within an American Jewish community

Historical studies on the immigration of Jewish communities to the United States at the end of the 18th century reveal socio-medical views that associated Jews with stereotypes of blackness and dirtiness. Medical magazines frame them as the "diabetic race," connecting them to immorality, fatness, and lust and positioning them as outsiders to the American white bodily ideals. The current study explores perceptions of bodywork among Jewish women in North America today.

Based on 20 semi-structured interviews, I trace how this community manages, responds, and negotiates such deep ancestral messages and ties the scholarly worlds of medical anthropology, religious studies, fat studies, and gendered bodywork. I ask how religious Jewish women in the US perceive body size and negotiate the intersection of gendered expectations, religious prescriptions,

and community ideals. Preliminary findings focus on a few meaningful themes. 1) Pressure for thinness before wedlock, 2) Challenges with parenthood amid obesity scares and diet culture defiance, 3) Complex relations with parents and family members about body size, and 4) negotiating and resisting diet culture.

Presenter(s): Hilla Nehushtan

Patients, Providers, and Practice of Gender Affirming Care

Transgender healthcare has been practiced within Western Biomedicine for over a century in Europe and the United States. During this time patients, providers, and practices have engaged in an active creation of a model of gender affirming healthcare amid the backdrop of major social and political changes. In my paper I will look at the historical progression of gender affirming care as it impacts the current models for care delivery in the United States and the ways that actors within gender affirming care bring together varied ontological perspectives leading to positive and negative patient interactions and perceptions of care. With particular attention to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care, the built medical environment, and the increase in Pride and Gender Care Clinics I will show how care in practice can both enact wellbeing and harm for patients and how the social and political impact individual care. I will end this exploration with two potential scenarios for the future of gender affirming care: one where more transgender voices are included in policy and practice making, another where transgender individuals are denied autonomy and care.

Presenter(s): Daniel Hamilton

Orange Pills, Red Water: Therapeutic Resources and the Politics of Memory in Highland Madagascar

When Covid-19 circulated worldwide in 2020, Madagascar's government turned to older medical infrastructure to produce "#MadeinMadagsacar" drugs. The state reclaimed a factory that manufactured medicines during the island's socialist period (1975-1992); orange anti-Covid pills made there replicated the orange antibiotics made forty years previously. Government popularization of Covid-19 medications highlighted socialist self-sufficiency to fuel narratives of "true independence" for pandemic-era global health intervention. However, many Malagasy spurned these orange pills. Preferred treatment was ranomena ("red water"), a distillation of cattle blood, prepared in DIY village "factories." Rural communities narrated reliance on ranomena in previous waves of epidemic disease, including outbreaks during the socialist period that state drugs could not address. Ranomena's name, "red water," also designates massacre sites during 1940s uprisings against French rule. This paper therefore examines how therapeutic substances encapsulate legacies of political resistance and layered struggles for self-determination, which transmute engagement with such substances into powerful sites for postcolonial subject formation. Grounded in the language rural communities use to narrate interpretations of therapeutic substances, it considers how historical ethnographies of medicine can attune to local meaning-making through embodiment of collective pasts.

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Robbins

Therapeutic Hauntings: Conspiracy Theory as Shamanic Narrative

A case of infant mortality in a public hospital in Newark, NJ led to forms of emotional distress for the father. Curiously, the cause of death was unclear to him, but did not require further elaboration or explanation. Allied with a conspiracy theorist on the street, this young father resolved his experience through a narrative of malevolent power, regaining his power of signification and sense of control, while reinforcing an explanation of marginalization and dispossession common among young Black men in this neighborhood: the powers that be are behind the curtain, whose visible face is the exploitation of Black folk.

The experience of public health, and the narrativization of experience on the street both stem from a position of marginality. I argue that conspiracy narrativizing serves a shamanic function, providing agency and a sense of control to those haunted by the history of race in the U.S. and disoriented by the gyrations of political-economic volatility in racialized capitalism.

Presenter(s): Kartikeya Saboo

The Eugenic Unconscious: How Nineteenth-Century Junk Science became “Common Sense”

The term eugenics carries a mystique in our collective imaginary, modulated by an assumption that it has something to do with horrific, unspeakable acts. Such unspokenness, such disavowal and unteaching of eugenics in the evolutionary and biomedical sciences, however, has loosened our understandings of what it was and what it accomplished.

This paper traces core eugenic concepts through their inception in 19C biomedical science, their implementations into healthcare structures about 100 years ago, and their persistent afterlives – permeating through policies that are not yet overturned, and circulating as “common sense” in the public vernacular. I provide critical genealogies of keystone eugenic ideas that pass as “common sense” in clinical encounters, research, and education: survival of the fittest; the notion that Black, Indigenous, and women of color do not feel pain; the myth of an absolute gender binary; the myth of essential race differences; the pathologization and criminalization of immigration, race, homosexuality, Indigeneity, and disability; perceived threats of racial replacement; and more.

As an anthropologist who is immersed in the biomedical sciences, I have learned that a basic competency rooted in honest discussions of eugenics can transform healthcare education. Among other outcomes, I share how my required courses in graduate health education empower providers to recognize eugenic structures and to dismantle them in their future practice.

Presenter(s): Lucian O'Connor

Refusing from Above: Antivax Politics and the Afterlives of Elite Medical Mistrust

This paper explores how contemporary medical mistrust among socially powerful communities draws on longer histories of elite refusal of biomedical expertise. Thinking with original ethnographic research I conducted in Northern California among a community of self-described "Hippie Moms" who seek out-of-hospital birth care and express other forms of medical mistrust—such as antivax beliefs—I trace how the language of "medical freedom" and skepticism toward mainstream medicine can be mobilized not from structural vulnerability but from positions of privilege. While often framed as novel responses to pandemic-era policy or institutional overreach, these resistances echo past moments when powerful groups distanced themselves from biomedicine in response to perceived threats to their status. I argue that contemporary refusals are not simply anti-authoritarian reactions to power, but are embedded in neoliberal racial logics that render whiteness invisible while mobilizing it as a perceived site of vulnerability. Through discourses of autonomy, choice, and bodily sovereignty, mistrust can become a tool for defending racialized privilege while disavowing its structural roots. These refusals are haunted by anxieties over the erosion of whiteness as social capital, repackaged as concern for health and freedom. In this way, certain mistrusts act as both embodied memory of medical pasts and as mechanisms for reproducing inequality.

Presenter(s): Jessica Dailey

Discussion

5475 Intersectional Hauntings and Their Impact on Migrant Communities and Democracy

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Avery Gordon, writing on the ongoing affects that shape the "structure of feelings"* that constitute modernity, argues that "Ghostly matters are part of social life. If we want to study social life well, and if in addition we to want to contribute, in however small a measure, to changing it, we must learn how to identify hauntings and reckon with ghosts..." The process, she adds, is "often painful, difficult, and unsettling."**

In keeping with this year's AAA theme of "Ghosts" this panel invites papers that grapple with how to document unseen power dynamics that shape the lives of migrant communities. How do the histories of race, sex, gender, class inform current legislative policies on immigration and how are these undermining first amendment rights of freedom of expression and thought? What is the role of universities in relation to immigrant students who voice opinions contrary to these and related policies? How do ongoing inquiries from several federal agencies toward universities and their acquiescence along with law firms to Executive Orders create a chilling specter on the ability of these institutions from serving the public, and in particular, migrant communities?

What kind of methods within and outside of the discipline of anthropology have proven helpful in documenting how the past informs the present? How are migrant communities evoking the power

of immaterial forces to motivate change? What kind of engaged approaches are scholars, activists, and practitioners using to uphold or challenge international human rights protocols that are responsive to the needs of migrants? How do key conceptual frameworks used throughout the social sciences – assimilation, incorporation, citizenship – shape the spectral possibilities for all forms of life in the age of the Anthropocene?

Works cited:

* Williams, Raymond. 1960. *Culture and society, 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press.

** Gordon, Avery. 1996. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*: University of Minnesota Press, p. 63.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Oscar Gil-Garcia, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Oscar Gil-Garcia, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Zainab Najeeb, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, Oscar Gil-Garcia, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Oscar Gil-Garcia, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghosts of the Frontier: Internal Displacement, Suspended Citizenship, and Gendered Resistance in Pakistan

This paper examines how internally displaced Pashtun women from Pakistan's former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) navigate life in urban centers like Peshawar after the 2014 military operation Zarb-e-Azb. Although their displacement occurs within national borders, these women experience a form of spectral citizenship—haunted by the legacies of colonial governance, securitized state control, and the slow erosion of rights, mobility, and recognition. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research and digital ethnography in the cities of Peshawar and Islamabad, this paper explores how Pashtun women live with and against a state-driven discourse of crisis that casts them as both subjects of care and threats to order.

The panel's theme of "intersectional hauntings" offers a generative frame for understanding how crisis narratives, legal ambiguity, and cultural erasure function not just as policy outcomes, but as affective structures. While not international migrants, these women's lives are shaped by ruptures in kinship, governance, and place-making that mirror—and often exceed—the exclusions faced by cross-border migrants. I examine how these women resist the containment of their political agency through quiet refusals, digital activism, and the pursuit of higher education, creating new solidarities and modes of belonging that unsettle dominant logics of state legitimacy.

Presenter(s): Zainab Najeeb

Legacies of Forced Migration: The Spectral Hauntings of US Deportation Raids

My talk will feature the experiences of Gaspar and Amalia, an Indigenous Akatek Maya married couple, and their children, following "Operation Wagon Train" one of the largest immigration raids in US history. I will share how the parent's incarceration and Amalia's eventual deportation to Mexico impacted their children, and how in turn, their ordeal resurrected an untapped memory of a deportation raid in my New York City home and family separation. Exactly how the disclosure of this memory with the family fostered a long-standing partnership to amplify their voices and others who continue to experience legacies of forced migration will be discussed.

Presenter(s): Oscar Gil-Garcia

Discussion

6308 Spirit Matters: Ghosts and Hauntings in the Museum

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Scholarly work on ghosts and hauntings has tended to overemphasize analyses of belief. Far less scholarship has engaged with ghostly phenomena directly. Are ghosts and hauntings necessarily immaterial?

In this roundtable, researchers and museum practitioners at diverse career stages consider spectral matter, which we encounter in the form of cultural materials, faunal and botanical remains, and human ancestors resting in museum collections. We invite each presenter to contribute a spectral encounter, be it with a known entity or cultural presence from the past that reveals itself in the present. In a time when the politics of recognition of ghosts and haunting has become increasingly contested in the US, this round table contributes to the wider re-envisioning of museums as spaces of plurality, transformation and healing.

How do these presences impact the ways we learn and the knowledge we produce about objects, belongings, communities, and heritage? What are our stewardship responsibilities to them and to their living associates? What happens in museums when we begin to open up our practices of stewardship to these different understandings and presences?

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Pascale Boucicaut, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Joshua Bell, Smithsonian Institution (NMNH)

Presenter(s): Charlotte Williams , Dorothy Lippert, Smithsonian Institution (Repatriation Office), Rosemary Joyce, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Pascale Boucicaut, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Joshua Bell, Smithsonian Institution (NMNH)

5371 Panel 1 - Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines how urban communities, living on the margins of interconnected energy hubs, manage the sociocultural and health effects of chemical air pollution. A secondary focus explores how longstanding struggles over industrial toxicity are newly being shaped as climate science becomes increasingly integral to contemporary governance. The panelists, all contributors to the forthcoming edited volume *Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change*, draw on qualitative methods - including ethnographic participant observation and historical archival research - applied at a scale typically reserved for quantitative climate studies. The panelists work within a clear network of scientists, policymakers, workers, and residents across transnational sites. Each panelist investigates the practices and interactions of ordinary people as they grapple with energy industries that are at the center of their lives and with community debates about their health and that of the planet. By studying these networked practices and interactions as key drivers for reordering urban life and politics, we may be better able to dismantle homogenized perspectives on transboundary air pollution to build more equitable and sustainable cities.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Kerry Ryan Chance , Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Laurence Ralph, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Kerry Ryan Chance, J   Judson, University of Minnesota, Nicole Fadeke Castor, Northeastern University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Bj  rn Enge Bertelsen, University of Bergen, Department of Social Anthropology, Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: Mareike Winchell, London School of Economics, Christine Walley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Toward a Theory of Habitable Air

This paper situates the theoretical concept of "habitable air" within three key anthropological literatures: (1) theories of democratic politics, (2) research on urban ecology, and (3) studies of climate change. Within this framework, I argue that toxic air - though invisible - has tangible sociocultural, geographic, and corporeal effects. These manifest not only in the prevalence of cancer, asthma, and other illnesses near petrochemical plants, but also in enduring and emerging forms of community-based political mobilization. Drawing from research in the U.S. and South Africa, I examine what politics is possible where residents face radically life-shortening illnesses and the known "slow violence" of toxic exposure. While recent research emphasizes making air pollution legible to technocratic planning from above, this paper explores how urban residents deploy climate politics to sustain bodies and communities. I focus on how residents do so through

everyday scientific and spiritual practices that offer innovative challenges to an emerging consensus about climate crisis.

Presenter(s): Kerry Ryan Chance

Sacrificial Habitation: Pollution and Policing in New Orleans, Louisiana

This paper seeks to explore how different stakeholders grapple with national debates about community policing and environmental vulnerability by examining the problems articulated and the solutions proposed in New Orleans, Louisiana. As the city with the highest rate of incarceration in the world and a climate change hotspot, New Orleans is an ideal site to understand policing's relationship to inequality and environmental exposure. The city also has a community policing program in place, centered on post-Hurricane Katrina disaster areas, that allows the opportunity to methodologically evaluate police-citizen-environment relationships. The current climate of heightened awareness around policing demands a comprehensive study of policing in relation to urban ecologies, rooted in rigorous historical, and ethnographic analysis.

Presenter(s): J   Judson

Co-author(s): Laurence Ralph

The Enduring Urgency of Black Breath: African Diaspora Perspectives

This paper is dedicated to an essay by Dr. Omotayo Jolaosho, who passed away in 2022. Their work examined what they called "Black Breath" through post-colonial musical performances, particularly in the mining regions of Southern Africa and protests over police violence in the United States. The essay examines breath as a powerful material and spiritual force, a point not only of harm but also of recovery, showing convergences of racial violence, health, and environmental hazards through time and space. Fadeke Castor offers a new reading and insights reflecting on these themes.

Presenter(s): Nicole Fadeke Castor

The Non-Linearity of Time: Mozambican Politics of Irreconciliation and Extractivism

At least 1 million people died during the Mozambican civil war (1976/7-92). Unfolding after gaining independence from Portugal (1975) and alongside experiments with Afro-socialism in the 1980s, the war, despite its brutality, has not been subjected to global templates of reconciliation processes. At the same time, Mozambique has been the center of opening new markets to oil and gas extractivism, and the U.N. suggests it is one of Africa's most vulnerable countries to climate change. Thus, drawing upon historical archives and representations of violence and disaster, as well as localized cosmologies, it comprises a unique case to probe what irreconciliation might mean – both as a political horizon and analytical concept.

Presenter(s): Bj  rn Enge Bertelsen

Solastalgia: Seeing Stories Beneath the Surface in Mossville, Louisiana

This paper offers an ongoing meditation on the petroleum industry in southwest Louisiana, the material, ecological, and social violence that this industry has produced in the region. For more than 150 years, Morris' maternal family has lived in Mossville, Louisiana, a small, unincorporated community that was a historic freedmen's community. In 2011, a South African energy and chemical company announced its plans to invest \$21 billion to build the first gas-to-liquid plant in the United States and expand its existing chemical facilities, which produce synthetic fuels and a variety of petrochemical products. The expansion required a buyout of the community, effectively resulting in its demise. The paper plays with themes of origins, religiosity, domesticity, death, and the psychic life of ruined landscapes.

Presenter(s): Courtney Desiree Morris

Discussion

Discussion

1905 How Foods Haunt Places: Sugarcane, Soybeans, Shrimp, Figs, Teff, Cotton, Olive Oil, etc.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How do foods haunt places? What forms of belonging emerge or vanish when specters of adversity confront agricultural livelihoods? How do differently positioned individuals and communities negotiate the ghosts of familiar worlds while positioning themselves within global or local supply chains? This session explores the unsettling effects of global markets and climate change on rural livelihoods. Through the lens of agricultural products-sugarcane, soybeans, shrimp, figs, cotton, teff, olive oil-panelists examine the tensions between crisis and transcendence.

Rural spaces have long been sites where decline and desire become entangled, sometimes through invoking tradition, sometimes through embracing innovation. Drawing on scholarship from Sarah Besky (2020), Julie Guthman (2019), Sophie Chao (2022), and Anna Tsing (2015), we consider how food producers-whether in fields, orchards, or kitchens-navigate shifting landscapes of uncertainty. What happens when rupture defines a food's relationship to place? We revive Ernesto de Martino's concept of crisis of presence to explore how foods become haunted materials, disrupting the everyday and remaking relationships to land, labor, identity, and the food itself.

We begin with a theoretical orientation to the panel, drawing on fieldwork with fig growers in central Italy and soybean farmers in the U.S. Midwest. For fig producers, killer weevils unsettle ties to land. Meanwhile, soybean farmers face changing planting windows with techno-optimism, which fails to address climate change. These cases explore the ways crisis transforms not only agricultural practice but the lived experiences of what it means to exist in rural worlds.

Panelists examine haunted foodscapes across a range of sites. In Louisiana, sugarcane is both a cornerstone of the economy and a powerful reminder of enslavement. Shrimpers in the same

region contend with scandals around imported catch due to disappearing coastlines which bring to the fore uncertainty over what constitutes "local" food. In the southern U.S., cotton functions as a food product, used in cattle feed and as cottonseed oil or cellulose in processed foods. Yet for Black farmers, participation in this expanding food system is hindered by exclusion from USDA programs and land access, the past continues to haunt the possibilities of the present. Teff, a vital grain in Ethiopia and its diasporas, raises urgent questions about cultural belonging as it circulates globally. Meanwhile, olive oil producers in southern Italy navigate a ghostlike landscape that a bacterium has left in its wake.

Across sites, food anchors a sense of place even as conditions that make those places habitable erode. What forms of belonging remain possible when everything is quickly shifting? This panel brings together ethnographic accounts of farmers, foods, and futures haunted by a crisis of presence.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Lauren Crossland-Marr, University of La Verne, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Krause, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Morgan Jenatton

Presenter(s): Lauren Crossland-Marr, University of La Verne, Department of Anthropology, Rebecca Dudley, Washington University in St. Louis, Elin Linder, Stockholm University, Jennifer Thompson, University of Georgia, Christina Collins, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, David Beriss, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sarah Besky, Cornell University

Presentation(s): How Foods Haunt Places: A Panel Introduction through Soybean Fields and Fig Orchards

How do foods haunt places? Rural life has historically transpired in spaces where decline and desire become entangled, sometimes through invoking tradition and other times through embracing invention. This paper frames the panel with Ernesto de Martino's "crisis of presence" as it draws on ethnographic fieldwork with fig producers in central Italy and soybean farmers in the U.S. Midwest.

Our paper offers a theoretical orientation as it considers how the legacies of food production involve both perseverance and disorientation especially as producers navigate unpredictable environmental and market conditions. For fig producers, killer weevils unsettle ties to land and tradition. Meanwhile, soybean farmers face changing planting windows with techno-optimism, which fails to address climate change. These cases explore the ways crisis transforms not only agricultural practice but the lived experiences of what it means to exist in rural worlds.

We take inspiration from Ernesto de Martino's framework of the must (what must be preserved for a culture's longevity) and the can (what can be imagined) to understand how rural worlds can generate a sense of feeling settled (appaesamento) and also unsettled (spaesamento) (de Martino

2023). Specifically, we focus on responses to globalization, industrialization, and technology. In the spirit of ghosts, we revive de Martino's crisis of presence to grasp how foods haunt place.

Presenter(s): Lauren Crossland-Marr

Co-author(s): Elizabeth Krause

Sugarcane hauntings: Spatial and racial examinations of plantation memory in Louisiana

Nearly ubiquitously, industrial farms in the U.S. have aerial-view maps of their farms. These maps not only tell stories about delineations of property and what is grown where. They are encoded with social meaning—family stories and personalities, tales of land acquisition betraying dynamics of power, and the emplacement of race and racialization. These elements create a sense of place, and a sense of self in place. In this paper, I examine these elements of social meaning as they connect to and are informed by myths of permanence and interruptions of that permanence. Key to this examination is racialized violence and disparity in the Louisiana farmscape. Two ethnographic sites anchor this paper. On the one hand, a white sugarcane farmer descendant from a family with inherited and acquired farmland since European colonization in the 1760's, over eight generations. On the other, a Black farmer in sugarcane country also with inherited and acquired farmland, yet at a significantly smaller spatial and temporal scale, and who grows soy. Both farmers use maps to tell family myths, explain local political conflicts, and explain themselves and why they grow what they grow. By conducting a comparative socio-spatial examination of the farm maps that encode social meaning and that shape farm operations, I seek to contribute to understandings of how plantation legacies are encoded in the land.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Dudley

Caring for olive oil, cultivating ghosts of the future: How an ancient practice and contemporary disaster haunt Salentini olive oil makers

Covered with ancient olive orchards and younger plantations, the landscape of Salento, located in the heel of Italy, showcases its multigenerational tradition of making olive oil. The making dates back to Roman times and has flowed with currents of time, markets, and multispecies shifts. The plant bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* has caused over 21 million olive trees to desiccate since its entrance into the region in the early 2010s, leaving an entire subregion ghostlike in its wake. The region has struggled to transcend its devastating effects. Based on more than 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork with Salentini olive oil makers, this paper explores dynamics of caring for the ancient tradition of olivicoltura in and beyond times of *Xylella*. Through situated storytelling, it critically engages how the craft of olive culturalists, multigenerational flow of olive oil, and multispecies complex of *Xylella* haunts the place while creating ghost of the future. With a curious lens on the dire situation of the present, legacies of the past, and hopes for the future, the paper discusses how the monoculture/duo-cultivar feature that made the landscape so vulnerable to the bacterium now is replaced with another such combination. Of critical interest is to tease out the values and practices by which Salentino olive oil flows, even in precarious times of disruption, and to analyze how it all relates to histories of what once were while imagining what is yet to become.

Presenter(s): Elin Linder

How King Cotton Continues to Haunt Georgia Cotton Farming

US cotton fields are haunted by dispossession, enslavement, and eroded soils and markets. After the forced removal of the Cherokee Nation in the 1800s, cotton spread as colonizers claimed stolen lands. Cotton became "king" from southern plantations to northern mills, supported by enslaved Black people's labor. Cotton and cottonseed oil production expanded post-Civil War, and in the late 1800s high lard prices led to the invention of Crisco®—an acronym for crystalized cottonseed oil. Though Crisco® dropped its namesake, cottonseed oil is lauded for its nutritional value, and cotton is a common food additive. Low market prices and high input costs have recently stifled cotton production, which remains haunted by its legacy of socioecological damage. We explore these ghosts in a large interdisciplinary cotton research project. While the broader project strives to repair ecological legacies through regenerative farming practices, "climate smart" projects, like this, largely ignore social legacies—engaging only "the usual suspects" (white/male farmers) for on-farm collaboration. In contrast, we are working to recruit diverse farmers, including purposeful engagement of Black farmers. Yet this is challenged by the fact that Black farmers make up 1.5% of US farmers and Black-owned farmland has declined 90% since 1910. Guided by King Cotton's specters, we critically reflect on the challenges of diversifying on-farm research and the inequities experienced by Black cotton farmers today.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Thompson

Co-author(s): Cydney Seigerman

A Gluten-Free Haunting: Teff's Cultural Identity within a Global Superfood Market

Teff is a grain distinctly identified with the cultural groups of the Horn of Africa, particularly the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, as of late, it has become globally marketed as a gluten-free nutrient-rich grain, or superfood, as well as a climate resilient crop. Drawing from interviews with teff producers and suppliers across the US, this paper explores forms of relationality which emerge through the cultivation, processing, and distribution of teff in a context outside of the Horn of Africa. Specifically, I ask in what ways are midwestern teff producers haunted by the grain's distinct identity, which is so deeply tied to Ethiopian & Eritrean culture, history, and landscape? How do they balance the tension between honoring the grain's local identity, without inviting claims of biopiracy, with promoting teff as a global superfood and climate resistant crop? What forms of representation in branding and marketing emerge from producers balancing such tensions? To what degree is there an erasure or refashioning of teff's local identity to market it as a global superfood? How do the historical, cultural, and ecological identities of teff haunt US producers? And finally, how do producers continue to engage with their core customer base of Ethiopian & Eritrean diaspora restaurants and groceries in light of the rising global popularity of the grain (i.e., more commercialized retail demands)?

Presenter(s): Christina Collins

Haunted by Foreign Shrimp: Deploying Culinary Nationalism to Save Louisiana Shrimping

The specter of foreign shrimp haunts the Louisiana seafood industry. In 2024, the Louisiana Shrimp and Petroleum Festival, held in Morgan City since 1936, was rocked by scandal. Scientists working for a food safety company revealed that many of the festival seafood vendors were selling imported shrimp. The company showed similar results at other regional festivals and in restaurants that claimed to sell domestic seafood. The tests confirmed suspicions about imported seafood in Louisiana and set off a scramble to reinforce regulations and persuade restaurateurs and consumers to demand local shrimp. For shrimpers, the scandal confirmed what they already knew: imported shrimp was driving them out of business. Seafood activists argued that the decline of shrimping was devastating towns along the coast and erasing local culinary heritage.

This is not, however, simply a story of a declining industry and dying communities. Drawing on interviews with shrimpers, restaurateurs, and activists, this essay examines the concepts and strategies deployed to save Louisiana shrimping. Imported shrimp is labeled as “foreign,” tainted by chemicals and antibiotics, and harvested by exploited workers. Louisiana shrimp is characterized as “wild-caught,” subject to “rigorous” regulations, and embedded in local communities and culture. This essay explores the intersection of cultural claims and policy activism that shrimpers and activists hope will save the domestic shrimp industry in Louisiana.

Presenter(s): David Beriss

Discussion

8801 "Why Letters to the Editor Matter? : A Genre of Writing Our Democracy Needs Right Now"

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Napoleon (41st Fl)

Type: Workshop

As the 2024 Recipient of the Anthropology in Media Award, Alejandro Lugo's workshop will focus on a brief public reading and discussion of selected "Letters to the Editor" Lugo recently published in the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times. The purpose of this workshop is for the workshop participants to unpack the process and strategies Lugo used to successfully engage with the different formats and editorial styles of the different national newspapers. This workshop ultimately invites all of us, no matter our subfield of anthropology, to explore how this powerful genre of writing can help shape public discourse and support our discipline, our communities, and our free press, all while contributing to audiences beyond academia and the college campus.

7285 The Liturgical Politics of Orthodox Christian Societies

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable seeks to expand our anthropological understanding of liturgy as a social experience, analytical category, and political action. In conversation between anthropologists of different Orthodox Christian communities for whom liturgy is a key emic concept, we ask how liturgy can be more fully theorized and linked to a richer study of entangled political identities, especially in settings where liturgical values confront secular state values.

While ritual, including its pivotal role in political movements (Farneth 2023), is a well-trodden category in anthropology, relatively less attention has been paid to liturgy. This is perhaps due to its colloquial understanding as simply one form of ritual. But liturgy is also a powerful tool through which authorities rise and communities establish themselves as inextricably bound together (Heron 2018). Within Orthodoxy specifically – in all of its various "national" iterations – liturgy is something both tied to high ritual and extending beyond it; it has the ability to both expand and contract the ritual experience within different temporal modes and frame alternative capacities for social and political belonging. As Jeffers Engelhardt has written, "In an Orthodox worldview, liturgical experience and participation is the fullest experience of being human – ultimately, the Orthodox life is liturgical" (2015). For various Orthodox Christian communities, liturgy and its reverberations through public life thus work as a framework through which individuals craft their worldviews and identities. From Greece to Lebanon to the Netherlands, liturgy makes claims on its participants and influences the ethics of care, activism, economics, kinship and more within Orthodox groups.

Participants in this roundtable will examine the significance of liturgy in their local ethnographic contexts and discuss the wider implications of various forms of liturgical politics. Through this comparative discussion, we aim to craft a shared, nuanced understanding of the bounds of liturgy, its political consequences, and the lifeworlds it generates for people that may run contrary to those on offer via global identity discourses.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Hannah Howard, University of Georgia

Presenter(s): Hannah Howard, University of Georgia, Aaron Eldridge, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Paul Melas, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Sarah Bakker Kellogg, San Francisco State University

Discussant: Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Northeastern University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

8776 Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists (ALLA) Business meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

This is a meeting of the Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists (ALLA) membership.

During this event, we provide updates to the entire organization, including awards and recognitions. We also seek nominations for future board members at business meetings. We vote on key decisions to help sustain and grow our organization.

7918 Thinking Through the Residual: Warring, Remembering, Memorizing, and Hybridizing

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel focuses on the concept of the residual—those elements that refuse to disappear and make unpredictable appearances, akin to ghostly figures haunting our collective subjectivities, memories, and histories. We explore how memory and unresolved historical fragments persist despite systemic efforts to repress or resolve them. How do these "ghosts" survive amidst rituals aimed at bringing closure? In doing so, we ask: how does the past become emblematic of various forms of intertwined resistance that directly affect how relationships function in the present? How do the pasts of communities and lifeworlds continue to make symbolic appearances in the afterlives by mediating relationships of ancestry, digitized interfaces, indigeneity, coloniality, and citizenship? Our panel, through the presentations, seeks to understand how we can move beyond temporal dichotomies to focus on uncovering how continuous strands of the past mediate contextual presents. What tricks operate in producing that which lingers, what remains persistently unresolved despite processes of resolution? The residual entails an act of subtraction, representing loss and the remains of something greater. Its latent indexical relationship to its former past form holds the dangerous potential to transform how we perceive our spatial-temporal experiences of the past, present, and future, enabling accountability and challenging hegemonic narratives (Feldman, 2004). Consequently, residuals often become sites targeted for organized erasure, detachment, or delegitimization (Feldman, 2004). The central question guiding our panel is how ghosts of the past and the residual manifest across different ethnographic contexts and how these remnants shape social practices and identities.

Our multi-disciplinary panel uses ethnographic and experimental methods to explore the residual across various sites of social action. The first presentation examines Assam in Northeast India, where interludes in ongoing violence are seen as periods of significant action and identity formation, reshaping past relationships. Another panelist recounts childhood memories in a postcolonial Indigenous context in Northeast India, finding that Christian values from British colonialism largely influenced his experiences at home, school, and with peers. Further insights are offered on "sentirpensar" (feeling-thinking), a framework rooted in Indigenous and Afro-Latine traditions, through interactions with Bolivian communities. This approach critiques Euro-American archival practices by viewing records as entities tied to ancestry and land, integrating embodied memory into recordkeeping. Lastly, we explore how the Shipibo-Konibo people in the Peruvian Amazon perceive old media influences within digital platforms, fostering collaborations and novel media hybridities.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Jennifer Sierra

Chair: Yvette Ramirez, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Presenter(s): SHIVANGI KAUSHIK, University of Oxford, Suanmuanlian Tonsing, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Yvette Ramirez, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Jennifer Sierra

Discussant: Allen Feldman

Presentation(s): From Warring Worlds: Understanding Discursive Interludes of Unstable Milieus

Subjective shifts in choices of selfhood by different individuals have been grappled with by scholars and activists alike as discursive frameworks within homeostatic interludes. These interludes seek to rewrite histories of uncertainty onto the futurity of different collectives. As such, historicizing irreverent narratives of embattled selves that transmutate into articulate and anarchic units is an epistemological endeavor often seeking to subvert larger panoptic structures. Thus, how do imbricated struggles situated at the overlapping levels of nation, ethnicity, and the community then offer ways of representing and foregrounding individual narratives of "subjugated and damaged interiority" (Feldman 2005: 220)? I seek to provide a reread of Manoj Goswami's short story Xomiron Baruah ahi ase, which recounts the experiences of Xomiron Baruah, who returns home having spent years fighting for a new homeland. Through his return, Goswami etches the strands of a fragile community as it braces itself for political change. Foregrounding ethnographic narratives of individuals recollecting these struggles in the present, I then highlight the materiality of different movements in the present in the context of the Assamese youth. I also suggest that agitations, protests, and movements conflict as material and symbolic assemblages that impact innate subjectivities of individuals, thereby interlinking their experiences to larger conversations of indigenous caste and ethnic entanglements.

Presenter(s): SHIVANGI KAUSHIK

Remembering through my Body Differently: Tattooing to Reconstruct Colonial Memories

Reflecting on his childhood memories, through Avery Gordon's (2008) lens of haunting, Tonsing realizes that most of his memories are shaped by colonial structures, specifically "Baptist Christian" principles. The set of beliefs explicitly rooted in the Baptist value system he was born into, such as salvation through faith, the promise of the afterlife, and believers' baptism, impacted how he sees his life on "earth" even as a child. His childhood recollections are more shaped by these religious principles than by social memories with friends and family. In this sense, the memory of his cultural dislocation operates like a ghost—what Gordon might describe as a seething presence that demands attention precisely because it was once dismissed or unseen. His memories, looking back, are overwhelmingly colonial, so inherently disconnected from the stories and knowledge that his Indigenous agency should have driven. As Gordon (2008, 63) suggests, haunting is a means of knowing what has happened or is happening in the present through disruptions, absences, and spectral presences.

In this haunting, he finds his need for a new kind of remembrance. In response to these colonial ghosts, he figured tattooing this "sacred" body, sacred in the Baptist Christian lens, could be an act of reclamation. He tattooed his body, which translates into a tool for reconstructing his memoryscape. In this corporeal space, colonial memories are contested and resistance is embodied.

Presenter(s): Suanmuanlian Tonsing

Sentirpensar: Memorizing through the Heart

Recently, as a discipline, archival studies has largely prioritized information in terms of efficiency and the ability to consume it at will, reflecting its colonial foundations. Aligning with a settler colonial perspective that asserts, I have the right to know, to access, and to have.

As such, how might discussions around records and memory work from the perspectives of Indigenous, Afro-Latine communities provide more localized and relevant methodologies within the field? Through the notion of sentirpensar (feel-thinking), this presentation examines how knowledge and, by extension, memory are embodied across Latin America, both corporeally and affectively, in relation to the world. Through interviews and discussions with highland Bolivian communities, including Aymara and Quechua-descendant members in New York City and the D.C Metro Area, I look at how said communities and worldviews engage with records and recordkeeping. I explore how records extend relationships among people, including spiritual beliefs, and the land. Where information is perceptive, slow, unfinished, and place-based. Feel-think is a political, affective, and intellectual call that engages with one's ancestral past (our ancestors alive and past) and present to imagine a dignified future. When we consider the greater collective histories and values embedded within records, we are reminded that memory constitutes a politics of hope that re-imagines worlds.

Presenter(s): Yvette Ramirez

Media Residuals: Selfies, Shamanic Practices, and Social Media Affordances among Shipibo-Konibos in the Peruvian Amazon

Media scholars see the "newness" of media as a relational construct intersecting existing media, historical contexts, local knowledge, and user interactions (Gershon, 2017; Gitelman, 2006). This view challenges technological determinism and techno-solutionism that ascribe autonomous power to Euro-American technologies, especially digital media. For Shipibo-Konibos, an Indigenous group in the Peruvian Amazon, digital technologies provide new opportunities, like fostering the largest Shipibo public, but also pose dangers, such as selfies potentially being misused by shamans to cause harm.

This presentation explores why Shipibo-Konibos avoid posting selfies on Facebook. Historically, shamans, or "médicos," are unpredictable figures in Shipibo society (Babrec de Mori, 2012). The apprehension about sharing selfies online originates from the fear that shamans could print these images and use them to harm individuals. This prompts questions: Why must these digital photos

be printed for shamans to use them? What unique significance do printed photos hold? The presentation delves into the semiotic ties between selfies and shamanic risks, examining how these fears foster media hybrids that merge "old" media, like printed photos, with digital photos on platforms like Facebook, resulting in media with agentic properties. By investigating this hybridity, I aim to understand how Shipibo-Konibos perceive media "newness" as inherently relational and imbued with presences of previous media

Presenter(s): Jennifer Sierra

Discussion

4314 Ethnographic Vignettes and the Writing Self

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Fiction author Siri Hustvedt (2012) writes about an inner self that emerges when we read, an internal narrator, a "new voice" with rhythms and pauses that exists both outside and within ourselves. Viet Thanh Nguyen (2025) has recently reflected on the otherness of writing. He urges us to consider both language and the self as others, positing that "having an acute sense of this otherness in relation to one's own being and to language is necessary to become a writer"-a point that resonates with long-standing post-structuralist debates on authorship and intertextuality. As ethnographers, the questions of selfhood, reading, writing, and language become even more complex. Our otherness is shaped by the relationships we create, nurture, and-why not admit it-fictionalize when our interlocutors transform into characters on the pages we write. This otherness is perhaps most acutely displayed in the vignette, which at once inhabits the scene of participant observation and translates our field notes into literary form, while serving as a key rhetorical device in ethnographic writing.

In this roundtable, we aim to create a space for encountering the writerly others within us through each other. Participants will bring short vignettes of 300-500 words as stand-alone pieces, allowing others to engage with the vignette without first providing a conceptual, theoretical, historical, or geographic frame. This exercise draws inspiration from understanding the vignette as a literary and artistic genre. The etymology of "vignette" traces back to its original French meaning: designs in the form of vein tendrils that once adorned the covers of books. As the meaning of vignette shifted from books to photographs, it came to represent a small portrait with blurred edges, leading to its contemporary interpretation as a "literary sketch." How can listening to each other read our ethnographic vignettes help us attend to the "blurred" edges that frame them? What modes of visual and other sensory representations does the vignette rely on? How can such representations evoke the beat of movement and life that the figure of vein tendrils suggests? What is the relationship between the vignette and the materiality of ethnographic texts? Our discussants are two writers whose creative practices have pushed the boundaries of genres and will drive us in an embodied reading of ethnographic vignettes.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Valentina Ramia, Wesleyan University, Pablo Seward Delaporte, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Yanina Gori, University of California, Los Angeles, Zaith Lopez, Stanford University, Abby Mack, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Stephanie Keeney Parks, University of California, Los Angeles, Valentina Ramia, Wesleyan University, Pablo Seward Delaporte, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Cheryl Mattingly, University of Southern California, Clara Han, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

3348 Dynamic Expressions of Lived Religion in Africa and the Diaspora

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the dynamic expressions of lived religion in Africa and the diaspora, focusing on how individuals and communities experience, practice, interpret, and re-interpret their faiths in diverse contexts. The presentations delve into issues surrounding spirituality, ritual, social change, and identity, and they explore the intersection of religion with politics, language, economics, and culture. Examining case studies from Tanzania, South Africa, and diasporic communities in the United States and Puerto Rico, the panel highlights the fluidity and adaptability of religious practices and beliefs across different African and African diasporic contexts. In these varied spaces, ghosts of history continue to haunt the present, while contemporary actors grapple with those ghosts in active and creative ways. The religions addressed in the panel range from Islam and African traditional religions to innovative interfaith practices linking Judaism and Christianity. Through this intentionally broad scope, the panel aims to offer new insights into the multifaceted nature of lived religion, employing innovative methodologies and engaging with underrepresented perspectives.

Section: Association for Africanist Anthropology

Organizer: KD Thompson, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Chair: KD Thompson, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Presenter(s): Alma Gottlieb, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Zolani Ngwane, Haverford College, Department of Anthropology, KD Thompson, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Samiri Hernandez-Hiraldo, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Discussant: Casey Golomski, University of New Hampshire

Presentation(s): Re-thinking Afro-Jewish Relations via the Passover Seder

Since 2006, a large and ever-changing group of diasporic Cape Verdeans (mostly, Catholics of color) and U.S.-born Jews (mostly, White Ashkenazim) has celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover together in Boston. In so doing, they annually reconfigure the classic part-family dinner/part-history lesson/part-prayer session that, for the better part of nearly 2,000 years, Jews

worldwide have known as the Seder. The traditional Seder embodies Victor Turner's definition of a "ceremony"—aiming to symbolically confirm what we already know. In this talk, I argue that a diasporic version of this holiday often transforms the experience into a "ritual" producing personal transformation in some participants. It does so on several registers—historical, emotional, sociological, and political—as an annually re-written Haggadah text challenges participants to rethink what they thought they knew about Cape Verdean history, Jewish history, and racial politics. At the Seder, some Cape Verdeans discover that an unanticipated haunting of Jewish history inserts itself in the present, redirecting historical memory.

Ethnographically, this talk offers a refreshing glimpse at a traditional Jewish holiday reinvented in unexpected ways, in unexpected places, and among unexpected participants. Theoretically, the talk challenges us to rethink the nature of religious experience via dynamic innovations linking past and present, and homeland and diaspora.

Presenter(s): Alma Gottlieb

“It is our religion”: Debates about the Circumcision rite as a religious practice in South Africa

Colonial and missionary onslaught on the Xhosa circumcision rite in 19th-century South Africa was often justified based on ethnographic texts that associated the practice with primitive religion. In recent times, and in the context of debates about HIV/AIDS prevention, the move by the government to regulate circumcision provoked a negative response from the Eastern Cape House of Traditional Leaders, which viewed such a move as an incursion into its legitimate domain – a contamination of tradition with modernity. Using the same 19th-century ethnographic texts as evidence, they argued that circumcision was a deeply sacred part of African traditional religion. This paper traces these revisionist arguments as part of an exploration of the rise of claims about African traditional religion in the context of post-apartheid nation-building discourses in South Africa.

Presenter(s): Zolani Ngwane

Navigating Religious Diversity: The Role of Nondenominational Islamic Radio in Tanga, Tanzania

This presentation explores the diverse Muslim denominations in East Africa, focusing on the role of Radio Nuur, a nondenominational Islamic radio station in Tanga, Tanzania. Historically, Tanzanian Muslim authors have depicted harmonious relationships among Muslim groups before colonialism and independence. However, post-independence conflicts, such as the government's ban on the multiracial East African Muslim Welfare Society and the creation of the Supreme Council of Muslims, have strained these relationships. My ethnographic research in Tanga reveals a complex landscape of Muslim denominations, with Radio Nuur serving as a focal point for discussions of what nondenominationalism might look like. The station's nondenominationalism allows it to reach a broad audience, reflecting a trend of religious fluidity and inclusivity. Yet Tanga is still haunted by not only past sectarianism but also ongoing anti-Shiism. My presentation highlights how ordinary

Muslims—both radio staff and listeners—navigate their religious identities and relationships in this dynamic social landscape.

Presenter(s): KD Thompson

Alzando la voz (Raising Our Voice): The Spirited Activism of Afro-Puerto Rican Women

This paper examines the religious and spiritual experiences of Black or Afro-Puerto Rican women across three distinct religious traditions in Puerto Rico. It highlights their roles within and beyond their religious communities, the character of their ritual practices, and their distinctive relationships with the supernatural as interpreted and adapted by women. Additionally, it explores how these experiences intersect with the broader sociopolitical landscape of contemporary Puerto Rico. A growing movement toward re-africanization signals a cultural and spiritual revival that challenges ongoing processes of nationalization, U.S. colonization, and the influence of U.S. cultural norms. This revival unfolds amid pressing societal challenges: land and housing displacement driven by foreign investment, environmental degradation accelerated by climate change, systemic mismanagement of education and healthcare funding, a significant exodus of young professionals, a troubling decline in the child population, rising rates of femicide, and the continued underrepresentation of dark-skinned Puerto Ricans in key professional and political roles. This paper explores how these structural and cultural dynamics influence and are influenced by the spiritual lives of Afro-Puerto Rican women within their communities. While limited in scope, it aims to lay a foundation for further inquiry into the critical intersections of gender, race, spirituality, and sociopolitical transformation.

Presenter(s): Samiri Hernandez-Hiraldo

Discussion

5398 Making worlds with collapse: ethnographic orientations to a condition of revenant endings

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The ends of the world hold the public imagination, and reverberate, inconclusive. Activists, scholars, and millenarians share a vision of futures haunted through certain concepts - collapse, disintegration, apocalypse, points of no return - mobilized to articulate divergent views of what futures (and pasts) hold. Each concept names a haunting by rupture, violence, or a "future [that] belongs to ghosts" (Jacques Derrida in MacMullen 1983, see also Audra Mitchell 2024).

Some endings, of course, have already happened. Indigenous communities on Turtle Island point out that their worlds have already ended, in some cases multiple times (Lear 2009; Bold et al 2019; Dillon 2012). With collapse, ecologists call attention to loss of niches, species or food chains (e.g. Hallmann et al 2017). European climate justice activists use collapse to frame the inevitable and irreversible nature of climate system transformation while also exploring possibilities of justice

beyond the tipping point (Müller 2024; Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017). Self-identified "preppers" across the Global North gear up for the collapse of financial or political systems, aligning spectrally, fully, or not at all with explicitly White supremacist orientations (e.g. Ford 2021; Boke 2015). Ecomiserabilists are accused of foregoing future possibilities of freedom or even survival (Thaler 2024), accused as "politically regressive" alongside far-right conservative preppers who stockpile supplies at their "bug-out sites" (see e.g. Ginn 2018). All this echoes China Mieville's resurrection of 19th century economic revolutionary thought (Mieville 2022; Marx and Engels 1848) even as digital media shape "collapse" as a defining figure of this moment.

The only ghosts, in this frame, are the losses of the (neo)liberal socioeconomic order.

How do we take up the haunting of collapse imaginaries, taking time as cyclical rather than linear? What if there is more than one end-of-the-world? If there is more than one world to end? How is life recomposed and repurposed in climates of cascading unpredictabilities, when the very idea of stable states has gone missing? Is collapse the opposite to hope, and if not, what kind of hopeful specters does it sustain?

This panel explores how actors across a range of liberal-conservative politics use the concept of collapse to sustain imaginaries (and practices) of hope, survival, and more (see e.g. Lempert 2018; Miyazaki 2003). We probe specters of futures sustained through systemic breakdown, exploring situated uses of the collapse imaginary – ranging from the demand for robust state responses, to rethinking care in collectives, to glorifications of rugged individualism (Thaler 2022; Boke 2017; de la Cadena 2010; Hebert 2016). We frame 'collapse' as a world-making tool rather than a world-ending specter. Panelists' contributions build towards an ethnographic understanding of how people stay oriented amid spectral futures imagined but as-yet unmade.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Organizer: Arne Harms, Charis Boke, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Arne Harms

Presenter(s): Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Hynek Becka, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Max Jack, Indiana University, Bloomington, Sébastien Roux, Lisa Gezon, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Department of Anthropology, Rebecca Dirksen

Discussant: Charis Boke, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Rot and Repair: Crafting Ecological Futures in a Broken World

Despite all their promise, there is something deeply ruinous about conventional ideas of progress. Loss and decay so often shadow the pursuit of growth and development, a difficult truth embodied most forcefully by the scale of the contemporary waste crisis. This talk sketches the outlines of a new book project that seeks to confront this paradox. We cannot build truly ecological futures without acknowledging pervasive realities of rot, and the possibilities for repair that still remain in the rubble of industrial modernity. In the natural world, decay is the underside of growth and the foundation of future life, as fallen leaves, fungi, and other quiet forces of decomposition can teach

us. Communities the world over are grappling with such lessons, devising ways to live with things as they come apart, taking circumstances of decay as occasions to craft more livable futures of social and environmental regeneration. This project tracks such openings between four places in the global North and South: Baltimore, Madurai, Accra, and Barcelona. I explore how artists and activists, naturalists, architects and many others have come to imagine rot and repair in ecological terms, improvising new ways of making and unmaking things, and organizing for justice in the experience of both loss and renewal.

Presenter(s): Anand Pandian

Entering the World in 5D: Czech Conspiratorial Milieu between Collapse and Transformation

The conspiratorial milieu in the Czech Republic is haunted by the imaginaries of collapse. People see its signs in environmental degradation, volatile financial markets, abandonment of "traditional values," and dissolution of political order. More than a multitude of crises, such signs are seen as an expression of a single process. This paper attends to epistemic labor people perform to make the Collapse visible and tangible, as well as to the political trajectories which are enabled by this particular vision. Different practices can become ways of preparing for the collapse, from permaculture gardening and cryptocurrency trading, to search for alternative relationships with animals, plants, and spiritual beings. However, tracing the collapse within the ethereal and spectral opens up particular political commitments while it closes the others. Those who went through "the awakening" see it as a space for hope, a chance for humanity to transcend and reach a higher level of consciousness. They mobilize around this idea while finding resonances with politics that promise to fight back against invisible enemies or uncover the hidden truth behind the political order. If the notion of collapse may allow people to conceptualize different forms of life, it matters on which lines is collapse constituted. What kind of politics are enabled by knowledge based on apophenia and affect, and who is allowed to participate in futures imagined within it?

Presenter(s): Hynek Becka

On Account of Doomsday: Auralities of Climate Activism, Street Blockades and State Violence in Berlin

As climate movements galvanize in response to the state and the EU's role in perpetuating an accelerating climate crisis, I focus on the fraught collaborations between German activist networks Extinction Rebellion and Letzte Generation (The Last Generation). These groups' performative and rhetorical uses of civil disobedience aim to convey an ecological crisis manifested by the hauntings of European (neo)colonialism. I draw from my fieldwork to explore an encroaching sense of global collapse among my activist interlocutors, tied to an unravelling faith in governmental institutions, liberal democracy, traditional politics, and global capitalism, as well as a shared dismay over ecological disrepair. Climate activists in Berlin blockade busy streets, enacting civil disobedience informed by connections between social and ecological collapse. They open public space to share political speeches, testimonials, and musical performances which blast over mobile sound systems. Creating an overlapping and at times chaotic acoustic milieu, these spaces temporarily

reorient toward practices of ethical listening (Hirschkind 2006) and police violence, as well as a mutual commitment to witnessing the utopian desires, anxieties, and frustrations of participants (Taylor 2022). Such interventions articulate a particular desire toward revolutionary transformation in moments of despair and despondence "when apparently nothing can be done" while "doing nothing is not an option" (ibid:2).

Presenter(s): Max Jack

Ghostly Lessons. Survivalist Politics and the Uses of History

Survivalist movements are experiencing unprecedented growth across Western countries. Despite this expansion, social sciences have largely overlooked these mobilizations, often dismissing them as rationally catastrophist. Yet survivalist groups continue to attract a growing number of adherents. Drawing on research conducted since 2021 among American preppers, this talk will examine how survivalists harness history to justify and promote ultra-conservative political projects. In survivalist circles, history serves a dual pedagogical purpose. First it offers a reservoir of past examples illustrating the fragility of established systems. Citing the moral decay of the Roman Empire, the recent economic crises in Greece and Argentina, or the decline of the Spanish colonial empires, preppers highlight historical precedents to underscore systemic vulnerability, exposing what they perceive as the corruption of modern societies. Beyond the cautionary, they also use history to form models for reclaiming an idealized past from which modernity has allegedly deviated. Many preppers narrate a bygone era characterized by a virile, heterosexual, white, and agrarian America, when free men "knew how to exercise" their fundamental rights, pointedly those of liberty and property. In this context, history becomes more than a narrative of decline and degeneration. It transforms into a political resource of curated "ghostly lessons" used to justify conservative agendas and reactionary projects.

Presenter(s): Sébastien Roux

Psychedelic imaginaries: Hope and refabrication of life amidst spectres of collapse

This paper presents an ethnographic analysis of psychedelic hopes as antidotes to collapse. I consider the making of futures amidst the spectre of impending and unfolding collapse relying on my ethnographic research with a psychedelic integration group and its community in the U.S. Deep South. Neurobiological research suggests that psychedelic experiences may relax prior beliefs (Carhart and Friston 2019), creating potential (but not inevitable) spaces for new orientations toward self, community, and the biophysical environment. I connect this potential with conversations about degrowth as a path to societal transformation. Degrowth, as a philosophy and social movement, decries adverse socioecological impacts of growth-oriented economies. Proponents seek to minimize harm in ways that include the reduction of reliance on non-renewable forms of energy, shifting mindsets away from productivism and consumerism, community commitments to living simply, cooperating, and seeking conviviality (e.g. Kallis et al. 2020). I examine what psychedelics offer to such moral and practical spaces of rethinking personal, social and environmental care. This ethnographic research presents a psychedelic integration community

that imagines this kind of transformative refabrication of life, despite the specter and materiality of collapse.

Presenter(s): Lisa Gezon

Refusing Collapse: Insisting on Life in Haiti amid Colonial Revenants

For centuries, Haiti has been cast as a land of collapse. From the "Pearl of the Antilles" to "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere" and a "shithole country" that is sending immigrants to the US so "deranged" that they "are eating people's cats and dogs," narratives of decline, failure, and inhumanity are perpetuated and promoted with limited resistance even among some scholars. The Haitian population has experienced compounding traumas, from life-destroying earthquakes and other humanitarian disasters, topolitical and economic violences, to ravaging environmental devastation and climate change, leaving many to despair that "There Is No More Haiti" (see Beckett 2019). Yet this nation, through the Haitian Revolution, insisted to the world that the institution of slavery could not and would not stand; that all human beings inherently deserve freedom and dignity, regardless of race. In rejecting the political campaigns of disparagement and disinformation that have persistently sought to destroy this legacy and the associated imagination of a better future for all, I curate ethnographic engagements from over two decades of research and a musical soundtrack to suggest a Haitian take on "Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet" (Tsing et al. 2017). In response to collapse and precarity, this presentation considers what it means to reach past decolonial ecologies (Ferdinand 2022) toward maroon ecologies (Hosbey and Roane 2021, Barson 2024) to insist on life.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Dirksen

Discussion

3909 Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller's Humanistic and Public Anthropology. Part II: Inspiration and Mentorship Across Sensory Fields

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Bringing together scholars from around the world, this session honors the scholarship of Paul Stoller and his influence on the anthropology of West Africa, humanism, wellbeing and the senses. This panel represents Part II of the session, and brings together a diverse group of anthropologists, artists and award-winning writers who have all been influenced by, or mentored, by Stoller. For four decades, Stoller conducted fieldwork among the Songhay of Niger and, later, among the West African diaspora in New York. Captivated early on by Songhay spirit possession troupes, Stoller was taken under the wing of a sorcerer and a possession priest, as well as the ethno-cinematographer Jean Rouch. Stoller's life and fieldwork shifted dramatically after a series of illnesses, first in Niger, where he was told bad magic was being cast on him, and again after a cancer diagnosis in the early 2000s. His resulting works are humanistic in nature, holistic in their treatment of sensory

engagement, and accessibly written. Stoller is particularly renowned for his unique writing style, having pioneered the "ethnographic novel"-readable, yet instructive academic work. He has been a regular contributor to the Huffington Post and Psychology Today, bringing anthropological insight to a non-academic audience through the publication of over 100 articles. For this, the American Anthropological Association awarded him the Robert B. Textor and Family Prize for Anticipatory Anthropology in 1994, honoring those whose significant contributions affect policy decisions; and the Anthropology in the Media Award in 2015. In addition to fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, he was awarded prestigious Anders Retzius Gold Medal in Anthropology-the discipline's "Nobel Prize" given by the King of Sweden every four years. He now travels around the world giving writing workshops and transmitting the knowledge of the Songhay ancestors to a new generation of students. Panelists' papers represent original research in their fields, discussing the ways in which Stoller's varied contributions to humanistic, sensory and public anthropology have impacted their own work. This extraordinary session includes scholarly papers, spoken word, and performance. A poignant discussion by Paul Stoller concludes the session.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Chair: Michael Di Giovine, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Presenter(s): Giovanna Parmigiani, Harvard University, Anna Badkhen, Helena Wulff, Stockholm University, Gina Athena Ulysse

Discussant: Paul Stoller

Presentation(s): Ordinary Magic: Sensing Knowledge and Writing Anthropology in the Legacy of Paul Stoller

This paper explores the enduring influence of Paul Stoller's work on magic, witchcraft, sensory ethnography, and ethnographic writing. Engaging with my own research on magic and time, I examine how Stoller's scholarship has shaped my methodological and theoretical approach. His commitment to sensory ethnography challenges conventional modes of knowledge production, emphasizing embodied experience, storytelling, and the power of lived engagement with the world. Stoller's writing, deeply personal yet politically incisive, demonstrates that anthropology is not merely an academic pursuit but a way of sensing and being in the world. His ethnographic narratives capture the complexities of magic and spiritual practice, insisting that understanding emerges not only from observation but through immersion, vulnerability, and affect. In this paper, I argue that Stoller's legacy is not just relevant but essential for the future of anthropology. His work compels us to rethink how we write, how we engage with our subjects, and how we make anthropology resonate beyond the academy.

Presenter(s): Giovanna Parmigiani

Our Years of Magical Thinking

At one point or another, we all knew something about how to heal ourselves using the plants and animals that surround us, at least somewhat. We treated pain with willow bark and terminated pregnancies with rue and quinine. We treated insomnia with lettuce and halitosis with parsley. A 10th-century cookbook from Baghdad devotes an entire chapter to the humoral properties of different vegetables, and many of us still know something about these treatments: as much as 80 percent of the world's population still use traditional plant- and animal-based medicines. Such bonds that once existed between all humans and the rest of the natural world were born of scarcity, which dictates need. As a child in Soviet Russia, I made plantain weed poultices for skinned knees, ate raspberry jam to bring down fever, dried the sweet-smelling linden blossoms to brew as an expectorant. Lately, more often we relegate this kind of intelligence to laboratories: who needs myrrh when there is aspirin? It seems portentous that we should lose the memories of how to maintain our bodies on the planet: it is as if we are unremembering how to stay alive, and our forgetting what sustains us allows us to neglect and abuse the resources we no longer know how to use, underpins our further undoing. Paul Stoller's ethnographic narrative offers tools to reconnect with knowledge we had abandoned, and demonstrates how it will sustain us moving forward.

Presenter(s): Anna Badkhen

Moving through the Senses: Well-Being In and Beyond Dance

Paul Stoller (1994: 634) paints the following picture of spirit possession among the Hauka in The Republic of Niger: "It is a white-hot day in June of 1987, and the mix of sounds and smells brings the spirits to Adamu Jenitongo's egg-shaped dunetop compound. Four mud-brick houses shimmer in the languorous heat. From under a thatched canopy at the compound entrance, the orchestra plays spirit music. The spirits like this place. Drawn by pungent smells, pulsing sounds, and dazzling dance, they visit it day and night." The sound of the dancing is described by Stoller in terms of "the patter of dancing feet on dune sand." But what does it feel like to dance? What is the role of the senses: vision and sound, touch, even smell, perhaps taste, for the dancers in this dance, in any dance? Key here is well-being, and the ability of dance and movement to evoke well-being. In this presentation, I am pleased to have the opportunity to explore well-being in and beyond dance in relation to the senses. For this, I will combine Stoller's work on the senses with my research on dance and ballet. The aim is to capture how well-being is created through dance, mainly from the dancer's point of view, but to some extent also from that of the audience. I am interested in how the dancer moves through the senses. Finally, dance is a social activity, but as Stoller (2011) notes, well-being also emerges "from the quality of our social relations – the texture of social life."

Presenter(s): Helena Wulff

A Rasanblaj of Spirits for Stoller

Rummaging through various points in Stoller's work, this offering of spoken word mixed with chants performance meditates and ruminates specifically on his conversations with the seen and the unseen.

Presenter(s): Gina Athena Ulysse

7916 Spectrality, Learning and Ethics: Philosophy, History and Teacher Identity in Conversation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Conversation/Debate

This presentation explores the multifaceted identities of Dual Language Immersion (DLI) educators in Georgia, USA, through the lens of spectrality and the metaphor of palimpsest (Derrida, 2001). Drawing on phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2019), ethnographic field notes, and transcript poems (Glesne, 1997), the research analyzes how educators' languaging (Otheguy, Garcia and Reid, 2015) reflects the complex layering of their experiences. Within the framework of hauntology (Derrida, 2011), ethnographic poetry (Richardson, 1989, Faulkner, 2020) surfaces the interplay between memory, teacher preparation programs, cultural understandings of education and personal bilingual development to provide insight into the experience of DLI teachers in Georgia, USA.

Dr. Dubberly's educational research is enriched by conversation with two other Georgia educators who provide insight into the historical and philosophical background of the study by engaging with other ghostly presences. Dr. Scott considers the ontological status of ethical obligation, and their speculative and spectral nature, extending this exploration to ecological responsibilities and the connection to language and place for teachers with transplanted identities. Dr. Hayes brings a historical and cultural context of the "Christ-haunted" South, using Flannery O'Connor's observations as a jumping-off point to reflect on the social changes of the past 65 years and their implications for educator identity formation. This interdisciplinary conversation explores an understanding of the intricate identities of bilingual educators in the contemporary South.

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Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Elizabeth Dubberly, University of Georgia

Presenter(s): Robert Scott, University of North Georgia, Elizabeth Dubberly, University of Georgia

Discussant: John Hayes

4298 The Various Anthropologies of Robert Brightman: A Roundtable

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Despite--or perhaps, because of--its concern with different ways of understanding and categorizing the world of experience, anthropology has occasionally produced scholars who themselves defy classification. Robert A. Brightman (1950-2024) was one such figure. His early fieldwork with Algonkian-speaking Cree hunter-gatherers in subarctic Canada yielded lasting insights into the cognitive and affective orientations that shaped these people's engagement with trans-species and infra-human "others." Later work revealed his remarkable range and conceptual agility, from Algonkian linguistics, windigo spirits, and Maidu tricksters; to an irreverent diagnosis of anthropological anxieties around the concept of 'culture' in the mid-1990s; to a later excavation of Joseph Mitchell's 1937 pen-portraits of Boas and other early 20th century anthropologists in the pages of the *New York World-Telegram*. Over a long career at Reed College (Portland, OR), he initiated more than one "generation" of students into the field in his own, sui generis style. This roundtable assembles colleagues, friends, and former students commenting and building on Brightman's anthropological contributions to the study of language, myth, ontology, the supernatural, and the various ways of being and doing human.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Paul Silverstein, Reed College, Department of Anthropology, Robert Moore, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education

Presenter(s): David Dinwoodie, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Suzanne Oakdale, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Pauline Strong, University of Texas at Austin, Clint Westman, University of Saskatchewan, Maria Lepowsky, University of Wisconsin, Madison

1880 Possessed by the Past: Histories of Anthropology and Contemporary Practice Part 2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

At the 1962 Social Science Research Council's Conference on the History of Anthropology, Dell Hymes observed that anthropologists felt discomfort when they encountered historians' perspectives on their discipline. This unease, he noted, stemmed from anthropologists' attachment to their own narratives of "origin, nature, and destiny"-narratives that would come to haunt the discipline in unexpected ways. When historians of anthropology presented their findings as "historical topics," anthropologists tend to translate them into "substantive contemporary issues." This tension between historical research and disciplinary self-understanding, which Hymes hoped could be resolved through "objective control over our use of our history," has only intensified in recent decades.

Hymes suggested that historians' perspectives on anthropology were particularly jarring to anthropologists because their own historical narratives were largely self-affirming. The tensions that resulted spurred George Stocking toward his influential insistence on rigorous historicism in the history of anthropology. Yet Stocking came to recognize, partly through Hymes' influence, that while anthropologists inevitably approach their past through present concerns, an "enlightened presentism" was possible-one that could both critique the past and recover its unrealized possibilities. This dual approach to disciplinary history-as both critique and resource-remains vital as anthropology grapples with its ghosts. Similar methodological tensions have emerged across various national traditions, as seen in European ethnology's struggle to establish a new identity distinct from Nazi science, or in the complex negotiations between colonial-era anthropological knowledge and postcolonial reckonings in many regions.

The 1962 conference emerged when, as Hymes noted, American anthropology was "flushed with success"-expanding enrollments, multiplying jobs, and increasing funding marked an era of disciplinary confidence in the United States. Today's landscape, as Ira Bashkow observes, is radically different: "we no longer live in a world where the value and institutional viability of anthropology itself can be taken for granted." The discipline finds itself possessed by both doubt and possibility-some call for radical breaks with the past, while others seek to reassess it whether by reading the classics with new lenses or by recovering alternative traditions and forgotten insights from the archives.

By taking the Hymes-Stocking controversy as a starting point for exploring analogous or contrasting debates in multiple settings, this panel invites papers that explore how historical research can productively engage anthropology's diverse past in ways that inform its present and future.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Grant Arndt, Iowa State University, Department of Anthropology, Nicholas Barron, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Nicholas Barron, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Robert Hancock, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology, Matthew Watson, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, John Tresch, University of London, Hande Birkalan-Gedik, Frederico Rosa

Presentation(s): Occulted Projects and Ancestral Afterlives: The Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians and the Possibility of Other Indigenous Anthropologies

Originally envisioned as a Bicentennial project when it was launched in 1971, the final volume of the Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians was finally published in 2022. Intended to be comprised of twenty volumes, in the end only seventeen volumes were published. Of the volumes that were actually produced, at least one — Volume 2, "Indians in Contemporary Society" — went through multiple distinct versions under different editors, leaving ghostly traces both in the final version and in the discipline of anthropology more widely. First edited by D'Arcy McNickle (Metis/Enrolled Salish Kootenai) and then, after his death, by Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), the planning and production of the two superseded versions represented broader and more sustained engagement with Indigenous scholars than any of completed volumes including those overseen by the only other Indigenous editor (Alfonso Ortiz [Tewa], volumes 9 and 10). Based on extensive archival research, my examination of the processes by which these two unfinished volumes were developed and produced, including an analysis of the intellectual networks and other connections between the Indigenous contributors, reveals an often-occulted aspect of the roles, both intellectual and institutional, played by Indigenous researchers in history of postwar American anthropology.

Presenter(s): Robert Hancock

Typing Culture: Personal Computers and Postmodern Critiques, 1974-1986

Recent histories of U.S. anthropology, psychology, and biology underscore how protean technologies contoured the post-War field sciences' epistemic and political shapes. Well-funded anthropological fieldwork collaborations, such as the Harvard Chiapas Project (1957-80), offered students images of ethnographers that differed from scholarly personae of lone fieldworker-theorists such as Bronislaw Malinowski. Collaborative fieldwork cultivated an image of "culture" modelled on information storage tools. As humanistic knowledge became social scientific data, "culture" became an archive, database, or drive storing social memory. I argue that this modernist construction's dissolution was prompted by: (1) declines in social science funding; and (2) the rise of personal computing. Extensive research with archival materials of anthropologists including Victoria Bricker, Richard Bauman, and Louise Lamphere suggests that appetites for postmodern critique reflected a conjunction of anxieties. While fieldwork proposals yielded reduced funding, the home computer offered distinctive compositional affordances: cut/copy/paste, the backspace/delete key, and the mouse. Ethnographic representations became endlessly editable and debatable, at the cost of a modernist sense of fieldwork results' archivable solidity. This disciplinary transition, I suggest, offers material lessons for critical assessments of anthropology's funding and technological conditions today.

Presenter(s): Matthew Watson

The Specter of Archetypal Anthropology: Radin, Eliade, and Jung at Eranos

The Eranos meetings held in Ascona, Switzerland were a site for interdisciplinary and at times transcultural encounter. Originally framed by their host, the artist and theosophist Olga Froebe-Kapteyn, as a meeting between Eastern and Western mystical traditions with a heavy emphasis on

Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, and alchemical practices, they also presented Native American traditions-- including Aztec materials and Winnebago narratives introduced by wayward Boasian Paul Radin. Other notable scholars at Eranos included Mircea Eliade, D.T. Suzuki, Gershom Scholem, and Joseph Campbell, while the overall tenor was set by psychologist Carl Jung, who attended most of the meetings from 1933 into the 1950s. While few of the participants explicitly or faithfully adopted a Jungian approach, the idea of the archetypes of the collective unconscious was frequently invoked as a lingua franca or "boundary object" in these conversations. I present Eranos as a laboratory for the repackaging of worldwide "spiritual" traditions for Western consumption: it encouraged both ontological pluralism and the perennialism which haunts the comparative study of religions. Jung's debts to anthropologists (including Bastian, Frazer, and Levy-Bruhl) are significant, while postwar anthropology's uptake of Jungian theory deserves closer attention, as references to archetypes continually exert an ambiguous influence on understandings of non-Western, "pre-modern" beliefs and practices.

Presenter(s): John Tresch

Haunting Phantoms of Nationalism: The Afterlives of Two Folklore Congresses and the Transnationalization of Folklore Knowledge in Turkey

The closing of the Turkish Folk Literature and Folklore Department at Ankara University in 1948 due to rising far-right attacks on its founding chair marks a turning point for academic folklore in Turkey. Despite—or perhaps because of—this closure, folklore knowledge emerged through state institutions, journals, and international congresses. Yet, "phantoms" of nationalism, to borrow from Roger Abrahams, kept haunting the disciplinary praxis, shaping the ways folklore was institutionalized, studied, and mobilized. I examine the 1975 and 1981 International Turkish Folklore Congresses as venues of both transnationalization and nationalist consolidation in folklore knowledge. Organized by the state-funded National Folklore Institute, these congresses embedded Turkish folklore within transnational scholarly networks while primarily seeking to re-construct a national canon. Linking Turkish folklore to Turkic communities in Central Asia and the Balkans, certain scholars aimed to establish historical continuities and trace the "origins" of folklore genres back to Anatolia. I scrutinize the afterlives of congresses within broader debates on the uses of history in disciplinary self-understanding. Drawing on "epistemic communities," I examine how these congresses structured disciplinary knowledge, navigated the interplay between nationalism and transnationalism, and contributed to the ongoing negotiation of folklore's place and its futurities in Turkey.

Presenter(s): Hande Birkalan-Gedik

The "Minor" Histories of Anthropology: Metamorphoses in the Textbook Tradition

In many academic locations where anthropology is based, the teaching of its history occupies a key place in the training of future anthropologists. As much as the discipline itself, however, courses on its history have undergone profound changes, with a growing tendency to portray the past and its actors from a distanced, essentially critical perspective. In contrast with narratives that highlighted

the intellectual contributions of major figures, students may be encouraged to focus on negative aspects in relation to the colonial context of anthropology. Considering the pivotal place of textbooks in the syllabi and teaching of disciplinary history, this paper proposes a retrospective, comparative and critical review of these abundant secondary sources – sometimes disregarded as presentist or minor literature by historians of anthropology in their specialized outputs. These are, however, fundamental texts in the construction of the discipline's futures, given their repercussions not only on the way contemporary practitioners relate to their ancestors, but also to themselves. Using a corpus selected from a vast publishing universe that, while dominated by the English language, includes creations in other languages, the paper seeks to identify continuities and ruptures in a multiform tradition that dates back to at least *Die Entwicklung der Modernen Ethnologie* (1889) by Thomas Achelis.

Presenter(s): Frederico Rosa

8465 Indexical (mis)recognition: Part II

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel applies the theory of indexical (mis)recognition (Barrett and Hall 2024) within linguistic anthropology. The framework of indexical misrecognition focuses on cases in which speakers/listeners do not share knowledge of the indexical meanings associated with a given linguistic form. The framework of indexical misrecognition presumes that indexical meanings are dependent on specific ethnographic contexts that relate indexical signs to particular cultural contexts of language usage. The model also addresses cases in which individuals claim to use indexical meanings in opposition to normative interpretation of indexical signs. Building on this model, the papers in this panel use wide ranging sets of language data to demonstrate the role of normativity (and antinormativity) in the interpretation of language with a given interaction.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Rusty Barrett, University of Kentucky

Chair: Rusty Barrett, University of Kentucky

Presenter(s): Olivia Marquardt, Jules Blank, Aidah Aljuran, University of Pittsburgh, Jarred Brewster, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Maya Stephens

Discussant: Kira Hall, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Indexical Misrecognition and Lesbian Identity

The consumption and creation of media depicting two men interacting romantically and sexually has long been a woman-driven practice (Russ, 1985), assumed to be a reflection of authors' real-life desires. The present study argues that engagement with such media can index an identity that does not involve a desire for men: lesbianism. In their 2024 article, Barrett and Hall discuss how indexical misrecognition serves as an essential strategy for identity construction within the queer community. They state that queer "language users defy norms not only by using norms in new ways

but also by creating new in-group norms constituted by distinct indexical inventories" (p. 131). I explore how this concept plays out for five self-identified lesbians who practice a violation of normative sexual ideologies: their repetitive engagement with men-loving-men (MLM) media. MLM media engagement is in the first and second stages of the indexical cycle (Bell, 2014) for a lesbian identity. In the first stage, members of a community look to differentiate themselves through linguistic means, and in the second stage, these practices are beginning to be evaluated by in- and out-group members. Media consumption both reflects aspects of identity while also assisting in the process of identity formation (Koller, 2008; Zemmels, 2012; Wu, 2006), and my participants show how MLM media engagement serves as an indexical misrecognition, where consumption of male-centered erotica can index a lesbian identity.

Presenter(s): Olivia Marquardt

""What do you think caused your heterosexuality?": Indexical misrecognition in queer zines

Zines, short for 'fanzines' or 'magazines,' refer to physical, printed, self-published creations that can consist of a single sheet of paper or many, fastened together. They tend to be independently made for the love of creating, and rarely make a profit (Wreck 2005). Most importantly, though, zines are artifacts rich with meaning— and, thus, can be read as tangible manifestations of the ideologies and identities of the creator(s). Existent work within the fields of sociology, gender studies, and sociolinguistics on zines center the manipulation of form and object to express meaning (Piepmeier 2008; Poletti 2008). This particular paper extends these observations, focusing on the way zines are used as tools of resistance, empowerment, and storytelling. It discusses how the practice, itself, is a manifestation of rebellion, often engaged in by individuals who hold marginalized identities. (Bolt 1999). This project surveys the ways in which text and images function as tools of queer expression within zines. This is accomplished by an application of sociolinguistic indexical misrecognition frameworks (Barrett & Hall 2024; Silverstein 2023) to closely examine the zine "Galatea's Naked." It explores both specific messaging within the zine, as well as the practice of zine-making itself. Overall, this project highlights the way zines, which are historically non-traditional and anti-capitalist, are particularly effective avenues for self-exploration of queerness.

Presenter(s): Jules Blank

Indexical Misrecognition of Taqiyya in Saudi Salafi Discourse and Everyday Interaction

In this talk, I draw on Barrett and Hall's (2024) framework of indexical misrecognition to discuss how the practice of taqiyya—meaning 'concealment' and 'dissimulation' in the Isma'ili Shi'a tradition—is misrecognized within dominant Saudi discourses. Historically, taqiyya has been rooted in pragmatic responses to persecution, functioning for many Isma'ili individuals as a contextually bound tactic to navigate surveillance, interrogation, and social exclusion. In the Saudi context, however, the Salafi 'ulama's hegemonic discourse reconstructs and negatively revalues the practice through the lens of categorical ethics (e.g., the idea that one should always tell the truth). Within this framing, the dangers that necessitate taqiyya are denied, and the order of cause and effect is reversed: rather than being understood as a response to persecution, the practice is

reframed as evidence of Isma‘ili 'duplicity' and 'hidden enmity,' and thereby justifying discrimination. The rhematization of taqiyya—shifting it from an indexical meaning (a tactic responding to a specific social context) to an iconic meaning (a reflection of moral essence)—renders Isma‘ili speech and action inherently untrustworthy, resulting in harassment and marginalization.

Presenter(s): Aidah Aljuran

Indexial misrecognition and Omani livestock

Since the 1970s, Oman's state-building project has consisted of efforts to attenuate tribal power by disrupting the pastoralist social order and creating in its stead a globalized economy based on proletarianized labor in oil, international shipping, and tourism. In the country's southernmost city of Salalah, pre-state economic reasoning haunts the logics of evaluation and exchange in spite of state efforts. Livestock (cows, goats, camels) and their derived products (butter, milk, and meat), formerly the nuclei of social and economic life in and around Salalah, are still taken to be emblematic of tribal affiliations in the region on the basis of historical patterns of transhumance, and their values continue to be conditioned by their (real or perceived) social provenance. This research examines how value and exchangeability of livestock, meat, and dairy are reckoned through shared repositories of social knowledge. Using the concept of indexical misrecognition from Barrett and Hall (2024), I ask how these indexical associations are communicated, obscured, and reinterpreted within the market economy of the newly globalized city.

Presenter(s): Jarred Brewster

Black Hypotheticals in VTubing Debates about Race and Appropriation

This paper applies the concept of misrecognition (Barrett and Hall, 2024) to controversy regarding Western Virtual YouTubers' (Weeb VTubers) appropriation of Japanese cultural signs. While commonplace in the VTubing world, the use of Japanese linguistic and visual styles has been perceived as a racial mockery of the genre's Japanese origins, inciting members of the VTuber fandom to fight back on fan forums and social media. In an analysis of discourse centered around race as it is discussed in VTubing fandom, this paper illuminates key points found in critical arguments made by both fans and non-fans about race when applied to virtual avatars, building on the theorization of animation vs. performance found in linguistic anthropology (Manning and Gershon, 2013). In particular, the paper interrogates the use of what I call hypothetical Blackness in arguments both critiquing and defending the genre, whereby Black people are co-opted into discourse via a posited hypothetical to provide a guiding perspective on race politics. Fans and non-fans have different indexical fields when it comes to race and avatar, but both use hypothetical Blackness to support their indexical perspective. Ultimately, the paper illustrates how race-based hypotheticals are used to situate the genre as both "racist" and "raceless," illustrating the importance of misrecognition as a semiotic concept.

Presenter(s): Maya Stephens

2588 The Earth in Phases: Activation, Environment, and Sensation Beyond the Subject

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As planetary forces, emerging environmental phenomena, and the natures of the late Holocene press their ways into anthropological and sociocultural inquiry, they are raising important questions for how an anthropology of environment configures its objects. The human at the center of the discipline re-emerges: not a self-evident locus for agency, sensation, and meaning making alone, but rather as part of a raucous and shapeshifting complex of material, semiotic, geophysical, and technological entities. Likewise, the environment appears as more than a tableau of objects whose import is how they are interpreted, but as a universe of vivid and active materialities whose impacts can be so large or so small that they elude the ability of any human body to sense them. How do scholars with deep commitments to ethnography, specificity, and the event make sense of these configurations? And what kinds of ethnographic and analytic experiments are necessary for grappling with formations of humanity, technology, and environment when planets are reckoned with via their shifting material conditions for life and inquiry?

The Earth in Phases builds conversations on environment, materiality, ontoepistemology, and sensation to offer ethnographically-grounded scholarship for unfolding and reconfiguring new forms of knowledge that emerge from the vivid and morbid transformations of the Earth and other planets. It centers on a notion of "activation," by which we refer to concrete arrangements of practices, technologies, environmental entities, and forces that come into unexpected constellations that reveal emerging, or previously unattended to, properties.

We build from the following three principles:

- 1 An anthropology of environment re-situates human life within an earth that is in constant flux.
2. Materiality is not a set of properties or objects in the world, but the ongoing effect and entailment of specific relations. This makes materiality an ethnographic question and a matter that ethnography, with its keen curiosity, can limn in ways that other methods and approaches may not.
- 3 Human bodies are highly-developed loci of sensory capacities, and yet contemporary environmental situations conjure and reflect an array of sensory attunements that are beyond the ability of any human body without technologies and techniques that enhance it.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Jerry Zee, Princeton University, Andrea Ballesterio, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Ferry, Brandeis University, Sophia Roosth , Nicholas Shapiro, University of

California, Los Angeles, Andrew Moon, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, Emma Crane, Stanford University, Gaston Gordillo, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lachlan Summers, Max Planck Institute

2625 Rethinking Rural China: Habitation, Negotiation, and Anticipation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel discusses new theories, methods, and approaches for understanding rural China. We ask: how have urban-rural disparities evolved following four decades of economic reform? And how have recent state-led rural development, welfare, and technology projects been implemented and received on the ground? This panel brings together four recent ethnographic studies that examine knowledge production, the quest for good lives, the politics of belonging, and practices of hope in rural China. Long Sheng's analysis of authority negotiation in national land surveys reveals how rural residents' knowledge plays a significant role but is overlooked in state technological projects. Min Lee's work examines how villagers in an ethnic Yi village in southwest China envision and enact their own vision of rural revitalization, one that contrasts with the state's model, through their interaction with urban-to-rural migrants. Also addressing urban-to-rural migration, Xisai Song's research focuses on returning rural migrant workers suffering from kidney failure, who struggle with social alienation, economic hardships, and tenuous kinship relations in their officially designated hometown. Ray Qu's research demonstrates how people in rural northern China adopt incense seeing as a practice of hope to grasp determinacy and resist marginalization in daily life. Interrogating how ruralities are perceived, lived, governed, negotiated, and imagined, this panel invites new reflections on conceptualizing urban-rural divides in China and beyond.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Xisai Song, University of Texas at Austin

Chair: Ting Hui Lau, National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology

Presenter(s): Sheng Long, Yale University, Min Lee, University of California, Berkeley, Xisai Song, University of Texas at Austin, Ray QU, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Erik Mueggler, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, Jenny Chio, University of Southern California

Presentation(s): Studying Neither Up nor Down: Reversed Hierarchies in Technological Projects in Rural China

In this essay, I reflect on the ambiguous relationships that anthropologists navigate during fieldwork within technological projects. During the fieldwork in rural Meixian, Southeast China, I shadowed technicians, rural residents, and government officials collaborating on national land surveys intended to digitize land systems. This essay focuses on the conflicting expectations placed on me as an ethnographer, from quiet observer to mediator to scholarly expert. My position as a bridge

between these groups—despite being entangled in ethical dilemmas and lacking authoritative modes of accounting—revealed that rural residents, positioned as mere "subjects" in these technological projects, were actually the primary contributors of knowledge. Engaging with scholarship on power relations in anthropology (Hannerz 2006; Ho 2009; Nader 2018 [1969]), I investigate the accountability implied by these shifts and the anthropologist's role in providing insights. Focusing on ethnographic moments in which authority has been negotiated during the national land survey, this essay looks for ways to recognize overlooked rural residents' contribution in state technological projects. Against the often presumed "up" or "down" of hierarchies between anthropologists and our interlocutors, I examine circumstances where these hierarchies reverse or become more complex.

Presenter(s): Sheng Long

"The Village Chose Us": Symbiosis of the New and Old in a Southwest Chinese Village

This paper explores the symbiotic relationship between native villagers and urban-to-rural migrants in an ethnic Yi village in southwest China. Based on thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2021 and 2022 in a suburban village in Kunming, Yunnan Province, I examine how native ethnic Yi villagers, or "old villagers," act as active gatekeepers who select incoming "new villagers" rather than passively accepting settlers. The old villagers deliberately embrace young, highly educated urban-to-rural migrants to utilize the urban resources—economic, social, and cultural capital—that these newcomers bring, envisioning these as tools for their own ethnic revitalization. This paper specifically focuses on how interactions with urban migrants reshape the Yi villagers' aesthetics regarding traditional housing and their perspectives on education, prompting a reevaluation of their home village's value. Through this ethnographic case study—distinct from cases of model villages for rural revitalization, where native villagers are often displaced by growth-oriented business forces—this paper seeks new possibilities that trouble conventional urban-rural dynamics and power relationships in contemporary China.

Presenter(s): Min Lee

Reinhabiting "Home": Kidney Failure and Life after Migration in Rural China

This talk examines the lives of chronically ill rural migrant workers when they are no longer wanted by the labor market and return to their rural hometowns. Based on year-long ethnographic fieldwork in the hemodialysis ward of a county public hospital in southwest China, my study focuses on a group of young and middle-aged rural migrant workers suffering from kidney failure. In China, public health insurance has significantly increased reimbursement rates for dialysis over the past decade, and the national poverty alleviation program offers further assistance with medical expenses. These social entitlements are tied to household registration (hukou), compelling migrant workers to return to their hometown to receive the full benefits. Although they are able to extend their biological lives on dialysis, my research finds that former migrant workers' social, intimate, and economic lives fall apart after returning home, as they struggle with loss of work abilities, social isolation, tenuous kinship relations, and hopelessness. Through examining how returning rural

migrant workers negotiate the idea of "home," this work challenges the conceptual binaries between care and abandonment, inclusion and exclusion, and life and death.

Presenter(s): Xisai Song

A Ladder of Hope: the Religious Capacity to Aspire and the Infrapolitics of Hope under Medical Authoritarianism in rural North China

Indeterminacy, open-endedness, and possibility have characterized the predominant understanding of hope in anthropology. This rendering of hope is unsettled by the practices of hope in North China where millions of people muddling through lives in an authoritarian regime seek help from incense seers who foretell their futures. Through an ethnography of the individual/family-based hopes for "living the daily life" under unforgiving health regulations, I argue that incense seeing offers an affordable and easily accessible "ladder of hope"—a cultural toolkit from which people draw to maintain hope and achieve goals seemingly beyond their reach. Rather than wishful thinking, this "ladder of hope" affords a sense of determinacy that influences people's hopeful dispositions and inspires them to act, resist, and make changes in their lives under China's zero-COVID and birth planning policies. Their experiences invite a retheorization of hope as a dynamic, relational practice that features an active interplay of determinacy and indeterminacy, especially for marginalized social groups in helpless situations. These mundane acts constitute a fundamental part of the politics of hope and breed potentiality for more conscious efforts of building collective anti-authoritarian hopes for social and political change.

Presenter(s): Ray QU

Discussion

1865 Challenging Ghosts: New Books by/with Disabled Bodyminds

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The anthropologist Cassandra Hartblay developed the concept of "disability expertise" to describe the talents of disabled people and their allies—how they innovate, illuminate, and subvert in the struggle to survive, thrive, and live with joy in the face of structural and interpersonal ableism. In this panel, we extend this concept to the discipline of anthropology itself, where ableist ghosts continue to haunt a recognition of both the violent histories as well as creative methods and theories that evolve through and around disability expertise. We build on the foundational insights of Avery Gordon whose powerful use of the metaphor of "ghostly matters" amplified awareness of how the suppression and afterlife of violent racism continues to haunt the social sciences (1997).

Our participants have all published new books in 2024-25 by/with disabled bodyminds – books that bring lessons from these experiences in world-building to challenge the ghosts of ableism that have shaped our field: removal of disabled family members to institutions (Burch 2021, Rembis 2024); the "ugly laws" barring physically disabled people from urban space (Schweik 2009); historic

exclusion from education and the rise of segregated "special education" (Friedner 2015); medical experimentation on disabled bodyminds (Nakamura 2013), and more. The recent books in our panel intervene in some of the most exciting and urgent conversations in our field: on the nature of communications, on the politics and ethics of design, on relationality and its power and limits. Instead of "author meets critics," our format is "authors meet authors," reflecting the interdependent and collaborative nature of our work and the broader contributions that these books, read together, can make to diminishing the ghostly presence of ableism in our field.

Citations:

Burch, Susan. 2021. *Committed: Remembering Native Kinship in and Beyond Institutions*. (North Carolina)

Friedner, Michele. 2015. *Valuing Deaf Worlds in Urban India*. (Rutgers)

Gordon, Avery. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minnesota)

Nakamura, Karen. 2013. *A Disability of the Soul* (Cornell)

Rembis, Michael. 2024. *Writing Mad Lives in the Age of the Asylum*. (Oxford)

Schweik, Susan. 2009. *The Ugly Laws*. (NYU)

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Rayna Rapp, New York University, Faye Ginsburg, New York University

Presenter(s): Cassandra Hartblay, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Zhiying Ma, University of Chicago, Danilyn Rutherford, Wenner-Gren Foundation, Joshua Reno, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Pamela Block, Western University, E. Mara Green

Discussant: Sumi Colligan, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work, Anna Jaysane-Darr, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work

3982 Ghosts: Hauntings, Trauma, and the Anthropological Encounter

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Like a ghost lingering in its former dwelling, our fieldwork experiences leave indelible marks, shaping us long after we have left the field. This roundtable, organized by the Anthropology & Mental Health Interest group (AMHIG), explores how trauma-both personal and collective-continues to haunt researchers and study populations, influencing our academic journeys, methodologies, and narratives. We center scholars using creative, embodied, and decolonial methods to engage haunting as both metaphor and lived experience. Presentations explore mixed-

media art, feminist participatory research, community theater, collaborative writing, and embodied movement practices to grapple with memory, trauma, colonial violence, and relational care.

Together, we ask: How do cultures shape the experience and expression of trauma? How do traumatic events, memories, and emotions manifest in ethnographic work? How are they embodied, remembered, and transmitted across generations and disciplines? How do anthropologists navigate the complexities of researching trauma and its afterlives? What are the methodological and ethical challenges of this work? And how might haunting-as metaphor and method-open possibilities for survival, healing, and community care?

This roundtable brings together anthropologists, artists, and ethnographers committed to exploring trauma's afterlives through creative practice - making visible the ghosts that linger within our work, our bodies, and our disciplines.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Melinda Gonzalez, Georgetown University, David Kofi Mensah, University of North Carolina - Charlotte | AnthroClub

Presenter(s): Sarah Franzen, Louisiana State University, Mara Dicenta, William & Mary, Department of Anthropology, Malvy Chintakindi, Brittany Franck

Discussant: Beatriz Reyes-Foster, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Rebecca Galembo, University of Denver

1134 State Ghosts/Ghostly States

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

State institutions come with their cast of ghosts and states may take on a ghostly quality. Anthropologists increasingly study state institutions as animated by ideals, morals and affects, moving beyond Weberian imaginations of cold, rational bureaucracies (Bear and Mathur 2015; Stoler 2009). But they have less to say about the deeply ambivalent, haunted nature of such institutions: about their ghosts. This panel explores the eerie, spectral life that hovers beneath mundane state practices and performances. It argues that state institutions are animated by something akin to a psychic life, fueled by utopian visions and desires to do good, as well as repressed secrets, unacknowledged pasts and violent undercurrents. Building on the work of Lisa Stevenson (2012), Yael Navaro (2012) and Tess Lea (2022) and others, this panel explores such ghostly aspects and asks what they teach us about the state.

State institutions find their justification in enacting the people's will and working for the public good. They elaborate utopian visions and high-minded plans, promising better futures. But they also have an eerie, haunted and menacing quality, with public infrastructures and institutions from the police to welfare services and state works shadowed by specters of violence, past and future. The various contributions to this panel show that such institutions are inhabited by ghosts that stubbornly refuse to disappear, but instead live on in state spaces, procedures and visual-material

traces, in stories told about states past and dreams of better futures that are forever lost. Such ghosts feed on the more violent dimensions of statecraft that hover behind ostensibly benign state encounters.

Drawing on cases from Peru to Pakistan, the Netherlands and Sri Lanka, this panel explores how state ghosts come into being, where they reside and how they trouble utopian visions and desires and fantasies of the good state. Paying attention to these ghosts takes us into the unruly, compromised heart of the state, into institutions animated by ambivalent affective investments, jumbled temporal registers and haunting reminders of things not quite past, denied but present, and never quite left behind.

Organizer: Anouk de Koning, University of Amsterdam, David Nugent, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kristine Krause

Presenter(s): David Nugent, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Adeem Suhail, Franklin & Marshall College, Department of Anthropology, Anouk de Koning, University of Amsterdam

Presentation(s): Ghosts in the Machine: Enchanted Underground and Haunted State in 20th Century Peru

In the middle decades of the 20th century political authorities in the Chachapoyas region of northern Peru faced a crisis of rule. Government officials came to view the state apparatus as haunted by a powerful malevolent presence called APRA—a radical political party that had been forced underground by brutal repression. Officials came to believe that their ability to carry out even the most basic of government functions was being thwarted by APRA, which had somehow succeeded in lodging itself deep within the government, but in ways that could not be detected. In these circumstances, officials came to see themselves as part of a failed state. They attributed to their underground adversary a subterranean party apparatus of great power and potency, with all the abilities that their own regime lacked. Indeed, the political authorities came to view their administration as a pale imitation of a sophisticated, complex state structure located somewhere deeply underground. They couldn't actually see the subterranean party state to which they attributed such miraculous powers. They were certain it was there, but the authorities couldn't find it. As a result, they were left to imagine the contours of their invisible enemy. The less they could see the more they were compelled to imagine. And imagine they did. The authorities came to view the Aprista underground as a darkly enchanted domain lying hidden beneath the surface, haunting the existing order of things.

Presenter(s): David Nugent

Shatter and Scatter: Climate Catastrophe, State Abandonment, and the Haunted Futures on Pakistan's Makran Coast

The catastrophic floods of 2022 in southern Pakistan submerged a third of the country, killing thousands and displacing forty million people and exposing the Pakistani state's incapacity to respond to ecological devastation. For the flood-affected Baloch of the Makran Coast, the floods

mark a moment of rupture. The 'shatter and scatter' rendered by the floods did not just radically transform the material and ecological dimensions of life; it also shattered cosmological certainties through which people navigated everyday life (Descola 2013; Tsing et al. 2017). For many of the displaced, the very idea of Pakistan as a project of state-making was lost in the floods (Suhail 2023).

Drawing on ethnographic encounters with displaced climate refugees, this paper explores how the floods not only disrupted lives and livelihoods but also fractured the cosmological and political frameworks that once shaped the Baloch community's perception of the state, of sovereignty, and imaginaries of how the Baloch of the Makran may inhabit viable futures. By attending to the ghosts of vanished landscapes, failed promises, and emergent solidarities, it documents how climate catastrophe reshapes both state imaginaries and the affective attachments that sustain them (Stoetzer 2018; Stoler 2013). In doing so, it foregrounds the uncanny endurance of spectral sovereignties at the margins of a crumbling state.

Presenter(s): Adeem Suhail

The Haunted Welfare State

Welfare states are often studied as biopolitical assemblages that use welfare resources to nudge, cajole or force beneficiaries to act in certain ways, hoping to reform body and soul. This paper, in contrast, directs attention to what I argue is an institutional psychic life. This psychic life is generated by the confluence of utopian policy visions, professional desires to do good, and persistent disavowals of less sympathetic dimensions of welfare work. Drawing on 18 months of research with Amsterdam's Parent and Child Teams, I sketch an institutional life replete with fantasies of benign, supportive welfare services as well as phantoms of a monstrous welfare state that waltzes into people's lives, laying down the law. The Teams' mundane routines and deliberations were haunted by the specter of that old, overbearing welfare state and its professional habitus. Rejected as oppressive and undemocratic, this was both the foil against which a new welfare state was imagined and enacted, and a persistent ghost that troubled its everyday practice.

This psychic life provides welfare institutions with a nervous energy and fuels their deep ambiguities: Professional desires for horizontal, personable welfare relations come with an insistent disavowal of interventionist rationales; commitments to non-racism allow for the persistence of white middle-class normative frames, while optimistic visions of a quintessential human and intimate welfare state accrue an eerie, haunted quality.

Presenter(s): Anouk de Koning

2494 Specters of Academia: Demystifying the Book Publishing Process

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together editors from leading anthropology presses to offer insights into the

monograph publishing process. Designed for early-career researchers, the session will offer guidance on the steps involved in transforming a dissertation into a publishable book, from crafting compelling book proposals, preparing manuscripts for submission, to understanding the peer review and revision process. Participants will also discuss emerging trends in academic publishing, such as open access, digital dissemination, interdisciplinary collaboration, and publicity. By engaging directly with publishers, attendees will gain practical advice and a deeper understanding of the expectations, challenges, and opportunities in publishing their book-length work. This roundtable aims to create a supportive environment to ask questions and engage directly with publishers to increase transparency around book publishing. Engaging with the conference theme of ghosts, this roundtable will explore how the book publishing world operates as a specter of academia that shapes intellectual landscapes and career trajectories yet can remain elusive and daunting. Join panelists from Duke University Press, Rutgers, Colorado University Press, Stanford University Press, University of Arizona Press, and University of Chicago Press for their insights and advice on navigating the academic publishing world.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Emilia Group, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Rasmus Rodineliussen, Stockholm University

Presenter(s): Ken Wissoker, Duke University Press, Elizabeth Graber, Rutgers University Press, Darrin Pratt, University Press of Colorado, Dylan White, Allyson Carter, University of Arizona Press, Dylan Montanari, University of Chicago Press

Discussant: Emilia Group, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

8818 NAPA Professional Development Workshop: Augmenting Anthropological Research with AI: Hands-On Strategies for Ethical, Impactful Practice

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

This hands-on workshop invites all levels of anthropologists and qualitative researchers to explore how AI tools - such as ChatGPT, Gemini/NotebookLM, and Claude - can be thoughtfully integrated into every stage of the research process, from planning and data collection to analysis and reporting. Participants will engage in interactive exercises, work through practical research scenarios, and examine real-world case studies that showcase the power of AI-augmented research practices. By the end of the workshop, participants will see how AI can serve as a collaborative partner that strengthens their research capabilities, helps uncover insights faster, and amplifies their impact.

What to Expect

Section 1: Introduction to AI in Research

We'll begin with an accessible overview of current AI tools relevant to qualitative research. Attendees will gain familiarity with core capabilities, differences between platforms, and practical ways to begin using them immediately.

Section 2: Ethics and Best Practices

This section will explore ethical considerations, such as maintaining participant confidentiality, removing PII, and understanding the limitations of public vs. enterprise AI accounts. We will ground these discussions in the AAA and NAPA codes of ethics.

Section 3: Case Studies and Applied Practice

Participants will review real examples of AI-enhanced research across sectors, with structured opportunities to practice using AI tools in each phase of the research lifecycle—from planning to reporting.

5035 Heritage Language, Racialization, and (Post)colonialism, PART II

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What is heritage language, and how do framings and contestations around notions of "heritage" inform, reproduce, and confound ways of organizing difference and belonging in what are claimed to be 'post'colonial contexts? What institutions, practices, and actors have a stake in defining heritage and the value of particular languages and dialects for demarcating contemporary ways of organizing around difference and similarity, and in relation to which social, political, cultural, and economic projects? We attend to (the specter of) colonial relations as they become manifest in (shape) shifting "heritage" languages that may evoke indigeneity, migration, nostalgia, purity, and collectivity. Our analytic frameworks entail ethnolinguistic racism, revitalization, tourism, media analysis, pedagogy, policy, ideology, and (hauntings of) fractal recursivity. We also approach these dynamics with the understanding that coloniality continues to loom over such practices-almost as a kind of phantom-haunting institutional efforts, identity projects, and ideologies of language in uneven and often unacknowledged ways. The papers offer diverse epistemological standpoints and theoretical and methodological approaches on the question of heritage language, racialization and postcolonialism, including but not limited to areas such as: applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, autoethnography, postcolonial semiotics, critical discourse analysis, language policy and planning, and classroom discourse analysis. A focus on the robust analysis of language and discourse in relation to social and cultural processes unites these papers with respect to our chosen themes.

In this double panel session, we propose to examine how notions of heritage, language, and race become bundled together in educational and other settings in ways that can reproduce colonial hierarchies even when projects attempt to legitimate themselves as multicultural and/or as post-,

de-, or anti-colonial. Each of the nine papers in this double session examines these questions and issues in different ways, culminating in comprehensive remarks by our co-organizer and discussant Jennifer Delfino. In line with the panel's focus on how language intersects with power and the making of social difference and inequality in relation to history, colonialism, and capitalism, this double panel brings together papers that problematize the production of "heritage language" as a means for the reproduction or contestation of racializing ideologies and processes in relation to postcolonial nation-building and other political, economic, and social projects. Our work spans nine languages (in order of presentations): Tagalog, Tamil, Modern Standard Arabic, Quechua, North African Arabic, Portuguese, Taiwanese, Kreyòl, and Kichwa; as well as eight ethnographic sites (in alphabetical order): Canada, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, France, Peru, Taiwan, and the United States.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Chantal Tetreault, Michigan State University, Department of Anthropology, Jennifer Delfino, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Aurora Donzelli, Spencer Chen, Molly Hamm-Rodriguez, University of South Florida, Quichi Patlan, Southern Illinois Univ-Edwardsville

Discussant: Jennifer Delfino, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Lusophone Specters: Creolized Tongues and Ideologies of Purity in a Former Portuguese Colony

In contemporary Portugal, the notion of "Lusophony" has been instrumental in repackaging colonial nostalgia as a progressive and cosmopolitan form of postcolonial national identity. Epitomized by Pessoa's line "My homeland is the Portuguese language," "Lusophony" hints at a geographically tangible speech community embracing Portugal and its former colonies into a pluri-continental cultural community. This article explores the paradoxes of Lusophony from the perspective of Portugal's former easternmost colony: East Timor. In 2004, after three decades of Indonesian military occupation, East Timor chose Portuguese as the primary medium of instruction, stirring a wave of Lusophone enthusiasm both among intellectuals and the general public in Portugal. Drawing on linguistic anthropological fieldwork conducted in Portugal and in East Timor in aftermath of the implementation of this language policy, I analyze the tensions between the existence of a hybrid linguistic reality and the ideals of racial-cum-linguistic purity that are still informing the Portuguese national imagination. Indeed, East Timor's choice of returning to the language of a colonial elite exposed teachers to the dilemma of either teaching Portuguese as a "native language" to students who barely spoke it, or resorting to L2 pedagogical techniques that undermined the very ideal of Lusophony, revealing the exclusionary linguistic purism underlying Portuguese inclusionary postcolonial ideology.

Presenter(s): Aurora Donzelli

Voicing Heritage: Negotiating Taiwanese Identity and Colonial Ideologies in Taiwan's Dubbing Industry

Taiwan's sociolinguistic landscape has long been shaped by colonial language regimes. The imposition of Mandarin and suppression of non-Mandarin Sinitic and Formosan languages during the post-WWII years led to an irreversible shift from Taiwanese to Mandarin. In recent decades, a key site for revitalizing marginalized languages has emerged in the Mandarin-dominant dubbing industry, where Taiwanese-speaking voice actors strive to reintroduce Taiwanese into dubbed media. Drawing on longitudinal fieldwork in the dubbing industry since 2016, this paper examines how heritage language ideologies are enacted and contested within Mandarin-dominant media production. Focusing on Taiwanese-speaking voice actors trained in Mandarin, I argue that efforts to de-Sinitize media paradoxically reinscribe colonial hierarchies even as they seek to dismantle them, contributing to the mixed reception of Taiwanese-dubbed media. Through analysis of metapragmatic commentary and linguistic life histories, I show how actors navigate tensions between decolonizing language and conforming to standardized norms. Despite their intentions, they often reproduce colonial logics by privileging dominant forms of Taiwanese, marginalizing regional variation, and reinforcing ideologies of linguistic purity. This paper theorizes the dubbing industry as a site of contested heritage value, where de-Sinitization and heritage work both challenge and sustain colonial ideologies in postcolonial Taiwan.

Presenter(s): Spencer Chen

Immigrant Specters of Heritage Language: Hearing Kreyòl and French against Economic Demands for Multilingualism

In the Dominican Republic, language ideologies have historically naturalized borders with Haiti by positioning Kreyòl as a threat to national identity (Valdez, 2014, 2015). In 2013, Dominicans of Haitian descent—born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents—were denationalized (Curiel, 2021). The policing of Haitian heritage through ethnoracial discrimination, anti-Black racism, and anti-immigrant violence intersects with raciolinguistic ideologies (Rosa & Flores, 2020) in a Spanish-dominant setting that not only devalue Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) as heritage language, but also prestige languages such as French and English when spoken by those of Haitian descent. Drawing on ethnographic participant observation and interviews with young adult students and public school teachers, I analyze how Dominican teachers and Dominican youth of Haitian descent use stancetaking and voicing to evaluate perceptions of heritage language use. Findings illustrate that economic demands for bilingualism (English/Spanish) contrast with state anti-immigrant efforts to produce the country as monolingual (erasing Kreyòl). While Dominican youth of Haitian descent repress Kreyòl as heritage language to avoid being interpellated as foreigners, they are positioned as "exceptionally multilingual" (in French, English) and thus more qualified for jobs in tourism, which contradicts the realities of being excluded from the labor market by their documentation status.

Presenter(s): Molly Hamm-Rodriguez

The Hemispheric Verbal Art of Selling 'Truths' and 'Lies' to Tourists: Ethnographic and Critical Ways of Engaging Runa Heritage Tour Guides for Hire

This paper explores the paradoxical verbal art of representing cultural "truths" that indigenous tour guides face in commoditizing their "rural culture" and ultimately, themselves in a cut-throat industry governed by Western stereotypes of indigeneity, time, space, and speaking. It explores why some transnational and self-identifying Kichwa "Yachacs" or ritual specialists may be subject to ridicule and criticism by their neighbors? I center this local Kichwa debate on Yachac authenticity by juxtaposing conversations I had with a Yachac named 'Amaru' in 2014 and a subsequent anonymous "feed-back" interview (Stone and Stone 1981) I conducted with a tourism host named 'Sergio' in 2019 about his critical perceptions of Amaru's representations of Kichwa heritage. The debated "truths" presented by two tourism hosts of different backgrounds are paired with comparative research looking at self-commodification in Amazonian, Mexican, and Alaskan tourism venues. I aim to model a "critical" (Davis and Smalls 2023) and "discourse-centered" (Sherzer 1987; Hill 2008) manner through which we (i.e., tourists, researchers, or an Indigenous person from North America) might advance Otavalan Kichwa and other indigenous tour guides into a more agentive and equitable re-positioning that takes place through the tourism encounter and, in doing so, collaborate with indigenous hosts in mitigating and dismantling the discursive and economic presence of neo-colonial expectations in global tourism.

Presenter(s): Quichi Patlan

Discussion

4001 Honoring Lynn M. Morgan, Winner of the 2024 SMA Career Achievement Award: Part 2 Reproductive Governance, Reproductive Rights

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Lynn Morgan's path-breaking work has been lauded for its deftness at revealing dialectical connections between micro and macro and local and global processes. Part II of this two-part session will consider Morgan's contributions to the complex interconnections among reproduction, policy, and societal power structures, notably her illuminating analyses as to why reproductive health policies have become focal points of intense social and political mobilization in the world today.

Morgan and Elizabeth F.S. Roberts introduced the concept of reproductive governance as a framework for tracing shifting political configurations enacted through moral regimes: the standards that govern a society's intimate behavior and ethical judgments. Their work advanced understandings about how powerful institutions, such as religious organizations and international financial entities, in concert with or independent of state mechanisms, have exercised social control over reproduction. Morgan and Roberts's work has been extended through explications as to how reproductive governance intersects with human rights discourses and actions: today human rights has paradoxically catalyzed political movements for both bodily autonomy and fetal rights. At

a time when advances in reproductive medicine increasingly challenge assumptions about biological essence, identity, and humanity, Lynn Morgan's work has proven indispensable for understanding practices that have gained prominence as the 21st century proceeds.

Papers in this session will assess consequential challenges to reproductive rights and governance in Francophone Africa and Spain. Others will consider devastating effects of contemporary U.S. reproductive governance in key sites including prisons, the clinical treatment of nonconforming and transgender children, and newly pronatalistic policies from the perspective of Single Mothers by Choice. Part II will conclude with a reflection on Lynn Morgan's exceptional mentoring career.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Carole Browner, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Roberts, University of Michigan

Chair: Elise Andaya, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Siri Suh, Brandeis University, Diana Marre, Carolyn Sufrin, Johns Hopkins University, Sahar Sadjadi, Linda Layne, Karen-Sue Taussig, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lynn Morgan, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Global Reproductive Governance: Policies, Interventions, Metrics, and Technologies in Francophone Africa

In my discipline of sociology, reproduction in Africa is often understood through the lens of demography, or black boxed as a "global health" matter. In contrast, Lynn Morgan's theory of reproductive governance, through its attention to the political, economic, and religious rationales that drive the regulation of reproduction by various actors and institutions, such as government health authorities, neo-Malthusian aid donors, feminist NGOs, and anti-abortion activists, facilitates transnational and postcolonial analysis of reproductive politics in Africa. The concept of reproductive governance pushes us to move beyond policies—such as the Global Gag rule, or national abortion restrictions—to examine how reproductive health discourses, interventions, technologies, and metrics exercise reproductive control during the twenty-first century. In this talk, I show how post-abortion care metrics in Senegal demonstrate compliance with commitments to global maternal mortality reduction while obscuring the inadequacy of obstetric care in public hospitals. Drawing on my research on misoprostol in Burkina Faso and Senegal, I explore the increasing importance of pharmaceuticals in advancing both neoliberal approaches to maternal mortality reduction and feminist approaches to self-managed reproductive care. At the same time, I highlight persistent structural inequities in access to misoprostol within and beyond hospitals.

Presenter(s): Siri Suh

Reproductive Governance in Spain: Why Do Women in Spain Have So Few Children?

In 1978, Spain had one of the highest fertility rates in Europe; from 1995 to the present, it has had one of the lowest. Since the 2000s international adoption and assisted reproduction in Spain has boomed. In this paper, I show how the concept of reproductive governance has been crucial for

understanding these shifts. In 2009, I used the frame of "structural infertility" to address the puzzle of fertility in Spain: Women faced structural hurdles in securing employment, and when they finally reached financial stability, many could no longer conceive and therefore created families through international adoption. Yet labor market forces seemed like only one piece of the puzzle. The concept of "reproductive governance" provided another, in that it makes it possible to analyze how reproductive behaviors and choices are conditioned by government action or inaction, and also the actions of entities such as churches, corporations, health institutions, laboratories, NGOs, and social movements. I have applied this lens to the Spanish feminist movement, which historically has prioritized women's right to divorce, contraception, and abortion, while ignoring their right to enjoy equal pay or to balance work and family (Briggs et al. 2012). Ironically, in fighting only for the right not to reproduce and not the right to reproduce, the feminist movement inadvertently made it harder to become a mother in Spain.

Presenter(s): Diana Marre

Coerced to Birth, Coerced to Cede: Prisons as Technologies of Reproductive Governance in the U.S.

Thousands of pregnant individuals enter U.S. prisons each year, subjected to classic biopolitical regimes of disciplinary power that define modern carceral power. As their reproductive bodies come under the explicit control of the state's punitive apparatus, prisons, laws, contradictory judicial precedents, and hospitals converge to govern the bodily and psychic dimensions of their pregnancies and futurities. This paper presents ethnographic insights from research with pregnant individuals in prisons and jails across four U.S. states. Some needed abortions while in custody but were overtly and illegally prevented from obtaining care. Others unknowingly presumed that the punitive bargain of incarceration foreclosed abortion as an option. For others, the bereft conditions of incarceration and intense anxiety over whether they would be shackled in labor and would have a safe birth produced a desire for abortion, as a maternal protectionist stance towards their fetus. All were thus coerced to birth, and after birthing, returned to prison alone, forcibly separated from their newborns and ceding their abilities to mother as the state continued its governance of their reproductive futures. Through foreclosure of abortion and abilities for newborn care, prisons operate as exemplars not only of classic disciplinary power, but of reproductive governance at every point on the continuum of possibilities of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood.

Presenter(s): Carolyn Sufrin

Children, Gender Transition and Reproductive Politics in the US

Why did children's gender transition become explosive in American cultural politics, taking a place alongside abortion? Why is it so difficult to conceptualize children's relation to reproduction, beyond viewing them as reproductive outcomes? I have grappled with these questions throughout years of research and thinking on psychological and medical treatments for gender nonconforming and transgender children in the US. Children, lacking legal autonomy, pose a challenge to reproductive rights frameworks that center consent and autonomy. They embody a liminal

reproductive status having reproductive organs that will only in the future gain reproductive capacity. This paper reflects on children's position in reproductive politics through engagement with Lynn Morgan's writings on personhood and the body, theories of potentiality and representations of non-Western gender diversity.

Presenter(s): Sahar Sadjadi

From Fatherless Families to Babies Galore! The Paradoxical Influence of Neoliberalism and the New Pronatalism on Single Mothers by Choice in the US

Drawing from a long-term ethnographic case study (2005-2024) of one American Single Mother by Choice, I illustrate the often-paradoxical ways two successive regimes of reproductive governance, Neoliberalism, and Trump 2.0, constrain and enable Single Mothers by Choice (SMCs), which emerged as a recognized family form in 1980, the year Republican Ronald Reagan brought neoliberalism to the US with support of "a pro-family, pro-America" Christian political movement. Republican V.P. Dan Quayle condemned the popular character Murphy Brown for having a baby as a single woman, blaming the Los Angeles Rodney King riots for nuclear family breakdown. Even Obama singled out fatherless families for opprobrium. Yet neoliberalism combined synergistically with Second Wave Feminism's emphasis on personal choice and e-commerce to enable SMCs plentiful choice of sperm donors.

Elon Musk arguably best exemplifies Trump 2.0's New Pronatalism, which shifts focus from a nuclear family ideal to a goal of more happy, healthy, and intelligent babies using all technological means. This shift from what SMC families lack, i.e., a father, to what they bring,

i.e., high-achieving, native-born children should create a more welcoming climate for these nonnormative but privileged mothers. Yet while more affordable IVF will be a boon to future SMCs, Trump's attacks on higher education is making it harder for women to attain financial independence to consider undertaking family-making on their own.

Presenter(s): Linda Layne

Challenge Accepted: Reflections on Lynn Morgan as Mentor Extraordinaire

Over the course of her career, Lynn Morgan has had a significant impact in and beyond anthropology. From her pathbreaking work in the anthropology of reproduction to her remarkably creative pedagogical practices, and her generous collegial engagement as peer and mentor, Morgan's work will carry on for generations to come. This presentation will reflect on specific examples of the distinctive impact Morgan has had as a mentor. The paper will demonstrate how Morgan deploys the kind of rigorous and creative thinking we see in her scholarly and pedagogical work, in her mentoring, and in ways that challenge others to continually push the bounds of their own thinking about how things might and can be otherwise.

Presenter(s): Karen-Sue Taussig

Discussion

2497 Past Imperfect: The Grammar of Forgetting and the Insurrection of the Past

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ceremony (1977), Leslie Marmon Silko's novel about grief in the wake of colonial conquest, opens with a poem about the power of stories. She writes,

Their evil is mighty

but it can't stand up to our stories.

So they try to destroy the stories

let the stories be confused or forgotten.

They would like that

They would be happy

Because we would be defenseless then (p.1)

In light of AAA's theme examining ghosts and haunting, we take seriously Silko's message about the necessity of stories as defense and the violence of imposed forgetting. As critical ethnographer's who study the relationships among schooling and immigrant communities in the context of ongoing colonization, we offer a symposium on remembering as a generative act of refusal (Simpson, 2014).

The conflict between the role of schools as an ideological state apparatus for colonial conquest (Vaught, Brayboy, Chin, 2024), and the use of schools to achieve students and their communities' self-determined goals (White, 2015) is the tension of public education that animates and sustains our commitment to educational anthropology. This tension is particularly stark in immigrant education, particularly in this moment, where state and community goals are in clear and obvious opposition. U.S. schools employ forgetting in an attempt to resolve this tension: forgetting about where students come from, forgetting why they are enrolling in public schools, and forgetting about community social movements and the promises made in response to them.

In this panel, we present five papers that examine how the intended-to-be-erased past haunts the present in immigrant education, broadly conceived. Each paper is drawn from study with immigrant communities at distinct points in their migration journey: paper 1 examines the experiences of migrants headed toward the U.S. while they wait in shelters in Mexico City, paper 2 focuses on young people and families held in detention centers at the U.S.-Mexico border, papers 3 and 4 are drawn from studies within public schools, and paper 5 focuses on the transnational and diasporic work of Indigenous migrant mothers around and between schools and their communities. Taken together, these papers reveal how the past pierces into the present in distinct immigrant educational contexts to reveal how schools structure and perpetuate inequality as well as how

students and communities contest erasure and fabricate possibility.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Kyle Halle-Erby, University of California, Los Angeles

Chair: Inmaculada García Sánchez, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): Claudia Triana Ipinza, Melissa Adams Corral, Kyle Halle-Erby, University of California, Los Angeles, Alexander Feliciano Mejía, San Francisco State University, Patricia Baquedano-Lopez, University of California, Berkeley

Presentation(s): The Praxis of Placemaking in Mexico City's Migrant Camps

As border externalization policies, such as CBP One, strand migrants in third countries, makeshift camps grow to serve migrants in transit. Unlike institutional camps (formal refugee camps, hospitality camps, detention camps etc.), which are understood as "top-down" spaces of control, custody, and care, managed by international humanitarian agencies or state entities, makeshift camps are informal spaces made by migrants. Makeshift migrant camps are often the result of state neglect and abandonment, as transit migrants are often "forgotten" and denied access to basic resources. Most theorization on camps centers on Agamben's "spaces of exception," accentuating these spaces as physical manifestations of exclusion (Minca, 2015). Instead, I draw on anthropological and geographical theories of placemaking and feminist decolonial practices to highlight the role of camps in cultivating migrant solidarity. Drawing on data from an 18-month ethnographic study (2022-2024) conducted in Mexico City, I examine how migrant families in transit learn to resist border violence. While most camp studies position the camp itself as the space of containment, I argue that migrants are pushing back against multiple contaminants while in transit, and the camp can materialize as a space of learning and resistance. This paper addresses the growing prominence of makeshift camps across Mexico and their function in migrant learning.

Presenter(s): Claudia Triana Ipinza

Waiting Rooms on the Frontera: Time in the Institutions Between the Border and School

(Im)migrant youth enrolling in U.S. schools often pass through spaces of transit upon arrival in the U.S., including shelters along the border, detention centers for unaccompanied minors, and immigration courts. Transit spaces have little contact with school or support systems in the U.S. or in other countries, which delinks them from youth's pasts and futures. These spaces are also often divorced from their own histories—as downtown nightclubs, nursing homes, Protestant boarding schools and missionary training facilities. This paper explores what it means to look closely at the pasts, presents, and futures of border transit spaces and to consider their impacts on children's educational trajectories.

I engaged in a critical autoethnography (Madison, 2012, Spry, 2011)—acting as an observer in immigration courts, and a volunteer in shelters and detention centers—to make sense of transit spaces in the borderlands. This required challenging the norms in each setting through stillness, return, and a commitment to asking past and future-oriented questions, particularly in relation to young people's educational trajectories. In spaces oriented towards processing people, these interruptions were disorienting. In the tradition of performance autoethnography, this paper offers

"a person, a body, a place, and a historical moment," (Denzin, 2017, p. 44), to explore the hauntings of and by windowless, industrially sanitized spaces of confinement and judgment.

Presenter(s): Melissa Adams Corral

The Construction of Newness in the Context of Conquest

Based on an ethnographic study of specialized high school programs for recently-arrived immigrant young people, this paper examines how language policy facilitates the construction of immigrant students as "new." Rather than simply a myth or misconception, the construction of newness is a strategy for dominating, structuring, and having authority over Indigenous and Latinx children as part of the ongoing project of U.S. state formation through conquest. This paper argues that the construction of newness conceals the history of insurgency/ counterinsurgency on both sides of the border to which students' migration and appropriation of services within the educational system belong. While this obfuscation attempts to exceptionalize the role of school and obscure carcerality in immigrant education, analyzing the construction of newness reveals the colonial "entanglements" (Greyeyes, 2022) that animate U.S. schooling and gestures toward the transnational solidarities that contest it.

Presenter(s): Kyle Halle-Erby

"Ellos Saben Que El Trabajo Es Primero": Diasporic Maya Youth Navigating Language Acquisition and Acquisition of Wage-Labor at a Continuation School

Educational ethnographers have generated important knowledge about diasporic Maya youth in school settings, highlighting their navigation of institutional spaces and use of cultural resources. Less studied is the labor dimension of diasporic Maya Indigeneity, particularly the intersection of language, education, and labor.

This paper presents findings from a two-year ethnographic study of Newcomer Continuation School in Northern California, serving primarily Maya youth from Guatemala. The analysis draws from participant observation at school and workplaces, classroom recordings, and interviews with students and teachers, examined through a discourse analytic lens focused on the functional uses of the school.

Findings reveal contestations between the school's language acquisition orientation and Maya students' repurposing of the institution as a space for labor acquisition and workplace networking. Teachers attempted to resolve this tension through a multilingual job-seeking curriculum. Maya youth actively transformed the school from its intended purpose into a site for workplace connections serving their immediate needs and community priorities.

These findings nuance our understanding of social reproduction and labor market stratification through schooling under racial capitalism, while illuminating relationships between education, language, diasporic Maya Indigeneity, and labor socialization.

Presenter(s): Alexander Feliciano Mejía

Against Erasure: Present-Day Hauntings, Ancestral Voices, and Language Revalorization in the Yucatan-California Maya Diaspora

This paper begins with an overview of the cultural and linguistic erasure of Indigenous Maya immigrant families from Yucatan (Mexico) by school bureaucracies in California, particularly during enrollment processes where Indigenous Maya students are subsumed under the racialized "Latine" demographics. Drawing from a 3.5 year ethnographic project at a K-5 school and the university-school partnership that evolved from it, the author examines practices that socialized Indigenous worldviews guided by Indigenous mothers. These invoked ancestral knowledge and practices of remembering relations with human/non-human actors. Similar to Maya cultural practices discussed in the literature involving engagement with supernatural beings (Author; de Leon 2012; Le Guen 2012; Vapnarsky 2003), Indigenous mothers socialized multi-party interactions that invoked *chichi'* (a nonhuman being), already "made present" in the liminal spaces that mothers occupied at the school as stern guidance for children's good behavior. In another example, a mother recalled women elders' use of "real Maya" language during secluded, subterranean, and gendered ceremonies in Yucatan that she witnessed as a young girl. These women leaders in diaspora connected the past to the present to resist forgetting Indigenous language and culture. This paper uses language analysis as a window into understanding how cultural and linguistic resources are employed to counter logics of Indigenous erasure in schools and society.

Presenter(s): Patricia Baquedano-Lopez

3787 From Bodies to Objects with/out Value

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In early anthropological collections, categories such as "tool," "ritual," and "weapon" came to define the relationships between humans, matter, and technology. However, the presumed boundaries between the social and technical dissipate as we delve further ethnographically and historically into the histories of bodies and earthly matter. Drawing inspiration from, while also challenging, Mauss's proposition that "the body is man's first and most natural instrument" (1937:75), this panel examines the body not just in terms of aptitude, technique, and habituation, but also through its materiality, valuation, and objectification. In an era of automated technology replacing manufacturing, service, and clerical labor, bodies themselves become doubly eclipsed as they are technologized and reduced to the capacity of their labor, particularly within informal, agrarian, and extractive economies.

How do bodies and earthly matter traverse the boundary between subject and technical object, acquiring or losing value through processes of commodification and labor extraction? Under what conditions might the materiality of labor come to coalesce with the materiality of bodies? These questions become increasingly urgent as we witness the abstraction of human capacities into technical functions, mirroring the historical processes of the commodification of enslaved persons into fungible objects. Our papers examine the transformative processes of the devaluation of

bodies and (dis)abilities to the construction of value in matter and objects. We aim to spark a conversation about how different types of matter are involved in value systems that blur the traditional divide between human subjects and objects.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Lai Wo , Elif Irem Az, Harvard University

Chair: Lai Wo , Elif Irem Az, Harvard University

Presenter(s): Elif Irem Az, Harvard University, Lai Wo, Anamaria Berbec-Chiritoiu, Uppsala University, Devika Singh Shekhawat, Cornell University, Ping-hsiu Lin

Discussant: Sahana Ghosh, National University of Singapore

Presentation(s): Amortization of Bodies: Labor, Disability, and Becoming Accidental in the Soma Coal Basin

Soma miners experience and understand labor not as compensated working time but as a compulsory life-activity that diminishes the value-generating power of one's body within financialized everyday life. Drawing on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 68 open-ended, semi-structured interviews conducted in the Soma Coal Basin of Turkey in 2018–19, I call this phenomenon the "amortization of bodies": the lived experience of one's body as a corporeal asset within an insurance calculus—as calculated, compensated for, and factored into a kind of amortization process. This conception is in conversation with, and distinct from, the analyses of the capturing of the future through credit, indebtedness, or coins. As it pertains to bodies that are concrete, and whose capacities are often unpredictable, the amortization of bodies describes how the present (of bodies and subjects) is seized and depoliticized through a constellation of labor conditions, the medicalization of disability and debility, welfare and pension policies, and future-oriented credit schemes. This paper focuses on one part of this constellation: the labor-related and medical ways in which corporeal unpredictability is governed within neoliberal capitalism, shaping how miners experience their bodies as amortized. I draw broader conclusions about the subjective experience of labor and financialized everyday life for the populations who work in the most precarious conditions within contemporary capitalism.

Presenter(s): Elif Irem Az

Incommensurable Absences: Intimate Labor Migration between East Java and Hong Kong

This paper explores the idea of migrant absence and the form that it takes in urban Hong Kong and rural East Java. While migrants' everyday presence in their employers' homes is felt through the proximity of their intimate labor – preparing meals, laundering clothes, dressing and feeding children, elderly caretaking – they are simultaneously rendered as 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966) and discarded to the margins of the spatially dense city. Parallel to the invisibilization of their care work, migrant bodies are simultaneously made to be unseen by local Hong Kong citizens, as they are required to sleep in closets or cupboards in their employers' homes and sit along sidewalks and underneath bridge overpasses on their days off. Comparatively, despite the migrants' extended physical absence in their sending villages, they remain ever-present within the everyday

discourse, imaginary and planning among their kin who anxiously await their remittances and eventual return. Conversations with husbands, aging parents, and teenage children whom they left behind as newborns revealed that the material markers of success – migrant houses, motorbikes, and land – are not commensurate with a mother's actual presence. Taking a semiotic analysis to think through migrant bodies out of place in Hong Kong's urban landscape alongside uninhabited migrant houses in their rural sending villages, this paper attends to the anxieties generated from these 'constitutive absences' (Deacon 2012).

Presenter(s): Lai Wo

(Not) Being There: social reproduction and social (im)perceptibility

This paper explores bodies which both are and aren't really there. It focuses on the irregular migrations of Romanian Roma to North America in search of political asylum and economic prosperity. When they get to the US Roma people often come to rely on informal economies. The most visible of these is begging—a mode of labor that depends on the objectification of the begging person's body in anticipation of onlookers' empathy.

But those same bodies that are used to epitomize destitution are redeployed to signal prosperity to Roma relatives, both in the US and in Romania. On social media, in phone calls, and in the remittances people send home, what is embodied to Roma publics is not destitution, but affluence. How do individuals' bodies traverse within the course of one day, every day, the glaring distance from recipients of charity to embodiments of success? How does this transformation produce value? How do people use it to mutate from subject to object and back again?

What does a focus on the body reveal about the perilous journeys my Roma interlocutors undertake? Journeys that are about being either scrutinized or unseen, but rarely anything in-between; about political vulnerabilities and the absence of papers to document it; about sickness and the lack of access to medical care; about relatedness—a resource and a predicament, material and affective; and about the extent to which people who exercise little control over their circumstances control their bodies instead

Presenter(s): Anamaria Berbec-Chiritoiu

Rhythms of Plantation life: The corporal reality of time, health and labour in tea plantations of Assam

The paper explores time as an axiom to understand how labouring bodies are made fungible through experiences of health, healthcare and labour relations within tea plantations of Assam. It asks what time means within a plantation system and uses the daily schedule of workers as a vector to understand how experiences of health are embedded within the material reality of plantation life and the extractive production process. It looks at time as constitutive of a plantation and engages with the oppressiveness of time to understand how the temporal corpus in a plantation has a bearing on the bodies of workers as it blurs the lines between the home and the workplace. The perception of time and the lack of rest becomes instrumental to understanding how

labour conditions and 'rest time' or 'break time' don't have the same temporal division in a plantation. Time and rest as categories are re-looked at to ask who the 8-hour work day in the plantation context is made for and how is the labouring body then reproduced for the plantation economy. The paper looks at health through the operationalisation of time on labouring bodies. It analyses how rest during the work day and the plantation season is understood and experienced by the workers. Drawing on 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork at multiple tea plantation sites in Assam, the paper uses a political economy framework to explore how the corporal realities of plantation life structure the capacity to labour for tea workers.

Presenter(s): Devika Singh Shekhawat

A Geography of Risk: Cyclical Mobility and Value Transformation Pakistan's Mineral Economy

In the Hindu Kush Himalayan mountain region that span contemporary Afghanistan and Pakistan, shuttle-traders maneuver complex socio-spatial terrains, mediating between mineral extraction sites and urban marketplaces. This paper examines one such trading network, asking how its complexities expose fissures in conventional understandings of commodity circulation and value creation. Suggesting that a geography of risk—forming through repeated cycles of movement rather than linear progression—offers insight into rural-urban relations as they are refashioned amid fluctuating border regimes, I ask: What are the stakes of mobility as traders travers periods of violence and political closure? What kind of "value" emerges at this geopolitical juncture? And what forms of knowledge are activated and constrained in the social process of mineral trading? The transformation of Namak Mandi into a competitive marketplace where minerals converge from different countries forms the backdrop for theorizing how men from agricultural communities cultivate specialized expertise while managing significant uncertainties. Their movements—neither purely nomadic nor simply circulatory—embody a particular form of skilled mobility that simultaneously transforms the stones they transport and the socioeconomic connections they establish, destabilizing conventional distinctions between production spaces and market spheres.

Presenter(s): Ping-hsiu Lin

Discussion

1978 Absence and Persistence: Black Hauntings

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Absence and Persistence: Black Hauntings explores spectral presences through work that brings the Black diaspora in the US, Costa Rica, Madagascar, Tobago, and Jamaica into conversation. McCoy-Torres examines how the presence of specters in the building facades of a gentrifying Brooklyn, New York and roads of a quickly developing Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica highlight the absences of Afro-Caribbeans in these once Caribbean places. She argues Afro-Caribbeans counter being made into ghosts through reggae performance mediums and placemaking that insist on Afro-Caribbean life, visibility and embodiment. Crosson considers how, in Tobago, spirits inhabiting

trees motivate people's refusals to cut them down, constituting a form of conservation. His work uncovers how the haunting of trees propels an Afro-Caribbean ethos of conservation that departs from Western environmentalism centered on loving nature to rejuvenate the white body. Brown explores the politics of healing for Black religious subjects in Jamaica and New Orleans in the spectral afterlife of the plantation. She shows how the spirits of the dead animate the lives and bodies of Revivalists and Spiritualists through trance journeys, seances, and conjurings that facilitate healing and remediation. Andre-Johnson discusses the future "tense" (grammatical tenses and muscular tensions) of afterlives. Bringing together ethnographic theory from Madagascar and Black feminist writings, she asks how we orient towards possible futures while holding onto and being held by pasts that have not yet passed. Miles examines how journeys through water-across the Atlantic, down hoses and through fountains of the Jim Crow south, and in rising sea levels-organize the emotional worlds of coastal Black southerners. He demonstrates that the people who have drowned under the structural weight of "liquid racism" are central to Black southerners' affective relationships to water. Through multi-sited international fieldwork, Roberts-Gregory focuses on the feminist climate policies and organizing strategies that address the rise in nuclear energy and AI data centers. She critiques how these advocacy efforts interface with "feminist ghosts"-the absence of women of color, feminist priorities, and care economies in climate negotiations and policies.

These papers invite us to consider how we might observe resistance to becoming ghosts and healing if we looked on the dance floor, alongside water, around the trees, or even the graveyard. Or how methodological and conceptual death results in tense futures and creative placemaking like inclusion in environmental justice. Collectively we show how people of the Black diaspora confront the haunted and the haunting.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Sabia McCoy-Torres, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sabia McCoy-Torres, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sabia McCoy-Torres, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, J. Brent Crosson, University of Texas, Austin, Department of Anthropology, Khytie Brown, University of Texas at Austin, Cory-Alice Andre-Johnson, Tulane University, Corey Miles, Tulane University, Frances Roberts-Gregory, Harvard University

Presentation(s): "The Flesh and Blood": Affective Resistance

Brooklyn, New York and Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica have historically housed Caribbean enclaves that are connected to each other through migration between them. Today, Afro-Caribbeans in both locales are experiencing displacement through gentrification and touristic development. In Brooklyn, facades of buildings make visible specters of Caribbean communities that evince people are being threatened with disappearance in a borough some call "the flesh and blood" of West Indians in the diaspora, "Little Caribbean," or even "Brooklyn West Indies." These affectionate terms capture the work of (trans)migrants, immigrants, and West Indian Americans to create a place that feels Caribbean. Similarly, in Puerto Viejo, the reconstruction of roads illustrates the changes that threaten to make Afro-Caribbeans ghosts in a town that immigrant laborers from the West Indies

and their descendants painstakingly created, within a wider geography they helped define as la zona caribe (the Caribbean zone). Yet, in these two important West Indian diasporic sites, Caribbeans are not without recourse. I argue that they continue to insist on presence, place, and, in turn, life through the rituals tied to reggae culture. They, further, manipulate affective relations to engender Caribbean feeling. Together, these actions create Caribbean subjects and transnationally connected places for Caribbean embodiment that root them in shifting terrain.

Presenter(s): Sabia McCoy-Torres

The Silk Cotton Archive: Haunting as Conservation in the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, the silk cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*) roots divergent histories. Scholars note how the giant tree was an icon of tropical nature for touristic consumption (before the beach became the primary site for tropical nature's rejuvenation of white bodies). However, the tree was not simply an object of tourist desire. The silk cotton tree is native to (and sacred in) both West Africa and the Caribbean. It was one familiar landmark that many enslaved Africans encountered in the Caribbean, telling of a longer history of exchange between Africa and the Americas. Across the region, Afro-Caribbean people have refused to cut down silk cotton trees for fear of spiritual retribution from ancestors that dwell in the tree. I draw on interviews with Tobagonian environmental leaders to theorize a Caribbean form of conservation that departs from the assumptions of Western environmentalism. My interlocutors theorize "haunting" as an effective form of conservation because it carries the force of law when state law or private interests may fail to protect trees. Fear of and respect for trees as potential agents of affliction contrasts with the racialized story of Western environmentalism, which has centered on the love of nature as a way of rejuvenating the white body. I briefly detail how these assumptions have biased scholarly accounts of the Caribbean birth of modern environmentalism, obfuscating the agency of Afro-Caribbean people (and spirits) in this story.

Presenter(s): J. Brent Crosson

"Graveyard Physicians: Healings and Hauntings in Jamaican Revival Zion and New Orleans Spiritualist Churches"

"Graveyard Physicians" explores how healing and hauntings are intertwined within the spectral afterlife of the plantation, through comparative ethnographic analysis of Jamaican Revival Zion religion's spiritual-physicians and the mother-healers of New Orleans Spiritualist Churches. Jamaican Revival Zion and New Orleans Spiritualist Churches emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries, respectively, among Black populations grappling with the necropolitics of racial capitalism. While these ritual specialists are often viewed as either charlatans or perverse necromancers, the paper shows how Revivalists and Spiritualists reorient questions of life, death, and healing against these death-dealing logics. The paper asks: How might we understand health and healing if we started not from a hospital or clinic but from the graveyard? Simultaneously, how might we grapple with the notion of hauntings if we were to foreground intimacy? The paper explores these questions by centering Revivalists' and Spiritualists' intimate relationship with

spirits of the dead and primordial spirits. These spirits—from Jamaican Revival's mermaid spirit, River Mumma, to Black Hawk, a Native American spirit in New Orleans Spiritualist churches—animate the lives and bodies of practitioners through trance journeys, séances, and conjurings. Thus, they facilitate multiple forms of healing and remediation that exceed the limits of Western rationalism's understandings of healing and hauntings.

Presenter(s): Khytie Brown

Real Tense Conditionals: Persistent Pasts in Black Feminist Futures

This paper brings together bodily and grammatical orientations towards the future through Gasy ethnographic theory and Black Feminist writings to question how we move into futures haunted by the past. It takes as its starting point a confluence between: Gasy temporality as facing the past while moving backwards into the future (Crossland); Gasy relation to ancestors as braced in the bottleneck of an hourglass (Walsh); Black Feminist grammar as a future real conditional (Camp); and Blackness as remaining in the hold (Sharpe). In all of these iterations, future possibilities weave together with ghostly pasts, with the dead, loved and lost, in ways that render bodies tense, stiff, hardened, and conditionally potent. Rather than presenting a future that resolves the past, turns its back on it, or releases its hold, this paper keeps with the disorienting 'future-past' to think along the desirability of staying Black and dying.

Presenter(s): Cory-Alice Andre-Johnson

How do Ghosts Feel: Emotional Seepage Between the Drowned and Undrowned

Drowning happens in your lungs, but it is visible in the skin, bodily movements, and lack of ability to articulate that you are drowning. As metaphor, this demonstrates how the climate catastrophe does internal damage and makes itself visible in the ways southern Black people move even when they have yet to find the language to articulate the happening. If we go beyond metaphor, what might be noticeable? This paper walks down the Atlantic coast with southern Black coastal communities to examine how policing and climate disaster co-construct the weather of the South. Drowning is central to slavery, Jim Crow, and natural disasters that disproportionately harm poor Black communities. On this walk we see that the deaths of the drowned are connected through what I term "liquid emotions" to the lives of those who Alexis Pauline Gumbs refer to as "the undrowned." Liquid emotion thinks about the flexibility of Black feeling to both love and fear home; while pointing to how structurally Black emotions function like liquid assets and can be cashed in to mean whatever the white imagination needs to justify unequal systems. The complicated relationship Black southerners have with water is not inherently due to one personal experience but a reciprocal affective relationship with the drowned - feeling in community with ghosts. They frustrate assumptions that center liberation as the central mode of the Black imagination and demonstrate that there is beauty in creatively drowning together.

Presenter(s): Corey Miles

Black and Indigenous Women's Environmental Resistance: The Methodology of Feminist Political Ecology and Genesis of the Ecowomanist Digital Archive

Critical environmental, energy, and climate justice scholars currently inquire into how women, queer communities, and people of African descent resist premature death and precarity that logically result from necropolitics and state-corporate crime vis a vis transnational environmental governance. Feminist political ecologists likewise expose the under-theorization of gender in environmental studies and highlight the links between gendered vulnerability to climate change and the androcentricity of extractive economies. Despite these intellectual advancements, Afrodiasporic women continue to be vastly underrepresented in climate policy debates and imaginings of climate solutions, rendering them ghosts. I methodologically employ Black feminist autoethnography, conversational interviews, feminist media analysis, feminist policy analysis, and multi-sited ethnography to investigate how Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory relationships with energy and petrochemical industries, build solidarity through ecofeminist coalitions, and advance feminist advocacy at UNFCCC COPs and other transnational climate policy spaces. Future directions of this work will include creating The Ecowomanist Digital Archive and Book Manuscript to narrate and house audio files and digital artifacts from 10+ years of feminist political ecology research.

Presenter(s): Frances Roberts-Gregory

5235 Roundable /Town Hall THE FUTURES OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In 2010, a dossier published in the *American Anthropologist* with the suggestive title "(Not) the end of anthropology again? Some thoughts on disciplinary futures" (Comaroff & Kohl, vol 112, no 4) signaled that instead of the recurring fears of its demise, we should analyze the broadening reconfigurations and futures of anthropology. Considering the significant transformations of our discipline throughout the last fifteen years against the context of neoliberal capitalism, this roundtable examines how anthropology is differentially changing in different parts of the world and, from this viewpoint, the future of anthropologies and the possibilities of constructing viable and flourishing anthropologies of the future.

Given the significant transformations in the global political economy already underway, how can we think comparatively about the future of anthropologies and the constructions of anthropologies of the future? In the current context of neoliberal capitalism - which privileges free trade, technocracy, and high technology, including AI - anthropologists in some parts of the world face declining interest in anthropology and the humanities, program closures, and precarity. In addition, the concomitant advance of authoritarian governments, emphasizing securitization, technocracy, and accountability at the expense of cultural differences and human dignity, has significantly impacted the discipline, even leading some places to criminalize anthropology and anthropologists. At the same time, a discipline transformation is taking place with former research

subjects becoming PhD in anthropology, among others, the so-called minorities, such as Indigenous peoples, who, while contributing with traditional knowledge rather than studying otherness, tend to focus on themselves. Overall, anthropology has confronted considerable challenges as well as opportunities in the reconfigurations of its anthropological research practices, ranging from self-ethnographies to online ethnographies, which resort to IA, and in the process ever expanding themes of research

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Bela Feldman-Bianco , Cristiana Bastos, University of Lisbon

Presenter(s): Ayse Caglar, University of Vienna, Chandana Mathur , Don Nonini, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Noboru Ishikawa , Marisa Ruiz Trejo, Grinnell College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Ulf Hannerz, Stockholm University

1961 The Spirits of Life and Death: The Transformational Nature of Alcohol Distillation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Alcohol has long occupied a liminal space between life and death, nourishment and poison, the sacred and the profane. This session explores the paradoxical nature of distilled alcohol—commonly referred to as "spirits"—as both a vital cultural force and a potential agent of ruin. From ancient alchemists seeking to capture the "breath of life" to modern distillers crafting artisanal liquors, the process of distillation has been imbued with mystical, medicinal, and social significance. Yet, while alcohol has historically been celebrated as a source of communal bonding, religious ritual, and economic sustenance, it also serves as a spectral presence haunting societies with its well-documented harms.

Drawing on ethnographic and historical perspectives, we examine how different cultures have understood and negotiated alcohol's duality. Why is alcohol revered as a life-giving substance in some traditions yet feared as a harbinger of death in others? How do alcohol purveyors reconcile their roles as both a source of pleasure and a contributor to addiction, disease, and social instability? Recent studies highlight the health risks associated with even moderate alcohol consumption, challenging long-held beliefs about its benefits. Meanwhile, excessive use remains a major public health concern, with links to liver disease, alcohol poisoning, cancers, and increased mortality.

This session invites papers that consider the ways in which distilled spirits, as both material and metaphor, reveal deeper anxieties about transformation, embodiment, and mortality. By tracing the ghostly imprint of alcohol across cultures and histories, we aim to illuminate how societies define the boundaries between sustenance and excess, remedy and poison, celebration and sorrow. In doing so, we ask: What can alcohol's enduring contradictions teach us about the human condition,

and how do these tensions shape contemporary debates around health, consumption, and social responsibility?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Chair: Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Brandon Lundy, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Janet Chrzan, University of Pennsylvania, Brooke Hansen, University of South Florida, Isabel Rodrigues, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Ghost of Grogue: Lingering Health Effects and Harm Reduction Efforts of Locally Produced Alcohol in Cabo Verde, West Africa

Ghosts linger as harmful spiritual residues, often unnamed with unfinished business. Grogue, a sugarcane-based spirit of Cabo Verde, is analogous to the ghost, as a lingering, often harmful byproduct of a sugar plantation economy that spread through the Atlantic world beginning in the fifteenth century. The ghost of grogue continues to ensnare contemporary Cabo Verdean society as a haunting commodity often with ill effects. This paper considers these lingering societal and public health harms from grogue in contemporary Cabo Verde as well as harm mitigation strategies underway to battle these spirits. Through a review of the 2019 Alcohol Law, extant research on alcohol-related harms, government alcohol cessation campaigns and reports, and through interviews with health officials, treatment facilities, and grogue producers, this paper examines the consequences of drinking grogue in Cabo Verde. This study finds new legislation to help manage the long shadow of grogue. Laws, campaigns, and treatment facilities work to establish a new normal around the use of alcohol in Cabo Verde to ensure that these spirits are safer to drink and are consumed responsibly. Purveyors of grogue are keenly aware of its harmful effects, often distinguishing between good and bad grogue by their effects on people. Do these efforts such as the harm reduction campaign "Menos Álcool Mais Vida" help banish this evil specter without diminishing the cultural and economic importance of grogue?

Presenter(s): Brandon Lundy

Co-author(s): Monica Swahn, Nancy Hoalst-Pullen, Mark Patterson

The Ghost in the Glass

Alcohol is a diaphanous spirit. Culturally, metaphorically, philosophically, psychologically and socially, alcohol functions as an unseen presence in use and effect, action and consequence. It honors the dead as an offering to mourners, a remembrance of the deceased, or sacrificed to the gods who govern the afterlife. Metaphorically it is understood to elevate the mind, causing a spiritous reaction and the liberation of an interior unseen self. Philosophically it encourages analysis of character (in vino veritas), intention, consequences, moral reflection and social shame. Users become psychologically possessed by alcohol and by the ghosts of past actions that linger as lifelong and even intergenerational traces and trauma. Socially it is bound by unacknowledged rules of comportment and perception; the alcoholic becomes a social wraith subject to sanction

and shame. Because of such tension, alcohol can become an intentionally avoided linguistic referent - alluded to obliquely with poetic wordcraft that obscures intoxication. Among drinkers and those in recovery, the ghost of alcohol's active presence is felt but rarely acknowledged, a lacuna circled nervously like that cold spot in the room where, perhaps, someone died. Because alcohol's effects are so freighted and conflicted the natural impulse is to look away, to ignore, to hope it isn't there. Like a ghost, we fear its presence while simultaneously questioning its existence, so we can live in peace with our haunting.

Presenter(s): Janet Chrzan

Distilling Connections from Cradle to Grave: Rakija's Role in Serbian Culture

Rakija, Serbia's iconic fruit brandy, is far more than a drink—it is a profound symbol of cultural identity and continuity that permeates every stage of life and type of interaction. Distilled from plums, apricots, and many other fruits, rakija holds a revered place in Serbian households and traditions. It is offered to guests as a gesture of hospitality, used in toasts at weddings and christenings, and shared solemnly at funerals and memorials. From cradle to grave, rakija marks life's milestones. One of its most sacred roles is within the Slava, a UNESCO-recognized intangible cultural heritage practice unique to Serbia, in which families annually honor their patron saint. Distillation of homemade rakija, legal in Serbia, uses traditional methods passed down through generations. It is a symbol of regional pride and familial identity. Rakija is also served at business meetings, in tourist sites, and is exported for consumption around the world. Commercial distilleries are expanding and refining their product, winning awards, and taking a place in beverage tourism. The number one tourist souvenir in Serbia is rakija. Our work involves making 3D tours of rakija distilleries, spectral digital twins if you will, for tourism promotion of this iconic beverage. Whether in celebration, mourning, business dealings, everyday social gatherings, or tourism, rakija is a liquid thread that weaves through Serbian life and is integral to the spirit that defines the Serbian people.

Presenter(s): Brooke Hansen

Co-author(s): Laura Harrison

Sugar Cane Spirits and the Purging of Pain in Cabo Verde

Alcohol consumption has a long-entwined history with colonialism, labor exploitation, violence, and addiction. These have been the subject of countless studies on indigenous people's vulnerability, subjugation, and dependence from alcohol consumption brought about by European conquest. Here I propose a more nuanced understanding of alcohol use in Cabo Verde by focusing on the medical and healing use of grogue and its derivatives, which is a sugar cane spirit that is locally produced and sold across formal and informal markets, in the islands and across its diaspora. In Cabo Verde's diaspora, grogue has the synesthetic sensorial capacity to heal from sodadi or the longing for the homeland. It fulfills the desire for encomendas di terra, those gifts from the homeland that are locally produced and that have a unique capacity to smell and taste like home. In addition, in the islands this spirit heals multiple ailments, eases social relations with the

dead and the living, and allegedly cures multiple maladies by purging away pain and relieving the stress of poverty. I will draw on my ethnographic research and translation of a rich literary tradition to illustrate how grogue is not just a drink but a potent multipurpose spirit that has been fully creolized and added value that surpasses that which is commonly attributed alcoholic drinks.

Presenter(s): Isabel Rodrigues

1969 Curiosity: Anthropology and/after Ian Hacking

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

It has become a commonplace for anthropologists to draw inspiration from philosophy. This traffic of ideas have only rarely worked the other way round. There are some exceptions, most notably Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. And then, there is Ian Hacking. Hacking was a versatile thinker and a prolific writer covering a wide range of topics. As he explained in several interviews, what tied together these diverse topics was his curiosity. "Curiosities for the Ingenious" is also the motto of one of his books. In his oeuvre, Hacking was inexhaustibly curious about anthropology. Throughout his life, he was in an extended conversation and collaboration with numerous anthropologists, while drawing on their work, ranging from Mary Douglas, Philippe Descola, Bruno Latour, Paul Rabinow, Michael Lambek and Scott Atran to name a few. This roundtable is the first systematic attempt to interrogate Ian Hacking's lasting and ingenious curiosity about anthropology. In turn, drawing on this curiosity and the themes Hacking explored (including biosociality, classifications, language and incommensurability, laboratory science, making up people, memory, probability, styles of reasoning), it asks: What might an Ian Hacking-inspired curious anthropology look like?

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: David Henig

Presenter(s): Michael Lambek, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Talia Dan-Cohen, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Tanya Luhmann, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Stephan Palmié, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Roy Grinker, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Andrew Lakoff

7629 Ghost Busters: Understanding vulnerability and precarity as resources for resistance

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Last year, this IG proposed a similar session. We asked: what happens if vulnerability and precarity are conceived of as fertile-really necessary-grounds and resources for exploring resistance (Butler,

Gambetti, & Sabsay, 2016)? We challenged ourselves and welcomed others to reorient and reframe discourses and understandings surrounding communities and nation states forced into living under precarious (im)material conditions. Panelists responded with new, intriguing, and humane formulations for what it means to be vulnerable, and what it means to resist (Deslile, 2024; Niesz, 2024; Ullman, 2024; Wright, 2024). They reminded us that "new" and powerful stories of resistance are formulated, written, and performed every day and everywhere people's bodies, dignities, cultures, and humanities are under assault; we learned that any story about vulnerable peoples living under precarious conditions is a story about resistance.

This year, the annual meeting theme is about past (and present) "ghosts" and their haunting grips on the present, the individual and collective imagination. This interest group wants to continue its exploration of vulnerability and precarity as necessary, rich grounds for thinking about and expanding what it means to resist and defy ghosts. We are making space for (counter)stories, theoretical insights, and epistemic considerations that center and honor people forced into vulnerable and precarious living conditions as embodied sources and resources of resistance, as living acts of defiance, and rejection of past ghosts that still dominate most of our institutions, policies, politics, and value systems.

It is important to reiterate that our adoption of vulnerability and precarity here stands in direct opposition of-in fact, it's a rebuke to-mainstream and paternalistic conceptions of the term as meaning or describing someone or a people as "passive (or in need of protection)" (Butler, Gambetti, & Sabsay, 2016, p. 3). As renowned essayist and novelist Ta-nehisi Coates (2021) puts it during a recent lecture, referring to people who were subjected to sexual violence as "rape survivors" (as opposed to victims) is not about "being politically correct" (or woke); it's about acknowledging an act of (embodied) resistance; it's about honoring a people's humanity and vulnerability in the face of catastrophe.

While the intended focus of this panel is on precarity and vulnerability as sources of resistance against ghosts in the US and abroad, proposals included in this panel speak to various forms of individual/group/community resistance to sociopolitical norms, policies, systems of education (broadly conceived). Given this current oppressive political climate, we contend that this IG's continued exploration of vulnerability and precarity can help us think about, develop, new or more suitable frameworks for understanding and resisting the resurgence of past ghosts that have haunted our lives these last few months.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Thierry Elin-Saintine, Stockton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Jonathan Larson, Grinnell College

Chair: Thierry Elin-Saintine, Stockton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Chenyu Wang, Hamilton College, Claire Menck, Taku Suzuki, Denison University, Jonathan Larson, Grinnell College, Zakir Aydagul

Discussant: Thierry Elin-Saintine, Stockton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presentation(s): Refusing Inclusion: When DEI Meets Chinese Nationalism

How do Chinese international students—primarily middle- and upper-class, globally mobile subjects—make sense of DEI initiatives in North American universities? What forms of politics emerge as they navigate institutional discourses that both racialize and valorize them? This paper explores how their engagement with DEI reveals an ironic co-production of Chinese nationalism and the essentialization of "Asian culture" in U.S. higher education. Drawing on two moments of conflict between Chinese international students and a campus Asian Student Union (ASU), this paper examines how DEI logics become entangled with transnational politics. These moments show how a form of self-proclaimed vulnerability can emerge through compulsory legibility—being made visible only through narrow institutional frames like "Asian," "diverse," or "international." Rather than reflecting structural disenfranchisement, this vulnerability is articulated by students who feel misrecognized within liberal DEI frameworks. Chinese international students' refusal of institutional DEI is not a turn toward conservative politics, but a response to their ambivalent positioning. This claimed vulnerability becomes a political stance through which Chinese international students actively challenge dominant models of inclusion and raise new questions about how legitimacy and recognition operate in global education systems.

Presenter(s): Chenyu Wang

Recipes of Resistance: Community-Led Agriculture and Food Production as a Form of Personal and Communal Self-Care

Food is a biological necessity; perhaps because of this, its history is steeped in social rituals. These acts exist in all five stages of food production: production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal. This paper is founded on ethnographic, participatory action research carried out in New Orleans, Louisiana, five years after Hurricane Katrina during the BP oil spill in 2010 through the current day in the urban agriculture movement in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The initial study in New Orleans differentiated between quick onset disasters like a hurricane in contrast to the slower onset disaster of the BP oil spill. The research focused on three embedded case studies as well as dozens of individual interviews with members of the food system. This foundational work established the role food systems play in response to and preparation for critical change events. These stories offer us recipes for resistance to devastating and powerful political and environmental forces. This paper examines how communities like those of New Orleans and Milwaukee have worked to exorcise the demons of past disasters, both environmental and political, through urban food systems that call to the rituals and activities of the ancestors of the community. In this way, food becomes a tool for the reclamation of the community's spirit and a tangible entity for building more healthy, localized, sustainable, and resilient contemporary people facing modern life.

Presenter(s): Claire Menck

We are here today, and we will be here tomorrow: Joy of survival among the liminally legal migrants and asylum seekers in Japan

While an increasing body of anthropological research has examined the precarious lives of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers facing severely restricted rights, relatively few studies address how these individuals—those with what Menjívar (2006) calls "liminal legality"—actually survive and build lives in their destination countries, often for years. Existing research that highlights the resistive potential of liminally legal migrants, meanwhile, tends to focus on overt political actions such as protest rallies, community organizing, or labor strikes, positing these as representative forms of subaltern resistance. However, this emphasis overlooks the reality that most of these liminally legal migrants and asylum seekers do not overtly participate in collective action. The ghosts of a long-standing bifurcation in anthropological approaches to vulnerable populations—either emphasizing their socioeconomic desperation or romanticizing their political resistance (Constable, 2014)—must be challenged. This paper argues that this can be done through painstakingly portraying the everyday acts of survival of these "precarious" subjects and their allies, who strive to find joy in the mundane, and improve their conditions despite a permanently temporary legal status that bars them from full political or economic citizenship. Pragmatic tactics and flexible support networks are not merely about sustaining "bare" life but also about pursuing "good," fulfilling.

Presenter(s): Taku Suzuki

Scaling vulnerability: Exploring "inclusion" in the making of EU educational policy space

This paper explores the keyword of "inclusion" as constitutive of the "worlds" (Shore, Wright, and Però 2011) or "spaces" (Lawn and Lingard 2002) of the European Union's social policies, including education. Claiming often to aim to support "those with fewer opportunities," the EU constructs itself as a figure of parental care. To the extent that the EU has constructed a role for itself in educational policy as part of its "scalar" European project (see contributions in Carr and Lempert 2016), it has done so through arguments about the "vulnerability" of industries, labor in a globalizing world, racially othered migrants not integrated into their communities, "European values," national identities, and the haunted nature of postcolonial Europe. Drawing inspiration from work that has sought to apply Judith Butler's work on vulnerability (Scheibmayr 2023; Tyler 2019), this paper traces through policy documents the development of "inclusion" in the EU from attention to poverty to concerns of diversity and inclusion in education. The ongoing nature of such projects points to the inability of the EU to achieve the invulnerability of its constituents, in part because of an ongoing refusal of these constituents to accept the proposed means and terms of those projects. The paper concludes with a consideration of how the vulnerabilities of the European projects of inclusion have intertwined the vulnerabilities of the European project and communities that it marginalizes.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Larson

Negotiating Vulnerability: University Autonomy and the Haunting of Authority in Turkish Higher Education, 1992-2016

This paper examines the transformation of university autonomy in Turkey from 1992 to 2016. Through a comparative case study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) and drawing on interviews with former high-level officials, university rectors, and faculty members, I analyze how vulnerability functions as both a constraint and a potential resource for resistance. The findings reveal that Turkey's post-2016 authoritarian shift significantly diminished once-meaningful negotiation spaces for rectors, transforming how university autonomy is contested. The post-1980 coup design of Turkish university governance created a powerful central body (YÖK) and strong rectors. Drawing on Butler's (2016) understanding that "freedom can be exercised only if there is enough support for the exercise of freedom," I argue that the introduction of rector primaries in 1992 represented a mobilization that aimed to "create, keep, or open the platform for political expression itself." Faculty gained a collective voice in selecting the rector(s) would negotiate their 'double-layer vulnerability'. Rectors negotiated based on shifting constellations of individual traits, institutional culture, and political economy, reflecting Butler's insight that bodies exist in "dependency on other bodies and networks of support." However, post-2016, a 'black hole of authority' emerged, an overwhelming gravitational force, that consumed these negotiation spaces, university actors, and academic freedom.

Presenter(s): Zakir Aydagul

Discussion

2965 Where Our Ghosts Took Us: Reflections from East Asian Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As anthropologists of East Asia, the ghosts we encountered in graduate school were specters of structural inconsistency, those who died young, those who died away from home, often in violent circumstances, those who died with regrets. In the field, we met the ghost as an agentic presence moving action, driving events intended to resolve a troubled mingling of living and dead, often in the intimacy of families but sometimes bearing witness to larger issues of political grievance and mass violence. The ghost was a presence made vivid in rituals, dreams, or stories. Sometimes pursuing the ghost led us down unexpected pathways, challenging us to address new questions in our work and leading us to places we might not otherwise have gone.

The presenters in this panel, all seasoned anthropologists, describe how field encounters with ghosts inflected their subsequent research and writing. Our discussants, two PhD candidates, raise questions and pose challenges. Laurel Kendall engaged with the unsettled dead in Korean shaman ritual, trying to understand how these rituals "worked," how they became emotionally compelling, she found herself enmeshed in the question of how ghosts become real through the visual, aural, and tactile properties of the ritual, from tears to puppetry. Anru Lee focuses on how the affect of haunting not only has the potential to correct historical wrongs but can also become

an instrument of capitalism. She explores how, in East Asian cultural contexts where ill death has to be amended and the sociality between the living and the dead has to be restored, ghosts can sometimes become cultural commodities because people fear or feel for them. In his research on the funeral sector in urban China, Andrew Kipnis encountered ghosts not only in cemeteries but more forcefully in the silences around actions taken but never discussed to avoid, appease and settle the spirits of the dead. He asks, "How can we secularists deal with what we feel but don't quite believe?". Laura Miller had researched yin yang masters (onmyōji) who were tasked with dealing with malicious ghosts and had taught a course on ghosts in Japan for more than a decade. When her recent research turned to "Kofun Mania," popular interest in ancient burial sites in Japan, she discovered, to her surprise, that people are doing many corny and fun things related to kofun, evading the point that powerful ghosts may be within the vicinity, even making the person in the tomb into a cute mascot or figure.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Laurel Kendall, American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Laurel Kendall, American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology, Anru Lee, CUNY - John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Laura Miller, University of Missouri St. Louis, Andrew Kipnis, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Discussant: Gennie Zhang, University of Cambridge, Leah Wasil, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu | AnthroClub

7781 Routine (Dis)possessions: The Haunting of Land and Property Regimes

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Dispossession from land is often perceived through moments of spectacular, overt violence, and economic exploitation, but its most pervasive forms are enacted through legal and bureaucratic mechanisms that redefine land, property, and ownership. This panel explores the routine forms of governance, documentation, and property regimes that produce possession and dispossession across settler-colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Worldwide, the conditions of capitalism, globalization, and development coupled with racialization and majoritarianism have fostered a politics of space and place that have left minority communities vulnerable to land dispossession. As an organizing principle we recognize that property is a marker of exclusivity, exposing how people's relations to resources and each other are inextricably tied back to ownership or the lack thereof. Property, specifically land, has long mattered relationally, with rights and privileges to property establishing modes of political, social, and economic access, but also exclusion that fosters dispossession and inequality. Just as property acquisition matters relationally, dispossession and possession additionally reflects consistently shifting political and social relations. Within property regimes built upon histories of

settler colonialism, imperialism, and enslavement, dispossession can take on a specter-like reality, consistently reappearing as a condition within the afterlife of the colonial. In this way, the seemingly mundane bureaucratic interaction for some becomes a fester of dispossession for others.

Anthropologists have long examined the relationship between land tenure and governance, but recent scholarship has highlighted how dispossession is increasingly produced through mundane bureaucratic procedures, legal classifications, inscription devices, and so on. This panel seeks to advance anthropological engagements with land and property regimes by interrogating how possession and dispossession are structured through governance. Colonial legacies, climate change, and neoliberal development policies amidst the resurgence of right-wing politics are reconfiguring the tensions between marginalization, property ownership, rights, and communities marked by differences of race, caste, ethnicity, religion, and others. By turning our anthropological attention to this dynamic coding and recording of land and property regimes, we better attune our anthropological senses to forms of dispossession that haunt, re-appearing in new forms but with familiar effect.

Through examining dispossession as routine, this panel asks how the haunting of land and property regimes have shifted our collective recognition of dispossession, how it takes shape, and how like a specter it moves and shifts across space and time.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Shikha Nehra, Stanford University, Kristin McFadden, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kristin McFadden, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Shikha Nehra, Stanford University, Kristin McFadden, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Melville, Teachers College, Columbia University

Discussant: Kregg Hetherington, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Shifting Land and Floating Citizens: Navigating Reoccurring Dispossession in Assam, India

This paper explores the entanglements of riverine environments with regimes of property and possession to show how land erosion impacts Muslim inhabitants and their experiences of citizenship in Assam, along the India-Bangladesh border. Citizenship is tied to a person's situated location within a nation-state that forms the basis of property and rights. However, in riverine areas, erosion and accretion transforms land and property from a place of dwelling to a space that can only be located through its geographic coordinates. This paper examines how Muslims citizens navigate climate-induced land dispossession in the Brahmaputra River basin in a Hindu majoritarian post-colonial state that perceives them as undocumented immigrants from Bangladesh. Land tenure system of permanent settlement and propertied class relations during British colonial rule led to the settlement of Bengali Muslim tenants in riverine areas of Assam since late 19th century. While the post-colonial Indian state brought land ownership reform and property rights for these tenants, the annual land erosion and absence of bureaucratic record for land loss

has made this population vulnerable to disenfranchisement. The paper draws on ethnographic data and legal cases to show how this vulnerability is produced through—the recoding of property rights for landless people; exclusive land rights for native Assamese people; and excessive use of public authority to refuse claims from erosion-affected Muslim families.

Presenter(s): Shikha Nehra

Fungible (Dis)possession: Heirs Property and Bureaucratic Illegibility in South Carolina

Analogized as a bundle of rights, in the United States, property ownership is imbued with rights of possession, control, use, enjoyment and disposition. But what happens when those rights are easily mutable or disavowed? Moreover, how might bureaucratic and legal process produce shifting rights for some landowners? For Black landowners in South Carolina, occupying the obscure legal category of heirs property ownership, collective ownership exposes them to increased risk of dispossession. Heirs property—broadly defined as property without clear title but equally owned by the heirs of a deceased property owner—accounts for an estimated one-third of all Black owned property in the American South. In South Carolina, when a property owner dies intestate their property is distributed equally among their heirs. This can result in intergenerational shared ownership that multiplies over time, fostering bureaucratic uncertainty over ownership validity. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper explores Black land dispossession in South Carolina as a mutable constellation of processes facilitated by bureaucratic systems that render heirs property owners illegible, threatening Black land retention. Considering Black land dispossession as a condition within the afterlife of slavery, this paper additionally analyzes how a race-property matrix becomes reified through heirs property and its latent tensions with normative American interpretations of property ownership.

Presenter(s): Kristin McFadden

On the Steps of Modulada: Social Housing, Dispossession, and the Afterlives of Ownership in Southern Brazil

During Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's second administration, the federal government launched Minha Casa, Minha Vida (MCMV), a public housing program aimed at making homeownership accessible to millions of poor and working-class Brazilians. Since its inception in 2009, MCMV has expanded into the largest social housing program in Brazilian history, intended to alleviate poverty and promote upward mobility through homeownership. The program emphasizes principles of privatization and self-sufficiency, providing beneficiaries with temporary fiscal inclusion via debt and legal land tenure. However, ten years on, the long-term consequences of these policies have destabilized residents' lives, leading to threats of displacement.

This paper examines the social and material afterlives of MCMV construction in Ijuí, a rural city in southern Brazil. Through ethnographic research, it reveals how land allocation and contractor cost-cutting impact women in Beija Flor, a MCMV condominium. The deterioration experienced by residents results not just from market constraints but from a political project that used social housing as a tool for patronage. By analyzing the moral economies that justify concessions to

housing infrastructure, the paper argues that public funding for privately built social housing has failed to provide feasible pathways to safety and social mobility for many of these women.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Melville

Discussion

5092 The future is a foreign country: Operationalizing and acting on the world to come (Part 2)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In 2025, the futures for many look grim. Authoritarian forms of governance are gaining traction in much of the world, while for many people "getting by" (Kideckel 2008) and "making do" (de Certeau 1984) remain the norm. State and corporate colonialism continue to promote cultures of extractivism and frustrate grassroots efforts for sovereignty and self-determination. Climate disasters are increasing their severity and damage, forcing many to flee or abandon their homes, while the world experienced its hottest year on record in 2024. As a discipline that sheds light on inequality and oppression and seeks solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed, anthropology today often seems focused on the darker aspects of human existence (Ortner 2016) that lead to particular projections of the future, such as apocalypse.

While imagining a future in crisis can be productive for action, it runs the risk of forgoing the historical realities that lead to such framing. Further, affective reactions to an apocalyptic future may undermine the power of present-day actions, leading to the materialization of unwanted futures through inaction (Wolf-Meyer 2019). Alternately, far from encouraging paralytic inaction, anthropologists studying climate change, history and memory, speculative futures, and disasters can highlight the ways that various communities operationalize imagined and hoped-for futures. In this panel, we ask what futures people imagine for their communities and the concrete actions they take to materialize futures that at first appear spectral and uncertain. Inspired by conceptual engagements with the past, we take Keith Basso's placemaking lens to the future. Through placemaking our "country of the present" becomes suffused with historical imagination from the "country of the past" (Basso 1996, 5). If we come to understand and make our present through actions of remembering and imagining, how might those same actions help us to understand and make the country of the future?

Part 2 of this panel engages with imagining and operationalizing the country of the future through the lens of crisis, collapse, and recovery. Panelists discuss the ways that individuals and societies have begun to reassess their priorities and values in the face of past, present, and future disasters. These reflections may take the form of decades-long journeys – learning about the proper relations amongst humans and other beings (Menzies) or our ever-shifting understanding of societal risks and vulnerabilities and how to address them (Hoffman). Other papers discuss how communities navigate uncertain environmental futures in the face of crisis, whether amongst 'anti-

civilizationalists' in the Pacific Northwest (Thompsett), university students in a California classroom (Tebbe), or communities shaping their Vancouver neighborhoods (Eaton).

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Kailey Rocker, Wilkes University, Jonathan Eaton, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kailey Rocker, Wilkes University

Presenter(s): Charles Menzies, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Fern Thompsett, Margaret Tebbe, University of California, Irvine, Jonathan Eaton, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Susanna Hoffman

Discussant: Margaret Wiener, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Seeing the future in our past

Gitxaala, a north coast Canadian First Nation, is a people rooted in the past in a way that prioritizes planning for the future. hagwil hayetsk (this paper's author) is a member of Gitxaala. This presentation draws upon his reflections and research gathered over the course of a lifetime. Gitxaala history tells of times in our past when we forgot ourselves, we broke our relations with other beings and treated them with cruelty. Our histories tell how we were then met with calamity – tidal waves, floods, landslides, and famine was our reward. In the aftermath our ancestors who survived rekindled our proper relations with other beings and returned to knowing who we were. Our current world is one in which people have globally lost knowledge of who they are, living in a moment of individualist self-aggrandizing. This presentation reflects on the solutions communities like Gitxaala hold for the global society, how our past brings forward a vision of resilience and attachment to place that counters the depravity of extractivism.

Presenter(s): Charles Menzies

“I view this place as a lifeboat”: Imagining futures beyond civilization

What motivates people to build alternative worlds on the threshold of the world's end? The anti-civilization movement emerged in the Pacific Northwest during the 1980s, and is composed mostly of white, working-class people. The movement identifies civilization—colonial, agricultural, extractivist society—as the primary source of ecological and social oppression. Civilizations are also defined within anti-civilizationist (and some archaeological) theory as predestined to collapse through the overconsumption of natural resources. Today, many anti-civilizationists argue that we are witnessing the initial stages of collapse for the largest civilization ever to exist. In response, they devote themselves to developing microcosms in which more just and sustainable ways of living may prevail, often by forming land-based intentional communities based on principles of mutualism. As part of this justice-oriented project, they seek in complex ways to support Indigenous sovereignty from their positions as settlers. In these endeavors, they are inspired as much by anthropological descriptions of stateless, non-agrarian societies, such those by James C. Scott, as they are by eco-anarchist speculative fiction writers including Starhawk. This paper draws

from fieldwork with two anti-civilizational communities in rural Washington to articulate members' differing senses of future possibilities, and of what it means to prefigure alternative worlds toward an uncertain horizon.

Presenter(s): Fern Thompsett

“On Tuesday we used EJScreen in class, and on Wednesday it was gone”: Imagining environmental futures under Trump

In California, the 2025 Winter term began with the Los Angeles wildfires and never calmed down. From Trump's inauguration and subsequent executive orders to the loss of key environmental and health data to the gutting of the federal government, we lurched from crisis to crisis. Undergraduates today, raised during a major recession, the first Trump administration, and the ever-present impacts of climate change, are no strangers to crisis. In this paper, I analyze how California youth imagine the future in the context of an undergraduate course on environmental injustice where crises repeatedly reached into the classroom. I draw on three years of ethnographic observations as a lead Teaching Assistant for the course, student work, and more than 70 interviews with students. Rather than being paralyzed by the scale and complexity of the problems they were presented with, students were drawn into the work of figuring out what comes next. Youth are experts in what Adriana Petryna (2022) calls "horizon work"—the challenge of imagining futures in the face of runaway change when existing knowledge fails. I argue that, though we should not abdicate responsibility for solving problems to the next generation, we should look to them as partners in this work.

Presenter(s): Margaret Tebbe

Imagining recovery as a form of placemaking: Anticipating disaster in Vancouver, Canada

People everywhere engage in practices of making place, drawing on their traditions, histories, beliefs, and values to form and express relationships with their environment and each other. At the same time, places and our connections to them are becoming increasingly precarious, whether from climate-related hazards such as wildfires or flooding, authoritarian political climates, prohibitive living costs, or unpredictable and seemingly unavoidable geological risks, such as earthquakes. This presentation draws on ethnographic research with two grassroots neighborhood groups in Vancouver, Canada to understand the ways that people constitute place through their values and how place-based expressions of values can contribute to future disaster recovery. Drawing on the term 'otherwise' as theorized by Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) and applied to contexts of disaster recovery by Aidan Seale-Feldman (2020), I demonstrate how my interlocutors' community-building and placemaking work draws a through-line from past to future as it holds unexpected potentiality for recovery, even and especially in anticipation of future disasters. By imagining and operationalizing future recovery efforts prior to disaster, present placemaking acts can lead to proactive rather than reactive responses to disaster risks and shape society for the better even in the prelude to disaster.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Eaton

After thirty-two years of disaster study: The enduring, the fading, and new horizons

In the face of crisis and incertitude over the last decades, time, research, expanded understanding, and new circumstances have shifted, deepened, widened, and altered many central platforms in anthropology, and certainly in the field of the anthropology of risk and disasters. Some postulations remain pertinent and valid. Others have become less accurate and efficacious. Others, once clear in definition, have become muddled or merged. At the same time, the disasters facing human communities have increased in frequency, magnitude, arena, and harm globally. From a thirty-year perspective of my particular engagement in the anthropology of risk and disasters, I address a number of the operative concepts, foci, assumptions and terms that have evolved, shifted, arisen, or come into question. These include among others, the scope of the notion of hazard going from explicit exposure to now incorporating the implicit, the distinction between probability and possibility when now much more is ever likely, and between vulnerability and precarity when exposure had shifted to constant, the returning need for deduction over induction as more overarching and less particular is needed, and more.

Presenter(s): Susanna Hoffman

Discussion

3878 Ghost Waters, Living Currents: Hauntings of the Deep in the Struggle for Maritime Justice

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The oceanic margins of the water masses of the world are saturated with ghosts. Along the coasts, beneath the waves, and within the currents, hauntings of extractive colonialism, racial dispossession, and epistemic erasure linger-shaping how marine and coastal environments are governed, inhabited, and imagined. This panel brings together anthropological engagements with the spectral life of the sea: how submerged histories of violence, eroded ecologies, and silenced knowledges resurface to inform present-day struggles for justice. We explore how oceanography-long dominated by militarized, technocratic, and colonial logics-is being reimagined through critical geography, ethnoecology, food sovereignty, and environmental justice, guided by the voices and visions of coastal peoples.

Drawing on case studies across the seven seas, panelists examine how alternative development projects open space for multivocal maritime rights and participatory governance, even as they contend with ghostly legacies-of imperial expansion, ecological ruination, and scientific (social and biological) complicity. These watery ghosts are not just remnants; they are also agents. They guide, warn, and speak through human and more-than-human relations, stirring new political ecologies and ontological reorientations. We ask: How do the spectral inheritances of sea and shore help communities resist erasure, reclaim belonging, and rechart futures in marine worlds haunted by the past? And what role might anthropology play in listening to these ghost waters?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Nemer Narchi, El Colegio de Michoacan, Christine Beitzl, University of Maine

Chair: Christine Beitzl, University of Maine

Presenter(s): Christine Beitzl, University of Maine, Nemer Narchi, El Colegio de Michoacan, Maria Cruz-Torres, Arizona State University, Nicole Peterson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Victoria Ramenzoni, Rutgers University, Jana Kopelent-Rehak, Johns Hopkins University

Discussant: Keri Brondo, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies

Presentation(s): Submerged stories and specters of the past: How fishing heritage is leveraged to contest ocean renewable energy development

For over a decade, the State of Maine has been working to advance renewable energy and blue economy initiatives through advancing the development of offshore wind. Launched in 2019, the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative and Roadmap aims to engage directly with the fishing industry to promote transparency and comprehensive research in support of economic development, environmental protection, social equity, and the "preservation of Maine's traditions and culture." As multiple institutions coordinate to develop policies and regulatory frameworks to advance offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine, fishermen continue to raise concerns about competing uses of ocean spaces, industrialization of the ocean, and the future of their maritime history and heritage. In this presentation, I will describe our partnership with a state agency and a non-profit organization in our efforts to document fishermen's stories from the sea and provide a record of historical use of fishing grounds within the Gulf of Maine. Drawing on an analysis of ethnographic interviews and oral history data, our work explores how offshore wind development opens space for participatory governance while simultaneously perpetuating uneven risks and benefits in the Gulf of Maine region.

Presenter(s): Christine Beitzl

Co-author(s): Julia Hiltonsmith

Haunted Waters: Memory, Stewardship, and the Echoes of Extractivism in Baja California's Fisheries

Our presentation explores how the ghosts of extractivist histories linger in marine environments, shaping contemporary struggles over resource management and ecological care. Focusing on fishing cooperatives in the Baja California Peninsula, in Mexico, it traces how local communities navigate a seascape marked by the material and symbolic residues of past exploitation—overfishing, regulatory neglect, and shifting climatic regimes. In contrast to dominant narratives that cast fishers solely as extractors, this work reveals how they emerge as stewards who confront these hauntings through intentional, adaptive co-management practices. Drawing on ethnographic research and a detailed case study, our work shows how traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is mobilized alongside scientific principles to enact strategies such as selective harvesting,

translocation, and the creation of marine reserves. These practices reflect not only ecological sensibilities but also an ethical reckoning with the past—one in which sustainability is a form of resistance to the ghosts of collapse, and care for the sea becomes a way to reclaim agency over futures that were long foreclosed. By attending to the interplay of memory, environment, and human agency, this presentation contributes to a broader conversation about how landscapes—and seascapes—are haunted by prior regimes of exploitation, even as communities work to chart new, collaborative paths toward resilience and regeneration.

Presenter(s): Nemer Narchi

Out of the Shadows: Women's Work in Small-scale Fisheries in Puerto Rico

Although women in Puerto Rico perform different tasks in local fisheries, for the most part, their work has not been fully acknowledged, recognized or valued. There is also very little information how women's work in fisheries contributes to the overall food security of their households and communities. Understanding women's roles in the fisheries is not only necessary, but also imperative given the many economic and environmental changes facing coastal communities in Puerto Rico. This presentation discusses the specific tasks that women perform in the seafood supply chain. It examines their lived experiences and challenges to better understand the socio-ecological dynamics of small-scale fisheries in the Caribbean. Framed within a feminist political approach and based on ethnographic fieldwork, this presentation provides new research directions that can better guide the quest to advance gender equality in small-scale fisheries.

Presenter(s): Maria Cruz-Torres

Intangible matters: contesting access to resources and livelihoods in Mexican fisheries

Drawing on research in Loreto, Baja California Sur, Mexico, I use the concept of ghosts to explore how fisheries management and economic development rely on "ghosting" the knowledge and experiences of local fishing community residents—removing them from meaningful roles in policy planning. Even when terms like "participatory processes" or "alternative development" are invoked, such frameworks often relegate local input as exceptional rather than integral, reinforcing institutional control over what counts as participation or progress.

I argue that the ghostly nature of institutional power facilitates these erasures—rendering certain forms of knowledge and engagement intangible or invisible. Contrasting this spectral power with "matter" (suggesting materiality and legitimacy) helps us see how power becomes immaterial for some and concrete for others. Power, then, is the real ghost—its presence or absence shaped by who engages with it.

Community members have attempted to renegotiate their position through money, education, and networks, with uneven outcomes. By framing power through ghosts and matter, I call for a politics of perception—one that interrogates which people, values, and forms of knowledge are made to matter, and which are rendered spectral in struggles over development, environment, and livelihood.

Presenter(s): Nicole Peterson

Fishing in jinn riddled places: transitioning from open pelagic fishing to stationary platforms in Eastern Indonesia

In Eastern Indonesia, artisanal fishers are rapidly shifting harvesting technologies—from fishing in open pelagic waters to using floating platforms known as rumpon (fish aggregating devices). This shift has intensified competition and enabled elite capture, triggering a privatization rush over marine space. Yet many of these waters are believed to be inhabited by jinns and other spirits, making fishing a spiritually risky endeavor. As a result, fishers increasingly recite spells and revive traditional practices, asking permission from fish spirits near certain rumpuns.

This presentation explores how efforts to commodify and control marine space intersect with supernatural beliefs. We examine how fishing, far from being purely economic, entails navigating spiritual and ontological dimensions. Classic anthropological theories often frame ghosts and witches as mechanisms to regulate inequality. Building on and expanding this view, we consider how enchantment and spirit possession among fishers reveal a moral logic of exploitation—one that can align with wealth-seeking under specific conditions.

Interpreting the spread of rumpuns and resurgence of ritual through ecological theories of religion, we argue that mythical beings and haunted seascapes reflect the uncertain, shaping how fishers engage with the material and the mystical in an increasingly commodified maritime world.

Presenter(s): Victoria Ramenzoni

Ghost Trees, Ghost Plants, and Ghost Husbands

Women's grounds on Smith Island are shifting along with the shorelines washed by waves pushed from northeast winds. The rising sea level has turned the trees into ghosts. Marshland plants claim eroding soil under the brackish water, transforming garden flowers into islanders' memories. Marine animals are moving north as they seek cooler waters. The costly hard rock infrastructure solution has failed to protect the homes of aging women and the bodies of their buried husbands in the island's graveyard. This research looks at the experiences of women in late life who are forced to cohabit in a place with ghost trees, ghost plants, and ghost husbands

Presenter(s): Jana Kopelent-Rehak

Discussion

9082 Towards a new AAA Climate Change Task Force Report

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 3:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Sponsored by the Climate Change Interest Group

In December 2014, the AAA Global Climate Change Task Force (GCCTF) published a groundbreaking report documenting the state of anthropological knowledge on the human dimensions of climate change and offered a series of practical recommendations for the discipline to carry forward. Eleven years later, the world is a very different place. The role of anthropology in understanding cultural, political, and social dimensions of climate has become even more urgent—revealing whose voices are heard, whose are marginalized, and how climate futures are imagined and enacted across contexts. The purpose of this workshop is to initiate a much needed update to the first AAA GCCTF report.

8806 Writing Beyond the Academy: How to Break into Trade Publishing

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Workshop

Anthropologists are frequently called on to share their expertise with a diverse range of publics outside the confines of academia—from policymakers to civic organizations to the media. A critical part of this public engagement—and the place where it often begins—is the publication of a book with a “trade press” (i.e., a commercial, non-academic publisher, with a powerful marketing and publicity apparatus). Not all academics have a desire to do this kind of work. However, for those who do, there is often confusion about where to begin, and a lack of resources to help with the process. Worse, there are sometimes institutional disincentives, in the form of tenure clocks, skepticism from colleagues, or the pressure to produce “real scholarship” that advances the field.

This workshop is designed for scholars interested in better understanding the process of finding an agent, landing a commercial book deal, writing in a more accessible register and other skills related to making the transition into writing for the general public.

The workshop features concrete, actionable tips from trade book author John Ghazvinian and anthropologist Rebecca Lester. Ghazvinian has two decades of experience as a journalist and academic, having written for such publications as the New York Times, Newsweek, The Nation and the Washington Post. His most recent book is "America and Iran: A History, 1720 to the Present" (Knopf, 2022) -- named by the New York Times as one of "100 Notable Books of 2021". He is founding director of “Scholars to Storytellers” – an initiative aimed at helping senior academics engage with general audiences. Lester is an award-winning psychotherapist, author and academic coach, as well as a professor of anthropology at Washington University in St Louis. Her most recent book is the widely acclaimed "Famished: Eating Disorders and Failed Care in America "(2019).

1908 Unheard, Yet Present: Silence as a Transformative Classroom Force

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Silence is often framed within Western early childhood education as a deficit—a sign of disengagement, passivity, developmental concerns, or failure to participate fully in classroom discourse. This view assumes that voice and verbal expression are the primary means of learning, communication, and participation. We challenge these assumptions by rethinking how silence might be productively considered a form of resistance (MacLure, Holmes, Jones, & MacRae, 2010), unsettling the taken-for-granted logic of presence and considering silence as an active, affective force that resists adult-centric interpretation. Rather than viewing silence as a personal or individual act, we consider how it functions affectively—what forces it sets in motion. We agree with Ahmed (2004) that "Affect must be understood as both personal and more than personal, as 'intensity and force' that passes through persons with different histories and different circumstances, therefore coming into being with bodies that have different capacities to act" (cited in Boldt & Leander, 2020, p. 11). We conceptualize silence as a force that unsettles interpretation—resisting analysis and generating new thought (MacLure et al., 2010). Silence is not a void but a powerful presence—one that disrupts dominant classroom norms, challenges Western epistemologies of participation, and signals alternative ways of knowing and being.

We reconceptualize silence through stories from Turkey and Korea as former preschool teachers, examining its role in shaping relationships among students, teachers, and parents. How adults perceive students who refuse to speak reveals how silence, presence, and difference are constructed and reshaped through daily interactions. We explore how these relationships both influence and emerge through intersubjective dynamics. In this view, silence is not merely absence of speech but an affective force that opens possibilities for young learners to relate, resist, or act on their own terms, while entangled with relationships, institutional structures, and pedagogical expectations. Silence unsettles assumptions of clear communication and produces affective responses—frustration, anxiety, confusion, or fascination—among teachers, researchers, and peers. As MacLure et al. (2010) write, "Silence confounds interpretation and manifests, intolerably, the illusory status of speech as full 'presence' or living voice. Yet it also incites the search for meaning and is therefore productive" (p. 493).

This paper also examines how assumptions and expectations shape experiences of silence, deficiency, and participation. As emerging ethnographers, we reflect on how these dynamics intersect with broader trends in early childhood education. This autoethnographic study explores how we, too, became entangled in dichotomies of silence and agency. Thinking about silence as affect differently offers hope, possibility, and a renewed focus as researchers (Boldt & Leander, 2020, p. 16).

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Özge Ergin, Junghee Lee

Chair: Junghee Lee

Presenter(s): Junghee Lee, Özge Ergin, Seunghoon Han

Presentation(s): Unheard, Yet Present: Silence as a Transformative Classroom Force

This paper reconceptualizes children's silence not as a deficit, but as an active and affective force that challenges adult-centric interpretations of the centrality of language. Drawing on personal

classroom experiences in Korea and Turkey, we discuss how silence opens alternative pathways for agency and negotiation. We explore how it shapes and is shaped by intersubjective dynamics among teachers, students, and parents, questioning dominant norms that speech is essential for engagement. Through an autoethnographic lens, we reveal the potential of silence in rethinking classroom interactions, opening possibilities for inspiring critical perspectives in early childhood education.

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Presenter(s): Seunghoon Han

4167 Speculation and Its Specters

Start Date: 11/20/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Recently, anthropologists have used the analytic of speculation to describe an array of social practices, including how people make financial investments in emerging markets (Searle 2016), how people bet on horses (Puri 2020), and how families make decisions about college debt (Zaloom 2019).

Anthropological attention to speculation-as both objects of analysis and analytical tools-surged at the turn of the century. Emerging financial instruments fueled "fictitious capital," or investments that were not tied to the "real" production of goods or services but were instead measured by the imagined speculations of future earnings. Amidst the dot-com recession, anthropologists highlighted the historical development of this "financialization" (Lee and LiPuma 2004), capitalists' pursuit of "spectacular accumulation" (Tsing 2005), and the ways in which financiers speculated in global finance (Zaloom 2006; Ho 2009).

Noting how market financialization required the public's increasing tolerance for speculation (Preda 2009), scholars started examining how the logics, affects, and practices that fuel financialization manifest in domains far beyond the trading floor. Anthropologists have expanded the concept of speculation to describe and theorize social practices taking place across domains of urban development (Nam 2011; Searle 2016), emerging technologies (Sunder Rajan 2006; Messari 2024), and household decisions (Zaloom 2019; Musaraj 2020). This coincides with the emergence of "speculative anthropologies" working to actualize the "political potentialities" of a liberatory "otherwise" (Anderson et al. 2018).

This broadening analytical use of speculation begs the question of how the concept differs from those used to describe other seemingly similar practices, including prediction (Mathews and Barnes 2016), motive (Mathias, Yount, and Morton forthcoming), hope (Miyazaki 2013) and aspiration (Mathew and Lukose 2020), "horizoning" (Petryna 2022), and anticipation (Weszkalnys 2014). This roundtable thus asks: What, if any, are the analytical affordances and limitations of conceptualizing some social practices as "speculative"? What, if anything, makes those practices distinct? Semiotically, do they differ from practices of prediction, motivation, aspiration, and the like? Are those distinctions tied to social domains and historical junctures (Bear 2020), temporality and affect (Bryant and Knight 2019), and/or processes of "mediatization" (Agha 2011) and "enrupture" (Kockelman 2016)? Is there something about these practices that makes them particularly impactful or significant in shaping social worlds and, hence, important for anthropologists to study? Members of the roundtable will engage these questions through their ethnographic explorations of "speculative" practices across contexts of labor development (Peng), real estate valuation (Stephens), migration and mobility (Morton; Yount), and sustainable financing (Begim).

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Jessica Peng, Lehigh University, Rachael Stephens

Presenter(s): Jessica Peng, Lehigh University, Rachael Stephens , Gregory D Morton , Chelsie Yount, Leiden University, Ainur Begim

Discussant: Paul Kockelman, Yale University, Llerena Searle, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology

3811 Reflexive Anthropology and John Borneman's "I Was Married to a Horse, and Other Tales by an Accidental Anthropologist."

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

HAU Books, the publisher, has been a leader in insisting on links between traditions within anthropology and changing research objects and new forms of ethnographic writing. This panel will focus on HAU Books' recently published narrative nonfiction/memoir/ethnography, "I Was Married to a Horse, and other Tales of an Accidental Anthropologist" by John Borneman. Our focus is on how "reflexivity" is changing the nature of ethnography and ethnographic writing. A concept at least a century old, reflexivity has become quite popular—and contentiously debated—in both the humanities and social sciences. This renewed interest in reflexivity is connected to the related term "participant observation"—the epistemology dominant in socio-cultural anthropology since Malinowski. Like reflexivity, participant observation has also been subject to much recent critique, ignoring anthropology's grounding in questions of perception to refocus on the authority of the anthropologist.

Scholars across disciplines now claim to be reflexive, effacing the links to traditional meanings of participant observation, and inevitably leading to a proliferation of meanings with effects both within and between disciplinary approaches. Borneman's challenges this unsettled moment by integration the memoir and the autobiographical into the epistemology of ethnographic reflection.

This roundtable will reflect on: (1) the relation of the ethnographer to their own history and that of their interlocutors; (2) the relation of the ethnographer to participation and to their interlocutors, (3) the epistemology of the ethnographer in the face of challenges presented by Big Data and overwhelming amounts of online information; (4) the status of truth and authority in contemporary anthropological writing; (5) the relation of scenes and events to structures in the writing of fieldwork- or encounter-based research; (6) the changing relation of anthropological writing to different literary and ethnographic traditions.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Frederic Keck

Presenter(s): Michael Herzfeld , Laurie Hart, University of California, Los Angeles, Robert Weller, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Casey High, University of Edinburgh

Discussant: John Borneman, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

314 Society for the Anthropology of Work Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Jennifer Shaw , Kathryn Stam, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Sofía Vicente-Vidal, University of Oregon, Department of Anthropology, Wahid Al Mamun , Sierra Sarver , Susan Tratner , ILQUA LUTFI , Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, Montgomery College, Rockville, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jennifer Shaw, Kathryn Stam, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Sofía Vicente-Vidal, University of Oregon, Department of Anthropology, Wahid Al Mamun, Sierra Sarver, Susan Tratner, ILQUA LUTFI, Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, Montgomery College, Rockville, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): "Now I Feel All That Pain": The Embodiment of Migrant Care Work and Debility in Canada

This flash presentation engages Jasbir Puar's (2017) concept of the "biopolitics of debilitation" to explore how care work performed by temporary migrant workers-often racialized women-in Canada is not only precarious but also debilitating, physically wearing, and pain-inducing. Canadian scholarship has shed light on migrant workers' constrained legal status, uncertain pathways to permanence, and second-class citizenship shaped by dwindling access to permanent residence (Pratt 2012; Shaw 2025; Stasiulis and Bakan 2005; Tungohan 2023; Walia 2010). Yet there has been less attention paid to the embodied, affective, and health-related dimensions of this labour, including its material and sensory effects on the body. In speaking about the difficult nature of care work alongside precarious immigration status and long-term family separation, care workers reflect on broken bones, back pain, anemia, sleep deprivation, weight loss, and heartache. The embodied toll of care work and its debilitating effects are especially relevant in Canada's post-Live-in Caregiver Program era, as newer care work streams continue to expose workers to difficult and degrading conditions. Drawing on community-based research with migrant care workers in British Columbia, I examine how narratives of pain, fatigue, disease, and bodily exhaustion point to debilitation as a lived, embodied experience of precarity. I also reflect on how certain labour and immigration programs are upheld as symbols of a caring, inclusive Canada, while the individuals within them are rendered invisible-and their injuries and wear treated as acceptable collateral within a racialized care economy.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Shaw

Educational and Career Choice for Refugee Students Across Cultures

Refugee-hub cities such as Utica, NY have been welcoming refugees into their communities since the late 1970s. In Utica, the refugee population makes up one-fourth of the city's population and the city's character has been changed visibly and in countless other ways. The refugees are credited for saving the city's economic and cultural life after massive population decline due to industry changes.

However, refugees' work experiences and perspectives on working in the American system are not well known across cultures. This study's goal is the development of best practices for refugee community members through understanding cultural perspectives on job training, employment, and careers. In order to increase STEAM participation by refugee families, it is important to

understand their experiences and perspectives, and the contexts with which they approach the worlds of school and work.

Using grounded theory and visual anthropology approaches, we are conducting interviews with refugee family members about their experiences and perspectives on STEAM education, job training, early jobs in any field, their knowledge of the requirements to join STEAM fields, and their perceptions of obstacles to entry. We are reviewing family photographs from before and after resettlement to further understand context. All family members who influence family decisions about the future are invited to participate. Coming from war-torn countries including Burma, Sudan, and Bhutan, and having lived in refugee camps for years, the contextual and cultural backgrounds of the participants remain relevant to their willingness to enter STEAM fields, even many years after resettlement. This project addresses the process of culture change and the resilience of communities as they adapt to their new lives and contribute to their new communities.

Presenter(s): Kathryn Stam

Co-author(s): Margaret Wehrer

Find Yourself in Tulum: Gig Labor, Tourism Development, & Soul-Searching in the Mexican Caribbean.

This research explores the lives of migrant freelance gig-workers who provide services in the informal economy of spiritual wellbeing and party entertainment offerings, which are in demand by tourist consumers in Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico. The gig workers who provide these services are domestic migrants from other states in Mexico and foreign migrants from Argentina, who have established a robust diaspora in Tulum. This project confronts the paradox inherent in spiritual tourism: the consumption of products marketed as aiding in emotional and physical wellbeing which necessitates the labor exploitation, and compromises the wellbeing, of the freelance gig-workers who uphold this informal economy so vital to the broader tourism economy of Tulum. It addresses the ways migrant freelance gig-workers navigate the specific precarities of their work-lives by living in shared rooms in hostels to save rent costs or by volunteering their labor in exchange for room and board. Additionally, it illustrates the network of mutual aid among freelance gig workers established by the Argentine diaspora. Through in-depth ethnographic methods of participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, and life-histories, this research highlights the informal economy that undergirds tourism in Tulum, the lives of the workers who uphold this vital aspect of tourism, and how this class of workers further complicates the racial hierarchies already present in Tulum's tourism labor force. Finally, it explores potential policy recommendations that seek to mitigate the stresses that hinder worker wellbeing, specifically challenges in securing affordable housing and ensuring they receive full pay for services provided.

Presenter(s): Sofía Vicente-Vidal

Haunted Precarities: Towards a Spectral Politics of Migrant Worker Poetry in Singapore

How does migrant worker poetry in Singapore circulate precarity as a form of communal experience among migrant worker poets? How does this circulation inaugurate new imaginative possibilities for thinking about how migrant workers envisage themselves as durable political agents from the edge of precarious existence in Singapore? I retrace two separate, high-profile incidents involving two male, nondomestic migrant worker poets from Bangladesh deported from Singapore between 2022 and 2024. Tellingly, both poets alleged on social media that they were deported in part because the poems that they published on public channels were critical of the Singaporean government—an allegation that was confirmed, in one case, by the country's Minister of Manpower, who claimed that a poem had spread "misleading, false, or deliberately provocative" news. How, then, can migrant worker poetry reconfigure deportation and precarity? Through a digital ethnographic study of social media posts, exchanges, social actions, and poems in the wake of both deportations, I consider how migrant worker poets apprehend their lived precarity not merely as a singularly present and material fact, but as a haunted object that can move forwards and backwards in time. Responding in part to Byron Good's call for a renewed haunthropological ethics (2019), I ask how the haunted object of precarity allows migrant workers to look for a relational ethics rooted in what I term as "haunted precarity". A theory of haunted precarity challenges predominant narratives of migrant labor precarity framed within the immediate present, which can only register migrant workers within a bounded neoliberal temporality of constraint. Instead, a haunted precarity is one that reverberates and sticks, illuminating forms of life that elude and exceed state control over migrant worker space and time. Additionally, this view of precarity takes migrant workers and migrant worker poets as serious progenitors of precarity theory, heeding the call of Maribel Casas-Cortés to theorize labor precarity from the ground up through social movements. By looking at how migrant worker poetry sediments the liminal passages of migrant worker poets in and out of Singapore into its corpus, I propose that it forms the vanguard for a spectral form of politics, fostering community and political subjectivity among its participants. More broadly, this spectral politics can also expand imaginative political possibilities for migrant worker poets to build solidarity and permanence within a country that routinely conditions their lives as peripheral and deportable.

Presenter(s): Wahid Al Mamun

Hope in the Margins: Articulations of the American Nomad

What does it mean to imagine freedom in America? Popular invocations often conjure symbols—eagles in flight, the open highway, stars and stripes—gestures toward an affective ideal embedded in the nation's mythos. Yet beneath these mythic images lies a spatialized ideology: an "obedience call" that disciplines through dreams, shaping subjects and landscapes alike. This project explores how contemporary nomadic communities—train-hoppers, van-lifers, hitchhikers, and backpackers—challenge, resist, and reimagine these dominant narratives through their practices of mobility, placemaking, and refusal. Based on ongoing ethnographic and visual research across the West Coast, this project draws on spatial theory, political anthropology, and cultural geography to examine how freedom is made, unmade, and remade from the margins.

At the heart of the project is a theoretical framing of space and power, drawing from Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad: perceived space (everyday use and material infrastructure), conceived space (planned, ideologically shaped), and lived space (embodied, symbolic, often resistant). This triadic lens illuminates how capitalism and the state regulate space-from zoning laws to policing-to preserve economic extraction and social hierarchy. Against this backdrop, nomadic life appears not only as a lifestyle but also as a mode of fugitive inhabitation. These communities occupy liminal zones-slipstreams between state control and sovereign refusal-what Talal Asad and Victoria Sanford frame as the spaces of exception, uncertainty, and illegibility.

The project analyzes visual culture-such as Mike Brodie's Juvenile photo series-as well as ethnographic observations of nomadic "oases" like Slab City and Mount Shasta. These visual and spatial practices serve as articulations of freedom that refuse commodified stability. Everyday acts like hitchhiking or encampment become tactical gestures: not simply pragmatic, but symbolic refusals of enclosure and normative belonging. James C. Scott's work on state legibility is instructive here, as is Lefebvre's call for a "right to the city"-a more inclusive, participatory vision of spatial justice.

Finally, the project turns to the political and emotional register of hope. Drawing on Rebecca Solnit's work, I consider how hope at the margins is not naïve optimism but a radical willingness to imagine and enact otherwise. In Solnit's framing, despair and hope are interlinked: despair might turn us from the walls of the present, while hope builds or finds doors through them. In the interstitial spaces between legality and illegibility, control and refusal, nomadic communities carve new cartographies of possibility.

Hope in the Margins ultimately reframes freedom not as a fixed right or national inheritance, but as a daily negotiation-at once intimate and insurgent-between power, place, and the will to move.

Presenter(s): Sierra Sarver

Shifting Facets: Stories and Statistics in the Diversification of NYC's Diamond District

The diamond industry uses memo/uncollateralized loans to avoid banks, lessen risk, and facilitate trade. Social scientists hypothesized that the trust-based system worked due to the combination of embedded social networks and homophily (Granovetter 1985, Bernstein 1992, Richman 2006 and 2017). In recent decades, the diamond industry has undergone a seismic change. Jain and Hindu Indians now dominate, displacing Jews as the predominant ethnic group. One of the research questions was whether the participants' social networks were diversified demographically or whether the newcomers were self-segregated. While informants claimed to have trade partners who are not like them, other evidence contradicts them. This flash presentation examines the contradictions between the answers obtained during three years of qualitative research in the New York Diamond District and the results of a quantitative survey instrument.

Presenter(s): Susan Tratner

The Haunting of Ehsaas: Care, Power, and the Moral Precarity of Domestic Labor in Karachi

The Haunting of Ehsaas: Care, Power, and the Moral Precarity of Domestic Labor

In Karachi's upper-middle-class households, domestic workers perform intimate, essential labor-cooking, cleaning, caregiving-while remaining outside the moral worlds they help sustain. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with rural migrant women in Pakistan, this paper explores how workers invoke ehsaas-a term connoting empathy, feeling, and moral awareness-as a language of critique and a claim to recognition. In a context where domestic labor is informal, unregulated, and legally unprotected, ehsaas becomes one of the few available means to evaluate how labor is treated, how care is withheld, and how dignity is denied. Rather than being a simple appeal to sentiment, workers use ehsaas both to seek emotional recognition and to challenge the limits of transactionalism-demanding a form of moral accountability that exceeds the wage. Through stories of small gestures offered and withdrawn, care selectively mobilized, and moods that govern the boundaries of belonging, the paper shows how labor is shaped not only by class and precarity, but by volatile moral terrains. What haunts these relationships are not only the absences themselves, but the lingering traces of what could have been: a kind word withheld, a small gesture rescinded, a relationship that once felt possible but dissolved without explanation.

Presenter(s): ILQUA LUTFI

X-it: From #AcademicTwitter to #AcademicSky

CMC (computer mediated communication) was envisioned as a utopian space with early CMC platforms enabling the creation of online imagined communities hailed as public spheres. The utopian vision of early CMC was replaced with commercial platforms including social media, which are often described as bourgeois public spheres.

One of the best-known social media platforms was Twitter. Twitter became widely used internationally, enabling easy and quick communications and the creation of new communities connected together through the use of #hashtags. The ability to form networks, offer support, commiserate, advocate, and celebrate is especially important for members of a gender minority, women who work in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields. These users often post content using #AcademicTwitter and #STEM as social and identity markers online.

While Twitter's easy interface enabled #AcademicTwitter to become a large loosely connected community and a site for sharing social science, humanities, and STEM related information, it also allowed extremist and violent content, harassment, and misinformation. Women, and especially women of color, more likely to be the target of this abuse. Even so Twitter was a place to share one's research not only with others in the academy, but also the general public, and Twitter became known for #WomenInSTEM.

The almost utopian view of Twitter transformed in late 2022, when the company changed ownership. While a small number of users immediately left the platform, the number of users did not significantly decrease the first few months of new ownership. Though Twitter/X became a dystopian space/place for some, many did not wish to leave their already established communities and the platform's known interface. What later caused larger numbers of users to leave the

platform in 2023 and 2024 is what social media users on other platforms called #EME - "Elon Musk Events" - changes in Twitter/X's platform or policies. The general post of #incoming signaled other social media platforms were likely to receive a large influx of new users.

A question facing women in STEM online, in addition to women online in general, is do you abandon the communities and connections you built over years on a well-known platform to move to a growing, but not as large site? Will your work still get seen? Does it matter? Women in STEM, in addition to women in anthropology, are now striving to create new communities and support on Bluesky. While #AcademicSky does not yet have the large number of accounts of Twitter/X at its height, its number continues to grow. Where do you go when your social media home no longer loves you? How are the recent US government policy changes regarding science, STEM, and the academy at large discussed on #AcademicSky?

Presenter(s): Terilee Edwards-Hewitt

2816 Ghosts and parasites across relations: towards a material culture of tricks

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Oral Presentation Session

For decades, anthropology has been concerned with those existing at the margin, in the cracks of liminality and latency, and the transformative power these positions can hold. From ghosts to parasites, all the way to jokers and tricksters, various figures and metaphors have been used to tease out such liminal generativity. And while the specificities of these vary a great deal, all seem to position agents in the periphery to the forefront, be these 'agents' persons, matter out of place, mistakes, or noisy incursions.

With such entities and processes existing within and feeding off of zones of obscurity, their spectral (Derrida, 1993) and mad (Serres, 2007[1980]) presences bring forward a latent capacity for worlds to be otherwise, upsetting and subverting linear relations and equilibria.

Along complementary lines, anthropological theorising has also been advocating for a reclamation of marginality and boundary-crossing, with the coyote (Wagner, 2010) and the trickster (Haraway, 1988) figures as emblematic of epistemic subversion, partiality, and contingency (see also: van Meijl, 2015).

In starting from these varied but complementary lines, this panel seeks to think through these conceptualisations to understand how such transformative potential is enacted and brought forward "from the margins" through material engagements. We thus seek to analytically and ethnographically engage with how such conceptual tools emerge in action and in practice, and gain their ontological and epistemic agency through and as tricks.

We understand tricks as the material, technical, perceptual, and conceptual resources that agents draw from (and engage with) in order to operationalise indeterminacy, hijacking relations by

operating on the very channels that concretise such relations in the first place. In so doing, tricks bring to the forefront the cracks and fractures of time and space (Fisher, 2014) which ghosts and parasites inhabit, and frame agents and objects alike as mutual tricksters and jokers, allowing for generative disruptions to seep in. We thus foreground questions such as: how are tricks rendered into engines of change? How are they conceptualised, brought forward and enacted from their spectral interstices? How can we think of them as simultaneously analytical devices, and concrete material practices and engagements (e.g., Coleman, 2015)?

Conversely, and wary of the critiques of such figures, which see them as too ubiquitous and powerful (Kockelman, 2017), we attempt to highlight how tricks exist in an equivocal duality: they unmask through masking, they reframe through deceiving, they generate through concealing. In acknowledging this, we seek to question how people conceptualise and draw from such uneasy potential: what happens when tricks go wrong, and what comes after? What happens when tricks are mobilised to control and regiment? How does one resist and outsmart tricks (perhaps through yet more tricks)?

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Raffaele Andrea Buono, University College London

Chair: Raffaele Andrea Buono, University College London

Presenter(s): Livnat Konopny Decleve, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Chloe Dominique, Paddy Edgley, Alice McAlpine-Riddell, University College London, Nada Rosa Schroer, Siyu Tang

Discussant: Victor Buchli

Presentation(s): How to see the future? Feminist Accounts of Clairvoyance and Future-Making

One of the promising potentials of the tricksters is their ability to offer new imageries and visions of the world (Haraway, 1988) and its future. Based on research on alternative political imaginations with Jewish progressive activists, this paper explores the political use of magical consciousness (Greenwood, 2005) by women activists. While peace-building practices are usually connoted with liberal ethos (Weiss, 2022), activists salvage magical traditions, unearthing them from spectral interstices, to elicit a clearer view of the future and intervene in its creation through the engagement with specific artefacts. The paper explores how talismans against the evil eye, are reframed as a tool to generate new relations of the community with others. The flower symbol ornamenting religious objects is tattooed on an activist's body to simultaneously heal it, and to reclaim feminine knowledge and propose alternative political order. Religious chants are retrieved and sung by their descendant, a woman spiritual leader, surcharging them with feminist content to empower women's leadership. Hence, traditions which were embodied and repeated for centuries (Asad, 2015), associated with the non-rational, and thus seen as inadequate to explain and act in the modern socio-political world, are re-created, re-claimed, and re-used by women activists as political tools and tricks to envision the future, and to act upon it in the present on both the personal and collective level.

Presenter(s): Livnat Konopny Decleve

The tricky techniques of sex work

Drawing on five years of ethnographic fieldwork with independent indoor full-service sex workers in London, this paper explores the uneasy, uncanny coupling of sex as work, drawing on tricks as techniques, and magic and alterity. Turning tricks – a euphemistic phrase for exchanging sex for money and/or resources – has grasped the imaginations of the social sciences and the general public. Sex workers work in the tricky space of monetising desire and sex, and in so doing exist in the spectral locale of what Taussig calls a 'public secret' (1999). Centering body techniques, in the Maussian sense, the paper conceptualises tricks, their shadows and their phantasms. Tricks as techniques can do good, they can do bad, they can be cruel (à la Berlant, 2010). Tricks and their relationship to alterity is also explored, with sex workers drawing upon a body of knowledge of magic and spirituality to both bring them closer to the trick, while out-tricking those played on them. Occupying a trickster-like role - learning to trick and learning to get away with it - requires strategically placed smoke and mirrors to obscure the fullness of the sex workers' subjectivity. It requires a performance of liminality, with the shadow of one's self not too far behind.

Presenter(s): Chloe Dominique

Photon Traps and Cosmic Tricks: Astronomers as Tricksters

There are many tricks that haunt modern, western amateur astronomy. These techniques and hacks are deployed through practices that make the universe visible, diagnose and correct errors, and legitimise the knowledge it produces. These practices render astronomers as liminal figures within the "dual cosmos" of modernity (Abramson & Holbraad, 2014), seeking out and working within the gaps between the human and non-human world, guiding and trapping flows of photons that reach the Earth from the cosmos. By making sense of astronomers as tricksters and trappers of reality, this paper explores scientific and epistemic practices as efforts to trick the universe into legibility. Following Donna Haraway's discussion of the "God Trick" (1988), astronomical practice can also be construed as a trick that would-be-moderns play on themselves, convinced that that the impossible demands of objectivity have been met. Attending to these tricks, and particularly how their nature as tricks emerges when images fail and matter turns in unanticipated ways (Carroll 2018), this paper asserts that astronomical practice should be considered cosmopolitically (Stengers, 2010): as a site where the internal struggle for recognition between the human and other-than-human dimensions of modernity is articulated, and where astronomers reconsider the stature of humans in the world.

Presenter(s): Paddy Edgley

Performing tricks, becoming safe: Tricking safety in New York City

Through an ethnographic exploration of the use of everyday objects (sunglasses, headphones) amongst femme-presenting people in Brooklyn, NYC, this paper explores the material culture of safety and security for gendered bodies in urban spaces. This paper argues that the securitization of such objects function as safety tricks, moving beyond their functional use to subvert the male gaze, operating as surveillant, sensorial security objects. This paper also situates the body as a site of

both technology of security and trickster performance, through eye contact and voice; by performing madness, women play on spectral imaginations of feminine hysteria to keep themselves safe whilst moving through the city. Following Donna Haraway, the 'trickster' or 'coyote' is reimagined as a figure for the creation and dissemination of feminist situated knowledges (1988), reframing narratives of gendered bodies as supposedly insecure and vulnerable. By reclaiming the mythological figure of the trickster as feminist, this paper explores the trans femme experience of harnessing the power of "cyborg" sunglasses, to surveil others unnoticed on the street as a safety trick, transgressive in the context of mass surveillance of trans bodies in the US. Moreover, this paper demonstrates how such situated knowledges create fluid 'safety assemblages', of intersecting actants, positionalities and modalities, as agency flows relationally, reconceptualizing everyday security for gendered bodies.

Presenter(s): Alice McAlpine-Riddell

Water Spectres

Turning to artificial water flows of Rhineland this paper introduces water specters as a 'metaphorical vehicle' (Martínez, 2020) to disrupt spatiotemporal logics of anthropogenically transformed water bodies in (post-)mining landscapes. Infrastructuralization accelerates water's material movement and obscures relationalities and interdependencies (Hoppe 2024). These water ecologies are haunted: they embody 'traces of more-than-human histories, through which ecologies are made and unmade' (Tsing et al., 2017). They foreground tensions between presence and absence (Toso et al., 2020), unearth lost relational structures of past lifeworlds (Ingold, 2000), while remaining deeply entangled with aqueous materiality. Curatorial research project Curating with Water Ecologies engages with water specters through collective mapping, listening, voicing rituals, and somatic writing. By slowing the perception of materially interconnected, trans-corporeal flows, the project creates space for trans-temporal imaginaries, disrupting industrial acceleration to reveal water as relational and its temporality as hydrosocial (Strang, 2015). By conjuring water's spectral agency and evoking water as a trickster with its own stubborn materiality, we experiment with situated aquatic epistemologies that affirm its vitality and challenge extractivist futures, without romanticizing pre-industrial pasts or essentializing pre-modern imaginaries (Haraway, 1998; Hoppe, 2021).

Presenter(s): Nada Rosa Schroer

Tricking across ruins and utopia: Spectral rebirth of housing in a Chinese rustbelt city

This paper investigates how, through tricks on indeterminacy, the material artefacts of housing in a peripheral Chinese city metamorphosized ghostly ruins of past anticipations into a financial instrument and a utopian spectre for youths at the economic bottom. I understand tricking as the appropriation, modification, and distortion of the material aspects of housing, the socio-political significance of which was produced catachrestically (Derrida, 1982) – through the abusive inscription of signs – in the context of post-marketization China. Particularly, Hegang saw an unexpected influx of young people purchasing cheap apartments. Because of local government's

failure to "trick time" (Ringel, 2016) and salvage the economy, massive housing projects became surplus and were left in an indeterminate state in the late 2010s. However, since 2018, young rural migrants previously labouring in urban hubs started moving to Hegang, as they felt hopeless about prospects of upward mobility, deciding to adopt an indolent life in the rustbelt, now dubbed the "utopia for homeownership". I consider how housing materialized through the partystate's operationalization of unsustainable constructions to pump fiscal liquidity is yet being "tricked" by rural youths to turn against state sovereignty. As such, housing was reframed into vehicles to renounce hegemonic hopes, disrupting ruling narratives of national ascendance, industrial productivity, and wealth accumulation.

Presenter(s): Siyu Tang

Discussion

542 Combined Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Max Bowens , Vénicia Sananès , Gleb Aleksandrov , Jon Harald Lie , Karla Hernandez-Swift, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah A. Robert, SUNY, University at Buffalo, Ramprasad Mahurkar

Presenter(s): Max Bowens, Vénicia Sananès, Gleb Aleksandrov, Jon Harald Lie, Karla Hernandez-Swift, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah A. Robert, SUNY, University at Buffalo, Ramprasad Mahurkar

Presentation(s): "Let the dead bury the dead": Absent Presence in the Era of Repatriation

Between 1867 and 1910, the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology amassed a collection of 7,266 human remains, the majority of which belonged to Native Americans. Joining the Smithsonian, Penn Museum, and many other institutions, the Peabody constructed a "bone room" for the display of remains furnished by eugenic ideals of racial taxonomy and ontological hierarchy.

By 1918, remains were placed into storage. With the passing of NAGPRA in 1990, these very same remains began to be unearthed, as they became newly subject to repatriation.

On October 23, 2023, I submitted a research inquiry to the Peabody Museum regarding this collection. Thus ensued a bizarre archival project which revealed more absence than presence. As of April 2025, the only persons who can receive permission to view museum collections of physical remains are proven tribal affiliates. In the absence of remains themselves, what is available for study is a scatter of documents related to their arrival, use, categorization, and conservation, e.g. partially redacted accession records, blank anthropometric data sheets, storage protocols pertaining to chemical treatment and pest management, and correspondences between curators of physical anthropology.

My paper analyzes the ghosts, traces, redactions, and non-representational images left in the wake of these vital ancestors, revealing the extent to which human remains have transformed from being hyper-visible to a highly securitized archive in the era of repatriation. Rather than treating this archival absence as a void, my paper proposes "absent presence" as a novel methodology for archival study. Building on the work of postcolonial anthropologists (Trouillot, Thomas, Povinelli), visual studies scholars (Campt, Field) and critical theorists (Mbembe, Hartman), my paper analyzes the contemporary archival status of physical remains.

To be clear: the significance of this transition cannot be overstated. Not only are remains gradually being removed from their respective storage facilities, they have also become subject to a complex scheme of identificatory protocols which will dictate their future passage. No longer reduced, racially typed, or otherwise taxonomized, repatriation committees composed of Native American tribal groups alongside anthropologists are working in good faith to undo old systems of classification in order to understand anew the rightful affiliation of vast numbers of physical remains. In other words, the identificatory status of "remains" are becoming "human." Through the process of repatriation, memories are reconstituted, both personal and institutional, as old images become new and speculative histories become reality.

Presenter(s): Max Bowens

Cheerleaders of the Welfare State

This paper draws on 12 months of ethnographic research on intimate welfare programs in Amsterdam to contribute to debates on the role of affect in social policy. I argue that Dutch welfare professionals act as 'cheerleaders', supporting and encouraging residents to persevere despite increasing challenges. In neighborhoods where poverty, precarity, discrimination, and distrust of the government are prevalent, these professionals work hard to build a sense of community and resilience. As their cheerleading efforts become increasingly essential to a devolved welfare state, I ask: how does their unwavering positivity engage with residents' precarious circumstances and the underlying structures that produce them.

Presenter(s): Vénicia Sananès

Hungry Ghosts in the Land of the Unburied: Conspiratorial Memory, Conspiratoriness and Mainstream Politics in Contemporary Russia

The notion of conspiratoriness, introduced by Charlotte Ward and David Voas in 2011, describes an intersection of conspiracy thinking and New Age-style spirituality evident in many contemporary social movements, conspiracy-based subcultures etc. The "spiritual" component is a prominent feature of many conspiracy theories today, including numerous such ideas gaining prominence in Russian society, media and, increasingly, politics in recent years. What distinguishes Russian conspiracy theories (or Russian versions of globally popular conspiracy theories) is their greater and growing emphasis on history, on conspiratorial reformulation of established collective perceptions of the past. It would be no exaggeration to say that Russian conspiratorial thinking revolves almost entirely around conspiratorial memory. Alexander Etkind in his seminal "Warped

Mourning: Stories of the Undead I the Land of the Unburied" (2015) presented a thorough exploration of the complex nature of memory politics and memorial practices of post-Soviet Russia, the ever-prominent presence of unquiet "ghosts" of victims past in contemporary social and political life. Given this unusual importance of the past, the emphasis on history, from interpretations of specific events to essentially conspiratorial conceptualizations of the driving forces of history in general, eased the transition of conspiracy theories from the margins of the public sphere into mainstream media and politics of contemporary Russia – in the absence of a coherent productive memory policy, conspiracy thinking became the only way to reconcile inherent contradictions embedded in Russian collective memory. Based on a broad survey of online communities, on in-depth interviews and on analysis of officially published government materials, this presentation explores the connections between conspirituality, collective memory and mainstream politics in contemporary Russia.

Presenter(s): Gleb Aleksandrov

Public–private partnerships in policy and practice: from synergy to subsidy

Public–private partnerships (PPPs) constitute an emerging normative policy agenda in international development, which see PPPs as a way to 'crowd in' private actors and capital in order to mitigate the huge development financing gap needed to attain the audacious SDGs. The promises of what PPP may unleash have caused public and private actors embrace the PPP agenda. Yet, the World Bank's 'billions to trillions'-mantra, which drives the PPP agenda, is still far from realisation, which points to a critical policy implementation challenges – which, in the words of an informant, could be conceived of as 'cultural problems inherent to the PPP agenda'.

Drawing on multisited fieldworks in Ethiopia and within the World Bank, this paper explores policies and practices related to (PPP) in international development. The World Bank fieldwork addresses the PPP policy level and implementation challenges as seen from within the Bank. The Ethiopia fieldwork, which constitutes the main core of the work, engages the practical partnership between a publicly funded NGO and a multinational corporation, which elicits more fundamental concerns to the overall PPP agenda, drawing on an ethnographic exploration of policy implementation.

The paper applies the interface concept (Long, 1989) to explore what happens in the practical encounter of public and private actors. The interface concept draws attention to the intersection of different logics and knowledge regimes. The paper argues that the PPP policy puts together actors with distinct logics that are hard to reconcile in practice: the private for-profit logic with shareholder accountability is fundamentally different from the not-for-profit development logic with responsibility to beneficiaries and funding agencies. The case analysis shows how this causes the private actor to withdraw from the PPP, thus turning the joint project into a publicly funded and subsidised proxy for private sector interests.

Presenter(s): Jon Harald Lie

Unidentified in South Texas: Institutional Decision-making in Migrant Remains Cases

In South Texas, hundreds of migrant deaths occur in poor counties that have no medical examiner. These counties are not equipped to deal with this crisis and often send remains to funeral homes. If not immediately identifiable, funeral homes bury remains in local cemeteries without state mandated DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) sampling. State laws require unidentified human remains to have an inquest (autopsy and death investigation) and DNA sample submission to a state lab for inclusion into a federal DNA database. State laws are not systematically followed by many counties, giving rise to the long-term dead. These long-term dead have families that are searching for them; they have a right to know what happened to their loved one, and the dead have the right to be identified.

This presentation explores the decision-making processes surrounding the treatment of unidentified human remains, presumed to be migrants, by law enforcement and other agencies in two South Texas counties. We discuss key themes that emerged from semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups with stakeholders involved in processing human remains, including justices of the peace, funeral home directors, law enforcement officers, and the director of the South Texas Human Rights Center.

Key challenges that emerged in processing unidentified human remains included limited resources such as basic necessities, lack of or limited access to a medical examiner, lack of clarity regarding procedures, stakeholder roles, and responsibilities, and limited communication between cooperating agencies. We also discuss creative strategies stakeholders in both counties used to navigate challenges, including improving inter-agency communication, adapting and defining roles to improve efficiency, developing and modifying protocols to facilitate procedural consistency, and engaging in innovative resource allocation and creative problem-solving to fill service gaps.

Failure to follow and enforce laws regarding migrant remains constitutes a form of structural violence. State laws mandating unfunded procedures regarding the processing of unidentified human remains in resource-constrained counties infringe upon the human rights of the deceased and their families. Understanding the barriers faced by two South Texas counties and where improvements can be attained through advocacy for funding, expanded training programs, improved communication, and strategic reallocation of resources to strengthen identification efforts in delivering effective humanitarian aid.

Presenter(s): Karla Hernandez-Swift

Co-author(s): Molly Kaplan

Why should we care about school food politics?

Why should we care about school food politics? Government-funded school meal programs are a vital form of food, education, and care infrastructure in communities around the world. Using the lens of school food politics, we engage with what Joan Tronto (2013: 139) describes as "the larger structural questions of thinking about which institutions, people and practices should be used to accomplish concrete and real caring tasks" and to what ends.

Drawing on multiple chapters from, *Transforming School Food Politics Around the World* (Gaddis and Robert, 2024), we provide a global vista of how school food politics is transforming in productive ways who feeds whom what, how, when, and for what purpose. Responses to these and the flash presentation's title question are, we argue, the direct result of food, care, and education politics, yet the people who are most impacted by the resulting programs and policies too often experience "politics" as an abstract and distant process. By highlighting examples of "transformative" school food politics, we signal the need to challenge and change the composition and structure of school food systems, rather than accept school food politics as the purview of corporate lobbyists and elected officials.

And we theorize that policy protagonism (Robert, 2016; 2017) both pushes elected officials and other decision-makers to invest in education, food, and care infrastructure, and holds them accountable when they do not meet the needs of students and communities. Policy protagonism includes four elements: (1) defining policy "problems," (2) identifying and seeking power and resources to address those policy-worthy problems, (3) effectively "using" social categories and symbolic identities (e.g., perceptions of teachers as mothers and caregivers), and (4) demanding multiple seats at the decision-making table.

Beyond simply providing food, school meals are public programs that can be designed to improve children's health, education, and well-being; promote educational access by helping to attract and keep the most vulnerable populations in school; create new paid employment opportunities; and catalyze broader food system transitions that increase local agro-biodiversity, strengthen food sovereignty, and shift power away from multinational corporations to the communities where children are fed. Achieving these aims, however, requires a care-centered transformation in school food politics.

Presenter(s): Sarah A. Robert

Co-author(s): Jennifer Gaddis

"The Right to Remain Wet": Bureaucratic Forgetting, Ghostly Wetlands, and the Rewriting of Environmental Loss

What happens when an ecosystem dies- not through spectacular disaster, but through silence? This paper follows wetlands not just as hydrological bodies, but as ghosted geographies: spaces that haunt our maps, infrastructure, and environmental legalities. Drawing from long-term ethnographic engagement, archival fieldwork, and participatory interactions with residents, planners, and bureaucrats across two wetland belts undergoing rapid urban transformation, I argue that wetlands today are made absent through bureaucratic categories, framed as "wastelands," "unused land," or "technically dry." Yet these wetlands are neither lifeless nor forgotten-they appear in bird collision reports, flooding patterns, and residents' memories of childhood. They persist in the margins as "epistemic leaks"-where bureaucratic language fails to hold water.

The methodology is deeply anthropological: drawing from multi-sited ethnography, archival ethnography, legal pluralism, and environmental storytelling. I conducted semi-structured

interviews with local residents, planners, and conservationists, walked the terrain alongside wetland activists, and participated in town hall forums where ghosts of loss-floods, disappearance of birds, water scarcity-were recalled. I also incorporated "ghost mapping" as a method-tracing sites erased from planning documents but alive in local memory and ecological impact. The result is a critical ethnography that unearths bureaucratic silences and reveals the affective dimensions of environmental erasure.

While environmental-legal anthropologists such as Deepa Das Acevedo, Mark Schuller, and Heath Cabot have illuminated how law governs through inclusion and exclusion of persons and communities, this work shifts the analytical gaze from the human subject to ecological subjects themselves. Unlike existing scholarship that foregrounds the legal marginalization of migrants, minorities, or workers, I examine how ecosystems are legally ghosted, denied status, stripped of ecological memory, and rendered disposable.

This paper thus adds to political-legal anthropology by arguing that bureaucracies don't only dispossess people-they erase places. Where Cabot explores humanitarian reception, and Acevedo tracks legal disruption in institutional frameworks, I interrogate the silent bureaucratic violence toward the nonhuman, showing how modern planning systems undo socio-ecological entanglements under the guise of "progress."

Theoretically, I propose wetlands as spectral actors-entities that return to unsettle, resist, and haunt the present through infrastructural breakdowns, bird strikes, floods and revived local knowledge. My contribution is to show how legal voids are not neutral spaces but built absences that reflect deeper epistemic and ecological fractures.

Rather than a lament, this is a call: to see ghosts as remnants of loss and as agents of return.

Presenter(s): Ramprasad Mahurkar

7092 On ghosts and haunting in Indigenous health research: Conversational insights from Indigenous research methodologies and community-led health projects

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Conversation/Debate

Indigenous Peoples of North America are represented in popular culture as both haunted by histories of colonial violence (e.g., historical trauma) and haunting figures within settler society whose enduring presence and (perceived) absence variably inspire pride, confusion, and guilt in settler imaginaries. Health researchers, too, have struggled to engage with these ongoing histories of colonial violence and Indigenous endurance beyond dehumanizing narratives of victimhood and tragic inevitability. The result is routine assertions of authority over representations of Indigenous health experiences, concerns, and desires, and scientific knowledge production that obfuscates the coloniality of much health knowledge and research practice. This approach has proven

unfruitful in addressing Indigenous health disparities, and it has perpetuated inequity through the imposition of neoliberal constructions of self and health that distract from the colonial origins of contemporary hardship. In this conversation, participants will explore alternative approaches to research that pursue self-determined health and wellness goals - elaborating and discussing possibilities for a hauntology in Indigenous health research through community-led initiatives that support self-determined wellbeing through engagements with Indigenous knowledges, community health practices, and research methodologies. Each participant will describe an Indigenous community-driven wellness project or methodological approach wherein Indigenous People/s are agentic beings guided and strengthened by their histories toward asserting vital presence, rather than existing within settler narratives of historical loss and stoic persistence. First, Rachel Wilbur will explicate the concept of "health survivance" as a strengths-based and Indigenous-driven alternative to "resilience", demonstrating how historical stories - the narrative basis of the Native "ghosts" that haunt the public consciousness - may instead illuminating pathways to thrive across generations. Second, William Hartmann will introduce the Connecting Generations Project, which brings youth and Elders together for six months of structured engagements around cultural practices. Referencing Appadurai's "capacity to aspire," Hartmann argues that the project's health benefits can more fully be understood as creating opportunities for youth to try on Coast Salish ways of thinking, feeling, and being-not framed as wounded victims needing self-work-but a distinct subject position based in relationality, belonging, and generativity. Collectively, the participants will explore the role of - or divergence from concepts of - decolonization in relation to ideas of strength, self-determination, and resistance enacted through intergenerational wisdom and ancestral guidance as a positive form of haunting. Cesar Barreras will serve as discussant, offering reflections and posing an initial round of questions to the participants, followed by audience Q&A.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: William Hartmann , Rachel Wilbur

Presenter(s): William Hartmann , Rachel Wilbur

Discussant: Cesar Barreras

526 Anthropology and Environment Society Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Namita Poudel Bhurtel , Anupama Cemballi, Johns Hopkins University, Eric Thrift, University of Winnipeg, Ashley Clark , Yuqiu Li, Yale University, Tilde Siglev, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Felipe Antonio Giron Palacios, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Seren Heyman-Griffiths

Presenter(s): Namita Poudel Bhurtel, Anupama Cemballi, Eric Thrift, University of Winnipeg, Ashley Clark, Yuqiu Li, Yale University, Tilde Siglev, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Felipe Antonio Giron Palacios, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Seren

Heyman-Griffiths

Presentation(s): &A

Water use efficiency has increased by 9%, yet water stress and scarcity remain pressing global challenges. Additionally, unprecedented disruptions in water systems between supply and demand exacerbate the issue. In this context, households play a crucial role in communicating with relevant authorities about emergencies such as pipe leaks. However, if households are unwilling to share water or dissatisfied with the system, conflicts may arise, leading to water scarcity even during non-crisis periods. To enhance household resilience and promote a sustainable water system, various benefit programs have been introduced. Despite these efforts, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, a disaster-prone region has long struggled with water scarcity. Rural households often hesitate to share water, while urban areas fail to explore alternative resources, as highlighted in national reports. Although resilient water infrastructure is recognized, displacement due to disasters, protests reconstruction, and potential labor shortages for future water projects underscore the importance of understanding household resilience. This study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify and measure household resilience indicators. Findings reveal that rural households exhibit significantly lower resilience, while all areas require improvements for sustainable water management. Additionally, results highlight the necessity of increased investment in the environmental dimension across all regions. Therefore, this research recommends a greater focus on environmental investments. Moreover, adopting resource-to-money strategies such as water trading, and PES (paying for the ecosystem) common in other countries could allow rural areas to sell resources to urban centers, generating financial support for holistic resilience enhancement across multiple dimensions.

Presenter(s): Namita Poudel Bhurtel

Crop Versatility Steering Resilience

Indigenous scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer asks, "How can we begin to move toward ecological and cultural sustainability if we cannot even imagine what the path feels like?" (2013, 6). Farmers across the US are rising to address this failure to imagine. They are pushing against technology-driven path dependence dictated by large agricultural corporations by reinventing established industrial farming norms and embracing solutions like improving soil health through environmental remediation, and prioritizing crop diversity and versatility (Spangler et al., 2022). Tom Özden-Schilling describes how advocates of resilience theory dissonantly "accept unconditionally the conditions of the present, even as [they] plan for a radically open future" (2022, 74). Research to understand small-scale farmers' practices and strategies to develop climate resilient farms, and how this knowledge is learned and passed on, is thus pertinent. This is especially so as the current federal administration has frozen funding to the USDA, which provides financial and research support to farmers nationwide (Crawford 2025). Given corporate overproduction and monoculturation across the United States and its international impact, small-scale farmers play a pivotal role in this movement of crop diversification, regenerative agriculture, and global food security. The efforts farmers are undertaking to build climate resilient farms are fundamental to

asserting food sovereignty. Domestic farmers' responses to climate change and the practices they are adopting have been less extensively studied from an ethnographic lens. Previous literature in this realm focuses on perceptions (Mase et al., 2017), adaptations made (Ishtiaque 2023), economic implications (Burke and Emerick 2013), or charts erosion of crop diversity (Crossley et al., 2020).

Fieldwork in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States informs my understanding of farmers' motivations, challenges and processes implemented to build climate-resilient farms. By using millets and other grains as analytics, I examine what soil health challenges farmers are facing due to climate change and what changes to crop cultivation and processing they are implementing. This research also highlights the knowledge transfer and sharing practices farmers and their communities are employing. I rely on Anderson's (2017) and Law and Lin's (2017) considerations of nurturing situated forms of postcolonial STS to think through the value of examining food sovereignty movements from both postcolonial and contemporary global capitalism lenses despite historic resistance. Capitalism and its imperial power through globalization have led to the loss and destabilization of secure food systems. Small-scale farmers are countering this destabilization through the practices they are implementing in forging climate resilient farms. This presentation will question both intrinsically tied power structures to chart this evolution of food sovereignty movements.

Presenter(s): Anupama Cemballi

Cultural returns on investment: Determining socio-cultural value in Canada's inland commercial fisheries

Canada's commercial inland freshwater fisheries, located in the prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, are a major contributor to the global supply chain for walleye, whitefish, and other wild caught freshwater fish species. They are also a key contributor to the economic and cultural survival of Indigenous (First Nations and Métis) fishing communities. As part of a study commissioned by Indigenous Services Canada, undertaken in consultation with commercial fishers in 15 communities, our research team at the University of Winnipeg developed a cultural indicators framework to measure the social and cultural value generated by commercial freshwater fisheries in Canada. These indicators encompassed factors such as food security and access to culturally-appropriate food, human health and well-being, knowledge transmission through land-based learning, and political inclusion. While the primary outcome of this initiative was a technical instrument for use by government and communities, our research also forced engagement with the uneasy ways in which socio-economic "benefit" is determined by colonial and capitalist regimes of value-production and appropriation.

Presenter(s): Eric Thrift

Interspecies Terroir and the Making of Bug-Bitten Tea

Pong-Fong tea originated in Taiwan in the early 1930s as the first known 'bug-bitten' tea. Bug-bitterness, caused by Tea Green Leafhoppers (*Jacobiasca formosana*) who bite the tender leaves

and buds of tea plants, trigger a chemical defense response that produces a sought-after honey fragrance. This insect-plant relationship transforms the raw tea material, shaping both the teas' flavor profile and its economic value. Because Pong-Fong tea requires tea leaves to all be picked and processed by hand, this tea has never seen its own industrialization. Drawing on interviews with tea producers in Taiwan, this study came to understand Pong-Fong tea as co-produced through the interplay of insect-plant relations, as well as the care, labor, and creativity of tea producers. More than the taste of place or taste of soil, terroir is an embodiment of and co-produced by the relations and networks within place. Through taste, consumers can directly and materially experience the relational terroir that emerges from multispecies interfaces- involving cultivars, cultivators, insects, and their environments.

Presenter(s): Ashley Clark

Intestines of the Mountains-- Rural Waste, Cordyceps Economy, and Shifting Consumption, on Northeastern Tibetan Plateau

Rural waste is a growing problem on the Tibetan Plateau, noted for its attraction of bears to human settlements. Not only has the meaning for trash in Tibetan reinvented, the city's demand for this level of outside goods is also a recent development. Following its blooming cordyceps economy, Zadoi county (Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, People's Republic of China) has had an overflowing of trash in its municipal center. I investigated Zadoi's waste in situ. as a case study to understand the rural trash problem happening across the Tibetan Plateau, transforming indigenous cultural ecology as well as human and non-human relationships.

In Zadoi, the volume of trash production peaks with the cordyceps-digging season. Cordyceps (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*; Tibetan: རྩུང་རྩུག་ལུ་མུ་ Yarza Günbu; Chinese: 冬虫夏草) is a form of caterpillar-fungus. When the larva of the moth gets infected by fungus underground, the fungus kills the larva and grows a stem above ground. In Tibetan tales, cordyceps are the intestines of the mountains. The combination of the larva and the fungus is a valuable medicine in both Tibetan and Chinese Traditional Medicines, thus making it extremely profitable. In Zadoi, cordyceps have become the sole driving force of its GDP, making up an average 67% of local income per household.

As the capital generated by cordyceps accumulated in Zadoi, so did trash. In 2013, media reported Zadoi as "City of Waste". In Tibetan, "གད་ཉིགས་" (gad nyig) means everything that can't be used and needed to throw away, which used to refer to animal furs, worn out clothes and tools, but nowadays it is also being used for modern products-including plastic bags and other non-biodegradable objects brought by industrialization.

The rapid production of trash is a material result of the transformed consumption pattern during cordyceps-digging season. To save time and labor, Tibetans have opted convenient food like instant noodles over traditional food consumptions like yak meat and dairy products. The residual food in discarded food packaging waste attracts non-humans, mostly Tibetan Brown Bear and stray Tibetan Mastiff, closer to human settlements-- creating hazardous encounters and altered multispecies relationship because of the transformed material implication of གད་ཉིགས་ (Trash).

Presenter(s): Yuqiu Li

Manipulating the "Count": Scientific Management and Commercial Fishing in Coastal Louisiana

In recent years, coastal Louisiana has been a site of tremendous scholarly attention. Important contributions have examined the political and ecological dimensions of the state's ongoing land loss crisis and have shed light on the unequal effects of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the 2010 BP oil spill. Yet alongside these spectacular or eventful instantiations of environmental disaster that frame much contemporary discussion on the region, a quieter and more protracted crisis of social reproduction is unfolding in the commercial fisheries. While commercial fishing historically has sustained residents on Louisiana's working coast, coastal erosion is both transforming local landscapes and rendering lives and livelihoods increasingly environmentally precarious. At the same time, fisherfolk are facing the pressures of a globalized seafood trade, encroachment of the fishing grounds by a state-backed recreational fishing industry, and tightened legislation on commercial fishing in the realm of fishery management.

This presentation draws on historical research and extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the commercial fisheries of coastal Louisiana and explores how fishermen in this context navigate the moving grounds of socio-ecological crises. Through a focus on the tensions that emerge around official categorizations and classifications of fishing zones and aquatic animals themselves, I discuss how fishermen subvert and manipulate some of the abstractions and calculations that scientific fishery management rely on to render parts of nature both governable and marketable. In doing so, the presentation discusses how these subversions elucidate scientific fishery management as a contentious terrain for both knowledge production and for the consolidation of political interests.

Presenter(s): Tilde Siglev

Meanings of milpa cropping among farmers in Guatemala's Climate Change contexts: a tale of two experiences

Extreme climate events like droughts and floods shape the outcome of milpa cropping or farming. Guatemala agriculture systems can be divided into the milpa and non milpa, which fits into rainfed agriculture and irrigation agriculture. Given the water stressed that the country is facing because of different reasons like hydrological draughts and land use changes; milpa rainfed agriculture as an ancient cultural practice represents a risk to its practitioners to harvest some corn. How are farmers from an Indigenous cultural background and Ladino or Mestizo cultural background value and faced milpa farming in a Climate Change context which is in different ecosystems? After two years of being closed to key moments of the milpa farming practices between farmers from Zacapa (Dry Corridor) and Sololá, there explanations of why keep doing milpa seems to point out cultural and socioeconomic reasons. This flash presentation makes the claims that despite cultural or ecological differences, milpa rainfed agriculture is market which production is not motivated by any external market driver, just the cultural value of corn core symbol in Mesoamerican culture.

Presenter(s): Felipe Antonio Giron Palacios

Species in Circulation: Conservation, Commodity, and the Australian Macadamia tree

What happens when a native plant becomes a global commodity-and then a conservation target-on the very landscape where it first evolved?

This presentation will explore the strange and shifting status of the Australian macadamia: once a culturally significant food and way-marker for Indigenous communities, now a high-value monocrop grown across the remnants of its native habitat, and simultaneously listed as endangered in the wild.

This project is situated in Bunjalung Nation/the Richmond-Tweed and Wide-Bay Burnett regions of Australia's North-East coast, a landscape historically cleared for agricultural production and shaped by colonial and plantation economies. The project revolves around the macadamia-a threatened genus of four tree species which are indigenous (i.e. locally native) to the study area, and subject to a 'National Recovery Plan' for conservation. While once planted by Indigenous peoples as a culturally significant food source and way-marker, macadamia nuts are now a global commodity, and the plant is cultivated intensively in plantation form across its native landscape. These shifts have led to significant changes in how both macadamia and the wider ecosystems is understood. This project aims to analyze how practices on and around macadamia plantations create socio-ecological dynamics that influence local ecological knowledge systems. Methodologically, the study integrates archival research, market analysis, interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork with scientists, rangers, conservationists, and farmers, capturing diverse perspectives on ecological knowledge construction.

I argue that macadamia is not just a crop but a site of contested meaning-a plant through which land, labour, and scientific authority are negotiated. Drawing on multispecies ethnography, archival research, and interviews with farmers, scientists, and rangers, I explore how knowledge about macadamia is made, transformed, and circulated between local communities, conservation bodies, and global markets.

Presenter(s): Seren Heyman-Griffiths

505 Society for Medical Anthropology Flash Session #6

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Merrin Goldstein, Florida State University, Department of Anthropology, Megan Schmidt-Sane, University of Sussex, Christopher Morris, George Mason University, William Schlesinger, University of California, Los Angeles, Carly Thompson-Campitor, Jaya Mathur, Megan Latoya, Boston University

Presenter(s): Merrin Goldstein, Florida State University, Department of Anthropology, Megan Schmidt-Sane, University of Sussex, Christopher Morris, George Mason University, William Schlesinger, University of California, Los Angeles, Carly Thompson-Campitor, Jaya Mathur, Megan

Latoya, Boston University

Presentation(s): "We Have to Be Our Neighbor's Keeper": Examining Barriers and Facilitators to HIV Healthcare in Rural North Florida

High rates of new HIV infections in rural Southern counties have raised concerns for public health officials for a few years now. Several states and counties have been labeled as a priority by the Centers for Disease Control for higher HIV prevalence. However, some critical areas are being overshadowed in favor of other locales in the same state. For example, despite multiple counties in Florida's Big Bend region – including Gadsden, Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor – reporting HIV rates comparable to those in major metropolitan areas like Miami-Dade, these rural counties have not been included in the CDC's priority list. This study examines the factors contributing to HIV testing disparities and risk behaviors in eight rural counties in the Big Bend region.

Using a two-phase approach, this thesis first analyzes HIV testing rates and self-reported risk behaviors using the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data. The second phase involves qualitative interviews with HIV healthcare professionals to examine beliefs, attitudes, and opinions about the barriers and facilitators to HIV-related care in rural Florida.

The key findings suggest that non-Hispanic Whites, women, and persons aged 65 and older are associated with lower testing rates, while non-Hispanic Whites, males, and persons between the ages of 25 and 34 were more likely to engage in HIV-related risk behaviors. Additionally, qualitative findings indicate that social factors such as stigma, misinformation, lack of HIV health literacy, and issues with compliance from HIV patients persist in rural communities, possibly contributing to increased infection rates of HIV in these areas.

Presenter(s): Merrin Goldstein

Control and Resistance: HIV Treatment "Failure" as Sociopolitical Resistance in Kampala, Uganda

Recent HIV scholarship on Uganda has demonstrated both the great strides the country has made and persistent gaps in the response. What this public "success story" masks is that many, particularly low-income, urban informal settlement resident young men, are failing on HIV treatment and dying at higher rates when compared to other populations (women, girls, older men) living with HIV.

Based on long-term ethnographic research in Kampala, Uganda, we will explore the wider context of HIV/AIDS amongst young men in urban informal settlements including the wider political-economic developments in the country that underpin the social determinants of health. Young urban-resident men (who are perceived to be affiliated more with the opposition political parties) have become a lightning rod of sort, in a country that increasingly controls bodies through policies that may be perceived to be repressive by young people. In short, young men's bodies have socio-political meanings that underpin their experiences of and capacities to seek health and wellbeing broadly, and HIV treatment specifically.

Using a concept of "resistance," (which has multiple meanings in the context of HIV), we hypothesize that men's lack of treatment adherence might reflect a kind of sociopolitical resistance in circumstances that severely limit other forms of expression. This has implications for how we treat HIV adherence in public health practice as a "rational" endeavor.

Presenter(s): Megan Schmidt-Sane

Co-author(s): David Kaawa-Mafigiri, Fred Kizito, Santiago Ripoll

Ghosts in the Ground: Parkinson's Disease and the Geography of Chemical Life

In certain regions of the United States, researchers have identified unusually high rates of Parkinson's disease-clusters so consistent they have been described as a "Parkinson's Belt." This flash talk explores how these patterns can be read as hauntings: ghostly imprints of toxic pasts that shape why some regions face higher Parkinson's risk today, forged through long histories of industrial and agricultural exposure. Parkinson's disease invites broader attention to the chemically saturated conditions of contemporary life, where chronic exposure is diffuse, often invisible, and unequally experienced. In this context, public health discourse increasingly emphasizes the interplay between genetic susceptibility and environmental toxins such as solvents and pesticides. Beyond a scientific concern, it is a social and political one-one that turns on how evidence clusters, how harm becomes legible (or not), and how illness maps onto specific landscapes and communities.

Presenter(s): Christopher Morris

Haunted by Risk: Queer Grief, Biomedical Promise, and the Ghosts of HIV Prevention

This paper traces the spectral politics of risk, responsibility, and remembrance in the era of biomedical HIV prevention, centering on the queer affective life of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Drawing on ethnographic research with men who have sex with men (MSM) in Los Angeles, it explores how the uptake-and refusal-of PrEP is haunted by grief: for lovers lost to AIDS, for ways of loving foreclosed by moral panic, and for the psychic toll of being constituted as a subject of risk. Through attention to clinical encounters, peer education sessions, and intimate narratives of condomless sex on PrEP, this paper shows how MSM are compelled to navigate a landscape thick with ghosts: the enduring moral weight of condom-based prevention, the racialized logics of risk compensation, and the biopolitical afterlives of the 1980s epidemic. These ghosts shape contemporary forms of sexual subjectivity and public health governance alike. I argue that PrEP functions not only as a pharmaceutical technology but as a site where historical trauma is metabolized, negotiated, and at times disavowed. In doing so, I invite us to consider how grief and its ghostly presences animate the everyday labor of living with-and through-the promises and failures of HIV prevention in the present.

Presenter(s): William Schlesinger

Moral possibilities of repair and becoming through Lyme disease advocacy

Research reveals the enduring harms of contested illness debates on the lives of those living with illnesses defined by uncertainty, as well as the foundational role of patient advocates in shaping change around illness knowledge and systems of care. In this paper, I draw from my research on the subjectivities and knowledge-shaping practices of Lyme disease advocates and describe the ways advocates mediate past experiences of suffering and adopt moral positions regarding their commitments to advocacy work. For many Lyme disease advocates, the disorder wrought by ongoing dissension around the illness is given coherence and meaning through moral commitments to advocacy roles. While the effects of persistent Lyme disease can be life altering, I argue that the work of advocacy can augment and reconfigure the rupture that follows living with contested illness while offering reparative and transformative potential.

Presenter(s): Carly Thompson-Campitor

Skimming the Edge of the Painful Body: An Ethnographic Exploration of the Contested Disease Category of Fibromyalgia in India

Fibromyalgia has been described as a paradigmatic contested disease category and illness (Barker, 2005; 2011). While the medico-scientific communities of doctors, physical therapists, and MHPs (mental health professionals), as well as welfare institutions providing health insurance and disability benefits in the Global North, recognise fibromyalgia as a disabling health condition, patients in India continue to struggle for (medical and social) validation of their symptoms and everyday life challenges. It is mostly rheumatologists and pain specialists who provide the testing and diagnosis for fibromyalgia, the patients often find themselves in the clinics of general physicians, neurologists, psychiatrists, and orthopaedic physicians owing to their experiences of full-body generalised pain, fatigue, psychological and cognitive challenges, hypersensitivity to environmental stimuli, and fluctuating flares of ability and disability. Amongst these medical professionals, there exists a lack of consensus concerning clinical guidelines for diagnosis and treatment and fibromyalgia's status as a disease category; which, compounded by stigmatised attitudes of apathy, disgust and neglect towards patients of chronic pain, pushes the community of patients to the margins of biomedical care regimens. While patients often wait and struggle for several years for a formal recognition of their symptoms in the form of a diagnosis, it does not spell the end of their struggles, as their pain proves to be resistant to several forms of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions. This paper draws on ethnographic research conducted in New Delhi over 12 months excavating the embodied and contested sociality of fibromyalgia in India. Based on evidence collected in collaboration with patients, patient collectives and support groups, biomedical experts, and health advocates, it is argued, that the case of fibromyalgia exemplifies the limits of biomedical expertise. In doing so, it asks: What does it mean to be diagnosed, and to live with fibromyalgia in India? How are the various competing strains of expertise mobilised around fibromyalgia? What does a patchworked ecology of care galvanised around a contested disease category look like? What are the ways in which syndromic pain diseases complicate the therapeutic temporalities of an ongoing past and an uncertain future? Furthermore, the paper asserts, that while biomedicine's therapeutic limits are laid bare by fibromyalgic bodies, its authority over the medical, social, and cultural lives of the patients

continues to be retained and reified via legal, educational, professional, interpersonal and affective encounters.

Presenter(s): Jaya Mathur

“Seedlings”: HIV, Neurodevelopment, and Vulnerability in Urban Zambia

In the past twenty years, due to prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, perinatal HIV infection has declined sharply. However, research suggests that children exposed to HIV are still vulnerable to delayed development, including language acquisition. How do we ensure that such children not only survive, but thrive?

This paper examines urban vulnerability in the context of children's language learning among families living with HIV. It is based on two years of participant-observation on an early childhood development intervention with HIV+ mothers and their HIV- children in peri-urban Lusaka, Zambia. Using interviews with implementers and participants in the intervention, it explores local meanings of vulnerability to neurodevelopmental delays from multiple perspectives. I assert that traditional epidemiological models of causation in neurodevelopment research can obscure the complexity of risk to children's development in peri-urban settlements; by using vulnerability as a biocultural framework in the context of language acquisition amongst children exposed to HIV, we can understand how the interplay of social structures, embedded in inequities of resources and power, shape everyday risks for different families in Zambia.

Presenter(s): Megan Latoya

9086 Praxis Journal Discussion

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

Discussion of new journal vision and scope

1995 "We're always home, anywhere." A haunting by the state.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In *The Wiz* (1978), Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, gifts Dorothy and the audience with the notion that "we're always home, anywhere." A message specifically for Black Americans, displaced first from Africa by chattel slavery, and then during the Great Migration by the Jim Crow laws of the U.S. south, we are implored to carry on through the strength of our belief in a thing called home. Ostensibly inside of us, this home is meant to soothe our anguish with the world around us. More broadly applied to the subjects of empire and statecraft, home is meant to offer us hope that our individual liberation(s) exist within ourselves through our systems of (self-)belief rather than through the destruction of the state, its institutions, and the deplorable conditions they impose upon us.

Home haunts us as our claims to a home haunt the aims of capitalist accumulation in making "home" unlivable. We are meant, then, to reside in resilience—anywhere, under any conditions. Narratives of resilience narrowly frame our survival of the ubiquitous and quotidian conditions of carcerality, coloniality, and perpetual displacement which haunt those outside of the narrow ideal of citizen subject, i.e. surplus populations. In the most generous terms, resilience is an unwitting form of counterinsurgent propaganda.

Anthropology has for decades emphasized narratives of resilience to characterize subjective agency under oppression by depicting adaptation to it. Programs and initiatives geared toward community and the youth that are built through grassroots organizing (with or without state subsidy) give us hope for the future. This roundtable seeks to problematize these narratives of resilience, specifically those of home(-making), hope, and belonging, that ultimately aid state violence and neglect by making these conditions "livable". We ask these questions of narrative within the broader global and diasporic context of anti-Blackness from West Africa to the US to Latin America and the Caribbean. Does resilience to displacement further anti-Indigenous statecraft? Does the state depend on precarious Black subjects to demonstrate its capabilities and capacity for violence? Do messages of hope distract us from the gravity of our subjugation?

We posit that by encouraging communities neglected by state infrastructure or subject to institutional violence—vis-à-vis prisons, schools, policing, etc.—toward resilience (or even resistance), we are only sustaining the possibility for those conditions to exist by delaying rebellion. Rather, the politics of scholarship should strive to advocate for the destruction of oppressive regimes above hopeful depictions of survival within them.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Janelle Levy, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Janelle Levy, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Ikenna Acholonu, Diana Gamez, Stephanie JONES

Discussant: Sabina Vaught

4964 Ghostly legacies of Power: Colonial Hauntology in Policymaking.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Public policies are not fixed directives but dynamic and unpredictable formations shaped by historical legacies, institutional inertia, and complex human and nonhuman entanglements (Lea, 2020). Their unpredictability reveals the contested nature of governance, particularly in the fields of intercultural, environmental, linguistic, and public health policy, where bureaucratic routines, colonial imprints, and emotional or ideological investments often collide (Navaro-Yashin, 2012). This panel engages with policy hauntology as a shared theoretical lens to examine how contemporary policies targeting ethno-racial communities, marine and environmental

management, child welfare, and language continue to be haunted by colonial and neocolonial legacies.

Building on Tess Lea's concept of policy hauntology, we explore how policies that ostensibly aim to support historically marginalized populations frequently reproduce the very inequalities they seek to redress. Intercultural health policies may promote the inclusion of Indigenous worldviews while re-inscribing colonial logics through institutional structures (Stevenson, 2014). Environmental and climate adaptation frameworks often depoliticize vulnerability, masking the racialized and class-based dimensions of risk (Hamstead, 2023), while global health initiatives may erase alternative epistemologies even as they frame their interventions as benevolent (Kenworthy et al., 2018). Likewise, child welfare and post-adoption policies often portray the state as a reparative actor while concealing structural harm and sidelining adoptee-led perspectives, thereby reproducing colonial dynamics of care and control.

These dynamics also extend into the realm of language and naming. Language policies may standardize or suppress Indigenous linguistic diversity under the guise of accessibility and administrative coherence, erasing local epistemologies. In marine conservation contexts, more-than-human actors-such as spirits, animals, winds, and ancestors-continue to resist and reconfigure dominant governance structures, revealing the ontological frictions embedded in contemporary policy landscapes.

In this session, we will present analyses that critically engage with policy hauntology across domains such as intercultural governance, environmental regulation, public health, language and naming practices, and child welfare. The papers address the ethical and political tensions of working within institutions that both sustain and challenge colonial formations and reflect on how scholars and practitioners navigate the ambivalent space between institutional critique and collaboration. We also highlight the perspectives of public officials and community actors who, while committed to justice, operate within haunted bureaucratic frameworks that blur the boundaries between care and control, recognition and erasure.

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Diana Solano

Chair: Samuel Olah Velez, Florida International University, Department of Global & Sociocultural Studies

Presenter(s): Susan Vanek, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Madeline Nicholson, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Elena Burgos Martinez, Wageningen University, Thais Escobar, Samuel Olah Velez, Florida International University, Department of Global & Sociocultural Studies, Diana Solano

Discussant: Andrea Sanchez-Castañeda, Harvard University

Presentation(s): Haunted by Words: The Legacy of Colonial Place Naming Policy on Education and Access in Greenland

In 1933, the newly established Place Name Commission for Greenland began to formalize maps of the island's east coast. While standardized maps of the west, earliest colonial settlements, had been in use for over a century, those for the more isolated East Coast remained piecemeal. Yet, with international recognition of Danish authority over all of Greenland in the early 20th century, efforts to extend the state's reach to the entirety of the island hastened, including mapping initiatives. As the Place Name Commission set to work, a central point of contention concerned whether Tunumiisut (East Greenlandic) place names should be used on official maps of the region or if they should instead be derived from Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic), already in use on most maps of the island. At the core of these debates was whether Tunumiisut should be considered a separate Inuit language or a dialect, a point of tension that continues to reverberate through Greenland's educational and administrative policy, under authority of the island's Self-Government. This paper focuses on colonial debates surrounding the status of Tunumiisut and how they continue to haunt language policy and equitable access for Tunumiisut speakers. Particular attention is directed toward complications related to Indigenous language policy and education, as well as intricacies of working within governmental institutions while addressing broader patterns of discrimination linked to, but not limited to, language use.

Presenter(s): Susan Vanek

Co-author(s): Sophie Elixhauser, christoph hare svenstrup

Governing Through Care: Colonial Hauntings in Norwegian Post-Adoption Care Policies

This paper situates Norway's post-adoption policies within the framework of policy hauntology, revealing how transnational adoption policy is shaped by colonial genealogies of child welfare governance. In response to evidence of illegal adoptions, the Norwegian government has created a policy limbo—neither banning transnational adoption de jure but restricting it de facto. Alongside this ambiguity, the state has introduced post-adoption and intercultural services for transnational adoptees, framed as benevolent care policies.

I argue that these services reflect an ambivalent state strategy that acknowledges past harms while reproducing new forms of institutional violence. These policies: (1) reposition the state and adoption agencies as caring actors, diverting attention from their complicity in illegal practices; (2) reinforce the authority of adoption agencies while marginalizing adoptee-led initiatives; and (3) leverage adoptee collaborators to appear inclusive while ultimately erasing their contributions.

Drawing on policy analysis and ethnographic research with adoptees and adoption agencies in Norway, this paper argues that post-adoption services are a site where bureaucratic inertia, colonial legacies, and ideological governance intersect. Ultimately, I contend that reimagining post-adoption policy requires shifting power to adoptee-led organizations and confronting the enduring colonial logics embedded within them.

Presenter(s): Madeline Nicholson

The unmaking of the Marine Protected Area (MPA): ghostly mobilities and encounters in the demobilizing of the MPA

This article is based on 13 years of critical ethnographic and decolonial research and centers the agency and power of ghostly encounters as they regulate the manifold mobilities of the MPA in Northeast Indonesian islands. Ancestors, monsters, spirits, fish, wind, water, and different Bajo engage in daily encounters aimed at sustaining ancestral relations and dynamics in a place shaped by the collision of neocolonial biocentric/anthropocentric policy and ancestral knowledge, relationality, and alliances beyond the human. These encounters often occur around concrete bridges built by local and regional governments to intensify fishing and facilitate access for external actors.

Through critical storytelling, the article engages with grassroots notions of connection, protection, and governance of marine and island areas, tracing how these collide with colonial policing of marine space. By following the daily journeys of Muslim ecofeminists, Mbo Tibe (a water well), the Erok (a well-known wave), and a variety of fish around three bridges on Nain Island (North Sulawesi), this paper reveals mobilities deemed immobile by MPA policy, and how demobilization becomes a form of resistance enacted by more-than-human forces and alliances.

Furthermore, it suggests that Nain Island entities haunt MPA policy not only in the everyday but more importantly at epistemic and ontological levels.

Presenter(s): Elena Burgos Martinez

Ghosts of Redlining: Embodied Heat Inequality and Transit in Allapattah, Miami

This paper explores how extreme heat functions as a ghostly legacy of racialized urban planning in Allapattah, a historically marginalized neighborhood in Miami. Drawing on the concept of policy hauntology (Lea, 2020), I examine how infrastructural neglect—rooted in discriminatory practices like redlining (Hoffman, Shandas, & Pendleton, 2020)—continues to shape environmental vulnerability in spatial and embodied ways. Through the everyday act of waiting for the bus, I trace how heat exposure intersects with mobility, class, and racialized infrastructures of neglect. Transit spaces without shade or shelter become sites where colonial residues of planning are materially and viscerally experienced.

My mixed-methods research includes spatial analysis, participant observation, and interviews with residents who describe coping strategies ranging from shifting routines to saving for a car. Yet heat is often experienced as inescapable—something to endure rather than resist. This led me to conceptualize heat-embodiment: the internalization of heat on marginalized bodies (Hamstead, 2023), shaped by lingering policy ghosts.

This study contributes to anthropological debates on environmental justice by linking the spectral remains of policy to contemporary inequalities in health, mobility, and belonging. It reframes urban heat not as a technical issue but as a social and political one—an echo of racialized dispossession demanding justice-driven climate adaptation.

Presenter(s): Thais Escobar

Haunted Futures: Global Health, Pharmaceutical Promises, and the Unfinished Story of AIDS

The global health narrative of the "End of AIDS" has emerged as a triumphalist policy horizon—one where biomedical interventions, notably antiretroviral therapies (ART) and preventive drugs (PrEP), are framed as the definitive solution to a once-catastrophic epidemic. Promoted by international agencies and national governments, this vision enacts what Tess Lea (2020) calls "policy hauntology": a promise of future salvation haunted by colonial logics of governance. This paper interrogates the "End of AIDS" not as a biomedical endpoint, but as a narrative saturated with affective promises, policy spectacle, and the spectral presence of historical erasures.

Drawing from ethnographic research with people living with HIV in Colombia, I examine how global health discourses mobilize an affective economy of hope and obligation that obscures structural inequalities, epistemic violence, and embodied realities. While ART's benefits are undeniable, reducing AIDS policy to treatment adherence and viral suppression often depoliticizes HIV by abstracting it from social, racial, and economic entanglements.

This paper critiques how global health initiatives reproduce colonial logics under the guise of progress and asks: What does it mean to "end" an epidemic whose legacies persist in marginalized bodies? I propose alternative temporalities grounded in intergenerational memory, embodied histories, and collective world-making.

Presenter(s): Samuel Olah Velez

Haunted Infrastructures of Care: Bureaucratic Emotion in Indigenous Suicide Prevention Policy

This paper explores how officials in Antioquia, Colombia navigate the emotional challenges of implementing Indigenous mental health policies that, while aiming for inclusion, reproduce "phantasmic particles" (Lea, 2020)—colonial residues embedded in institutional systems—and "knots of meaning" (Pandolfo, 2018), discursive structures that confine Indigenous communities to static representations of the past. These bureaucrats also engage in care, healing, and reparation, generating tensions between their expectations and institutional constraints.

Grounded in the anthropology of the state, the affective turn, and medical anthropology, the study conceptualizes bureaucracy as an "affective landscape" (Navaro-Yashin, 2012), where "bureaucratic passions" (Aretxaga, 2003)—empathy, frustration, exhaustion—emerge through "emotional labor" (Hochschild, 1983) that mediates among state logics, Indigenous worldviews, and affects. Despite efforts to incorporate local perspectives through Participatory Action Research (PAR), structural barriers persist. "Inherited political atmospheres" (Lea, 2020) and "anonymous care" (Stevenson, 2014) undermine policy efficacy, exacerbating what Pandolfo (2018) calls "cultural agony."

This contradiction reveals a dilemma: bureaucracy is both a site of care and oppression, where suffering is normalized. Reimagining it as a space of intercultural translation requires recognizing affect as a force in policy, and healing as political, not merely technical.

Presenter(s): Diana Solano

Discussion

1887 Writing Southwest Archaeology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together the contributing authors of *Writing Southwest Archaeology* (forthcoming, SAR Press), a volume that emerged from a 2018 festschrift conference honoring colleague Stephen Lekson. Explicit consideration of historical method remains emergent in Southwest archaeology. Lekson's work, *A Study of Southwest Archaeology*, called for a new focus on archaeological historiography. In *Writing Southwest Archaeology*, we take up this charge and broaden the conversation to explore a diversity of historiographical approaches characterized as upstreaming, downstreaming, and slipstreaming. Upstreaming and downstreaming describe a familiar methodological tension in Southwest archaeology. Upstreamers utilize the direct historical approach employing the present to understand the past, whereas downstreamers advocate beginning in the past and following unfolding developments to arrive at the present. Slipstreaming – a new contribution to Southwest archaeology – is a concept we have borrowed from Native American literature. Volume authors engage the literatures and writerly conventions of historians, and we contribute to the broader theorization of archaeological storytelling. The history of Chaco appears throughout, as point of reference for general theorizations of landscape, religion, and the rise of inequality. At this roundtable, the contributing authors will share their experiences thinking through how to reorient their work toward a critical engagement with pre-historiography in an age of simultaneous Indigenous and decolonizing movements in US Southwest / Mexican NW archaeology.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Ruth Van Dyke, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Stephen Lekson, Carrie Heitman, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Donna Glowacki, University of Notre Dame, Lindsay Montgomery, The Archaeology Centre, University of Toronto, Robert Weiner, Dartmouth College, Kellam Throgmorton, Northern Arizona University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Severin Fowles, Barnard College, Department of Anthropology, Scott Ortman

6302 Settler Colonial Determinants of Health & Restorative Justice

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Among the many diverse pursuits of justice around the globe, "restorative justice" has emerged as an important conceptual and practical orientation within the nascent-but-deeply-rooted field of

Indigenous environmental justice. In response to the persistent settler colonial logics of elimination, which manifest through ever-changing modes of displacement and dispossession, Indigenous-led social movements are struggling to bring balance back to landscapes and relationships that are out of balance. Following the resistance and resilience of Indigenous scientists, artists, and storytellers, this session represents projects that work with decolonizing concepts of "re-membling," "re-storying," "response-ability," and "re-mediating," as well as a whole family of cognate terms. This session will work toward broader recognition of how environmental health research and practices can be transformed with attention to local Indigenous histories, knowledges, experiences, methods, arts, and sciences. In this session, we aim to forge collaborative relationships and elaborate on a collective conception of "settler colonial determinants of health," which can serve as an anthropological contribution within the environmental health sciences. With emerging interests in Indigenous ways of knowing in environmental health contexts, settler scientists also need to know about the sociocultural contexts and histories of dispossession and displacement that set the background (and figure-ground) for their biomedical and environmental research projects. This session will explore different ways in which the academic and legal concept of "restorative justice" can be combined with the political slogan "Land Back," and jointly applied to positively improve environmental health governance in Indigenous communities, as well as non-Native communities on Native lands. The roundtable format for the session will allow for diverse genres of expression, engagement, and interrelationship between organizers, discussants, presenters, and audiences. Given our focus on "re-storying," this session remains open to the many different ways in which these stories will unfold.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Thomas De Pree , Donna Riley, University of New Mexico

Presenter(s): Mallery Quetawki , Cheryl Jim , Cameron Zarrabzadeh, University of New Mexico, Tabitha Hrynich , Joaquin Arguello

Discussant: Dana Powell, Graduate Institute of Humanities, Taipei Medical University, Teresa Montoya, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

3770 Diversity's Ghosts: MAGA Era Talk about Difference in the University

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The war on DEI has come home to the university. Recent changes via executive orders not only profoundly affect the research agendas and financial solvency of institutions of higher education, but also impact the daily lives of faculty, students, administrators, and staff in a multitude of visceral ways. The demand to eliminate all language that purports to discriminate against white, cis-hetero-able men has created new challenges in naming and discussing various types of marginality and discrimination. Alongside universities eliminating terms that index diversity is the

concomitant order to no longer acknowledge, and therefore not support, previously established categories of race, gender, sexuality, and ability.

This roundtable aims to take stock of current political, social, economic and cultural conditions that shape universities in the current moment. It aims to understand the discursive changes underway in higher education institutions across the United States and how they impact what is still possible in our classrooms, research, writing, institutions, and activism/advocacy. What starts with a shift in representation via lexicon (i.e. "just" language) is very quickly manifesting material changes such as the removal of webpages, shutting down centers that provide important services, and the elimination of safe spaces. Moreover, dissent with government policies via peaceful campus protest or social media posts is used as a justification for student detainment, and deportation as well as for faculty tenure denial and dismissal.

The linguistic anthropologists on this roundtable will bring their research expertise in areas that fall under the broad heading of DEIA, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability to better understand institutional language and action today. Beginning with the 45th presidency, we invite them to use their knowledge as a starting point to understand institutional resistance and capitulation at universities.

We thus pose the following questions for participants:

What modes of surveillance and policing are becoming normalized in an anti-DEIA era?

How can instructors responsibly teach about power and inequality if they are no longer able to utter certain terms and phrases?

What alternative terminology is employed to talk about, work with, and protect difference?

How can academia push back but also work within emerging institutional parameters configured by fear, hatred, and exclusion?

Participants will share snapshots of particular challenges and obstacles, but also any new paths toward collective action that might be emerging. We will reserve time and invite participation from graduate students and contingent faculty in the room, but have only invited tenured faculty to avoid possible repercussions against vulnerable scholars.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Jillian Cavanaugh , Shalini Shankar, Northwestern University

Presenter(s): Shalini Shankar, Northwestern University, E. Mara Green , Jonathan Rosa, Stanford University, Steven Black, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology, Jillian Cavanaugh , Adrienne Lo, University of Waterloo

Discussant: Hilary Dick, Arcadia University

7552 Scale and the Politics of Technical Knowledge

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

How do people fathom the scale of the pressing problems and transformations they face in the world today? Anthropologists have long shown scale not as an objective, stable, inconsequential frame, as is commonly presumed, but instead as a contested, contingent frame integral to sense-making writ large...and writ small. Ethnographers in this session will similarly think aloud about how people (our interlocutors, others, and we ourselves) engage with scale and related concepts (magnitude, measure, growth, focus, the micro/mezzo/macro, etc.). Roundtable participants will speak from their diverse experiences ethnographically studying the interscalar politics of technical knowledge in action-vis-à-vis flood risk planning in an urban watershed in Hawai'i, global medicine and ecology in Madagascar, French legal disputes surrounding failed mining projects in Guinea, transformations of tropical rainforest governance in Peru, the Chinese state's statistical governance of rural landholders' agrarian resources, and Silicon Valley venture capitalists placing multimillion-dollar bets on which tech startups will successfully "scale."

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Max Cohen, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sheng Long, Yale University, Eduardo Romero Dianderas, McGill University, Gabrielle Robbins, University of Oxford, Stephanie Ratte, Gustav Kalm, Max Cohen, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sam Shuman, University of Virginia

3424 Structural Vulnerability in Anthropological Practice: Advocating for Interdisciplinary Analyses of Power and Structural Change

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The Covid-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, the fall of Roe v. Wade, mass deportations, and the dramatic restructuring of the US Government all require engagement with, and ethical reckoning across, issues such as racism, sexism, injustice, and social marginalization.

Anthropologists have long investigated the links among these factors to understand how social forces are incorporated into individuals' bodies, shaping disparities in human health and well-being. Yet, we believe we must ensure that the theoretical frameworks that guide our investigations also explicitly call for critical analyses of power and structural change. This is important for two reasons. First, "exceptional episodes" (Klenk 2019) are increasingly becoming everyday events—more routine and often more forceful, in part because of their deep, enduring and intensifying structural roots. Second, dominant frameworks developed to understand the upstream consequences of structural phenomena have been systematically weakened, turning formerly

critical analyses of power (like the social determinants of health; WHO 2008) into depoliticized, individual risk factors (Krieger 2024).

The concept and framework of structural vulnerability is increasingly used in anthropology to guide research that explicitly calls for critical analyses of power and structural change. Structural vulnerability is defined as a positionality in which a person or population is at greater risk for suffering the consequences of hierarchical structural inequities embedded within a particular society (Quesada et al. 2011). These hierarchies and inequities are socially patterned and locally determined, produced by class-based economic exploitation, are often overlapping and "mutually reinforcing" (e.g., via race, gender, ability, and socioeconomic status) and intersect with local laws, norms, and policies (Bourgois et al. 2017). Inter(sub)disciplinary teams of anthropologists are increasingly using structural vulnerability as a framework to guide research of the lived experiences and embodiment of social marginalization – with a concomitant turn to more applied anthropological efforts to push for structural change. In this roundtable, we describe efforts to do so, leveraging interdisciplinary expertise in cultural and medical anthropology, human biology, forensic anthropology, bioarchaeology and public health. We focus on two promising trends: 1) the potential for a structural vulnerability approach in helping applied anthropologists and practitioners identify social and structural assets and services within a community, and 2) the opportunity to devise and implement practical interventions to address population health in structurally-informed ways. Specifically, our group will highlight the potential to apply critical biocultural approaches in human biology, structural competency analyses in medical anthropology, and structural vulnerability profiles in forensic casework and bioarchaeological analyses.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Meredith Marten, University of West Florida, Department of Anthropology, Katherine Miller Wolf, University of West Florida, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Benjamin Burgen, University of West Florida, Department of Anthropology, Allysha Winburn , Paula Tallman , Jaymelee Kim, Wayne State University, Department of Anthropology, Aliana Schwartz, University of West Florida, Department of Anthropology, Michaela Andrusko , Taylor Perritt

Discussant: Morgan Hoke , Tsitsi Masvawure, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

7367 Canonical Hauntings of the Body: On Harm, Healing, Knowledge Production, and Belonging

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

As battles over funding, academia, and research escalate in the U.S., this panel explores communities who persist in times of precarity through healing practices. By examining intersections of bodily exclusion and aggregation across institutional and community contexts, we highlight pathways of resistances to negligent or indifferent states. Each paper approaches the

anthropological corpus as a form of epistemic geography in which bodies are mapped as sites of cartographic index and exclusion. We ask how "haunted geographies" create analytical space to interrogate the anthropological canon as a site of bodily meaning and harm and presents opportunities for healing. These papers, comprised of scholars across academic timelines and epistemic traditions, open an anti-hierarchical exchange about how harm and healing are negotiated at the intersection of canon and exclusion. Rodriguez examines how the specter of the AIDS crisis haunts contemporary responses to drug use among gay men in Los Angeles. Through ethnographic research with LGBTQ substance use services programs, the paper reveals how canonical understandings of queerness resurface amid the fentanyl epidemic, with historical tensions haunting interventions around chemsex. These canonical hauntings shape institutional responses and animate strategies that emerge as resistance to the disciplining gaze of public health. Vasquez considers Mexican Traditional Medicine (MTM) practitioners who specialize in birthworking and postpartum care in Southern California to interrogate the epistemic and methodological implications of capturing traditional knowledge systems within academic knowledge regimes. Drawing parallels between the ethnographic disciplining of MTM practices and that which is experienced by anthropologists in training, she grapples with questions of harm and explores how ethnographic practice, though disciplining, might provide opportunities for healing otherwise. Reed explores how the dismissal of whiteness by Ashkenazi Jews harms Jews of color and erases their experiences with racism. Through a critical inversion of the paternalistic historical and haunting relationship between Jewish anthropologists and Blackness, she asks what can Jewish Americans learn from African Diaspora scholarship? She suggests that Jewish identity should be reconceptualized through African Diasporic notions of identity and race as a means to deconstruct Ashkenormativity and to fuel a healing critical recognition of Jewish diversity. Arifi mediates the history of French ethnography with ethnographic fieldwork to posit how a legacy of disciplinary practice haunts ethnic identification among the French Kabyle. Particularly, they define how its corpus has codified and perpetuated hegemonic knowledges of belonging that supplant the diaspora's autonomy in self-conceptualization. They consider, then, how its communities negotiate what it means to be Kabyle through living encounters with discursive expression.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Darwin Rodriguez

Chair: Naomi Reed, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Darwin Rodriguez, Naomi Reed, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Yvette Vasquez, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Zacharia Arifi

Discussant: Melissa Johnson, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghosts in Queer Care

HIV/AIDS , Drugs, and Queer Public Health

This paper examines how the specter of the AIDS crisis haunts contemporary responses to drug use among gay men in Los Angeles, foregrounding how queer bodies are situated within overlapping regimes of public health, moral discourse, and anthropological knowledge. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in LGBTQ substance use programs, this paper analyzes how canonical public health frameworks—rooted in abstinence and harm reduction debates—resurface amid the fentanyl epidemic, shaping both institutional knowledges and community-based interventions around "chemsex."

Reading these responses as a haunted geography, I trace how the academic corpuses—both as a disciplinary archives and professional bodies—index queer bodies as sites of risk, regulation, and exclusion. Yet alongside this disciplining gaze, grassroots harm reductionists and mutual aid networks enact alternative modes of care that challenge institutional authority. This paper opens an anti-hierarchical conversation about how harm and healing are negotiated at the intersection of canon and exclusion, offering queer care as a critical response to disciplinary legacies.

Presenter(s): Darwin Rodriguez

A Healing African Diasporic Deconstruction of Ashkenormativity

The path to whiteness has been historically documented for many European populations in the US—Ashkenazi Jews included. The complex relationship between Jewish identity and race has created a frayed trajectory that in some ways diverges from other European populations, yet the imperialistic and hegemonic nature of white American Jewish identity across the Diaspora eclipses non-white Jewish experience—a phenomenon that is certainly racializing. If Ashkenazi Jews are not white but Jewish, how do we conceptualize the identities of the nearly 2 million Jews of color that exist globally? In this paper, I explore how the dismissal of whiteness by the Ashkenazi Jewish population in the US harms Jews of color and erases their experiences with racism within the Jewish community. Through a critical inversion of the paternalistic historical and haunting relationship between Jewish anthropology scholars and Blackness, I ask what can Jewish Americans learn from African Diaspora scholarship? More specifically, I suggest that Jewish identity should be reconceptualized through anti-imperialist African Diasporic notions of identity and race as a means to deconstruct Ashkenormativity and to fuel critical recognition of Jewish diversity—potentially healing the ongoing complex relationship between whiteness and Jewish identity and creating a space for liberatory inclusion.

Presenter(s): Naomi Reed

Mexican Traditional Medicine and the Healing of Epistemic Meaning

The stakes of this paper are two-fold. First, I ethnographically consider Mexican Traditional Medicine practitioners who specialize in womb health in Southern California, including birthworking and postpartum care. Amidst rising mortality rates among women of color, climbing clinical costs, and heightened reproductive care localisms, I examine how these practitioners can inform complementary medical systems to help improve maternal health outcomes for Latina women in the U.S. In Spanish the womb is referred to as la matriz, or a matrix, a structure in which

and from which, something takes form. The second aspect of this analysis approaches academic anthropology as a particular kind of matrix in which knowledge production is informed by and invested in reproducing particular canons, market logics, and epistemic genealogies. I draw parallels between the ethnographic disciplining of Mexican Traditional Medicine practices, and that which is experienced by academic anthropologists in training, paying special care to professionalizing mechanisms, including qualifying examinations, the dissertation process, and navigating the academic job market. I interrogate the ambivalence and slippages between participant and observer, PhD student and practitioner, and how things come to be known in the ethnographer's body, as a type of text, and to the body of anthropology, as a professional corpus of texts and bodies.

Presenter(s): Yvette Vasquez

Bourdieu, Awal, and Me: Unraveling a Canon of Franco-Kabyle Ethnography

This analysis explores how the canon of/canonical French ethnography, constituting both the practice of its discipline and the corpus of its produced works, haunts knowledges of belonging of the Franco-Kabyle and among its diaspora. This canonical spectre is undergirded by a legacy of institutional anthropology that has codified, reinforced, and perpetuated its domination over conceptions of ethnic identification through the position of a historically rooted paradigmatic Kabylité (defined in my work as a being-of-Kabyle, or loosely "Kabyleness".) I principally evidence this lens by rereading the regimes of colonial dominion over the Kabyle through the receipts of their censal ethnologies, tracing how their racialized implications shaped institutional policy attitudes in French Algeria. I elaborate on how further anthropological works variously both supplement yet become rooted in this academic canon, interrogating the early oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, "reclamatory" nation-building scholar-activism in the 1960s–70s, and trends of retrospective scholarship on the 1983 Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme, among others. This discussion then turns to consider how the spectre of Kabylité, with its associated system of knowledge production, is actualized and negotiated in its living diasporic communities: caricatured in Barbès' souk transactions, iteratively among Belleville brasseries, or reflectively — critically — through autoethnographic redefinition.

Presenter(s): Zacharia Arifi

Discussion

5394 Epidemic Endings and Afterlives

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Epidemics and pandemics are dynamic social, political, and biological processes with layered temporalities and unequal impacts. Viewed as emergencies requiring urgent responses from individuals, scientists, governments, and global health agencies, epidemics are often narrativized as exceptional moments that demand resolution for normalcy to return. From this viewpoint, life is

divided between crisis and aftermath. But the boundaries between the two are often blurry in practice. Medical anthropologists have tracked the extended implications of epidemics, offering a holistic perspective on how they arise and endure in social, political, legal, and medical worlds (Fassin 2007; Lynteris 2014). We know that epidemics are produced and shaped by social, political, economic, technological, and environmental factors operating in conjunction and over the long term (Kelly, Keck & Lynteris 2019). While anthropologists have attended to epidemic risk and preparedness (Lakoff 2017), and while the Covid-19 pandemic has inspired much scholarship on life during the pandemic, much less anthropological attention has been paid to epidemic endings and aftermaths.

This session asks: How do past epidemics haunt the present? How "past" are they, and for whom? This session builds on important work in anthropology, history, and disability studies to examine how epidemics endure beyond the confines of their officially declared beginnings and endings. We turn an ethnographic lens to what, and who, endures after others have moved on. How do patients, families, caregivers, practitioners, scientists, bureaucrats, and others navigate life in the aftermath of epidemics? How and why do people contest the endings of epidemics, and what kinds of biological communities does such contestation produce? What socialities and temporalities dissipate, emerge, or intensify in the wake of officially declared epidemic endings?

Each of the papers addresses these questions through ethnographic attention to various epidemics, places, and temporal frames. By situating epidemic endings and aftermaths in particular historical and ethnographic context, this session advances conversations about what it means to live on in the wake of epidemics.

Fassin, Didier. 2007. *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*. University of California Press.

Lynteris, Christos. 2014. "Epidemics as Events and as Crises: Comparing Two Plague Outbreaks in Manchuria (1910–11 and 1920–21)." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 32 (1): 62–76.

Kelly, Ann H., Frédéric Keck, and Christos Lynteris. 2019. *The Anthropology of Epidemics*. Routledge.

Lakoff, Andrew. 2017. *Unprepared: Global Health in a Time of Emergency*. Univ of California Press.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: K. Eliza Williamson, Duke University, Vinicius Cardoso Reis

Chair: Vinicius Cardoso Reis

Presenter(s): Vinicius Cardoso Reis, K. Eliza Williamson, Duke University, Jean Segata, Daniel Krugman, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Mary Knipper, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Emily Mendenhall, Georgetown University

Presentation(s): How to Repair a Pandemic: Victimhood and Covid Temporalities in Brazil

In the face of government neglect, Brazil experienced a Covid-19 mortality rate exceeding 700,000, the world's second highest. Covid-19 victims—those who lost loved ones to the virus and those who survived with long-term effects—are now seeking justice and reparation. Their activism unfolds in the context of a pandemic that persists in the everyday—through grief, orphanhood, and lingering symptoms. The Covid-19 international health emergency, a globally regulated event, officially lasted 39 months and 3 days, from January 2020 to May 2023. However, for the bereaved, the orphaned, and the ill, it has not yet ended. This paper builds on ethnographic research conducted with Covid-19 victims to understand how they defy narratives of pandemic ending while seeking to repair ongoing state violence. Avoiding event-based approaches, I look for how Covid endures in new and intertwined temporalities. In this context, I inquire about how they make a case for pandemic reparations, how Covid temporalities shape their activism, and how their practices respond to experiences of autocratic rule. Ultimately, this paper is concerned with how authoritarian forms of governance have stretched pandemic temporalities, giving rise to biomedical and sociopolitical continuities in which the affected fight back. Covid-19 victims refuse to let it go because the violence they endured is still present. And they mobilize for justice because they need to forge new horizons of existence.

Presenter(s): Vinicius Cardoso Reis

Disabled Futures and the Possibilities of Repair after Zika

The 2015-16 Zika virus epidemic was brief, but Zika continues to deeply shape the lives of those directly affected – children with Zika-induced disabilities and their families. Zika became a public health emergency when scientists discovered its link to fetal neurological malformations, now known as congenital Zika syndrome (CZS). After the number of CZS cases plummeted, Zika largely fell off the global health radar. But over 1,800 Brazilian children are living with multiple disabilities from Zika, most of them in Brazil's Northeast region. Situated within a larger ethnographic research project on families in Bahia, Brazil living the embodied aftermath of Zika, this paper dwells on parents' struggles for repair – both mundane practices of attending to the precarious bodies of their disabled children and seeking reparative justice for Zika's damage. Drawing on observations and interviews with mothers on their grassroots advocacy work and mutual aid practices especially over the last few years, I track how Bahian mothers have pragmatically leveraged charity and local politics to meet their families' needs, and how they have come to understand themselves as part of a national community of "victims of Zika." I argue that mothers' activism to repair their worlds after Zika crystallizes key tensions in the contemporary disability justice movement in Brazil and casts into relief contradictions in Brazil's post-authoritarian promises of social justice inclusion and inclusion.

Presenter(s): K. Eliza Williamson

Long COVID Afterlives

While public health metrics and biomedical narratives announce the end of pandemics through declining infection and mortality rates, the lived experiences of affected individuals tell other

(hi)stories. Drawing on ethnographic research with people living with long COVID in Brazil, this paper argues that the pandemic did not end with epidemiological trends — it persists as an unfinished critical event, woven into the fabric of ordinary life, transforming bodies, identities, and biographies. Far from being a transient post-viral condition that trends toward recovery, long COVID emerges as a chronic and often disabling state, marked by medical uncertainty, epistemic injustice, and social invisibility. Symptoms such as fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, and emotional instability are frequently dismissed by healthcare providers, reinforcing longstanding gendered and racialized inequalities in medicine. For many — especially women and marginalized groups — what is experienced is not recovery, but the emergence of a new person whose life becomes co-produced by illness. These are not merely remnants of a past epidemic: they are embodied survivals of a pandemic that, for many, never ended. By framing long COVID not as a postscript, but as a biographical rupture, the narratives grounding this work contribute to anthropological debates on epidemic temporalities, chronicity, and the politics of recognition and care.

Presenter(s): Jean Segata

“What will be Different if we Decolonize it?” Equitizing Expertise and Pandemic Afterlives at Africa’s Premier Population and Health Research Center

In the wake of COVID-19, Global Health has undergone a reckoning. Grappling with the stark disparities in mortality and vaccine distribution the pandemic exposed, health experts across the world question how to reach their goal of a better world. Coalescing around “decolonization,” these critiques have turned into a massive wave of scholarship, conferences, and initiatives promising to revolutionize global health infrastructures by equitizing relations between these technocrats. This paper addresses the implications of the movement to reinvent Global Health by attending to one of its main sites: The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya. The largest African-run, African-led health think tank, the decolonization movement has afforded APHRC and its staff with unprecedented status, resources, and opportunities. Examining projects that seek to localize public health programming and reconfigure relations with Northern colleagues, I show how this movement has reinvigorated longstanding contradictions and anxieties among APHRC staff. I argue that moments after pandemics are key “problem spaces” (Scott 2004) where health experts wrestle with the limits of biopolitical management and opportunity for change expands. My research reveals that the afterlife of COVID-19 has resulted in a complex mix of reproduction and reprogramming—one where the scale of globality and its assumptions of interconnectivity are thrown into question.

Presenter(s): Daniel Krugman

Protective Exposure and the “Afterlife” of AIDS in Lesotho

In Lesotho's eastern Maluti Mountains, pregnancy and infancy are moments in the life course particularly susceptible to environmental, infectious, gendered, and spiritual threats. Bo-Mme mothers in the remote village of Motete engage in a range of health practices, including “protective exposure” to known harmful substances, designed to protect the young before fatal encounters

occur in the community. New mothers dab infants with gasoline; feed newborns polluted substances; and strategically engage with impure persons – relating these moments to the injections and pills the baby receives at the clinic. This paper examines "exposure" as a historically evolving category of thought and material bodily practice. I draw on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork over the past decade to describe the ways that Lesotho's situated history of HIV intervention in the early 2000's resulted in overdetermined notions of perinatal risk, and its corollary, maternal care. Two decades later, moments of "protective exposure" have become a site where this epidemiological legacy continues to manifest and unfold within the everyday lives of Basotho mothers. In doing so this work poses an implicit critique to global health narratives celebrating the approach of "epidemic control" in Lesotho. Instead, I demonstrate the ways that lived experiences of infectivity, exposure, and immunization continue to persist in the everyday lives of Basotho mothers.

Presenter(s): Mary Knipper

Discussion

8104 The University as a Site of War

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As Israel's destruction of all twelve Gaza universities since October 2023 displaces campuses into mass graves and shelters, U.S. universities reveal parallel complicity through militarized repression of Palestine solidarity. This roundtable will discuss higher education's dual role in imperial violence—as both target (Gaza's 94 university presidents and 5,000+ students killed) and perpetrator (Columbia's violent NYPD raids, UCLA's donor-driven censorship). Drawing on Dylan Rodríguez's analysis of universities as "counterinsurgency laboratories," Ruth Wilson Gilmore's carceral geographies, and Maya Wind's work on Israeli academic militarization, we will confront: how the Palestine solidarity movement exposes universities as active sites of war; what Gazan educators and students teach about education under siege; and what the discipline of anthropology might offer us in forging a material solidarity with obliterated Palestinian academia. We ask: how does the university's historical role in racial capitalism and colonial knowledge production intersect with its present-day militarization? What does it mean to commit to liberation through pedagogy, protest, and collective care in academic institutions designed to manage and suppress dissent? How do student movements expose the university's embeddedness in imperial violence, and what alternatives do they envision?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Fatima Tariq

Presenter(s): Maryam Kashani, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Farah Cotter-Norwood, Miriam Urizar-Ávila

Discussant: Mariam Durrani

2888 Environmental Justice and the Varieties of Activist Ethics: A Roundtable on Uncommon Cause

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores the questions opened up by John Mathias's new book, *Uncommon Cause*. Tracing the stories of environmental justice activists in Kerala, India, Mathias argues that environmentalism, even as it looks beyond merely human concerns, is still fundamentally about how we relate to other people. In alternating chapters, the book presents two broad approaches to environmental justice activism, each offering distinct possibilities for an activist ethics. One set of activists repudiates community ties and resists normative pressures; for them, environmental justice becomes a way of transcending all local identities and affiliations, even humanity itself. Other activists seek to ground their activism in community belonging, to fight for their own people. Each approach produces its own dilemmas. For those who would attempt to extend moral concern beyond all community boundaries: how is it possible to sustain ties with others, even other activists? For those who would align their causes with their community identities: how is it possible to reach beyond the bounds of those communities and draw others into the movement? Mathias shows how activists confront these dilemmas in diverse ways, offering insights into ethical tensions that may be more generally human, tensions between taking a stand and standing with others. In a classic author-meets-critics format, this roundtable brings together anthropologists with deep knowledge of the domains explored by the book, including the specificity of activism as a form of life, the place of embodied experience and technoscience in the politics of environmental justice, the figures of "the people" and "the public" in South Asia, and the everyday ethics of environmentalisms.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Charles Zuckerman , Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley

Presenter(s): Joshua Reno, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Caroline Gatt , Francis Cody , John Mathias, Florida State University

Discussant: Nusrat Chowdhury, Amherst College, Prash Naidu, City College of New York

7612 Uncanny Valley: The Phantoms, Fantasies and Fictions of Food and Tech

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The rhetoric of tech entrepreneurs is rife with perpetual promises of a better world that lies on the cusp of being realized through the intervention of new (and often digital) technologies. This panel takes as its points of departure myriad industries that exist at the nexus of food and technology -

such as cooking content creation, AI-generated recipes, ghost kitchens, blockchain wine labels, and bio-modified seeds. In particular, we focus on those aspects of these industries that unsettle its purveyors, workers, regulators and consumers by virtue of being almost – but not quite – what they promise to be. What phantoms lurk within the fantasies and fictions of food-tech industries? What expectations do they conjure, and how are these expectations actualized (or left unfulfilled) in practice? And what do these figures tell us about food systems and social worlds that are increasingly shaped and mediated by technocapitalist imaginations and apparitions?

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: D.H. We

Presenter(s): Sucharita Kanjilal, Bard College, Anthropology Program, D.H. We, Ariana Gunderson, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Joeva Rock, Rikki Brown, University of California, Santa Cruz

Discussant: Lilly Irani, University of California, San Diego

Presentation(s): Gastronomy, Accumulation and the Techno-Fantasies of the Representational Frontier

This paper examines the proliferation of digital (and related) food media content that seeks to properly "represent" marginalized histories, cultures, practices and peoples. In particular, it examines Indian food content creators' ongoing search for and desires to document recipes and food stories that they fear are "lost" or "forgotten", or that they believe "no one knows about" and therefore "will be gone one day". What kinds of culinary knowledges are felt to be lost, unknown or unheralded — and by whom, in what form and to what end are they deemed recovered? Expanding anthropological conceptions of the "culinary frontier", I suggest that the contestations around lost-and-found foodways demonstrate the emergence of a broader common sense that I call the representational frontier. The representational frontier coalesces around the consensus that historical harms can be reversed, political inequalities can be recalibrated and indeed history can be correctly rewritten by entrepreneurial citizens participating in market-based, mediatized cultural representation on an ever-expanding global scale. Despite a tenuous or at least as-yet unrealized connection to the material redistribution of global power, the fantasy of the representation frontier is nevertheless a productive one: it provides, I suggest, the moral grist for the accumulative mill of the digital creator/attention economies.

Presenter(s): Sucharita Kanjilal

Apparitions on the App: Corporate Concealment, Unsettlement, and the Ghosts of Ghost Kitchens

This paper uses ghost kitchens in Los Angeles as an analytic object to explore various mechanisms and processes that allow tech companies to generate economic value through adjacent industries (in this case, the restaurant industry). I take as a starting point the following question: what is it that makes ghost kitchens ghostly and why do they unsettle consumers when their ghostly nature is revealed? Unlike traditional brick-and-mortar restaurants, ghost kitchens have no front-of-house. Instead, they are operated out of warehouse-like structures that house multiple delivery-only

restaurant "concepts," and transactions are mediated through third-party delivery apps. Ghost kitchens are thus restaurant formations that can only manifest at the nexus of physical and digital infrastructures, which ultimately renders the space and identity of ghost kitchens diffuse and opaque. In effect, a ghost kitchen business is able to masquerade as a local brick-and-mortar restaurant, or even several. It is not uncommon for customers to express dismay when such façades are revealed, but the sense of unsettlement ghost kitchens inspire extends beyond mere implicit duplicity. Drawing from ongoing ethnographic research, I show how the ghostliness and unsettling nature of ghost kitchens is not simply enabled, but rather actively reproduced, by technologies of infrastructural obfuscation, tactics of corporate concealment, and the creation of entrepreneurial ghosts by tech companies in the industry.

Presenter(s): D.H. We

Why artificial intelligence can't write good recipes

AI chatbots skillfully reproduce text in a wide variety of genres, but they are not very good at writing recipes. Analyzing popular media in which professional recipe developers evaluate the quality of AI-written recipes and my ethnographic fieldwork on recipe writing, this paper examines how the recipe industry in the United States responds to the 'threat' of artificial intelligence – largely by not seeing it as a threat at all. Recipe developers are deeply aware of the multi-authored creation of recipes, as writers get inspiration and even significant sections of their recipes from other recipe writers, so their arguments against AI are not based on a defense of an author's uniquely human creative mind. A recipe is not just a re-combination of other texts, it is a text made up of food. The recipe writing process involves moving between food and text iteratively as recipes are conceived, tested, circulated, and reinvented. This cross-modal creative process is what makes recipes 'work' in the eyes of the industry, and is not a part of how AI chatbots create recipes. Even as the specter of AI threatens the viability of many human jobs, recipe developers see their synesthetic work as something chatbots just can't do.

Presenter(s): Ariana Gunderson

Build it and they will come: Biotechnology and Expectations of Development in Ghana

For the past twenty years, Ghanaian officials have worked to build a biotechnology sector in country. This has included the development of a national biosafety authority, whose role it is to develop and oversee regulation related to biotechnology products, such as genetically modified seeds. In Ghana, as elsewhere, the move towards biotechnology has been controversial and raised public dissent. In response, biosafety officials regularly make statements positioning the authority as a guardian of public good, and a neutral regulator. My ongoing ethnographic research within the authority, however, reveals that the authority occupies a more complex position. Though a public entity, the authority is expected to generate its own funds through the receipt of applications from prospective biotechnology developers. In interviews, authority officials frame these future applications as "expected" and crucial to the future operations of the authority. Thus, in this paper I draw from ongoing ethnographic research and insights from Science and Technology Studies to

examine how "expectations" operate within Ghana's biosafety authority. I will show that while expectations are a crucial building block of the authority, they are highly unstable – raising questions around the authority's fiscal and operational sustainability – and that they are a potential conflict of interest, raising questions around the authority's ability to serve as a neutral regulator.

Presenter(s): Joeva Rock

What's Lurking on the Block?: Blockchain, QR codes, and wine labels

While blockchain technology, alongside Bitcoin, has been around for over a decade, it remains shrouded in mystery to the general "transactional public" (Swartz 2020). Yet, blockchain technology and its magical apparitions have made moves in the global beverage industry. In Georgia (country), QR codes have appeared on wine bottles, linking harvest, viticultural, and vinicultural data, all mysteriously stored on the blockchain. Pulling from one of the main pillars of blockchain—transparency—I examine Georgian wine labels to theorize three scales of transparency influenced by tech futures and pasts. Starting with minimal transparency, I think through the act of blind tasting and the obscuring of identifying data of wine to reestablish its taste profile and market value. Next, I present medium transparency as a textual analysis of wine labels, considering how winemakers choose what to share about their wine and how that information interacts with data collected for the blockchain. Lastly, I suggest that maximum transparency is reflected by ultimately merging unlabeled and labeled data on the blockchain, where it is visible (yet encrypted) to all. Through an additional label, the QR code linked to the blockchain, the consumer can obtain tasting notes and production data and be reassured that the product is authentically Georgian. Thinking through different scales of transparency shows how blockchain's central pillar—transparency—is complexified by its own unsettling processes.

Presenter(s): Rikki Brown

Discussion

3406 Ghostly Presences, Living Pasts: Spectral Politics of Memory and Resistance in Contemporary Asia and the Pacific

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how colonial and political ghosts materialize in contemporary landscapes, bodies and practices across Asia and the Pacific, shaping both physical spaces and collective consciousness. Drawing on rich ethnographic research from China, Malaysia, Indonesia and Tibet, these papers from scholars at Duke University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, University College London, Xiamen University, Columbia University, Leiden University examine how spectral traces of historical violence, displacement and trauma continue to haunt present-day communities, while simultaneously serving as catalysts for resistance, preservation and cultural reclamation.

Our panel analyzes various manifestations of these hauntings: from the transformation of female bodies and historical memories in socialist China through contemporary art (Lyu, Duke), to the complex preservation decisions surrounding colonial architecture in Lushun's heritage landscape (Xiao, CUHK). We see how war trauma endures through an elderly man's paradoxical preservation of bombing damage in his traditional courtyard house (Li, UCL), and how colonial dispossession continues to marginalize Malaysia's Mah Meri indigenous community through modern development projects (Yang, Xiamen). The panel also explores how communities actively engage with these hauntings- whether through arts festivals in Lhasa that reclaim cultural practices as civic participation (Lyu, Columbia), or through the fluid yet persistent "walls" of residential segregation in Jakarta that both divide and connect communities (Qiu, Leiden). Our discussants (Wang, Oxford; Gong, LSE) will draw connections between these diverse sites of spectral politics, while our chair Professor Andrew Kipnis, a specialist in the anthropology of China and ghost stories, will guide the conversation.

Together, these papers demonstrate how ghostly presences operate as powerful forces in contemporary life- shaping preservation decisions, influencing identity formation, and providing frameworks for resistance against ongoing marginalization. By examining how communities navigate, interpret, and sometimes harness these hauntings, the panel contributes to broader anthropological discussions about colonial legacies, collective memory, and the role of the spectral in contemporary social life. This investigation is particularly relevant to the conference theme, as it reveals how ghosts serve not only as metaphors for unresolved historical trauma but also as active agents in the production of space, memory and resistance in the present.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Yiyang Xiao, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Andrew Kipnis, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Presenter(s): Dongkun Lyu, Yiyang Xiao, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology, hanchun li, fanying yang, Siyao Lyu, Wenjing Qiu, Leiden University

Discussant: Jingsi Wang, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Zhixuan Gong

Presentation(s): Resurfaced Breasts and Images: Lichee Girl, Historical Memories in Socialist China, and Mao Chenyu's Contemporary Art Practice

Lichee Girl is a ghost. She lingers as a ghostly figure in the legends of Eastern Dongting Lake, Hunan, China, echoing through the fabricated lyrics of fishermen's songs. Lichee Girl was a real historical woman who lived a legendary yet tragic life and ultimately chose to suicide during the Cultural Revolution. Lichee Girl is both an exhibition and a series of artworks by Mao Chenyu. Resorting to the story of her as a medium and the geology and historical memory of Eastern Dongting Lake as its texture, it weaved a visual sequence that reopens inquiries and was exhibited at the Asia Contemporary Art Space in 2018. Lichee Girl is also a symbol—it represents the female body, specifically the shifting significance of breasts across different historical periods: wartime, the early socialist construction of China, the Cultural Revolution, and the contemporary art

context. This article, based on oral histories along the shores of Eastern Dongting Lake, ethnographic research, Mao Chenyu's artistic practice, and interviews with him, explores the symbolic transformation of the female body within the ghostly image and body of Lichee Girl . It examines the reinterpretation of historical memory in the People's Republic of China, the crimes driven by collective socialist mania and fanaticism, and the rebirth and power of images and symbols under geological shifts and image reproduction.

Presenter(s): Dongkun Lyu

Heritage as Haunting: Spectral Preservation in China's Post-Colonial Memorial Landscape

This paper examines how colonial ghosts haunt both the heritage landscape and collective consciousness of Lushun, a town in Dalian City, Liaoning Province. Through the lens of hauntology, it explores how these specters manifest in heritage practices and preservation decisions, creating sites where past, present, and potential futures converge. Once a showcase of colonial modernity under Russian and Japanese rule, Lushun's heritage sites now embody a complex temporal disjunction where multiple historical moments coexist through practices of preservation, demolition, and reinterpretation. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at heritage sites like the Lushun Japan and Russia Prison Museum, Russo-Japanese War memorials and Lushun Soviet Union Tomb, this study investigates how colonial hauntings shape both material heritage and psychological frameworks. These ghosts operate as what Derrida terms 'the persistence of a present past' – influencing how heritage is preserved and displayed, and how residents interpret these sites and negotiate their identities through them. The paper argues that Lushun's heritage landscape represents a form of 'spectral preservation' where colonial ghosts actively shape decisions about what to preserve, demolish, and interpret, creating a heritage palimpsest where colonial trauma, pride, nostalgia, and ambivalence coexist in perpetual tension.

Presenter(s): Yiyang Xiao

Non-Monumental Trauma: Architectural Palimpsest as a Resistant Identity Production in Post-Conflict Interpretation Practices

This research examines an individual's interpretation practices at his privately owned courtyard house, a former WWII Japanese bombing site in Central China, revealing how wartime trauma continues to haunt the present. Focusing on a man in his seventies as the dwelling's guardian and household, the study investigates his dual approach: meticulously restoring traditional architectural fragments while deliberately preserving war-induced damage. This paradoxical spatial practice transforms the house as a palimpsest where colonial violence and family memory intersect. The study argues that the elder's daily repairs function as embodied performances of memory, anchoring personal identity within narratives of resistance. The preserved war traces serve as spectral evidence, reactivating histories and contesting collective forgetfulness. As the dwelling becomes a living archive, its material decay intertwines with the elder's physical aging, demonstrating how wartime trauma endures through architectural palimpsest. By understanding the interplay between the preservation of bombing traces, daily restorations, and the haunted

construction of personal identity, this research highlights the critical role of personal memory practices in post-conflict cultural continuity. By analyzing the architectural-body dialogue, the study explains how unofficial memories persist through the ongoing interaction between the decaying structure and its human guardian—until both ultimately fade away.

Presenter(s): hanchun li

Ghosts of Colonialism: The Ongoing Marginalization of the Mah Meri Indigenous Community in Modern Malaysia

The Mah Meri Indigenous community of Carey Island, Malaysia, faces ongoing marginalization rooted in colonial legacies and exacerbated by modern development. During British rule, their ancestral lands were seized for palm oil plantations, disrupting their subsistence and spiritual ties to the land. Today, this historical violence is reanimated through state-backed tourism and industrial projects, such as luxury resorts and port expansions, which mirror colonial patterns of resource extraction. Ancestors' Day (Hari Moyang), their annual ritual to pray for the ancestral blessings, now unfolds under the gaze of tourists and photographers, transforming sacred acts into commodified spectacles. While tourism provides the Mah Meri with a source of income, it also reduces their cultural heritage to a marketable commodity, subject to the global neoliberal market. As the news of a new port's construction spreads, they may be displaced and face the globalized anxieties of modern development. This article explores how the spectral residues of colonialism continue to haunt contemporary socio-economic structures, perpetuating the systemic marginalization of the Mah Meri, Malaysia. Framing the past as an active, unresolved force, it argues that colonial-era land dispossession and cultural erasure reverberate through modern neoliberal policies, entrenching cycles of exploitation.

Presenter(s): fanyang yang

From Sweet Tea to Dancing in the Old Communities: Defeating the Ghost of Civic Marginalization through Local Arts Festival in Lhasa

Facing the ghost of marginalization, stigmatization, and assimilation of indigenous culture and knowledge systems, this paper critically examines the dynamic cultural practices and the civic impacts of the Chakhang Youth Arts Festival in contemporary Lhasa. Framed by the theories of Cultural Citizenship (Ong, 1996) and Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970/1993; hooks, 1994), this case study explores how the long-marginalized Lhasa communities reclaim cultural practices as alternative civic participation beyond the mainstream political civic narratives. Based on the interviews with the festival organizing team and analysis of festival documents, the findings reveal that the festival tries to create a safe public space for local communities' cultural-civic engagement by rooting art events deep into the communities, perpetuating traditional and modern senses of place, co-creating with local people, and mobilizing cultural entities. This is further aided by the examination of social media content posted by the public regarding the festival. As one of the first to examine art festivals' role in the Lhasa civic scene, this study will hopefully shed light on the

understanding of the arts as unhaunted civic common grounds for the caring and mobilization of culturally marginalized communities.

Presenter(s): Siyao Lyu

Fluid Walls, Enduring Ghosts: The Colonial Afterlives of Residential Segregation in Coastal Jakarta

The specters of colonialism linger in post-colonial cities through enduring residential segregation, materializing as "walls" that segregate dwellers and haunt urban landscapes. Jakarta, a city still experiencing ethnic and racial segregation, exemplifies this phenomenon. Colonial-era planning arrangements—which spatially segregated Indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese communities—continue to reverberate in contemporary mistrust, fear, and discrimination. Drawing on 2023-2024 ethnographic fieldwork in Jakarta, this article examines two adjacent settlements: a working-class fishing port settlement and a middle-upper-class gated community. The two communities are not merely divided by physical walls but are partitioned by fluid yet invisible walls—economic precarity, political marginalization, and cultural boundaries. Boundaries and divisions sustained by post-colonial neoliberal policies and bottom-up everyday practices replicate exclusion, ensuring a complicated sense of "security." This article reframes walls as dynamic, multifaceted constructs across time and reconsiders segregation as an ongoing process of haunting.

Presenter(s): Wenjing Qiu

Discussion

Discussion

5107 Specters of Failure: The Futures Past of Technoscience

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How are we to understand co-existing temporalities in technical and natural systems? What apparitions are felt as presence when these systems fail and begin to break down? What semiotic, material, and affective fragments and sediments remain when systems fail? And how do these specters of failures animate an anthropology of science and technology beyond anthropos in its inclusion of uncanny presences? Failure, seen as politically productive in political projects and technoscience (Ferguson 1994; Latour 1992), is never without the production of overlapping pasts and futures. By looking at four different examples of "failure" in technoscience, the papers in this panel examine the "futures past" (Koselleck 1990) of various systems to understand (absent?) presences and specters co-mingling in the present engendered by systemic breakdown. In doing so, we foreground the temporalities of technical systems and the agencies of human and beyond-human copresences (Beliso-De Jesús, 2024) to show the ways they are imbued with potentiality and fragments of the past, with metabolic cycles outside of plans and other artifacts of technoscientific reasoning. With examples across Southeast Asia and the United States, we also

think through the ways in which technical systems are embedded in local, national, and transnational histories and political and ecological networks. Across these sites, failure manifests as failure of meaning, development failure in light of climate change and socialist politics, technical failure against the microbial and spiritual forces of Vietnamese soil, and political disintegration in America.

Signs in artificial intelligence systems lose their intended meaning and lead to misinterpretation and social aphasia. The Mekong Delta sinks due to land subsidence, swallowing up the failed socialist development projects that now populate the urban landscape as ghost projects. Vietnamese and international scientists struggle and fail against microbial/bacterial forces and acidic soil that break down the bones of Vietnamese war remains, until only ghosts linger with little to none human DNA remaining for identification. Earthship builders in New Mexico imagine new cosmologies and lives off the grid amid infrastructural and ecological breakdown. In each case, systems of prior understanding and past conceptualizations of technoscientific and political futures fail and give way to disjointed temporalities. In these emergent temporal relationships, the present, past, and future give life to cosmologies beyond the material, human, and present. All systems take on meanings of their own. Delta geomorphology and hydromorphology outlive state projects. Microbes and DNA create new assemblages of life and beyond-life, the human, non-human, and spirits. Off-gridders and preppers in New Mexico gather from around the country to re-imagine settledness and cosmological contact in light of failed American dreams.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Darius Sadighi, Princeton University

Chair: Tiên-Dung Hà, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Darius Sadighi, Princeton University, Tiên-Dung Hà, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Brian Yuan, Benjamin Trujillo Perez

Discussant: Pablo Seward Delaporte, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presentation(s): Sediments and Specters in Mekong Delta Ghost Projects

Buildings sink into the delta due to the growing problem of subsidence. The skeletons of single row houses—the remnants of the country's unique tax code—jut out of fields. Rumors spread that American war-time chemicals have contaminated the soil, leading to potential home buyers abandoning the project. Still, peri-urban farmers allow their cows to graze on the overgrown grass. Garbage, weeds, and abandoned construction materials create the liminal feeling that the deferred dreams of middle class life are being swallowed by the nature of the delta, which is sinking rapidly, breaking the foundation of abandoned row homes. What do the abandoned ghost cities of the Mekong Delta tell us about the ecological patches created by failed delta futures? And how do specters of the war with America live on in the delta, even if only as rumors of contaminated soil that cannot be developed? By emphasizing the place of natural ruins in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, this talk looks at the novel ecologies taking shape in abandoned real estate projects in the peri-urban districts of Can Tho and foregrounds the ghosts of recently failed development to understand

the ways in which the delta's "accidental ecosystems" and ecological "patches" emerge from these projects. In doing so, it imagines the sediments, specters, and temporalities of delta futures that emerge at the nexus of failed socialist development and Anthropocene ruination.

Presenter(s): Darius Sadighi

Ghostly Mattering of Microbes in Vietnamese War Remains

How do we make sense of microbes and bacteria living in the bone matrix of war remains? When a combatant, soldier or civilian, dies, their DNA starts to fragment by action of cellular enzymes in the dead cells. After death, microbes from the highly acidic soil of Vietnam invade the remains and begin breaking down the bone matrix. Over time, the process of decomposition, typically marked with high microbial activity, gradually fragments the DNA within the bones into smaller fragments until little to no human DNA remains. During the DNA sequencing process, microbial DNA can take up most of the sequencing "real estate" and interfere with obtaining mapped sequence reads of human DNA. Vietnamese scientists, in collaboration with foreign forensic scientists, are optimizing "hybridization capture" techniques to enrich human DNA in hopes of overcoming microbial and bacterial DNA contamination from the soil. For many Vietnamese families who have been unable to locate the remains of their war dead, the soil from the place where their relatives died serves as the final connection to the deceased and becomes a ritual object of commemoration in lieu of physical remains. Therefore, this paper explores the ghostly mattering of microbes in the Vietnamese soil, where millions of war dead are buried, not as a biological contamination but a "copresence" (Beliso-De Jesús, 2024) of life and beyond-life: the human, and non-human "mattering" with the spirit and personhood of the war dead.

Presenter(s): Tiên-Dung Hà

Searching for Grounding: Dirt and the Cosmological Biopolitics of Earthships in Taos, New Mexico

Volunteers use sledgehammers to pound dirt into discarded tires in the southwestern sun. Students slather adobe onto walls made from bottles and cans. Off-gridders water garden beds embedded inside their houses. Experimenters wire up buckets of dirt to create fuel cells that run on soil microbes. These are vignettes from my research on Earthships, do-it-yourself off-grid houses built from dirt and reclaimed waste. Built by the hundreds on virtually every continent but most concentrated in northern New Mexico, Earthships have walls made of dirt rammed into tires and backing berms that turn them into artificial hills. A wide-ranging and complex community of residents and builders have formed around them, turning Earthships into platforms for personal life projects, scientific experimentation, and cosmological contact. What can the extreme groundedness of these off-grid houses tell us about the search for security and autonomy in an era of infrastructural failure and ecological crisis? And how can the centrality of dirt in the diverse scientific, ecological, religious, preparatory, and other life-projects of Earthship-builders and experimenters help us think through its unspoken power as the material and conceptual stuff of settledness? This talk centers the role of earth in Earthshippers' search for a sustaining biopolitics,

and in so doing highlights the re-materialization of cosmological connection as a response to uncertain ecological and infrastructural futures.

Presenter(s): Brian Yuan

A Theory of Social Aphasia

Why do systems fail? Through crafting theory of social aphasia, we capture the ways in which systems fail when their designed intentions are not properly expressed both in signage and interpretation. The system failures are exemplified within cases of Artificial Intelligence misalignment, but the theory behind it can be extended to thinking about social, political, economic, environmental, ecological, and technological systems. We find that cases within Artificial Intelligence alignment such as in specification gaming and reward hacking share much in common with broader contexts of social and system failure, providing the ground for a broader theory of social failure. Presented is a theory of social aphasia that describes a social semiotics of intersubjective failure. Systems that suffer from this condition fail to communicate their intended uses and goals, or to communicate the designer's desires through proxy goals and objectives. The goal as a sign does not properly signify the object desire of the designer. In some cases, form is not iconic or indexical of function. The ghost in the system comes to haunt us when we look at system failure in retrospect and frame it as "be careful what you wish for because you just might get it". Sometimes the things we own "own us". This is the curse of symbolism, the negative potential of the human condition. A theory of social aphasia provides a way to rethink interpretive and expressive agency, cybernetics, and the commodity fetish.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Trujillo Perez

Discussion

2632 Rights and Obligations of/for the Dead

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel provokes anti-colonial frameworks to further explore the significance and power of reckoning with the dead as political subjects to whom our relations might be transformed. Of systemic violence, we ask: What should we do with our inherited complicities/trauma when our ancestors are perpetrators and (non)survivors of brutality? What do we owe our/each other's ancestors, and what are the possibilities for reparative, transitional, and restorative justice?

Of "the environment" specifically, we ask: How do more-than-living entities advance our understanding of multispecies justice? For example, might the rematriation of gods, artifacts, and land shape the possibilities for resurgent politics? How might global warming be addressed through antiracist and anti-colonial abolition? What role does collective grief and mourning play in shaping visions of the future? Leaders in abolitionist and anti-colonial thought have guided similar questions: we aim to specify the pragmatic ways that we can transform our relations with the dead.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Kali Rubaii, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kali Rubaii, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Olivia Palepoi, Eli Elinoff, Victoria University of Wellington, Nooralhuda Sami, Creighton Burns, Taylor Borgelt, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Adriana Garriga-Lopez, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Refocusing the Hauntings of Pacific Literatures for Resurgent and Regenerative Practice

Indigenous feminist literatures have been calling for a regeneration and resurgence of genealogies existing outside colonial and imperialist boundaries of existence by (re)focusing on practices of reproduction, kinship, and relational space. Here, genealogy becomes an expansive site of refusal emphasizing the deconstruction of deeply embedded values of heteropatriarchy and capitalism by looking beyond human relationships. Therefore, instead, genealogical practice expands to include understandings of responsibility, respect, love, and other principles meant to cherish relational space between all things.

Using the presence of hauntings, spiritual beings, and notions of possession in Pacific academic literature, this paper culminates a genealogy of the importance of "spiritual encounters" to emulate its use in the (re)production of anti-colonial, resurgent, and regenerative worlds. Not only are encounters with the spiritual used to explain the ongoing projects of colonialism and imperialism, but also, these examples of spiritual presence demonstrate pathways of protection and regeneration.

From this, I focus on how Pacific literature offers examples of the ways spiritual presence center relational space and emphasize responsibility for those from the past, the present, and those yet to emerge as ancestors. I end with making a connection to works regarding the *vā* within the Samoan context as a place of negotiation and the immense potential of working against and beyond violence.

Presenter(s): Olivia Palepoi

Waiting in the Charnel Forest: Environmentalism, Murder, and Cosmological Deferral

The body of environmental defender Tonguan Kamjen lies in concrete tomb just outside a forest temple in the Thai province of Nong Bua Lamphu. Tonguan and Som Hompornma were murdered after Tonguan, who was the village headman, launched an oppositional movement against a limestone quarry that was being proposed in their village. After 35 years of intense community-led opposition, the quarry has been shut. In the voided remains of the mountainside, community activists have begun the slow process of trying to remediate the quarry by transforming it into a community. But, still, Tonguan awaits cremation in the charnel nearby forest. Concerned about the karmic effects his "bad death," Tonguan's widow deferred his cremation until all permits for mining in the area have been cancelled. This paper asks it means to wait for justice from the suspended space of the charnel forest. What can we learn about environmental justice from deaths like

Tonguan (and other environmental defenders like him) that have taken place in the wake of extractive projects? On the one hand, Tonguan's death highlights the unsettled relationship between the body and the necropolitics of extraction. On the other, the deferral of his cremation suggests something about the uncertain about the cosmic nature of justice itself when hopes for remediation are deeply embedded in the earth itself.

Presenter(s): Eli Elinoff

Embodiments of Inherited War in Iraq

In the wake of the 2003 assault, the village of Yathrib, Iraq, holds toxic inheritances revealed in withered grape vines and terminal diagnoses, in the sulfurous veil of burn-pit clouds and in cancerous growths on for-now living organs. The families here, pressed close to the Bakir Air Base, bear witness to environmental violence's patient work and its invisible accumulation in bones and soil, generation after generation. As a health researcher, I document these stories as not merely health outcomes to be recorded, but as embodied testimonies of how imperial violence writes itself into flesh and bone, root and branch, outliving its original architects. Here, the river remembers what bodies cannot; bodies remember what documents can never capture. In Yathrib, each soil sample I take becomes a testimony. Each medical record I gather is a counter-archive. Each failed harvest is rebellion against official narratives of military necessity and "acceptable" losses. We are witness to a violence that exceeds human temporality: this is haunting as a political project.

Presenter(s): Nooralhuda Sami

Colonial (Un)Wounding: Bodies and Beings in/of Guåhan

In times of ongoing ruination—theft and desecration of unceded Indigenous lands, brinks of ecological collapse, the waging of wars and genocide—we continually experience and witness the grounds of anticolonial possibility. Rather than repeat, amplify, and affirm these imperial formations (Sexton and Barber 2017; Stoler 2008) this paper explores how each of us might interrupt and destabilize our inherited and accumulated complicities without invoking moves to innocence or absolution. The ideas introduced in this paper take root from ethnographic engagement with CHamorus, the Indigenous peoples of Guåhan (Guam) and the Låguas yan Gåni (the Mariana archipelago); the tåno (land); the tåsi (sea); and the taotaomo'na (the people of before). Guåhan is one of many Pacific Islands subjugated to ongoing US-colonial rule and preeminent, but familiar and ongoing, militarization and environmental desecration (Aguon 2022; Flores 2023; Vine and Arriola 2024). As a non-Indigenous US-American settler positioned in a lineage of colonizer ancestors of anthropology, this paper addresses ethnographic demands to accompany, traverse, be guided, be touched, and be implicated by our interlocutors through our colonial wound(ings); not to move beyond in the name of resuscitated renewal, but to truly reckon, unsettle, and affect toward abolitionist futures.

Presenter(s): Creighton Burns

Our Dead, The Dead, My Dead: How the (Un)Making of Collectives and Individuals in Death Engages with Power and Violence

: In their persistence, The Dead, as a collective, engage with and offer a different form of representation and mourn-ability than dead individuals because of how meaning is variably imposed. Thinking about politics around death and dying dominant in the United States, it is important to consider how the power of the dead is continually made and unmade through shifting awareness and visibility around grief and memory. This presentation focuses on indexical differences and complexities through an examination of the roles of news media and county-governmental record making, looking at coroner's reports and death certificates, obituaries, and other forms of official documentation. Situated in a recent mass gravesite in Hinds County, Mississippi, I am contending with how Black death is made and unmade as a confrontation of (state, legal) power as The Dead move from a collective body to grieve-able individuals. What do identification and naming do, particularly in visible representational arenas, in the face of structural violence(s)? How can we think about the continuity of care and responsibility when moving between notions of the collective and notions of the individual? This work and analysis ask how the act of record making functions within realms of visibility and representation, with respect to how the dead are social and political actors.

Presenter(s): Taylor Borgelt

Discussion

1940 Haunting the Discipline: Embodied Knowledges, Artistic Praxis, and Decolonial Ethnography

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The ghosts of colonialism, epistemic violence, and disciplinary constraints haunt anthropology, shaping the ways knowledge is produced, legitimized, and shared. This panel reimagines ethnographic research through embodied, poetic, and artistic practices that summon new ways of knowing, transmuting research beyond the written word into movement, sound, and visual expression. Bringing together ethnographer-poets, dancers, singers, painters, musicians, and performance artists, this panel creates a space for scholars whose work enacts healing, community care, and decolonial praxis through artistic and embodied methodologies. How do our bodies archive histories of violence and resilience? How does artistic creation allow us to commune with the unseen, the silenced, the spirits of our interlocutors and ancestors? How does performance and creative expression materialize the spectral legacies that continue to shape marginalized communities?

We highlight the voice of Black, Indigenous, Brown, Muslim, and otherwise marginalized scholars activating ethnography as a site of collective memory, survival, and resistance. We use art as method, medium, and message, interrogating the role of the anthropologist not only as a scribe of

the spectral but as a conjurer of futures. In a moment where hauntings of the past shape ongoing struggles for justice, this panel serves as a communal ritual—a space to reflect, resist, and reimagine.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Melinda Gonzalez, Georgetown University

Chair: Melinda Gonzalez, Georgetown University

Presenter(s): Sofya Shahab, Pablo D. Herrera Veitia, Sergio Papa Ruark, AQA Section of AAA, Cydney Seigerman, University of Georgia, Melinda Gonzalez, Georgetown University, Heather Prentice-Walz

Presentation(s): What might ethnography look like if it centered care and healing at its core?

Drawing on our experience as part of the project Reconfiguring Heritage: Present engagements with communities' pasts for resilient futures, we share the learnings and challenges encountered in engaging participatory approaches to facilitate 13 youth researchers across Iraq/KRI, Syria and Jordan to design, conduct, analyse and share autoethnographic research. Through research that focuses on the ways in which affective encounters with community heritages are experienced and employed in embodied acts of everyday peace and resistance in the midst of conflict and oppression, together we are investigating how both community heritages and research praxis is being reconfigured to advance justice, agency and equity. In creating networks of researchers through regular workshops, learning circles and shared projects, we highlight the importance of trust and the role of friendship in and as method in advancing critical reflection. Sharing examples of our creative and reflective practice including visual art, poetry and storytelling that we have employed to engage with the spectral and relational dimensions of heritages through our bodyminds, we illustrate how the methods we use, might themselves, contribute to healing in the midst of violence (and what we mean by this) and discuss how a process rather than outcomes oriented approach can enable an ethos of care to sit alongside methodological depth and rigour.

Presenter(s): Sofya Shahab

Tengo's Hauntings: Lukumí Sonic Ethics and the Politics of Listening

What should an Afro-Cuban sound-based ethnography look like, feel like, and most importantly, sound like? This presentation explores how ethnographic knowledge might move beyond the written word into sonic, poetic, and multimodal forms. In Cuba's post-socialist crisis, Afro-Cuban rap and its transformation into more body-oriented genres articulate raced critiques of Cuban society. These sonic practices operate as insurgent epistemologies, making audible the lived experiences of Black Cubans.

Drawing on Lucumí Òrìṣà/Ifá, Afro-Cuban rap, and my own experience as a Havana-born, dark-skinned man, I reflect on the methodological, ideological, and ethical stakes of sound-based ethnography. How does listening—as method and analysis—reveal alternative knowledge systems? How might field recordings become analytical, affective, and performative interventions?

Through a curated playlist of audio fragments, including Nicolás Guillén's 1964 poem *Tengo* and its 2019 reinterpretation by Popy y La Moda, I trace a sonic narrative of anti-racist protest in urban Afro-Cuban music. Engaging sound and music as analytical tools within Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Diasporic, and Global South anthropology, this presentation challenges the discipline's privileging of text. It asks how digital multimodal formats might embody the sonic hauntings that persist in the histories, bodies, and spaces of Afro-Cuban life—moving toward an ethnography that resonates, disrupts, and transforms.

Presenter(s): Pablo D. Herrera Veitia

Gender Expression through Indigenous Dance in the Central Andes of Perú

Indigenous dancers aim to transmit multiple feelings to their audience while performing cultural dances. However, few studies explore how contemporary Indigenous people tell stories through nonverbal language to communicate feelings of strength, healing, and resilience. After attending the Two Spirit Gathering in Montana, I learned about the various roles of the Two Spirit people. I now realize that being a keeper of tradition is essential for my Two Spirit identity. The project integrates Indigenous identity into the dance to decolonize binary or Western-based influences. Using performance as the healing process for myself and the community allowed me to overcome generational trauma. Collaboration, an Andean value, was used to engage with family and the local community. This project revealed that stories of gender expression survived in Native American and Indigenous cultural performances. The journey shares how gender expression in Andean dances may contribute to reducing social stigma and prejudice faced by Indigenous and Two Spirit people.

Presenter(s): Sergio Papa Ruark

Performance as Ethnography of Water Realities—Past, Present, and Future—in Ceará, Brazil

Performance creates opportunity to expand understandings of dynamic human-environment relations through embodied practice. As an ethnographic method, performance shifts analytical focus toward knowledge stored and (re)created through the body. Because it is situated in the body, performance also provokes critical reflection on social responsibility and politics of representation. In this multi-modal paper, I explore devised theatre as an ethnographic method to examine human-water relations in Ceará, Brazil. I consider how community members of Quilombo Mearim, a rural community in Ceará, and I collaborated to devise and perform the play *Changes in Quilombo Mearim's Water*. The play is an exploration of the community's past and present water realities and their visions for more just water futures. Community members of all ages participated in the devising process, which became a site of intergenerational storytelling and future-making. Performed in the community in 2023 to an audience that included other rural dwellers and representatives from social movements, the public water authority, and the municipal government, the play centered community voices and communicated local goals to people in positions of power. Integrating recorded scenes from the performance into my discussion, I consider my social responsibility as researcher and as co-performative witness and the importance of radical flexibility in performance ethnography as research and praxis.

Presenter(s): Cydney Seigerman

Documenting What Endures: Poetry, Colonialism, and Ethnographic Refusal across the Puerto Rican Diaspora

This presentation embodies poetics as method, practice, and refusal — an ethnography shaped through the Afro-Indigenous body, diasporic memory, and ancestral knowledge. Drawing from long-term ethnographic research in Puerto Rico and her diasporas, I weave auto ethnographic poetry alongside the words of my interlocutors to trace the colonial hauntings that live in our bodies, landscapes, and everyday practices of survival.

Against extractive, colonial logics of knowledge production, I turn to poetry as a decolonial methodology — a way of being and knowing that honors the silences, the ruptures, and the spectral presences of displacement. I ask: what might the poetic offer us in reimagining anthropology's ethical and methodological futures amid climate catastrophe, austerity, and ongoing colonial violence? This work enacts ethnography not only as documentation but as a living practice of remembrance, relationality, and resistance — where art becomes archive, method, and healing.

Presenter(s): Melinda Gonzalez

Art, Ethnography, and Colonial Afterlives in Haiti

The figure of the ghost — the uninvited specter that haunts the present by collapsing it with the unfinished business of the past — has accompanied me throughout my academic career. It guides my ethnographic research on well-being in rural Haiti, where communities navigate the effects and affects of international interventions, climate change, and ongoing colonial violence. I draw inspiration from theorists who employ ghosts and haunting to grapple with the enduring legacies of colonialism and racism in so-called New World modernity (Du Bois 1903; Fanon 1961; Hall 2002; Hartman 2007; Gordon 1997; Stoler 2006).

Leaning into the ambiguous (im)materiality of ghosts, the discomfort of ethnographic positionality, and the call to extend our senses beyond their comfort zones (Lewis 2017; Tsing et al. 2017), I created a series of mixed-media paintings as a method of sharing research and sparking dialogue. Collaging original fieldnotes and surveys alongside ink, acrylic, and oil paints, these works engage with temporality, memory, and affect. They offer a sensory space to sit with the traces of trauma, survival, and resilience embedded in everyday life. My work asks: What if we welcome the ghosts that linger — those that hover at the edges of perception, embodied in our social presence — as reminders of unfinished business, of histories not yet resolved, and of the ongoing need to reckon with the afterlives of colonialism?

Presenter(s): Heather Prentice-Walz

7203 Specters of Emergency: Hauntings, Crisis, and Possibility in the Americas

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Marked by the violence of colonialism, dispossession, exclusion, disappearance, and exploitation, the Americas harbor spectral presences that are crucial for understanding contemporary political life. Ghosts contentiously materialize in intervened archives, silenced discourses, destroyed or invisible more-than-human beings, disappeared persons, suppressed feelings, repressed embodiments, and concealed political projects. Ghosts in the Americas are often experienced as reverberations of a historical condition in the present, stifling action or inciting new possibilities. As haunting agents, these ghosts invite critical attention to how spectrality can shed light on key present-day conjunctures across the region. Ghosts possess a volatile, lingering, and tangible presence—a crucial element that underpins their haunting. What can such spectral agents teach us about current crises in the Americas today? How do ghosts present in the contemporary Americas, and what other possibilities may they open?

This executive panel examines different forms of emergency in the Americas and the ghostly presence of the past and the future in the present. Thinking with Walter Benjamin's thesis that "the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule," we explore the emergencies of internal displacement, migration, truth and reconciliation, and environmental destruction, revealing not only how specters of power and domination exert force in the present but how other unseen entities open to different futures. The papers in this panel shed light on the diverse ways in which ghostly entities work to endure, enforce, or resist emergency in the Americas today. Clandestine organizing that refuses the fate the state has prescribed in abandoning communities to organized criminal groups, secret photographic archives that challenge and threaten the state's monopoly on truth, a volcano that mobilizes locals to fight against extractionism, divinely revealed speech and images that undermine political projects of closing borders and futures.

We think the ghostly in the Americas in an array of ways. From Irina Troconis's recent work on the ghost as a figure that can be resurrected to act in the political present, to Alfred Gell's theory of images as social agents, Margarita Serje's making visible the ghostly presence of the state in criminal governance, and José Rabasa's images that emanate from an elsewhere and enable seeing subjects to subvert political domination, the spectral entities explored in this panel act in the world, maintaining, refusing, or complicating the untenable state of emergency that marks modern history.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Britt Dawson, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Emily Fjaellen Thompson, Britt Dawson, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Emily Fjaellen Thompson, Angela Castillo, Britt Dawson, University of California,

Presentation(s): Phantom Frames: Tracing Peru's Impossible Archive

This paper explores photographs, negatives, and undeveloped film as relational entities that actively shape, rather than merely reflect, social and political realities. Building on Alfred Gell's theory of art as a social agent, I consider how haunting images that "don't exist"—unprocessed, withheld, or destroyed—still exert agency, influencing behaviors, shaping historical narratives, and producing tangible effects. Their power is not contingent on their material form but is often catalyzed by acts of negation, refusal, and deliberate omission. Focusing on Ayacucho, the epicenter of Peru's internal armed conflict, I examine remnants of unpublished photographic collections that challenge the state's linear post-conflict history. These images (and their absence) offer an alternative visual memory that unsettles dominant narratives of truth and reconciliation. They also highlight a deferred temporality: a phantom presence of what could have been, a latent history foreclosed yet never fully erased. As Peru's present echoes its past through state repression and renewed violence, these ghostly images demand recognition, revealing the ways memory, trauma, and political possibility are negotiated through the archive. Foregrounding the agency of the ethereal, this paper asks: How do images that "don't exist" act? What forms of knowledge and resistance emerge from their spectral presence? And what might such an "occult archive" offer as a site of memory and alternative futures?

Presenter(s): Emily Fjaellen Thompson

Volcanic Haunting: Seismic Uncertainty and Post-extractive Futures in Colombia

"The Machin Volcano is highly explosive and must be respected, "When it trembles, it is as if it feels under attack." These statements reveal conceptions of the high-Andean world that contrast with the narratives promoted by the mining company seeking to establish a mechanized open-pit mine in Cajamarca, Tolima. In recent years, Cajamarca, located in the Colombian Andes, has been the target of techno-political and legal interventions aimed at transforming it into a new mining frontier. Activists in Cajamarca and Ibagué mobilized to oppose the mining initiative, framing their collective action as acts of defending territory, water, and life. Although a series of protests and legal actions have halted the project, its future remains uncertain. This presentation explores the meaning-making processes and affective atmospheres that emerge around the presence of the Machin Volcano in the region. It proposes that the volcano functions as a specter that demands the politicization of mountain life. Drawing on Troconis (2025), who contends that the ghost is not merely a metaphor but a political, material, and social figure prompting us to address unresolved issues, the presentation argues that the volcano serves as an index of the indeterminacy inherent in the current situation in Cajamarca. As a specter, it creates an affective climate of caution, fear, and reflection toward the mountain, reinforcing anti-corporate mining sentiment and paving the way for a post-extractive future.

Presenter(s): Angela Castillo

Navigating the Unseen: Islam, Migration, and Crisis at the Mexico-U.S. Border

This paper investigates the invisible forces that act upon, with, and through Muslim migrants as they traverse the Americas and wait indefinitely at the Mexico-U.S. border in Tijuana. Fleeing different forms of crises across the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia, Muslim migrants must contend with an array of seen and unseen threats in their attempts to safely request asylum in the United States. Between forms of surveillance designed to impede Muslim mobility, waiting for asylum appointments assigned by the ghostly algorithm of the CPB One phone app, violence from criminal groups and Mexican authorities, and disappearances into immigration detention under clandestine U.S. policies targeting Muslims, various instantiations of border regimes condition the possibilities of Muslim migrants. At the same time, other invisible forces acting with and through Muslim migrants help them navigate and endure their situation. Drawing on Amira Mittermaier's and José Rabasa's notions of images that emanate from an elsewhere and act on or with the subject, this paper explores how encounters with angels, prophetic dreams, and acts of piety reorient Muslim migrants as subjects not stuck between the borders of nation-states but, rather, on the threshold between this world and the hereafter. This paper asks: What possibilities do encounters with an elsewhere open for Muslim migrants? How may such an ethics of in-betweenness, as Mittermaier terms it, enable us to think borders otherwise?

Presenter(s): Britt Dawson

The Haunted in Resistance: Life Stories of Internally Displaced Mexicans

Drawing from Margarita Serje, Rita Segato and Benjamin Lessing's theories on criminal governance, parallel states, and the myth of absence, this paper considers how the Mexican state and criminal organizations produce a symbiotic relationship through which the state exerts power over violent contexts, driving forced displacement. This paper explores the life stories of internally displaced Mexicans, the invisibility behind this phenomenon, and the phantom presence of the state. Testimonies from Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Guerrero reveal the state's phantom presence in facilitating criminal governance, through impunity, omission, collusion, systematic lack of protection, nepotism and extended periods of governance of political figures. The strategies of resistance and subjective experience that local agents share reveal a complex fight for dominance of territory for extractive activities, and the haunting of individuals who do not submit or comply with such efforts. Criminal governance in these territories evokes the spectral presence of colonial forms of state building, with violent imposition of symbolic hierarchical systems through physical and subjective forms. How does the phantom presence of the state sustain its power? And how do the haunted not only reveal but resist and undermine this power through clandestine organizing as well as displacement?

Presenter(s): Eugenia Morales Viana

Discussion

5304 The Body Ecology Lab discusses the stories bodies remember and/or reimagine about being in relationship with the land.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Conversation/Debate

Drawing from ethnographic, performance, and multimodal methods, the Body-Ecology Lab (BEL at Teachers College) explores embodied and ecological learning through the creative and performing arts. At BEL, we consider how creative practice with and through the body can inform how we understand our social, political, and ecological systems. Our current anchor project Storied Seeds of Rio is an ethnographic collaboration with youth in urban quilombos (home to descendants of Africans who escaped slavery) in Rio de Janeiro, to map communal foodways as a method of climate adaptation. The project helps urban quilombola youth to bring together modern climate data science with their food stories to work towards a more just and sustainable food system. Through community mapping convenings and workshops with Rio based organizations working at the intersections of agriculture, climate adaptation, and quilombola community development, the project will support quilombola youth in developing critical ethnographic practices, and community-driven climate and food literacies. The results will be expressed in a series of immersive and interactive "storied seeds" maps that highlight stories connecting African Diasporic foodways and climate literacies. These maps will contribute to existing efforts in Rio to build both virtual and material spaces that foreground intergenerational learning, cultural preservation and development, ecological wellbeing, and creativity. In the annual AAA's conversation, BEL Labs members will discuss the progress of the Storied Seeds Project as well as how each members' work in embodied research is in dialogue with it, supporting and learning as we all move together.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Sasha Dobos-Czarnocha, Teachers College, Columbia University

Presenter(s): Andreia Davies , Niambi Murray

Discussant: OreOluwa Badaki, Teachers College, Columbia University

4060 A Lexicon of Endurance: Articulating Black and Indigenous Feminist Futures

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

"How does one make a feminist world in the midst of continuous unraveling? A world where justice and equity prevail? How does our location in a particular corner of the world (at the center of empire, at its margins, or someplace else) shape our perception of this moment?" (Davis & Mulla 2020).

Answering the increasingly prescient call of Black and Women of Color feminist anthropologists Dána-Ain Davis and Sameena Mulla in volume 1, issue 2 of the *Feminist Anthropology Journal* (2020), we bring together anthropologists attending to dimensions of feminist world-making and techniques of endurance through social and sexual reproduction, political activism, and resistance in the Black Pacific, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the UK. Following the invitation made by Davis and Mulla to contributors in "Editors' Introduction: A Feminist Coda," (2022) we explore the multiplicities of feminist praxis, reading keywords through a feminist lens to consider their value for our movement in the world. We offer Imagination/aries, In/Compatibility, In/Determinacy, and the Maternal, as mooring points for our discussion on Endurance and Futures/ity.

In our independent projects, endurance and futurity emerge as common threads. As a feminist keyword, we understand Endurance as articulating Black and Indigenous women's multiscalar commitment to persistent world-making in the face of day-to-day state and interpersonal violence, as well as crafting enduring futures Otherwise and Elsewhere. Autoethnography and interviews with Black women offer a window into how imagination serves as a mode for pursuing life-affirming reproductive futures in the Black Pacific (Cotter-Norwood). Multivalent Q'eqchi trans indigenous activism in Guatemala demonstrates the value of using compatibility to push forward plural and diverse modes of life outside of Western categorical legibility (Urizar-Ávila). Indigenous catholic women in Nicaragua fashion 'homespun' religious practices of "sacred resistance" wherein the maternal transforms their reproductive labor into revolutionary praxis (Rayo). For Black women in London, navigations of motherhood can produce possibility through indeterminacy as racialized reproductive experiences connect with broad histories of racism, coloniality, and violence evidencing enduring structures of power and their continued effects (Bazambanza).

In 2020, global movements supporting justice for racialized people raised significant questions about the nature of white supremacy in the everyday: in our homes, hospitals, and universities. Five years on, critical voices are under threat through silencing, sidelining, and erasure. At this moment, it is crucial we forefront the knowledge of Black and Indigenous women who offer us avenues beyond survival, planting seeds for sustained transformation.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Farah Cotter-Norwood , Miriam Urizar-Ávila

Presenter(s): Farah Cotter-Norwood , Miriam Urizar-Ávila , Caroline Bazambanza , Rocio Rayo, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Dana-Ain Davis, CUNY, Graduate Center

2827 Anthropology Beyond Academic Silos

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology, as an academic discipline, is the knowledge of human cultures, and our methods are, by necessity, themselves steeped in human experience. Scholars from Malinowski onward

have also examined "participant-observation," one of our hallmark methods: how much is participation? How much is observation? And does such a divide echo another problematic divide: the outsider/insider dilemma (Abu-Lughod 1991; Narayan 1993). Turns towards more collaborative practices in anthropology have attempted to address these issues, and engage in collaborative or community-generated initiatives. For example, in archaeology scholars have begun excavating the contributions of local diggers, whose contributions were often elided by early archaeologists (Bruchac 2018; Mickel 2021; Quirke 2010). Projects like the Anthropology by the Wire project required students to present work to the community and gain consent before publication. The availability of cell phones and internet technology have also removed separations between "home" and "field," reshaping how research subjects experience the work done about their communities and in turn, their relationships with anthropologists. Especially in a moment when social science is under threat, anthropologists must consider how to work beyond academic silos and reach broader publics. Drawing from case studies with biological anthropology, medical anthropology, archaeology and cultural anthropology, panelists share their experiences of collaborating and coauthoring with their communities. We ask, how is our work is relevant to the people we work with and learn from? How do we translate our work and its relevance outside the narrow needs of the academy? What are the changing practices of working more collaboratively with communities?

Section: Society for Anthropological Sciences

Organizer: Elizabeth Derderian, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ruby Fried, University of Alaska Anchorage - Bookstore, Elizabeth Derderian, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology, Yesmar Oyarzun, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology, Douglas Smit, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Critical conceptualizations of health: Community-led development of an Unangan Healthy Living Conceptual Framework

This research developed a conceptual framework for Unangan Healthy Living using concept mapping (CM), a participatory approach prioritizing community engagement in defining health. Guided by the principles of community-based participatory research, this study used CM to collect and analyze Unangan community members' perspectives on healthy living. The study, conducted in the Alaskan Aleutian Pribilof Islands community of St. Paul involved diverse participants across different age groups, occupations, and familiarity with traditional Alaska Native practices. Research methods followed three phases: brainstorming, sorting and rating, and interpretation during which participants generated health-related ideas during semi-structured interviews, which were then sorted into thematic clusters and using multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis (CM), and were finally visualized and validated resulting in a conceptual framework that demonstrates the principal health themes and the relationships among concepts important to Unangan health. The final phase engaged community members in interpreting the final concept map to ensure it reflects local knowledge and priorities (survey, discussion, artwork interpretation). The main outcomes include a deeper understanding of community-defined health, with an emphasis on traditional foods, and environmental, community and economic health. The framework serves as a foundation for further self-determined, community-driven research.

Presenter(s): Ruby Fried

Imaginative Recuperation and/in Ethnographic Graphic Novels

In 1965, the ancient site of Pella, Jordan, was believed to be one of the richest unexplored sites in the Near East, and Dr. Robert H. Smith got permission to excavate it. There was just one problem: Smith wasn't an archaeologist. He was a religious studies professor. So he hired six men called the Jericho men to excavate the site and train his undergraduate student diggers. That the Jericho men are not named in Smith's documentation is perhaps not surprising. Historically, local contributors working for and alongside 19th-20th century anthropologists and archaeologists received short shrift.

This paper focuses on a graphic novel project, *Excavating Pella*, which emerged from a partnership with an Arab artist and on-the-ground research in Jordan. Coauthoring with an artist created opportunities to rethink ethnographic modes of writing and inquiry. The graphic novel blends facts, documents and images from the real excavation within a fictional story that charts a friendship between one of the student excavators and one of the Jericho men, writing the Jericho men back into Pella's story. This process, which we refer to as imaginative recuperation, attempts to capture and recuperate the contributions of the Jericho men within a likely, albeit imagined, context. Imaginative recuperation offers one mode of mining archival sources and reading for the elisions.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Derderian

An Invisible History, A Possible Anthropology: Assembling an Archive of Dark Skin in Dermatology

Under different banners— Black dermatology, ethnic skin dermatology, and skin of color dermatology— dermatologists have long attempted to deal with a so-called "problem with skin color" (Rabin 2020) that has plagued dermatology. In this paper, I present an artful inventory of the makeshift archive that I assembled on this invisibilized history. This archive includes traditional archival sources used in anthropology and the history of medicine, as well as the production of an oral history project archived on this subject (*Making Dark Skin Visible*) and the collection of materials, from obituaries to historical fiction books, from various contacts. I suggest that an ethnographic sensibility, rather than traditional anthropological or historical methods, is what allowed this project to reveal an invisible history of dark skin in dermatology. Through the stories of individual dermatologists, medical and educational institutions, and organizations like the National Medical Association that have surfaced since the mid-20th century to account for and attend to dark skin in dermatology, this project offers a reparative history of dermatology. I demonstrate how a medical anthropological approach to oral history can provide new primary sources and secondary sources that defiantly change the arc of the history of dermatology.

Presenter(s): Yesmar Oyarzun

"Collateral Damage in Unit 3": Institutional Legacies and Community Archaeology in West Philadelphia's Black Bottom

This paper discusses Heritage West, an ongoing community archaeology project co-developed by academic archaeologists and community stakeholders. Our project delves into the intertwined narratives of migration and urban renewal in the Black Bottom—a historically Black neighborhood razed in the 1960s by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority to facilitate the expansion of UPenn and Drexel. Our discussion here introduces the project's methods and explores the difficulties of developing a local, community-engaged project for university-based anthropologists. For us, this posed a complex challenge given historical and ongoing tensions between Penn and West Philadelphia. We critically evaluate the beginnings, fieldwork, lab, and dissemination stages of the project, including the formation and ongoing discussions with a community advisory board regarding exhibitions and future steps.

Presenter(s): Douglas Smit

Co-author(s): Megan Kassabaum

5233 Calling on Ghosts: Experiments in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Let's enlist the help of our Elders to challenge anthropology's chequered past and dubious colonial legacy; to re-examine traditional scholarly epistemologies. It's time to re-write our shared canon and add the voices of our ancestors. We are asking critical questions such as how we bring our ancestors into our research. And how does their guidance influence our research? Are we risking reproducing the bias and harm some anthropologists have enacted on countless communities and peoples and when do we call these ancestors to account? How does listening to the spirits of our ancestors change the basic promise of scholarship, for the better?

In this panel, we invite fellow anthropologists from all sub-fields to call up their ancestors via seance, witchcraft, technological or any other means. Panelists will perform a 5 minute summoning to bring forth their ancestors into the dreary conference room and have an open discussion with us. We use a particular image, sound, object, or memory to channel the ancestor/s and allow us to speak with them. We ask our Elders to bring their wisdom but also to reflect with us on what they might do otherwise. Our presentations will channel the ghosts of places, people, and other beings from our research. We will share with you trans-dimensional sensory experiences and collective knowledge.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Rebekah Cupitt , Paolo SH Favero

Chair: Rebekah Cupitt , Edgar Gomez-Cruz

Presenter(s): Rebekah Cupitt, Edgar Gomez-Cruz, Paolo SH Favero

Presentation(s): Channelling ancestors via artificial intelligence (AI): appropriation of ancestral voices through algorithmic magic.

This presentation will bring the voices of Ancestors that I have a connection with into the room and set them in conversation with each other to pay attention to their message. I will use this experiment to highlight the potential trauma and harms, the neocolonialism and even cultural appropriation of technological advancement. Asking difficult questions about my right to speak to these Elders, and even more-so, the right of others to steal their voices through algorithmic means.

Through invocation, I will channel these ancestors via machine-learning generated mediums, asking them to share their insights on my research into machine creativity as human-AI sympoiesis. From Lao Tse to Jagera warrior, Multuggerah that defended the stolen lands where I grew up; from Boudica to unnamed ancestors from Nordic tribal landscapes; and from Hortense Powdermaker and Dorothy Parker - my sometimes intellectual guides. By sharing their mediated wisdom, I will open up for a discussion on the challenges that AI mediated knowledge presents. How has algorithmic magic twisted and distorted the words of my Ancestors? How has it revised their message and most importantly, what are the human mechanisms in place that realise and counteract this?

Presenter(s): Rebekah Cupitt

Conjuring Ghosts: an exploration of traces and falsities

How do ghosts present themselves to us? How does their presence affect us, haunt us, scare us, move us? And perhaps more importantly, how do we perceive them? How do we see them? How do we interact with them? While ghosts can be understood as spirits, the definitions open other possibilities to interrogate them, as "false images", as "reflections", as a "shadowy trace". In this evocative and experimental presentation, I would conjure a series of ghosts through photo-media. Experienced as a series of dialogues and encounters with the unknown, and the unseen, I will open a dialogue with ghosts that refuse to leave and that continue to affect me.

Presenter(s): Edgar Gomez-Cruz

A ghostly ethnography for ghostly subjects

With this presentation I will bring the voice of a house to be heard. This house is an important actor who has witnessed the end of WWI and WWII, the rise and fall of fascism, the economic boom of the 1950s and 60s and the progressive entry into the present era of uncertainty. Home to an influential family and located at the feet of the Alps in the North West of Italy, this house was eventually abandoned by its inhabitants. As the youngest of the heirs, I will in my seance tribute the greatness of this house, appeasing with it also its ghosts, the history, stories and destinies that it has contained. In my seance I will use methods resulting from the combination of sensory and visual ethnography, of art and meditation techniques hence producing an archive of images, sounds and smells in search of a narration format. Crafting the materials of this archive, I will also craft my story, that of the storyteller, contemplating the ephemerality and situatedness of the self. A ghostly ethnography for ghostly subjects.

Presenter(s): Paolo SH Favero

2740 Toward an Anthropology of Architecture

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores what it means to pursue an anthropology of, for, and with architecture (cf. Murphy 2016). Anthropologists have long turned to architecture to disclose relationships between material forms and human forms of life (Buchli 2013). For instance, Morgan (1881) connected the spatial layout of the longhouse to Haudenosaunee modes of social organization while a tradition of structuralist thinkers (Levi-Strauss 1962; Bourdieu 1970) have held up domestic space as an cipher to understanding cultural meanings of the body, mind, and cosmos (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; cf. Keane 1995). More recently, scholars have examined architecture, and the urban built environment more broadly construed, as a mode of practice (Yarrow 2019) shaped by material networks (Yaneva 2009); entangled with political ideologies of socialism, democracy, colonialism, secularism, and capitalism (Mack 2017; Miller 2001; Terreffe 2020; Rabinow 1989; Shearer 2024); affective processes of ruination and decay (Stoler 2013; Pandian 2025); social hierarchies of labor (Dharia 2022); and constructions of place, (un-)belonging, and identity (Hartblay 2017; Hoffman 2017). Building on these and on other literatures, these roundtable participants will discuss new possibilities for thinking with architecture as analytic and provocation. We ask: What kinds of knowledge emerge from studying architects, planners, builders, and designers, not just as agents of urban change, but also alongside "everyday architects" who use, reuse, hack, and inhabit the built environment in creative, contested, and often unrecognized ways? How does architecture's commitments to intervention challenge anthropology's preference for critical distance, and extend its ongoing turn toward a more public-facing and practically engaged discipline? Might new disciplinary alliances help us better address urgent contemporary crises-whether planetary/multispecies habitability (Doherty 2017; Fadok in press; Nguyen 2023; Rademacher 2017; Gonzalez in press), racialized dispossession and gentrification (Di Nunzio 2022; Fennell 2015), and emergent virtual spatialities (Loukissas 2012)?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Richard Fadok, Rochester Institute of Technology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Victoria Nguyen, Amherst College, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Jennifer Mack, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Samuel Shearer, Washington University in St. Louis, Anne Rademacher, New York University, Jake Culbertson, HGA Architects & Engineers

Discussant: Cady Gonzalez

7998 Unfolding Bangladesh's Monsoon Revolution: Resistance and Negotiations in Post-Authoritarian Political Settlement

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh marked a profound political rupture-destabilizing decades of authoritarian consolidation and inaugurating new imaginaries of resistance, justice, and statecraft. This panel ethnographically explores the insurgent lifeworlds that emerged before, during, and after the uprising, illuminating how ordinary people, activists, institutions, and technologies reconfigured the terms of political engagement in a rapidly shifting political landscape. Through critical attention to digital subversion, legal activism, gendered participation, and bordering practices, the panel situates the uprising within broader anthropological debates on power, subjectivity, and the state.

The first paper explores how the uprising insinuates a tectonic shift from modernist state-media relations toward a post-media landscape, where the locus of power was no longer controlled by institutionalized media but instead networked and decentralized actors operating across digital and physical spaces. By analyzing the postmodern resistance and post-media disruption, it contributes to the broader understanding of how digital activism in the Global South challenges media control and offers a new paradigm for decentralized resistance. The following paper investigates how victims of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial violence, along with their families and lawyers, navigate the legal space in post-authoritarian Bangladesh. This paper illuminates life-affirming legal institutions and the building of a radical futurity for victims and their families. The third paper explores how Bangladeshi women actively participated in the July Uprising against authoritarian rule, challenging dominant narratives that often portray South Asian women as passive or "apolitical". It also examines the post-uprising period, where women's voices and contributions are once again pushed to the margins which highlight the contradictions between women's revolutionary presence and their subsequent "erasures". The next paper examines how the Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) frame, negotiate, and respond to border killings along the India-Bangladesh frontier, particularly in light of the July 2024 Uprising. The final paper interrogates the co-constitution of media and authoritarianism, exploring how regimes manufacture consent and the limits of digital resistance under conditions of authoritarian surveillance and censorship.

This panel demonstrates how anthropological analysis can illuminate the textures of resistance, the (re)articulation of state power, and the contested meanings of justice and futurity in post-uprising Bangladesh. It contributes to conversations in political anthropology, media ethnography, legal anthropology, feminist historiography and study "from below", while grounding these discussions in the specificity of a contemporary Global South revolution.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Zunayed Ahmed Ehsan, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Chair: Muhammad Abdur Raqib , Zunayed Ahmed Ehsan, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Presenter(s): Muhammad Abdur Raqib, Tamanna Rashid, SHAMSUL AREFIN, Zunayed Ahmed Ehsan, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Discussant: Zunayed Ahmed Ehsan, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Presentation(s): Prosecuting Disappearance: Lawfare and Counter-Lawfare in Post-Revolution Bangladesh

This paper investigates how victims of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial violence, along with their families and lawyers, navigate the legal space in post-revolution Bangladesh. At the onset of the revolution in 2024, the current interim government deployed law at the center of its political settlement, from establishing a range of independent criminal investigation commissions to reforming international crime tribunals to introducing new laws and policies. Approaching law as a statemaking process, I explore the way law would make legible, institutionalize, and therefore entangle in the post-authoritarian political transition. This paper thus aims to illuminate life-affirming legal institutions and the building of a radical futurity for victims and their families.

Presenter(s): Muhammad Abdur Raqib

From the Margins to the Frontlines: Women, Agency, and Resistance in the 2024 July Uprising in Bangladesh

This paper explores how Bangladeshi women actively participated in the July Uprising against authoritarian rule, challenging dominant narratives that often portray South Asian women as passive or apolitical. Grounded in the feminist theoretical frameworks of Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Himani Bannerji, I argue that women in Bangladesh, like elsewhere in the Global South, have historically been central to movements for justice and liberation. Their visible roles in organizing, resisting, and sustaining momentum during the uprising reflect a tradition of political agency that defies essentialist and depoliticized representations. However, I also examine the post-uprising period, where women's voices and contributions are once again pushed to the margins. Drawing on Bannerji's critique of nationalism and gendered power structures, I show how the patriarchal state and dominant nationalist narratives work to silence women and limit their roles in nation-building. By analyzing both the uprising and its aftermath, I aim to highlight the contradictions between women's revolutionary presence and their subsequent erasure, calling for a rethinking of liberation that centers gender justice and sustains women's political agency beyond moments of upheaval.

Presenter(s): Tamanna Rashid

Necropolitics and Nationhood: The Border Guard of Bangladesh, Border Killings, and the Post-Uprising State in Bangladesh

This paper examines how the Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) frame, negotiate, and respond to border killings along the India-Bangladesh frontier, particularly in light of the July 2024 Uprising—a mass democratic movement that overthrew an authoritarian regime. While much attention has been paid to the violence perpetrated by India's Border Security Force (BSF), little is known about how Bangladeshi state institutions, especially the BGB, engage with such cross-border violence. I address this gap by investigating how shifting political conditions in Bangladesh have reshaped institutional logics of security, sovereignty, and state accountability at the border. Theoretically, I draw on Foucault's concept of governmentality, Mbembe's necropolitics, De Genova's notion of performative bordering, Reece Jones's analysis of border securitization, and Akhil Gupta's work on the postcolonial state. Through discourse analysis of BGB reports, public statements, and intergovernmental communications, I trace how narratives and practices around border violence

evolve across political regimes. This study contributes to broader discussions in migration and security studies by illuminating how institutions in the Global South mediate violence, perform legitimacy, and redefine state power in post-uprising contexts.

Presenter(s): SHAMSUL AREFIN

Traditional Media, Digital Platforms and Authoritarian Censorship

The mass uprising of July 2024 toppled Sheikh Hasina's long fascist regime in Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina, like any other dictators in the world, created a "body of lies" to consolidate her power. The "body of lies" were further disseminated by the mainstream media to dictate the mind of the people or to "manufacture the consent" (Herman and Chomsky 1988) for her illegitimate rule. For instance, a propaganda narrative was widely popularized among the elite and urban middle class, "bikolpo nai" (there is no alternative to Sheikh Hasina). This paper scrutinizes the media narratives by which authoritarianism was normalized and practiced in Bangladesh during Sheikh Hasina's regime from 2009 to 2024, and shows how popular narratives were manufactured to sustain the undemocratic regime and how these narratives were "justifying" the brutality of the regime and made the lives of any dissents "disposable" (Mbembe 2020). Simultaneously, this paper explores how Hasina's autocratic regime controlled the digital media spaces as well, through surveillance and censorship to suppress any dissent. While many theorists argue that "social media platforms or digital spheres have become powerful sites" (Bonilla & Rosa 2015) to dismantle state-sponsored mainstream media propaganda, I argue that any authoritarian regime's absolute control over the digital spheres poses a fundamental challenge to this notion.

Presenter(s): Zunayed Ahmed Ehsan

Discussion

3765 Session 2: Revisiting the Discourse of Domination in Agriculture

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Scholars in anthropology and critical agrarian studies have demonstrated how industrial agriculture has made farmers dependent on externally manufactured inputs, thereby reducing their control over production. This has transferred power away from farmers to collaborative alliances between the state, scientists, and private companies, all of which benefit from this arrangement (Kumar 2016; Stone 2022; Weis 2013). Despite widespread opposition from farmers across the world, including in Europe and Asia, the corporate concentration in agriculture has continued, expanding across various domains such as digital technologies, biotechnology, and beyond.

While corporate actors engage with farmers in developing and testing their technologies (Freidberg 2019; 2022), some of these actors hail from farming families themselves and play an important role in shaping these interactions. Their presence complicates the "stark transnational capital versus peasantry" binary in the food regimes literature (Aga, 2018, p. 671). Instead of analyzing these

interactions solely through the lines of capital-centrism, imagining otherwise, or both, we aim to situate them in the everyday lives of farmers and corporate agents who work as foot soldiers of financial capital.

This roundtable seeks to ethnographically explore the ongoing corporate attempts to dominate agriculture globally, without reproducing the discourse of the "powerful." It proposes an anthropological examination of last-mile interactions between farmers and corporate actors, exploring both the fragilities and dependencies of the powerful while simultaneously analyzing their attempts to dominate agriculture. Could this way of revisiting power dynamics in agriculture provide pathways for promoting justice while also "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016)?

We invite participants to discuss ethnographic stories/work from diverse contexts, focusing on everyday interactions between corporate actors (including technology developers and state officials) and farmers. We will address (but are not limited to) questions such as:

- What kinds of interactions occur between corporate actors and farmers? How do these actors approach these interactions, and why?
- How is power formed within these interactions?
- Do we observe contestations within these formations? If so, are these contestations generative, and if so, in what ways?
- How have these interactions evolved historically? What roles have the emergence of digital and other technologies played in shaping these changes?
- Are the long-standing categories used to analyze agricultural change (e.g., small, medium, and large farmers) still relevant, or are they being challenged and reconfigured in these interactions?
- Do these interactions themselves offer strategies for rethinking the discourse of domination and making it more just?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology, Nikhit Agrawal, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Burge Abiral, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Mason Smith, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Eimear Mc Loughlin, Aarhus University, Morgan Jenatton, Giacomo Caruso

Discussant: Matthew Canfield, Leiden University

3818 Social Difference, Disability, Critique: Perspectives from Critical Phenomenology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Social Difference, Disability, Critique: Perspectives from Critical Phenomenology

"Social difference" is a key term in anthropology's repertoire, a focal point of attention for the discipline. Anthropology has offered a range of critical perspectives that challenge essentializing or dehumanizing depictions of human variation. This panel considers what critical phenomenology offers to an investigation of social difference, with special attention to the topic of disability. Ginsburg and Rapp (2013, 2020, 2024), have proposed that we consider disability as an axis of human difference which is as fundamental as other key categories in anthropology, a universal feature of all human societies (Durban 2021, Kasnitz 2020). Recent scholarship in critical phenomenology has engaged with the rich tradition of critical disability studies (Reynolds and Weiss 2024). What might be learned about critique, and about social difference, by bringing these scholarly traditions into further conversation and focusing attention on bodymind difference?

Critical disability studies foreground the social, cultural, material, structural, and political dimensions of disability, emphasizing that disability is not merely an individual or medical issue, but a phenomenon shaped, defined, and lived within a specific context. A central aim in this field is to examine ableist assumptions embedded in societal norms and institutions. Critique is not limited to an investigation of social oppression, however. It also encompasses an exploration of the creative potential that can arise with "misfitting" (Garland-Thomson 2011, 2024) and "living with difference" (Rutherford 2020). This has provided productive ways of articulating social difference that are radical and generative.

Phenomenology, as a western philosophical tradition, has always been critical, offering methods and concepts for disturbing and disorienting common sense perceptual experience. The newly emerging and multi-disciplinary field of critical phenomenology – sometimes called political phenomenology (Alcoff 2005; Jenkins and Csordas 2020) -- furthers this critical impulse by focusing on social difference. This field of scholarship complicates the concept of "transcendentals," or universal features of perception by foregrounding "quasi-transcendentals" (Guenther, 2021). Quasi-transcendentals, while often presumed to be universal in a given society, shape and normalize certain ways of perceiving, thinking, and behaving, while marginalizing or pathologizing others. Race, gender and disability are categories that have historically often attained the status of quasi-transcendentals (Mattingly 2024). Crucially, critical phenomenology also explores how lived experience may exceed and disturb normative social orders and categories of social difference. In this way, critique becomes linked to an investigation of potentiality (Throop 2018, Dyring 2024, Mattingly 2024, 2025, Zigon 2024, Aulino).

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Anne Ramsboel, Aarhus University, Department of Anthropology, Cheryl Mattingly, University of Southern California

Chair: Lone Groen, VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research, Laura Emdal Navne, University of Copenhagen; VIVE – Danish Center for Social Science Research

Presenter(s): Thomas Csordas, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Anne Ramsboel, Aarhus University, Department of Anthropology, Rasmus Dyring, Aarhus

University, School of Culture and Society, Cheryl Mattingly, University of Southern California, Jason Throop, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Felicity Aulino, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Phenomenological Critique in Anthropology and Philosophy

Edmund Husserl intended phenomenology to be a "science of true beginnings." Every time a scholar begins thinking phenomenologically it is a true beginning, not a "reinvention of the wheel" but the inauguration of a fresh perspective on human reality. If all phenomenology entails critique insofar as it discloses the taken for granted and brackets presuppositions, then the embrace of "critique" marks a new beginning in the method itself insofar as one can show that there is something new in moving from phenomenological description to phenomenological critique. In this context, my presentation has two goals. First is to draw attention to the recent parallel developments of critical anthropology and political phenomenology. These developments suggest that the true challenge for phenomenological critique is not reconciling first and third person perspectives, but to persevere in maintaining the first person perspective – that of immediacy in the lifeworld – even when addressing phenomena that appear more distant spatiotemporally and conceptually. The second goal of the presentation is to present examples from my own work on how the lived experience of two kinds of social difference can constitute the basis for phenomenological critique: that of political asylum seekers and that of demonically possessed subjects of Catholic exorcism.

Presenter(s): Thomas Csordas

The Threat of the "No Man's Land": A Critical Exploration of Autism, Family life, Coming of age

In this paper, I explore how families with autistic adolescents in Denmark experience and respond to the transition to adulthood. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with eight families, I illustrate how coming of age entails navigating uncertain and nonlinear paths, as typical, normatively laden trajectories may not be accessible. Through the case of Leo and his family, I show how this transition demands ongoing reimagining and searching for belonging and possibilities for becoming otherwise in a world shaped by the "quasi-transcendental" (Guenther, 2021) expectations of neurotypicality and chrononormativity, and where experiences of misfitting, (Garland-Thomson, 2011) and social difference are rarely a question of chance. Engaging with perspectives from disability studies and critical phenomenology—particularly the notion of dwelling, (Zigon, 2014) I ask how coming of age on the spectrum might deepen our understanding of what it means to dwell or to search for dwelling when there is no simple way of doing so. Ultimately, I argue that families like Leo's face not only practical and bureaucratic obstacles but also profound existential challenges. They face what I call an intensified dwelling problem of reimagining and searching for ways to feel at home in the world.

Presenter(s): Anne Ramsboel

Decentering Phenomenology: Critical Experience and the Exploration of Interworlds

This talk outlines some methodological motifs of a critical phenomenology of neurodiverse world-constitution.

Drawing on Throop (ethnographic epoché) and Carel (Illness as epoché), I argue that critical phenomenology needs a decentered experiential vantage point in order to unsettle ingrained "perceptual beliefs" and open registers of shared experience that are constitutively distributed between those who inhabit a given field. Where some critical phenomenologists look to an "archive" (Guenther 2021), it is the excesses of experience itself that provide the critical decentralization in ethnographic critical phenomenology (Mattingly 2019).

Next, I analyze the shared, yet differentiated experience of life with dementia. Building on Shabot's (2022) description of the epoché-like effect of the experience of dementia, I follow Murphy's (2024) description of the "caring reduction" that exposes the relational, quasi-transcendental structures of a community of care capable of sustaining an "interworld" shared between people with dementia and neurotypical caregivers. Finally, I flesh out an "anarchaeological reduction" (Dyring 2022, 2024) that traces the generative dynamics of interworlds back to the anarchic stirrings that perpetually unsettle an interworld and the differentiated, yet entangled responses to these stirrings of people with dementia and caregivers, which perpetuate and give form to these metastable interworlds (Dyring and Grøn 2022).

Presenter(s): Rasmus Dyring

Surprise and the Singular Plural: A Disability World as Universe in Expansion

What does it mean to inhabit (and invent) a plural we across significant bodily difference and what does the event of surprise have to do with it? In asking this question, I turn to recent work in both critical disability studies and phenomenology. Disability, as a topic for consideration, has burst upon the anthropological scene in generative, paradigm shifting ways (Durban 2021; Ginsburg and Rapp 2020, 2024; Kasnitz 2020; Reno et al. 2021). "Disability worlds" (Ginsburg and Rapp 2024) is a fruitful cultural imaginary for thinking about the pluralism of community. I investigate it phenomenologically as a "we-subjectivity" beyond sameness, a "singular plural" (Nancy 2000). Drawing upon Nancy's notion of the "event of surprise" that yields a "universe in expansion," I explore the shock of parents who witness the glee of their severely disabled nine-year-old son fly down a ski slope in an adapted chair, laughing for the first time. Their surprise generates a disorientation that calls some of their own normative assumptions about disability into question and precipitates deep shifts in family and community relations. What emerges is an increasingly experimental and pluralist disability world, a universe in expansion.

Presenter(s): Cheryl Mattingly

On Not Being Surprised

In this paper, I examine a form of everyday responsiveness to recurrently expected forms of injustice, ethical breach, or personal failing, that are often categorized as events that are ...not surprising. Not surprising...and yet, in their recurrent and seemingly unending repetition such happenings are

somehow still layered with an element of surprise all the same. The experience of surprise that arises in the midst of being not surprised is, I argue, a form of critical consciousness that is distinct from false consciousness, hegemony, or bad faith (even in its collective formulations). It is something quite different that requires careful phenomenological analysis. The ways that sedimented habitual orientations to the world can still yet be surprising in their seamless, lock and step, ideal typical enactments deserve both theoretical and empirical attention. The critical work this form of not-surprised/surprised does is, I argue, significant for holding open possibilities for becoming otherwise even in the midst of the most routine and despairingly predictable of engagements.

Presenter(s): Jason Throop

Discussion

5491 # Spectral Traces: Unveiling Power through Engaged Research on Violence

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Spectral Traces: Unveiling Power through Engaged Research on Violence

In alignment with this year's AAA theme of "Ghosts," this panel explores how research on individual deaths and acts of violence intersects with exposing larger systems of power. By examining specific instances of state and political violence, we aim to illuminate the structural forces that perpetuate cycles of oppression, displacement, and human rights abuses across diverse contexts.

Our panelists investigate how communities grapple with the aftermath of violence, from engagement with grassroots movements to state-sanctioned forensic investigations. We consider the ways in which death, loss, and sacrifice are imbued with social and political meaning, often becoming rallying points for resistance and transformation. The panel delves into the complex relationships between violence and care, exploring how affected communities can reclaim and repurpose sites of trauma.

Central to our discussion is the role of memory and commemoration in confronting past atrocities. We examine how societies navigate the liminal spaces between remembering and forgetting, and how mapping and documenting violent events can serve as both a scientific endeavor and a form of social mobilization. The panel also addresses the challenges of seeking justice and remedy in the wake of displacement and state violence, considering both formal legal processes and grassroots initiatives.

By focusing on specific case studies from Latin America and the Caribbean, we aim to draw broader conclusions about the nature of political violence and its long-term impacts on individuals and communities. Our interdisciplinary approach combines anthropological, historical, and

forensic methodologies to uncover the often invisible structures that underpin systems of oppression.

Key themes include:

- The mobilization of death and sacrifice in social movements
- Transformation of spaces associated with state violence
- The intersection of science, law, and community action in human rights investigations
- Mapping and memorialization as tools for confronting past atrocities
- The social history and ongoing consequences of forced displacement
- Grassroots and state-led approaches to transitional justice

Through these diverse yet interconnected topics, we seek to contribute to ongoing debates about historical memory, accountability, and the enduring legacies of political violence. By examining the "ghostly" remnants of past conflicts and their contemporary manifestations, we hope to shed light on pathways toward healing, justice, and societal transformation.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Jennifer Burrell, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology, Carwil Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jennifer Burrell, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Amir Mohamed, Jennifer Burrell, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology, Ayleen Paola Correa Rodriguez, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Chelsey Dyer

Discussant: Carwil Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): We Will Clear Your Name. We, Your Friends, Love You!": How Marginalized Guatemalan Youth Reject Their Abjection in the Aftermath of Death

In urban Guatemala, young adults participate in the informal economy by selling handcrafted jewelry in public parks. When a stray bullet killed Rafi Garcia, a beloved member of this community, police and journalists falsely claimed he was a drug-dealing gangster murdered by rivals in a targeted killing. Rafi's friends mobilized an energetic response, posting rebuttals in comment threads attached to news reports and organizing a protest on the street corner where Rafi was killed. The competing narratives surrounding Rafi's death exemplify an ongoing struggle in Guatemala over who deserves to be killed and who deserves to be mourned. In this paper, I argue the actions of Rafi's friends demonstrate the latent political potential of marginalized youth who are often assumed, and consider themselves, to be apolitical. Their resilience and resistance to physical, structural, and symbolic violence offer timely lessons in the global context of resurgent political and social authoritarianism.

Presenter(s): Amir Mohamed

The Forensic Gaze: Social Mobilization, Science and the Law in the Search for Mexico's Disappeared

This paper is part of a larger project that maps the interconnections between science, social movements and the law that coalesce around the search for Mexico's disappeared. New technologies and the novel application of scientific techniques to searches for the disappeared have been a hallmark in Mexico in recent years, and collectives of those who have lost family members have been central to the deployment of them. Noting the development and emergence of a scientific community dedicated to collaborating on these issues and the nuanced shift from a political to techno-scientific forensic social movement for many collectives of families, I draw out some of the tensions and contradictions in the law's relationship to science and regarding the question of expertise. I interrogate how the promises and limits of new technology deployed by citizen-scientists in the search for the missing complicate the public persona of grieving family members, prioritizing forensic discourses at the expense of everyday memories and lives.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Burrell

Territorio Cuerpo-Tierra in the Afterlives of La Cuarenta: Torture Site and Home

In Cristo Rey, a barrio built atop the ruins of La Cuarenta—once a site of torture under Trujillo's regime (1930-1961)—the past does not simply linger; it haunts the present. The neighborhood continues to carry the weight of state-sanctioned, often unspoken violence, and today holds the highest femicide rate in the country. I ask: how do women claim their community as home when they are rendered, sociopolitically, as disembodied objects—seen, but not protected; with rights as citizens, but questionable rights as humans? How do they reclaim their bodies as cuerpo-territorios and their spaces as tierra-territorios, following the framework of Maya-Xinka communitarian feminist scholar Lorena Kab'nal, in a place marked by layered and ongoing violence? And what role does Christina Sharpe's lateral care play in reclaiming spaces where trauma remains woven into the everyday?

Through reflections grounded in pláticas and the teachings of a group of women known as Las Fundadoras, I explore how memory, care, and everyday life become practices of refusal and reimagining. These women—some of the earliest to settle in Cristo Rey—carry with them stories that root the community's past in lived experience, and its future in collective strength. Their voices reveal how, even in the shadow of authoritarian legacies and ongoing state neglect, women lay claim to their neighborhoods and resist the conditions that continue to seek to erase them.

Presenter(s): Ayleen Paola Correa Rodriguez

Ghosts of Repression: Mapping Memory and Political Violence in Bolivia

When protesters challenging the 2019 ouster of Evo Morales as president of Bolivia marched through Sacaba and blockaded the refinery at Senkata, they followed in the footsteps of decades of Bolivian protest. The resulting Sacaba and Senkata Massacres, where 21 protesters were shot dead, echoed earlier state killings at the same sites in 1985 and 2003.

As researchers on Ultimate Consequences, a digital archive of lethal political conflict in Bolivia since 1982, we reflect on the role of documentation, archiving, mapping, and storytelling in connecting past and present violence. Our archive serves as a tool to assess political violence in Bolivia, provides accessible information to researchers, and offers an open-data framework for research elsewhere. It includes information about the circumstances and demographics of deaths, historical narratives of all 92 events with two or more deaths, over 100 testimonial narratives by witnesses and survivors, and thousands of source documents.

The meanings of death, sacrifice, and loss are significant to our understandings of social movements and political repression. Memory is critical for reparations, community rebuilding and cohesion, informing how future policies are crafted and imagined. This paper explores how "ghosts" of lives lost due to political violence can be unearthed through an open data project. We aspire to reconstruct memory through rich narration of events and balance quantitative analysis with personalized accounts

Presenter(s): Chelsey Dyer

Co-author(s): Emma Banks

Discussion

2786 Sedimented Futures: Haunted Ecologies of Extraction

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What does extraction have to do with ghosts? It might sound like a strange question at first, but let's think about it. Fossil fuels--our primary energy source--are like ghosts of a past world. They're ancient remnants of ecosystems that were buried deep within the Earth millions of years ago. When we extract and burn these fuels, we release their carbon back into the atmosphere, effectively resurrecting a long-dead world, only to haunt the present with climate change (Crate and Nuttall 2024). What view of extraction comes into focus when we take seriously these haunting afterlives? Are such afterlives best understood as the "ghosts and monsters of the Anthropocene"(Tsing et al. 2017)? Or is the flourishing of multispecies accounts simply the obituary to the industrial murder of the natural world, a celebration of agencies detached from the immediate histories of their destruction (Taussig 2020)?

The suggested solution, the Green Transition, requires more extraction, but this time, it's minerals, not oil. These deposits have formed over millions of years. But, just like with fossil fuels, they are going to be extracted in a rush and out of sight, without fully understanding the long-term effects and without thinking about the ghosts that future generations will have to face. The mining waste takes the form of sediment plumes--clouds of suspended particles resulting from excavation on the ocean floor, which can smother organisms and alter water chemistry; "spectral" phenomena, existing at the threshold between the perceptible and imperceptible (Han 2024); present absence of haunted processes of "ruination" (Stoler 2013). The Green Transition not only depends on mineral

extraction, though, it also requires the deployment of technologies to extract carbon emissions from the atmosphere and transform the seabed into a carbon burial ground, by using depleted oil and gas reservoirs to store those emissions. In this way, fossil capitalism lingers in spectral form and the seabed becomes haunted by the afterlives of extractive industries.

Grounding carbon in or extracting energy from the seabed means reckoning with a deep past (Ialenti 2020) while making changes way into a deep future (Irvine 2020). The seabed becomes a submerged heritage, a sedimented violence that takes us back to the bodies of those who lost their lives during the Middle Passage in the transatlantic slave trade (Childs 2024). Questions arise over responsibility for the long-term governance of carbon burial sites and the containment of what can return to haunt us. These are the "ghosts" who compel us to confront the violence of extraction and to reimagine new, alternative futures (Palermo 2022).

Participants will reflect on what haunted ecologies we encounter today, and which we are creating for tomorrow? Can we avoid creating new negative ecologies (Bond 2022)? Or are we bound to repeat mistakes of the past, and thereby, keep on pushing the world to its limits?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Rasmus Rodineliussen, Stockholm University, Marta Gentilucci, University of Bergen, Department of Social Anthropology

Presenter(s): David Bond , Håkon Larsen , Mark Nuttall, University of Alberta, Department of Anthropology, John Childs , Rasmus Rodineliussen, Stockholm University, Marta Gentilucci, University of Bergen, Department of Social Anthropology

Discussant: Chloe Ahmann, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

6396 Language, Play, and Resistance to Oppression

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What can we learn about oppressive systems by studying the play, the carnivalesque, and the alternative ways of interacting and being that have emerged as techniques to escape and resist forms of domination including language standardization, language oppression, and dehumanizing discourses? This panel meets at the intersection between the festival with its suspension of rules, and the hills where rebels take refuge. The papers share a concern with how anti-hegemonic tactics, in the shadow of power, tell us about the shape and trajectory of that power. The panel emphasizes the possibilities for linguistic creation in liminal settings and through anti-institutional anti-structures, while drawing together several meanings of "language" and genres of "play and resistance." We examine how individuals and communities craft alternative modes of expression- whether through subversive communication among the incarcerated or through politically charged artistic production. Each paper offers a unique epistemological understanding of "language," including speech, text, signs, and code.

We seek to share ethnographic insights toward undoing and subverting systems of linguistic/language oppression, from sites in Lebanon, Palestine, Guadeloupe, and Japan. Formerly incarcerated people in Lebanon innovate strategic forms of expression to communicate and collaborate, thereby resisting their captivity and isolation. Palestinian poetry, painting, and sculpture-making are "artistic interventions" that destabilize colonial and hegemonic discourses and imaginaries of Palestinian people, land, and state. In Guadeloupe, storytelling and folklore traditions as modalities of language reclamation and revalorization in a children's summer camp. In Japan, dialect celebrations run counter to the standardization demanded by both state and capital.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Marybelle Issa, University of Massachusetts - Amherst | AnthroClub, Edwin Everhart, University of Pittsburgh

Chair: Elise Kramer, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lara Sabra, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Sophia Rodriguez, University of South Carolina, Marybelle Issa, University of Massachusetts - Amherst | AnthroClub, Edwin Everhart, University of Pittsburgh

Discussant: Elise Kramer, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Prison Lingo in Lebanon: Languages of Solidarity and Survival

This paper examines the ways that incarcerated people in Lebanon construct and deploy a "prison lingo" to communicate and collaborate with one another amidst the highly surveilled and securitized carceral system that entraps them and regulates their relationships. Turning my attention away from the dehumanizing language used by incarcerating regimes (e.g. "criminals," "inmates," "law-breakers"), I instead focus on the languages, expressions, and words concocted by the people they incarcerate. To conduct this investigation, I draw on data from semi-structured interviews with formerly incarcerated people, supplemented by media analysis, to explore how incarcerated people conjured an alternative system of communication to sustain intimate bonds, build solidarity between each other, and maneuver survival strategies. What could these innovative language practices teach us about the carceral system that holds them captive? Can "prison lingo" generate new understandings of the discursive logics through which carcerality operates, in Lebanon and worldwide? My paper addresses these questions by taking inspiration from the creative, subversive, and defiant language practices of the formerly incarcerated people I met in Lebanon.

Presenter(s): Lara Sabra

Phatics and Poetics of Socialization into Postcolonial Guadeloupean Identity Through Oral Traditions

Much of the scholarship on language reclamation that has studied children's roles within language projects primarily focuses on top-down institutional settings or environments that prioritize teaching the structural properties of language, suppressing children's own creative volition. Unlike many child-focused spaces (e.g., schools, religious groups, immersion programs), a summer camp

offers a unique opportunity to study language reclamation, as it centralizes children's enjoyment while fulfilling parents' need for childcare. This project explores the reclamation and revalorization of Guadeloupean Kréyòl through child language socialization at a heritage summer camp. During the summer of 2024, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Guadeloupe (an overseas French department in the Caribbean) at a summer camp hosted by an organization that specializes in preserving, promoting, and disseminating Guadeloupean oral traditions, primarily storytelling. I find that children are socialized into a postcolonial construction of their identity-based ideas of resistance, primarily through the reconstruction of petit marronage and an emic understanding of the inner and essentialized Creole spirit of Caribbean people. Identity formation at the camp occurs through the phatic and poetic functions emblematic of Guadeloupean verbal arts, which are then recontextualized into everyday social exchanges.

Presenter(s): Sophia Rodriguez

Artistic Interventions as Counter-Colonial Acts in Palestine

In a world where the Palestinian subject continues to be framed through hegemonic paradigms bounded by political, economic and social crises, art offers a new angle through which Palestinians can be seen and heard, and their futures imagined. Kiersten Scheid argues that "all art is political, because politics is not outside of art but produced through art" (2020: 443). Using art as an investigative starting point thus provides a lens through which political inquiries can be explored beyond the limitations of socio-political movements, revealing how ideologies and relations between people, land, and state are conceived. Building on Scheid's work, I offer a linguistic anthropological lens to examine how meaning is generated through artistic interventions and to investigate the connections between art and critical consciousness. I draw inspiration from Webb Keane's foundational work on semiotics and materiality (2003) and Judith Butler's notion of materialisation to investigate the emergence of critical consciousness through creative practices (art acts) and product (the experience of the art). Focusing on painting, poetry, and sculpture-making, this paper asks the following question: how can art offer an angle that broaches counter-colonial projects against hegemonic discourses?

Presenter(s): Marybelle Issa

Dialect Dialect Revolution

Economic devastation lurks on the horizon, and your beloved home town is almost certain to collapse. What do you do? Most of rural Japan faced this question in the mid-1980s and many towns attempted to become tourist destinations (most failed; see Love 2013, *American Anthropologist*). With little more than boring flat rice fields on all sides, the town of Mikawa (Yamagata) chose dialect as their attraction - though dialect had previously been considered repulsive. For a period of 17 years, youth in this small town organized a National Festival of Dialects that brought singers, storytellers, comedians, and academics from up and down the archipelago, including from indigenous communities. These events could not "save" the town. But what did they create, and reveal? In this paper I seek to answer these questions, in multiple contexts: social

scenes of dialect discourse in 1990s Japan, present-day Mikawa town, and the potential futures available to all of us, from Mikawa residents to panel attendees. If celebrating dialect cannot save a community, I argue that the celebration can still reveal the contours of the threats to that community. A dialect festival stands athwart the institutions and ideologies of, specifically, the standardization that is demanded by both state and capital. Inspired by the youth of 1980s Mikawa, I address the potential for an even more ambitious degree of multidialectal, multilingual accommodation and solidarity, to replace the logic of standardization.

Presenter(s): Edwin Everhart

Discussion

2601 Permeable Boundaries and the Biomedical Imagination: Ghostly Presences within Medical Taxonomies and Epistemologies

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Health disparities compelled anthropologists and researchers to examine the haunted networks of knowledge production, where biomedical logics informed by histories of colonialism and boundary-making materialize in medical practices and institutions. Situating the biomedical imagination with the spectral "ghost" theme, we explore the tensions that haunt the clinical domain, particularly the presence of what remains illegible or unknowable within biomedical frameworks, creating an enduring ambiguity that haunts and unsettles medical certainty. We approach the following questions as productive entry points to our broader themes: How do particular epistemologies and bodies become spectralized within medical discourse and phenomena such as diagnostic tools, embodied experiences, clinical data, and histories of medicine? How do biomedicine's porous boundaries generate ghostly presences that structure and haunt medical knowledge practices? This panel examines the emergent contradictions and instability of boundary work: visible/invisible, normal/pathological, self/non-self, doctor/patient, presence/absence, health/illness, and other related boundaries. Medical documentation and protocols are haunted by the fragilities and "epistemic anxieties" of an afterlife of slavery and colonialism that shapes the legibility and disposability of certain bodies, an ongoing condition of "the wake" (Sharpe 2016; Hartman 2008; Stoler 2010). Accordingly, these tensions underlie human and non-human forces that materially shape clinical realities through invisibility and visibility. We also consider how medical epistemes and discourses become spectralized by the histories of slavery, colonialism, and the epistemic violence that erupted from it. From a hauntology of medicine, we trace how alternative ontologies and epistemologies develop that constitute and are constituted by the permeable boundaries between bodies and knowledge.

We present ethnographic work across various sites, including the remaking of subjectivities following the impacts of medical intervention defined as "Post-Intensive Care Syndrome" (Perfetti); the tensions of bodily norms regarding well-being and food between dominant WHO standards and

the Indigenous Matsigenka population in Amazonian Peru (Revilla-Minaya); forms of knowledge that exist as "ghosts in the data," simultaneously present yet institutionally illegible in maternal mortality metrics (Nurse); the paradoxical (in)visibility of fibroids as both a risk factor and a lived experience that shapes the tensions between "subjugated knowledge" and biomedical epistemologies (Keyes); and the spectral and biomedical nature of the HIV epidemic in Fiji, in conjunction with the "absent-presence of unrealized global health promises" (Uzim). Through these cases, we examine the spectral nature of health and medicine to contribute to deconstructing how biomedical knowledge simultaneously produces and is haunted by its constitutive exclusions.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Jasmine Keyes, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Gabriel Torres Colón, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jasmine Keyes, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Ashley Nurse, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Ross Perfetti, University of Pennsylvania, Elochukwu Uzim, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Caissa Revilla-Minaya, American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Sensing the Invisible, Hearing the Silence: Narratives of African American Women Living with Fibroids

African American women carry a higher risk for fibroids, which produces poorer reproductive health outcomes such as psychosocial and bodily suffering. Fibroids emerge as paradoxically visible as a racialized risk factor yet invisible as a lived chronic experience, generating cycles where communal, "subjugated" knowledge and biomedical knowledge converge and diverge across clinical spaces and intertwined histories. This project maps how fibroids operate as actants within assemblages of clinical protocols, patient experiences, histories of medical racism, and the biosocial nature of race to reveal how knowledge shapes the (in)visibility of this condition. The examination of inheritance across institutional, temporal, and bodily scales reveals how inherited knowledge about race operates through assemblages of inter-embodied experiences where African American women's bodily knowledge exists and evolves alongside and against institutional biomedical frameworks. I explore the following central question: How do medical epistemologies of fibroids and reproductive health in both African American women and clinicians emerge from and shape the combination of clinical education protocols, historical medical practices, and African American women's intergenerational knowledge networks in Atlanta, Georgia? Through focus groups and interviews, I examine how intergenerational knowledge shapes both the clinical understanding of fibroids and women's lived experiences with this condition.

Presenter(s): Jasmine Keyes

Buried Beneath the Measures: Evaluating Maternal Mortality Research Paradigms in Public Health

In the United States, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) is the primary measure through which public health understands maternal mortality. It relies on the systematic collection of hospital death certificates to help researchers make sense of the maternal landscape. As a quantifiable, reproducible, and translatable metric, it is the most legible means of legitimizing the existence of

the maternal mortality crisis to the state, to expand public health research. However, this datafied mode of understanding maternal mortality is more preoccupied with death than life, obscuring the experiences of those most vulnerable to early maternal death. The forms of knowledge that do not conform to the parameters of MMR slip into the shadows, becoming 'ghosts in the data,' unseen and unaddressed. What are the consequences of overlooking alternative forms of knowledge when their presence continues to haunt women's lives? Through an analysis of the history of the conception and operationalization of the MMR, I argue that public health researchers need to move outside the research paradigm that prioritizes legibility and consider the illegible: the material and social realities of women's lives that cannot be captured by the MMR. This paper reveals 1) the limitations of the boundaries public health has set in what is considered legible for informing the MMR and 2) the impact of considering the 'ghosts in the data' on maternal mortality research practices, priorities, and approaches.

Presenter(s): Ashley Nurse

A Syndrome of Care: Examining the Afterlife of the ICU

While intensive care units (ICUs) provide life-saving treatments to patients, practices such as mechanical ventilation and heavy sedation can cause long-term emotional, physical, and cognitive problems. Accumulating research on these negative outcomes demonstrates a dual effect of biomedical progress on the one hand and the harm incurred by intensive intervention on the other. Concerned about the impacts of ICU practices on longer-term recovery, members of the Society for Critical Care Medicine (2010) proposed the name "Post-Intensive Care Syndrome" (PICS) to bring awareness to the adverse biological effects of intervention, such as muscle weakness, as well as social pathologies, such as disruptions in memory and feelings of isolation among survivors. My dissertation project analyzes how PICS captures emerging concerns about how medical practices themselves can haunt both patients and those who care for them, constituting what I call a "Syndrome of Care." Drawing on fieldwork observing ICU care and interviewing former patients, clinicians, and researchers, this project asks: What is the afterlife of extreme medical intervention? How are ambiguous forms of biomedical harm made into objects of knowledge? In exploring the emergence and exclusions of a "Syndrome of Care," I show how subjectivities, solidarities, and accountabilities are remade, as this panel proposes, by the "permeable boundaries between bodies and knowledges" at the frontiers of biomedical innovation.

Presenter(s): Ross Perfetti

Ghosts of Global Health: HIV's Haunting Legacies in Fiji's Biomedical Imagination

Fiji's HIV epidemic, the fastest-growing in the Pacific, exists as a spectral presence within global health frameworks—hyper-visible as a crisis, yet, illegible in its local manifestations. Biomedical interventions, shaped by colonial histories and neoliberal aid economies, render Fijian bodies and epistemologies "ghostly" within dominant HIV narratives. Despite UNAIDS' 2030 viral suppression targets, Fiji's HIV epidemic thrives amidst receding foreign aid and the spectral scarcity of PrEP, exposing the fragility of biomedical boundaries between "controlled" and "outbreak."

Drawing on fieldwork with Fijian health workers and communities, I argue that HIV's "ghostliness" emerges from three tensions. 1) Epistemic erasures: global health metrics obscure Fijian experiences of HIV, relegating their lived realities to the margins of biomedical legibility; 2) Haunted infrastructures: clinics dependent on erratic foreign funding become sites where colonial logics of resource allocation resurface, leaving prevention efforts in a state of suspended animation; and 3) Spectral solidarity: Fijian health workers repurpose the "ghosts" of abandoned interventions into improvised care strategies, revealing medicine's permeable boundaries. Engaging Christina Sharpe's "wake" and Ann Stoler's "colonial aphasia," I examine how Fijians navigate HIV as both a biomedical and spectral phenomenon—where the virus's materiality coexists with the absent-presence of unrealized global health promises.

Presenter(s): Elochukwu Uzim

Haunting Well-Being: Conflicting Western and Indigenous Matsigenka Conceptions of Food, Nutrition, and Health

Western notions of well-being are used as global standards for healthy bodies, haunting and influencing the livelihoods and self-determination of minorities and Indigenous populations. This is exemplified by how malnutrition is defined by the World Health Organization, which is used by governmental health institutions to develop strategies to mitigate it. The body normality established by WHO standards corresponds to urban sample populations, often of high socioeconomic status. Despite the WHO's noble intent to identify and combat global child malnutrition, its standards misrepresent the diversity of bodies that populate the world. Furthermore, local conceptions of nourishment, health, and well-being, which are part of broader ontologies of how the world functions, are ignored. This can lead to misguided attempts to solve an externally perceived health problem without understanding what is at stake. Here, I address this challenge by exploring notions of food, health, and well-being in an Indigenous Matsigenka population in Amazonian Peru and comparing them against WHO health standards. Based on 37 months of ethnographic research, I propose that health for the Matsigenka is part of a broader condition of well-being influenced by relationships with both humans and non-humans that compose the Matsigenka world. These results will facilitate collaboration with the Matsigenka people in the development of culturally appropriate strategies to improve well-being as they conceive it.

Presenter(s): Caissa Revilla-Minaya

7513 “Genealogy of the broken: Indigenous multispecies research for land and people”

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In Joy Harjo's poem, "Speaking Tree," she writes, "Some things are unspeakable:/Genealogy of the broken-/A shy wind threading leaves after a massacre/Or the smell of coffee and no one there..." A powerful observation of unspeakable loss of human life in Indigenous worlds is interwoven with the

suffering and destruction of nature. And then she asks, "What shall I do with all this heartache?" This panel offers Indigenous multispecies research, including ethnography and mixed methods, as one kind of response to Harjo's reflexive question. Through in-depth descriptions of research methodologies, axiologies, or applications of research, presenters from different cultural and linguistic contexts explore ways that Indigenous peoples who are connected to human and more than human communities are crafting research with people and places. Through dynamic presentations, we acknowledge holistic views of Indigenous research anchored in interdependence with nature and in service of the liveliness that characterizes our Indigenous community contexts.

Inspired by widespread calls for recognition of earth and human brokenness that we increasingly confront and possibilities of (re)connection toward land and human healing, we present research that critically analyzes colonial and modern constructions of global development and their impacts on human and natural relationships. In this moment of rampant global development that characterizes the Anthropocene, we emphasize the roles of Indigenous and endogenous researchers who draw from epistemologies of place and Indigenous research methodologies through two interconnected lenses: First, we consider human relationships to and alternately, separation from land and nature through environmental threats that include climate change, extractive industry, and mass consumption, and what these imply for research. Second, we describe ideas of place and peoplehood through a discussion of endogenous and Indigenous knowledges and their significance for research design and impact. We engage dialogue among researchers whose work includes American Indian traditional arts, new media studies, Indigenous environmental studies, education, and animal sciences. Using comparative and synergistic insights, we engage the link between pluriversality (Escobar, 2018) and earth beings (de la Cadena, 2015) and the more than human (Abram, 1996). We argue that endogenous and Indigenous research requires researchers to expand our scope through iterative approaches to Indigenous holistic ecologies. Across five presentations, we contribute to Indigenous and endogenous intergenerational knowledges as we unpack how researchers work towards ecological healing and environmental regeneration across spaces, including academia, schools, and industry, and how multispecies research has the power to help people understand and rethink our fractured relationships with each other and our planet.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Elizabeth Sumida Huaman

Chair: Belinda Chiu

Presenter(s): Porter Swentzell, Kaylen James, Elizabeth Sumida Huaman, Samira Chatila, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Angel Sobotta, University of Idaho

Discussant: Belinda Chiu

Presentation(s): Questions of environment and inheritance: Pueblo traditional arts, neoliberal narratives of place, and Native American education

Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) named settler colonial strategies of "erase and replace" as pervasive and cyclical approaches to national identity formation related to human separation from

experiences in and with Indigenous places and cultural practices. As progenitors of modern society, dominant schooling assists in diminishing these relationships and the practices that have allowed human beings to thrive for countless generations, contributing to the reproduction of placelessness. However, Indigenous peoples like the Tewa of northern New Mexico are aware that human beings worldwide have been engaged in deep and intimate relationships with places, and that their epistemologies and ontologies are places. While Western capitalistic society devalues and separates people from relationships with place through global economic activity and neocolonialism, a mandate for conscientious Indigenous researchers and Indigenous-serving educational institutions interested in place is to provide counternarratives and ways of reversing the deplacing/displacement of people through research and education. Using examples of community-based education partnerships, I discuss traditional arts as place-based practices and innovative expressions that include ceramics, basketry, architecture, and textiles. My aim is to provoke conversation regarding what it means to re-engage with the practices that have allowed Indigenous people to thrive for millennia through place-based research and learning.

Presenter(s): Porter Swentzell

Settler Anxieties: Critical Indigenous Interventions in Fame, Technology, and New Media Studies

In 1944, Ella Cara Deloria wrote, "...the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: one must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative...Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human." Inspired by Deloria's fieldnotes, other archival research, and kinship with Lakota Elders, the purpose of this paper is to interrogate, establish, and articulate the explicit and implicit ways fame, status, technology, and new media operate as ideological apparatuses of the settler colonial state. I situate these structures as settler ways of knowing, being, and relating to the world—ways of knowing characterized by liberal and modernist logics. I argue that the logics of liberalism and capitalism are encoded within the technologies of new media and fame, and that these logics shape the way digital infrastructures and platforms are developed and coded. Operating as mechanisms and techniques of the settler colonial state that work to manage Indigenous differences via settler anxieties and settler structures of feeling and affect, if these structures are settler colonial technologies propelling liberalism and capitalism, I argue that it is necessary to interrogate how their embedded logics undermine, complicate, and disrupt Indigenous ways of knowing and being, including relationality and kinship.

Presenter(s): Kaylen James

Between life and death worlds: Earth, state, and the Indigenous ordinary

On December 13, 1984, 123 Quechua community members were executed by the Peruvian military and left in a mass grave in Putis in the region of Ayacucho, Peru. They were among the approximately 70,000 lives (the majority of whom were Indigenous) estimated to have been lost during Peru's internal armed conflict, escalating through the 1980s and 1990s. Centering the role of Indigenous research in service of repair, restoration, and regeneration of our distinctive worlds, this

presentation examines individual and collective memory and human and earth rights work alongside narratives of grief and loss in the Andes. Through three concurrent layers of Andean Quechua research—historical research on gender-based violence through the Peruvian hacienda era, the connections between the internal armed conflict and recent protests for democracy, and a discussion of Indigenous community-led human and earth rights movements, I consider the relationship between Indigenous community members and the state, fraught since colonial and independence eras. Linking contrasting ideas of humanity, selective citizenship, and the disposability of the Indigenous human and more than human, I describe the Indigenous ordinary as an ontological-pedagogical-analytical frame for contesting colonial capital and recognizing human agency as a process of embedded earth relations that rethinks nationhood, community, place, and belonging on Indigenous terms.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Sumida Huaman

Autoethnography as a fourth axis: Embodied displacement, multispecies care, and comparative research in crisis

This paper explores how embodied displacement, relational autoethnography, and multispecies care practices can deepen Indigenous and endogenous research methodologies in times of crisis. Drawing on fieldwork amid Lebanon's rapid descent into war in late 2024, I propose the autoethnographic self as a fourth axis of Comparative Case Studies. This expansion challenges dominant separations between researcher and field, human and more-than-human, method and life. In the aftermath of the Twin Attacks and resulting mass displacement, my family's survival practices, ranging from nurturing routines with cats under bombardment to the preservation of cultural memory through music during the Lebanese Civil War illuminated profound relational ecologies that sustain life amid systemic collapse. I argue that knowledge production in sites and times of crisis must attend to the intimate, embodied labor of care, hope, and relational endurance. Attuning to multispecies companionship, emotional geographies, and intergenerational histories of displacement, I center temporal resilience as a form of Indigenous ecological knowledge that insists on life despite rupture. The paper advances a methodological intervention that scholars from conflict-affected contexts treat their lived experience as method, archive, and analytic, radically expanding ethical and epistemological possibilities, repositioning routine and relationality as refusal against violence and environmental devastation.

Presenter(s): Samira Chatila

'iceyéeye [Coyote] Is Play and Sport: Indigenous Methodologies of Playful Pedagogy for Teaching and Learning Niimípuu Language and Stories

This paper is grounded in Indigenous educational and anthropological observations and inquiry. Focusing on Niimípuu fundamental pedagogical concepts, including the role of 'iceyéeye [Coyote], I describe Indigenous play and sport as part of Indigenous journeys for children and community members to discover reimaged ways of learning and teaching that address equitable ways of

knowing and land-based pedagogies toward the creation of methodologies of playful pedagogy for teaching and learning Niimípuu language and stories.

Presenter(s): Angel Sobotta

Discussion

6375 Ectoplasmic Traces: Symbolic Regimes and Alternate Imaginaries

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts imply the presence of the past--something or someone that should have been erased from reality but still haunts. Ghosts can take many forms, manifesting through colonial violence, epistemic erasure, and imperial desires. This panel explores how such presences shape contemporary struggles for justice, recognition, belonging, and memory across different geopolitical and historical contexts. Drawing from ethnographic research in the borderlands, legal systems, transborder diasporas, online consumption, and revolutionary legacies, this panel demonstrates how the spectral is entangled with power and resistance.

This panel is transnational; while each paper highlights the specificities of a particular region and theme, they connect more broadly to understand how ghosts--whether as memories, traumas, imagined empires, erased figures and narratives, or relics--provide a lens to counter and strengthen dominant discourses and histories. Each paper highlights tensions of power between historical imaginings and contemporary realities: how settler histories materialize in Texas, how colonial legacies of law perpetuate discrimination in Bangladesh, how imperial nationalist visions of history trickle through current digital markets, and exploring political contestations over guerrilla symbolic heritage in Colombia.

Paper 1 examines how ethnic violence on Indigenous communities and settler colonial imaginaries structure racialized forms of systemic violence on the US-Mexico borderlands. Demonstrating the complexity of power and resistance, Resendiz highlights how local communities contest these white supremacist imaginaries in Texas and beyond.

Paper 2 investigates digital legal databases locating the systematic erasure of Muslim women's experiences of law. Drawing on fieldwork from state courts and Islamic/customary courts in Bangladesh, Hoque explores how law is mediated in technology, highlighting how databases reinscribe the hierarchies and epistemic frameworks of Western legal systems, which is in part a legacy of colonialism.

Paper 3 explores the proliferation of imperial nationalisms and nostalgias among the material culture of the Iranian diaspora with a focus on online consumption. Mostafavi examines how ideas of a pure Persian culture and nation haunt objects as imperial specters, erasing the long history and presence of other racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in Iran and in the diaspora.

Paper 4 critically examines the Colombian context, delving into the ongoing contest surrounding FARC's symbolic heritage between demobilized and non-demobilized fighters. It specifically focuses on the imagery associated with the guerrilla's deceased founder, "Manuel Marulanda," and analyzes how this representation intersects with propaganda and consumer advertising, as well as the Cold War's afterlives in Latin America.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Parmida Mostafavi, University of Oregon

Chair: Lynn Stephen, University of Oregon

Presenter(s): Ramon Resendiz, Indiana University, Bloomington, Salwa Hoque, Parmida Mostafavi, University of Oregon

Discussant: Erica Bornstein, University of Oregon

Presentation(s): Specters of the Borderlands: Labor, Memory, and Violence in the Making of the Modern Mexico-Texas/US Border

The US-Mexico borderlands are among the most imagined and increasingly militarized landscapes of the 21st century. Often depicted as lawless and perilous, they are both portrayed as ahistorical while materially functioning as necropolitical carceral sites for undocumented border crossers. Much like Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) referred to the US-Mexico border as "an open wound," the phantasms of how the modern border was forged linger in the memory of borderlands peoples. These specters include the legacy of Indigenous land loss, ethnic violence, military conflicts, and, most importantly, the resistance exercised by subaltern communities to colonial violence spanning the past four centuries.

This paper demonstrates how local and Indigenous communities, alongside memory workers—filmmakers, artists, and historians—labor to reckon with the phantasmagorical wounds created in the process of making and knowing the borderlands as a site of historic colonial incursions and as a space of life and resistance. Drawing on over a decade of multimodal documentary fieldwork, interviews, and collaborations across Texas, this work presents an archive of the material and aestheticized environs from central Texas to the Rio Grande, exposing the clashing of distinct visualizing colonial regimes as well as the discursive and material production of settler iconographies, in/visibilized histories, imagined mythologies, and acts of resistance materially inscribed across the landscape.

Presenter(s): Ramon Resendiz

Exorcising Data: Legal Pluralism in Bangladesh

Drawing on the concept of legal pluralism, which promotes studying law outside of state-centric and Eurocentric frameworks, my paper provides insight on how Muslim women's experiences and frameworks of justice are erased when emerging technologies are designed to treat law as singular and universal. I demonstrate my argument through two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Bangladesh, analyzing what kinds of cases get recorded in databases and who makes these decisions, countering the idea that databases are exhaustive and inclusive. Outside of state law,

community-led customary courts called shalish that draw from Islamic legal philosophy are prevalent. I explore how rural women's testimonies and Islamic legal frameworks are mistranslated and miscategorized as cases move from shalish to state courts, and then from state courts to digital legal databases. Analyzing databases centering on the ghostly figures – those who are barred from fully living in the "real" world – provides a lens to see the continuing epistemic violence on groups who have been historically marginalized. Digital databases influence how knowledge and worldviews are mediated online, leading to ideological and material consequences that can deepen Muslim women's marginality in unexpected and perhaps unintended ways. As such, it is important to locate the ephemeral apparitions that appear through resistance despite the rigorous attempts to "exorcise" and "cleanse" them.

Presenter(s): Salwa Hoque

Ghosts of Empire: Imperial Hauntings in the Iranian Diaspora

In 20th-century Iran, the Pahlavi monarchy sought to "exorcise" the backwardness of a country seen through Western eyes, to create a nation simultaneously ancient, having existed unchanged for over 2500 years, and modern, exorcised of "backwards" Islamic traditions and superstitions. Such a nation-building project was also an exercise in cultural and racial purity as the state presented Iran as a culturally Persian, racially Aryan nation, excised of Arab, Mongolian, and Turkic influences.

Despite the fall of the monarchy in 1979, the Iranian diaspora remains haunted by an imperial nostalgia (Malek 2023, forthcoming), yearning for the aesthetics of empire. This paper examines how the convergence of imperial nostalgia and Persian-centric nationalism circulates within the material culture of the Iranian diaspora, focusing on online consumption. As spirits haunt things, I examine the differing notions of an Iranian nation that possess these objects, the ghosts of an imagined and constructed Persian empire. Imperial ghost sightings abound: in high-fashion luxury purses, in independently-designed jewelry, and in decorative plates glazed with Pahlavi faces. I argue that digital markets aid in the generation of these phantoms while appropriating and erasing the long history and presence of other racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in Iran and in the diaspora. Market ideologies infect diasporic politics, turning potential solidarities into fantastical apparitions.

Presenter(s): Parmida Mostafavi

Discussion

4470 Shadows: Addressing Our Past, Reconciling the Present within the African Diaspora

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We believe that there is an epistemological dissonance on how continental Africans, Afro

Caribbeans, and African Americans (black people) experience the legacy of colonization. From an equitable lens, our research aims to empower black youth and young adults to build sustainable lifestyles. As researchers of the African Diaspora, we posit that black youth and young adults within our global community have the capacity to promote sustainable community development. Therefore, an applied anthropology curriculum needs to be developed to inform our global communities about its respective members.

As applied anthropologists researching educational praxis, we are concerned with how educational institutions articulate the shared legacies and lived experiences of black people. Using mixed methods, we will create a science and art-based curriculum that dismantles cultural boundaries and promotes sustainable development through literary and digital arts, visual expression, and scientific analysis, but before said development, data needs to be collected to ensure that our model is inclusive. We will collect our data via panel discussions, focus groups, and questionnaires.

All of our proposed panelists are members of the African Diaspora and their work collectively endeavors to 1) repair historical injustices among black people of the African Diaspora, 2) improve the appreciation of cultural diversity within the African Diaspora by gaining mutual respect for black communities and their struggles due to colonization, and 3) increase the awareness from an etic perspective, the contributions of black communities across the world in creating sustainable environments, relationships, and lifestyles.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Deneia Fairweather, Galen University, Jason Vasser-Elong

Chair: Corliss Heath

Presenter(s): Nigel Encalada, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Pamela E Foster, Georgia State University, Jamaal Muwwakkil, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Deneia Fairweather, Galen University

Discussant: Corliss Heath

Presentation(s): Group Positionality in a multi-cultural Society: The Case of the Garifuna of Belize

The Garifuna people enjoy a unique position in the Caribbean demographic landscape, being both indigenous and Afro-descendant. Their journey to Belize in the Western Caribbean was the result of warfare, resistance, and refuge-seeking beginning in the early 19th century. In modern Belize, they are one of several ethnic groups that make up the ethnic and cultural landscape. This paper explores their legacy of struggle and adaptation in Belize's socio-economic and political context and through archival research and interviews with key leaders of the National Garifuna Council examines their self-perception of belonging, resource access and political representation in Belize's multicultural context.

The Garifuna people hold a unique position in the Belizean and broader Caribbean sociocultural landscape, as both Indigenous and Afro-descendant. Their migration to Belize in the early 19th century was shaped by a history of warfare, resistance, and the pursuit of refuge. In contemporary

Belize, they are one of several ethnic groups contributing to the country's rich cultural mosaic. This paper explores the Garifuna's legacy of struggle and adaptation within Belize's socio-economic and political contexts. Drawing on archival research and interviews with leaders of the National Garifuna Council, it examines how the Garifuna perceive their belonging, access to resources, and political representation in Belize's multicultural society.

Presenter(s): Nigel Encalada

Family Heritage Books on Every Coffee Table, in Every Classroom

To reconcile historical disconnects and harmonize dissonance related to the Atlantic Slave Trade and its aftermath, twenty-first-century African Americans collaborate across the diaspora, publishing genealogy books (family heritage books). This paper uses music to illustrate how the Agapic Agency Theory, derived from these genealogies, illuminates their content. The theory unfolds in three parts, mirroring core functions of Black genealogies: spiritual ancestral connection via Deep Roots, intellectual understanding through Deep Knowledge (interpreting oral history and records), and embodied positive ancestral self-identity revealing Deep Self. Crafting this identity involves seeking an ancestral home—domestic surroundings rich with heroic ancestors, accessible information, and opportunities for spiritual connection and reenactment of virtuous lives. Descendants find this home by engaging with ancestral legacies within their genealogy books. Thus, Deep Roots, Deep Knowledge, and Deep Self are both recurring themes and the interacting components forming the Agapic Agency Theory. The paper concludes with practical pedagogical applications for Black genealogy book research, teaching, and exhibition.

Presenter(s): Pamela E Foster

Black for the First Time: Black Community Identification through Racial Socialization at a Historically White Institution

This article examines Black undergraduates' racial community self-discovery at a Historically White Institution (HWI), focusing on the transition from non-identification to identification with the Black community. Challenging the assumption that racially minoritized individuals are invariably socialized within their racial community, this study distinguishes community orientation from racial identity to clarify diverse experiences within the Black community. Considering varied socialization informs strategic interventions to engage Black students. The article highlights Black students entering college without Black community identification, explores Black student socialization through cultural capital and Community Cultural Wealth theories using ethnographic examples, and introduces "hubs of cultural socialization." Interview data from Black undergraduates and a faculty member illustrate how students developed Black community identification during college. This work informs recommendations for Black students and HWIs to facilitate access to desired Black community socialization.

Presenter(s): Jamaal Muwwakkil

Cultural Border Crossing: Developing a Sustainable Educational Curricula for the African Diaspora

Our research posits that all black youth and young adults in the African Diaspora acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development in their respective communities; however, we believe that there is a historical disconnect, or epistemological dissonance on how continental Africans, Afro-Caribbean, and African- Americans (black people) experience the legacy of colonization. Research supports that science and art heal and transform marginalized communities and those affected by traumatic experiences. Using data collected from our qualitative study, our work endeavors to 1) repair historical injustices among black people of the African Diaspora, 2) improve the appreciation of cultural diversity within the African Diaspora by gaining mutual respect for black communities and their struggles due to colonization, and 3) increase the awareness from an etic perspective, the contributions of black communities across the world in creating sustainable environments, relationships and lifestyles.

Presenter(s): Deneia Fairweather

Co-author(s): Jason Vasser-Elong

Discussion

3366 Ghosts of Violence, Spirits of Resistance, and Reimagining Collective Safety

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Ghosts of Violence, Spirits of Resistance, and Reimagining Collective Safety

What lingers in the spaces between law and disorder, security and repression? This roundtable explores how ghosts - of state violence, failed reforms, colonial legacies, and lost futures - haunt policing practices and policed communities around the globe. We attend to the spectral dimensions of policing, not only as traumatic afterlives of violence but also as forces that generate resistant political imaginations, communal care, and alternative visions of safety. Across Brazil, Turkey, Kenya, the US, Jamaica, Venezuela and Thailand, we explore how haunting also opens space for reimaginings of justice, care, and community self-determination. Our panelists engage with themes such as (mis)trust, informal order, militarization, and the often blurred lines between authoritarianism and democratic aspiration, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork to surface how communities live through and respond to these spectral inheritances. Each participant will offer a short provocation, grounding their insights in specific sites and histories. These will be followed by rotating small-group conversations to foster interdisciplinary and transnational dialogue. Together, we trace the haunted contours of policing-and the possibilities that emerge when people respond not only with fear or resistance but with creativity, care, and collective refusal.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Deniz Yonucu, Newcastle University, Marta-Laura Haynes, CUNY - John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Presenter(s): Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam, Eric Haanstad, University of Notre Dame,

Department of Anthropology, Zoltán Glück, American University, Manissa Maharawal , Andreina Torres, Barnard College, Marta-Laura Haynes, CUNY - John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Discussant: Deniz Yonucu, Newcastle University

2847 Lessons from the ghosts of food recommendations past, present, and future

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Food guidance is never neutral. Recommendations about what to eat continually shift, reshaped by science, politics, moral frameworks, racialized hierarchies, and cultural memory. Yet, each revision carries traces of past ideologies, lingering as ghosts that influence current behaviors and future trajectories. These evolving recommendations often generate uncertainty as communities navigate contradictions and complex historical legacies embedded within contemporary guidance.

This session brings together scholars examining the palimpsest of food recommendations and their complex effects on present-day behaviors, values, and inequalities. What emerges is a layered conversation about how public health messages, policy shifts, sensory memory, and archival voices continue to haunt and shape food systems today. Each paper examines how people, especially those vulnerable or navigating marginalized food landscapes, make sense of evolving advice and what these recommendations carry forward from the past.

Together, the panel explores: 1) evolutionary perspectives on human diets and their contradictions with modern nutritional policy; 2) parental experience and anxiety stemming from recent shifts in infant allergen introduction guidelines in the United States that contradict previous guidance; 3) public health messaging in Madagascar and its unintended role in increasing consumption of processed foods due to hygiene concerns; 4) how memories of school lunches influence parents' attitudes toward interaction with the school food programs of today; 5) how archival Black American cookbooks encode values and sensory knowledge to that engage in a radical and liberatory pedagogy.

This session foregrounds the dissonance between lived experience and institutional food advice. What lessons can we learn from the ghosts of food recommendations past? How do lingering policies continue to shape present-day decisions? This session will explore the evolving nature of how we come to know about the food we eat, the forces that drive change, and how we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Erin Hosein

Chair: Erin Hosein

Presenter(s): Andrea Wiley, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Erin Hosein, Laura Tilghman, Plymouth State University, Social Science Department, Carolyn Mason,

Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghosts of the deep past: Evolutionary dietary guidance

Proponents of an evolutionary approach to nutrition have challenged standard government-sanctioned dietary guidelines, offering alternatives based on foods available to early human foragers. Both forms of guidance typically categorize foods into food groups based on their nutrient contributions. Food groups that commonly appear in standard guidance are grains/starchy staples, fruits and vegetables, dairy, and protein foods (i.e. animal sources and legumes), while those inspired by evolutionary nutrition typically remove dairy and grains and emphasize fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, meat, seafood, and eggs. I argue that this reliance on food groups in dietary guidance misses the deeper evolutionary meaning of the nutrient composition of foods. I consider the ancestral, biological continuity between humans and their foods and ask: Why does a food provide its particular array of nutrients? What were those nutrients doing in the eaten organism? All organisms share fundamental life history tasks and have associated anatomical structures. Eating food means consuming a part or all of an organism engaged in life history functions. Nutrients play central roles in those functions and are used by humans in species-specific ways. By aligning nutrients with functional anatomy we find patterns in nutrient availability, better understand why foods have particular nutrient profiles, connect humans and foods in new ways, and can frame a new kind of evolution-inspired dietary guidance.

Presenter(s): Andrea Wiley

Presentation(s): Parental anxiety in an ever-changing food allergy recommendation landscape

Recent U.S. recommendations now encourage early introduction of allergens such as peanuts and eggs as early as

4–6 months of age, a notable reversal of previous advice. Although these updated recommendations are firmly rooted in emerging scientific evidence in food allergy prevention, little research has been focused on how these substantial changes have created confusion, anxiety, and stress among caregivers. Here, we present preliminary findings that examine how food anxiety is shaped by changing public health narratives, social media, and cultural expectations. Semi-structured interviews and validated surveys were conducted with mothers of infants undergoing complementary feeding in North Carolina, where pediatric food allergy rates have increased by over 300% in the past decade. Additionally, digital ethnographic techniques were used to capture the current information landscape of food allergy advice on social media platforms. This study addresses an urgent need to understand caregiver experiences, perceptions, and choices amid shifting public health guidance and new information sources.

Presenter(s): Erin Hosein

Co-author(s): Mel Salm, Morgan Hoke

“Healthy food is clean food “: Food hygiene public health messages as drivers of processed food consumption in northeastern Madagascar

The Nutrition Transition refers to dietary changes as populations increase consumption of ultra-processed food, and then suffer from associated non-communicable diseases like hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes. Most commonly associated with economist Barry Popkin, the nutrition transition is often portrayed as a linear process resulting from large-scale forces like urbanization and globalization. Yet ethnographic research shows that the nutrition transition is hardly standardized, as cultural norms and socio-economic forces profoundly shape this process. This presentation will explore how this global phenomenon is playing out in the Maroantsetra region in northeastern Madagascar, based on in-depth interviews and participant observation over 4 months in 2022. Interviewees who were middle aged and elderly frequently noted the sharp contrast between what they ate growing up, and what their children and grandchildren are now eating. Packaged foods, once rare, are now daily purchases. One surprising reason is that open-air markets and prepared food stands have been portrayed in public health messaging as potential vectors of disease from flies, dust, and vendors' unwashed hands. Thus, local definitions of "healthy" are haunted by concerns of cleanliness, and hygiene public health messages combine with changing gender norms, financial constraints, and new ideas of proper parenting, to drive the nutrition transition in this region of the world.

Presenter(s): Laura Tilghman

‘My ancestors tell me when to stop’: Engaging with cookbooks as vectors of food values and sensory knowledge

Cookbooks allow cooks of all skill levels to document and preserve their recipes, special techniques, and the stories that come with cooking. This preservation extends a chef's expertise beyond its face to face limitations, and allows them to influence present day cooking and eating. These texts become instructional manuals that rely not only on what's written on the page but embodied knowledge that must be bodily and sensorially engaged. They also encode unspoken values in how we prepare certain dishes and regard certain ingredients (Forster 2023). This form of writing is a generally important literary form, but especially so for Black Americans. Cookbooks describing and engaging with the contributions of Black Americans, which have been marginalized and denigrated, instead document and preserve a significant culinary tradition (Fretwell 2020).

I will use archival materials at the SMU Degolyer Library's Cookbook Collection and UA David Walker Lupton African American Cookbook Collection to examine the change over time in the narratives encoded within cookbooks. I will view the ways that ideas about food can linger in our memories and on our plates in the present, resulted in an embodied learning that is translated to the page. I will use these texts to explore the sensorial aspects that are documented in cookbooks, and a new way of learning from and with our predecessors—ghosts of a time past (Jenks 2022).

Presenter(s): Carolyn Mason

8091 Ethnographic Hauntings: Engaging Improvisation and Historicity Towards Reimagining Methods in Educational Anthropology

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Building on the ways educational anthropology has been shifting to confront the global nature of racial injustice as directly tied to racial capitalism and colonialism (e.g. Abu-El Haj, 2015; Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Villenas 2009), this session grapples with the spectral presence (Gordon, 1997) of colonial, racialized, and disciplinary practices that continue to shape methodological approaches to educational anthropology. Drawing from the meeting theme "Ghosts," we reflect on how taken-for-granted methodological traditions in anthropological research, whose histories are inextricably shaped by US/European colonialism, continue to haunt research practices. Similarly, ongoing practices of genocide and dispossession are both haunted by the past and create conditions for hauntings of peoples experiences.

We recognize the need to simultaneously engage in critique and world building; this symposium addresses two core questions: (1) What is required to imagine educational spaces free of racial injustice? (2) How can we center methodologies, humanizing pedagogies, and liberatory theorizing that change the conditions for everyday people? We center improvisation as both an analytic and methodological orientation.

Contributors to this session draw from field-based education research situated in community-based learning, afterschool programs, classroom context, and performance spaces. Presenters take up the possibilities of improvisation as a generative practice that can move educational relationships and encounters toward joy, justice and transformation. Improvisation is treated not as mere spontaneity but as a deeply relational and historically aware practice that navigates structural constraints while holdings pace for emergent possibilities. We address some structural and epistemic tensions within educational anthropology, and consider how improvisational methodologies may interrupt inherited disciplinary practices. Marin and Lindberg disrupt Cartesian ways of knowing in interaction analysis that privilege talk as a primordial locus of analysis. Harb examines how improvised dialogues in community radio can unsettle raciolinguistic hierarchies. Gzehoviyak, Harris, and García-Sánchez center immigrant youth as rightful analysts of their own experiences and elevate their improvisational stories as legitimate representations of their own communities. Finally, Ali confronts the silences and absences in ethnographic archives to illuminate how racialized surveillance shapes knowledge, offering an improvisational methodology that treats absence as both evidence and method.

Framed by session co-chairs and concluding with a discussant-facilitated dialogue, this symposium invites educational anthropologists to reimagine the political, historical, and affective dimensions of methodology. In doing so, we seek to confront the haunting of our inherited methods while envisioning methodologies grounded in liberation, solidarity, and ethical attunement.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Inmaculada García Sánchez, University of California, Los Angeles, Arshad Ali, George Washington University

Presenter(s): Anthony Harb, University of California, San Diego, Jackson Gzehoviak, Arshad Ali, George Washington University

Discussant: Lesley Bartlett, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Presentation(s): “I’m just talking, and you should too!”: Restructuring Raciolinguistic Hierarchies through Methodological and Pedagogical Improvisation

This paper explores how methodological and pedagogical improvisation shaped my ethnographic engagement with a community-engaged Spanish-language conversation course at a predominantly white liberal arts college in the New Latino Diaspora (Hamman, Wortham & Murillo 2015). Taught in collaboration with a local Spanish-language community radio program, the course brought students and community members together to record a weekly radio segment about socio-political issues that affect the Latinx immigrant community. Drawing from student interviews, archival radio data, and field notes gathered across three iterations of the course during 2020-21, my analysis centers around how the Latinx students reproduced and resisted raciolinguistic ideologies (Rosa and Flores 2017) in their valuation of their own and others' language practices. I argue that engaging in improvised dialogue with local community members and activists in Spanish/Spanglish ultimately disrupted the deficit framing of their sociolinguistic position. Centering the experiences of emergent Latinx bilinguals (García 2009), this paper builds on scholarship that is reimagining educational research and practice through social justice-oriented (Cammarota & Romero 2009), culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim 2014), and translanguaging pedagogies (García & Sánchez 2021) orientations to help shift our gaze away from structures of white supremacy and coloniality and towards sociolinguistic justice in the language classroom.

Presenter(s): Anthony Harb

Disrupting Adult-Centeredness: Immigrant Youths’ Improvisational Storytelling for Transforming Community Representations in Educational Anthropology

Educational anthropology has a long history of privileging adult perspectives – such as those of researchers and community members – in research representations of minoritized communities. Drawing on community-based work conducted among Oaxacan immigrants in Southern California, this paper examines a series of improvisational stories composed by children in collaborative groups in an afterschool program. Anchoring our work in Childhood Studies (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin, 2007; James & Prout 1997), which centers youth as rightful analysts of their social worlds, we examine how children took turns adding to the story until they all agreed on an ending. Within this pedagogical framework, improvisation was deployed to encourage children to (re-)imagine representations of their communities, accommodating both critiques of inequalities in their daily lives and also their constructions of a more just society. We center improvisation as an analytic and methodological orientation that engages children's agency in representing their worlds through their own eyes, while rehearsing ways of envisioning social transformation. Inspired by Enciso's

(2017) call to "engage with the ongoing politics of imagination in everyday life across silenced histories and uncertain futures" (p. 29), this paper has implications for how improvisational approaches to ethnography can create research and pedagogical spaces in which immigrant youth can engage in both just critique and joyful world-building

Presenter(s): Jackson Gzehoviak

Co-author(s): Inmaculada García Sánchez, Amanda Harris

The Unwritten and Unseen: Haunting, Surveillance, and the Coloniality of the Ethnographic Archive

This paper engages the spectral dimensions of ethnographic research in educational anthropology, exploring how archival absences, silences, and truncated speech in fieldwork with Muslim youth are sites of epistemic tension and suppressed possibility. Drawing on Gordon's (1997) theory of haunting, Hartman's (2008) critical fabulation, and Morrison's (1987) concept of rememory, I develop an Epistemic Analytic of Absence (EAA) to examine how surveillance, racialization, and liberal modernity shape what is sayable, and knowable in ethnographic archives. Through a close analysis of a transcript with a politically active Muslim student, I show how hesitations, silences, and refusals mark moments of resistance that challenge dominant frameworks of legibility and complicity.

The paper asks how educational ethnography—often shaped by logics of documentation, legibility, and institutional containment—might be unsettled through methodological orientations attuned to absence, rupture, and speculative possibility. These absences are structured by racialized governance. This project offers a decolonial analytic that treats the unsaid as both evidence and method, inviting researchers to attune to the hauntings that emerge in the field and in the archive. It reimagines ethnographic improvisation as a historically grounded and relational practice—one that listens to silences, resists closure, and creates space for alternative ways of knowing and being in educational contexts.

Presenter(s): Arshad Ali

Discussion

3992 Towards an anthropology of disinformation

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Contrary to the debunking agenda of some research programs, this roundtable argue that the aim of an anthropology of disinformation should not be to identify false information per se, nor to pinpoint knowledge claims as "right" or "wrong." Instead of being prescriptive, an anthropological approach toward disinformation is an interpretative exercise that attempts to foreground the phenomenon within specific cultural contexts, rational motivations, social pressures, power plays, and

technological networks. While disinformation remains poorly studied in anthropology, this roundtable examines how the discipline possesses a rich taxonomy of terms that closely echoes sub-aspect of disinformation, hereby throwing the basis for an anthropological study of disinformation. We also discuss how anthropological research methods (such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, among others) foster a different take on disinformation studies, by underscoring the context of production in which "dubious" narratives happen and by interpreting the internal logic of agents embedded in claims of disinformation.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Maxime Polleri, Laval University

Presenter(s): Benjamin Schaefer, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Mathilde Gouin-Bonenfant, David Flood, University of Virginia, Giovanna Parmigiani, Harvard University, Noelle Molé Liston, New York University, Meg Stalcup, University of Ottawa

Discussant: Maxime Polleri, Laval University

3497 The Ghost of Power Relations: Legacies of Past Policies and Structural Arrangements

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We live in a world filled with ghosts-the legacies of past policies, institutional setups, human geographies, and ideologies that are intertwined in sometimes mutually contradictory ways and structure our lives. Even when we currently dismiss or disapprove of these past structural arrangements and ideologies due to their racist, sexist, and other problematic assumptions, these ghosts continue to "haunt" us. Walter Benjamin (1968) once argued that social transformation comes from shifting the way we relate to reality, which is formed in the forcefield between art and technology. Such perceptions of reality develop in our daily tactile experiences that turn into habits-e.g., films that turned "cult followers" of art into critics or certain architectural setups that we experience while being distracted. This session

examines such daily experiences and traces the legacies of past structural arrangements that are informed by specific ideologies-"ghosts"-that we may no longer believe in, because of the injustice and inequity they created, yet continue to shape our daily lives and the ways in which we connect to reality. By bringing these ghosts to the surface of our understanding, the papers in this session seek to identify the issues that need to be tackled and explore ways to create a more socially just society. The first paper analyzes the narrative of the "bad neighborhood" that must be avoided in the US, as shaped by the past policies ("ghost") of red-lining, the War on Poverty, the War on Crime, and the War on Drugs, all informed by racism. By pointing out the slippage of space and people that hides the blatant demonization of residents in such neighborhoods, this paper explores ways to humanize them as a first step to end this narrative. The second paper examines the erasure of Japan's colonial history ("ghost") in Japanese-as-a-Foreign-Language textbooks. Drawing on an

autoethnographic account of the author, a Zainichi Korean, and interviews of students from Japan's former colonies, this paper calls for the necessary addition of diverse voices in language textbooks in order to avoid further marginalization of such students. The third paper investigates the "ghosts" of the ideologies of standardization and appropriateness in the notion of immersion in a study abroad context. Based on interviews of students who studied abroad in France, this paper examines the ways linguistic policing based on this notion interacts with racial dynamics among students. The fourth paper shows the "ghost" of the language standardization ideology and the nation-state ideology behind it that structures Chinese and Japanese Foreign Language classrooms at a US college. This paper introduces a new pedagogical design that challenges these ideologies. Together, this session seeks to reveal these layers of historical structural arrangements in order to challenge them.

Reference:

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Neriko Doerr, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

Chair: Neriko Doerr, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

Presenter(s): Neriko Doerr, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies, Jisuk Park, University of Toronto, Cora Jakubiak, Grinnell College, Keiko Konoeda, Bates College

Discussant: Laura Miller

Presentation(s): The "Bad Neighborhood" Discourse and the Ghosts of Past Policies

This paper examines the "ghosts" of racist policies in the notion of the "dangerous neighborhood" that designates a space of criminality and serves as code for a neighborhood of "poor, non-white people," who are demonized as criminals based on media descriptions rather than actual crime rates. DiAngelo (2016) argues that this "Danger Discourse" is currently socially acceptable thus perpetuates racism. Based on an interview of a driver who is scared of "dangerous neighborhoods" and the author's autoethnographic account of working in a "dangerous neighborhood," this paper examines the operations of Danger Discourse and traces its "ghost"—historical structural arrangements: redlining policies that created urban poverty (Aalbers 2014) and the Wars on Crime, Poverty, and Drugs that connected race, poverty, and criminality and made urban, non-white, low-income communities the target of aggressive policing and incarceration (Hinton 2016; Lassiter 2015; Thompson 2010). This paper points out the problematic slippage between people and space, which spatializes and thus objectifies residents, hiding the blatant demonization of these people as "bad," in the Danger Discourse and suggests instead humanizing these residents as people who are hard workers, who are offended by such Danger Discourses, and who themselves suffer from crime. By bringing this "ghost" to the forefront, this paper explores ways to change this landscape of fear that inspires racism.

Presenter(s): Neriko Doerr

Ghost of Colonialism: Power and Silenced Voices in Japanese Language Textbooks

Some Japanese-as-a-Foreign-Language (JFL) textbooks lack sensitivity toward learners from diverse backgrounds. These materials are not just educational tools but also spaces where power dynamics determine whose histories are remembered and whose are erased. The suppressed history of Japan's colonialism lingers like a ghost, haunting marginalized JFL learners. This paper examines the portrayals of Shinto shrines and the atomic bombings in JFL textbooks. Shinto shrines are often depicted as peaceful in these materials. However, numerous shrines were built in Japan's colonies, where shrine rituals were imposed on all imperial subjects regardless of faith (Henry 2014). Such omissions reflect a broader system that privileges colonial narratives while silencing other voices, as this paper argues. Similarly, many JFL textbooks frame Japan solely as a victim of World War II, particularly in their descriptions of the atomic bombings. Japan's role as an aggressor in its colonial actions remains unaddressed. Drawing on the author's experience as a third-generation Zainichi Korean teaching Japanese, as well as interviews with JFL students who express frustration over such textbook portrayals of Japan, this paper explores why rethinking these materials is crucial for addressing colonial legacies—these "ghosts"—and power dynamics in language education.

Presenter(s): Jisuk Park

Exorcising the Ghosts of Linguistic Appropriateness in Study Abroad

Recent work in sociolinguistics challenges the concept of autonomous, bounded languages and takes a critical stance toward Standard Language ideology (SLI). SLI is maintained, in part, through "appropriateness" models of linguistic diversity management, which assign specific language practices to particular domains. Appropriateness has been charged with perpetuating racism and linguisticism. However, like lurking ghosts, SLI and ideas of appropriateness still undergird language-in-use practices in study abroad programs, some of which require students to sign "language pledges" to use the target language exclusively. This paper presents the findings of a study that examined how SLI circulated in the talk of 15 U.S. students studying abroad in France. Drawing upon interview data, the analysis traces how students self-surveilled and imposed "appropriateness" models of language education upon themselves. Most participants drew upon geographical imaginaries that idealized ties between French and France, the nation-state, and they hoped to pass as French in public spaces. They also castigated themselves for using English during communicative breakdowns. Participants who reported violating the language pledge, however, were often students of color; they experienced racialized incidents and used their wider linguistic repertoires to build community. These findings underscore the uneven effects of SLI on individual people, and they point to a reconsideration of language pledges.

Presenter(s): Cora Jakubiak

Fighting the Ghosts in Modern Language Education

Why do we teach and learn modern languages with such a single-minded focus on proficiency in a single named language? This paper examines how treating languages as bounded, teachable objects is a legacy of the "ghosts" of power relations in modern language education, particularly nation-state language ideologies and the ahistorical foundation of proficiency-oriented communicative language teaching. The resulting narrow mission of modern language education risks losing relevance for students, as technological advancements based on large language models render mechanical language skills less essential and critical thinking becomes increasingly vital. This paper presents the development of a new course, Histories and Contexts of East Asian Languages: Identities, Politics, and Diverse Language Contexts, offered at a small liberal arts college with Chinese and Japanese language programs, as an effort to fight these "ghosts" in modern language education. The course explores the premodern histories of the two languages, the standardization of 'national language', and language education in diverse sociopolitical contexts, to help students critically examine the sociopolitical dimensions of modern language education. As a culminating project, students will create supplementary materials for beginning Chinese or Japanese language courses, providing historical and contextual insights often absent from conventional curricula and teaching materials.

Presenter(s): Keiko Konoeda

Discussion

4398 Haunted by Policy: Specters of Dismantling, Displacement, and Disappearance

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines the invocation of historical ghosts and spectral afterlives of current federal policies and actions, focusing on the populations, institutions, and futures that were targeted, dismantled, or rendered invisible. These policies have left behind more than political debris; they have generated social absences, institutional voids, and lingering traumas that haunt communities – in the US and abroad. The papers examine the enduring "ghosts" of policies enacted during the Trump administration, focusing on the populations, institutions, and communities that have been marginalized, dismantled, or rendered invisible. Presenters reflect on these topics from a historical and/or anticipatory perspective.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Leila Rodriguez, University of Puerto Rico

Chair: Caitlin Fouratt, California State University, Long Beach

Presenter(s): Caitlin Fouratt, California State University, Long Beach, Debra Rodman, Randolph-Macon College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Rebecca Galemba, University of Denver, Lisa Maya Knauer, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Melissa Maceyko, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Leila Rodriguez, University of Puerto Rico

Discussant: Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University

Presentation(s): The Vanishing Agency: Disorientation, Disillusionment, and the Dismantling of USAID

This paper explores the disorienting and disillusioning effects of institutional dismantling at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which became a central target of restructuring in the early weeks of the second Trump administration. Drawing on interviews with USAID Foreign Service Officers (FSOs), it looks at how FSOs have experienced the erosion of their agency's mission and meaning.

As FSOs contend with shifting mandates, suspended futures, and a vanishing sense of purpose, their stories reveal a professional haunting shaped by disorientation, disillusionment, and spectral institutional memory. Many express deep concern not only for their own roles but for the fate of critical development and humanitarian projects they have overseen across the globe—initiatives now left unfinished, under-resourced, or abandoned.

This study contributes to conversations on the lived realities of policy actors, the affective dimensions of bureaucratic labor, the vulnerability of state institutions, and the global consequences of domestic political shifts. By foregrounding the voices of those tasked with enacting U.S. development policy abroad, the paper contributes to broader conversations about the afterlives of institutions under attack—and the forms of disappearance and displacement they leave behind. It also raises questions about the unsettling of long-standing structures of global aid and governance and the reshaping of the field of International Development.

Presenter(s): Caitlin Fouratt

Erased But Not Forgotten: The Spectral Violence of U.S. Asylum Policy and the Afterlives of Resistance

Drawing on my work as anthropologist and expert witness in asylum cases, I examine the spectral dimensions of U.S. immigration policy through the lives of Guatemalan women and LGBTQ+ individuals who have long resisted a life structured by erasure. These individuals—whose very survival challenges state-sanctioned silencing—exist at the crossroads of multiple violences: patriarchal, heteronormative, and geopolitical. Their flight is not only from individual persecution, but from deeply embedded structural forces that have attempted to render their lives illegible—first in Guatemala, then again in the U.S.

I center a recent case where a young gay man, despite winning his case and being granted withholding of removal, was nevertheless unlawfully deported by ICE. His forced disappearance by the very system meant to protect him exposes the limits of legality and the haunting afterlives of

anti-immigrant federal policies. The courtroom win becomes a phantom victory, and the legal apparatus itself a stage for reenacting erasure.

Anthropological expert witness work thus emerges as a form of spectral labor—testimony not only to violence, but to absence, silence, and institutional betrayal. I argue that U.S. asylum policy, especially in the wake of Trump-era dismantling, operates as a technology of disappearance: rendering certain populations disposable, unseeable, or bureaucratically dead. These policies do more than deny refuge—they haunt the lives they abandon.

Presenter(s): Debra Rodman

Here to Stay? Disappearances, Erasures, and Silence in a Newcomer Epicenter

In 2024, Denver received over 42,000 newcomers. Its mayor recently testified to Congress and Trump made a bogeyman out of the city of Aurora. Despite more welcoming policies, Colorado is haunted by its past as one of the most restrictive states. In December of 2024, we shared the final report of collaboration with Denver's immigrant worker center. Of 101 intakes, 98% planned to stay in Colorado and 100% wanted to be center members. This winter, when the center called, over 77% had vanished: wrong numbers, disconnected phones, numbers belong to new people, restricted servers, immediate hang-ups, unanswered voicemails. This paper explores these disappearances as a technology of power across scales. This includes the national visibility of the ICE abduction of a well-known Colorado activist, as advocates have staved off disappearance through weekly detention center vigils. Nearby raids and legal violations were sanitized, but revealed by Colorado's rapid response teams. Instead of protecting them, universities advise precarious students to be invisible and remain silent as students are actively disappeared. Silences and disappearances embed into our classrooms, selves, and community work- how we show up, what collaboration looks like, and even through students who fail to show up to class for weeks. Yet it also points to sparks of re-visibility from vigils to community meetings, digital national digital national and local networks, and local political organizing.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Galemba

Haunted Memories: ICE Raids and the Guatemalan Genocide

On March 10, 2025, ICE agents raided a car wash in New Bedford, Massachusetts, arresting three Maya K'iche' men from Guatemala and sending them to a detention facility on Cape Cod. Within the next month ICE had made several additional raids locally, often at immigrants' homes in the early morning hours. Between January 20 and mid-April, nearly two dozen community members, principally Maya K'iche', have been taken into ICE custody, on at least two occasions through violent assault. This paper, based on nearly two decades of ethnographic witnessing and accompaniment with the local immigrant community, explores current immigration enforcement activity in the context of two historical traumas. The car wash raid took place almost exactly 18 years after ICE raided a garment factory in New Bedford on March 6, 2007, sending 361 people, mainly Central American immigrants, into detention. This heavily militarized action with helicopters, Coast Guard vessels, and over 500 law enforcement officers, left a deep wound in the

collective psyche of the immigrant community, and many survivors of that raid still reside in New Bedford. But the 2007 raid had called forth a second, deeper layer of historical trauma that still haunts the local Mayan community – the forced disappearances, massacres, and forced displacements that struck their communities of origin during the 36-year-long Guatemalan genocide, and that brought the first Guatemalan migrants to New Bedford in the early 1990s.

Presenter(s): Lisa Maya Knauer

Reviving Reverse Racism: Competing Perceptions of DEI and Discrimination in the Trump Era

As one of his first official acts as president in 2025, Donald Trump issued a series of Executive Orders (EOs) that vilified existing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and preferencing, equating DEI with illegal and immoral discrimination. The framing of DEI as discriminatory is counterintuitive: DEI rose in the 1980s as an apolitical and business-driven alternative to expand and diversify workplaces, in part by creating individual and organizational changes that would expand access to opportunities, the inverse of illegal forms of discrimination.

This paper assesses competing perceptions of and claims around discrimination via popular social and legal trends. Although vague, inherent in Trump's 2025 EOs is an old and persistent ghost, the resurrection of the social, political, and legal logics of reverse discrimination, which leverage rights-based discourses around identity categories and equality to redirect resources and protections away from, instead of toward, historically marginalized communities. When paired with additional legal shifts around religious liberty in the 21st century, the logic of reverse racism has gained renewed social, political, and legal weight. Although currently in-flux, it is critical to understand how, when, and why specific discourses around DEI and discrimination are more and less successfully deployed to impact expansion and curtailment of rights and resource protections in the contemporary era.

Presenter(s): Melissa Maceyko

The Death that Engenders Ghosts: the anticipatory impact of Costa Rica's new role as a recipient of deportees from the U.S.

In February, Costa Rica's President Chaves announced that he had agreed to "collaborate with the United States in the repatriation of migrants". Soon after, 200 migrants from Central Asia and India arrived and were taken to recently-established Center for Temporary Migrant Care (CATEM), situated near the border with Panama. The full costs are covered by the United States, and the oversight of these persons falls on the International Organization for Migration. Among the migrants are Afghan women who fear returning to the Taliban-controlled country, and others who refuse to be repatriated. Despite its longstanding reputation as a country respectful of human rights and refuge, Costa Rica has not granted asylum to any of the migrants in CATEM. This situation has inflamed an already polarized population. This paper addresses the impact of federal policies on dismantling democracy abroad. To situate the problem, I first contextualize Costa Rica's cooperation with the current U.S. administration in a weakening of democratic institutions and proliferation of populist forms of governing. Then, using an anticipatory anthropology framework, I

describe the birth of new specters. Before a ghost exists, death occurs. Through the eyes of human rights activists, government employees and humanitarian workers, I question what has died in Costa Rica, what forms the new ghosts take, what are the foreseen impacts of these ghosts, and how they shape their new realities and everyday labor.

Presenter(s): Leila Rodriguez

Discussion

8361 Frontiers of Belonging

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What happens to belonging when there is no formal and representative institution, like the state, to make claims to? What alternative forms of association take shape in its stead, specifically extending to land and property? And how are these negotiations over land depoliticized and smoothened through the law, capitalist extraction, and bureaucratic management? This panel examines land, borderlands, and frontiers in global colonial, settler colonial, and imperial contexts. By attending to specific processes in the Korean DMZ, Palestinian Jerusalem, Kurdish-Iraqi borderlands, Egypt's land dispossession, and México's southern border, panelists seek to understand what is lost, buried, and extracted in the aftermath of colonial construction and destruction. In doing so, we hope to generate a discussion that illuminates how forms of belonging emerge amidst the creation and fragmentation of territorial sovereignty.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Thayer Hastings, American University, School of International Service

Chair: T. Yejoo Kim, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): T. Yejoo Kim, University of California, Los Angeles, Kerem Ussakli, Brandeis University, Reeham Mourad, Thayer Hastings, American University, School of International Service

Discussant: Kareem Rabie, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Frontier Futures in the Korean DMZ

This paper will examine how capitalist development in the name of "peace" smoothenes over the realities of US settler military occupation and South Korean sub-imperial collaboration in the case of the Korean DMZ. Building upon years of fieldwork, the paper will focus on the region of Paju that is within and right outside the DMZ boundaries. From the frontier villages that were modeled after Israeli kibbutzim to the "new cities" being developed today, Paju has been host to various village and urban development projects that purport a specific kind of neoliberal security war front by the US and South Korean military. Specifically, the paper looks at how various local to state-led "peace" projects seek to rebrand and build over an unresolved imperial present as the US expands its military presence in the emerging cold war with China. From the former cold war era (the US and Soviet Union) to the current one, the paper will examine the historical connections between the

US's military and economic investments into creating war fronts doubling as peaceful "frontiers" from Palestine to Korea.

Presenter(s): T. Yejoo Kim

The Spiritual Pleasure of Serving the People': Producing Popular Belonging Along the Kurdish-Iraqi Borderlands

In this paper, I examine the role of strategic partnerships and networks between tribal men, oil & gas companies and villagers in the making of Garmiyan Region. Originally a part of Kirkuk, this region was gerrymandered into the Sulaymaniyah Governorate in 1975 as part of the Ba'ath Government's Arabization campaigns. Most of its population are dispossessed survivors of the Anfal Genocide who maintain that their tribal identity is a part of the multi-ethnic life in Kirkuk. Since the US invasion of 2003, private guesthouses reemerged from the lands of the Kurdish-Iraqi border. Traditionally serving as the agha's court, these guesthouses were thought to be in decline since the 1960s. Their resurgence as gated, lavish retreats with lush gardens is symbolic of the shifting social power of tribal notables in the region, from public authority to gated wealth. The men who own these guesthouses receive contracts for the everyday management of oil & gas companies in the region, while mediating between companies and villagers who are pushed out of their lands. Based on two years of fieldwork, I discuss how what these men call 'the spiritual pleasure of serving the people' generates privatized claims to sovereign belonging along the Kurdish-Iraqi borderlands. While recent anthropological literature has focused on how Kurds evade or are constricted by nation-states' borders to facilitate cross-mobility, I provide an instance where Kurds assert borders.

Presenter(s): Kerem Ussakli

The Afterlives of Dispossession: A family's labor in Postcolonial Egypt

"Land is the only refuge," my mother once said. This sentiment is often brought up by the women in my family alongside economic hardships. Central to my research is my grandfather, a tea trader whose parcel of land, a mango field he cultivated, was dispossessed by the state in El-Saf City in Upper Egypt in 1972 under the Expropriation for Public Good law. The law granted the state sole authority to transform private property into a "public good" without fair compensation. The ambiguous definition of "public good" creates opportunities for private interests to take precedence. Following Luxemburg's and Harvey's conceptualization of accumulation by dispossession, I argue that the law, backed with state force, has become a major site for: 1) capital accumulation, 2) devaluation of personal property, and 3) alienation and transformation of political subjectivities. In this paper, I trace how properties were situated, spanning different imperial and colonial modalities of legal pluralism. I then problematize land dispossession. I ask: how does the public good become 'dispossession by law', with the manifestation of dispossession across different scales and temporalities? How do colonial and national legal structures enable the commodification of land and expand capitalist relations in post-colonial 'socialist' Egypt? And

above all, what does it mean to be dispossessed? What labor of survival do the dispossessed undertake?

Presenter(s): Reeham Mourad

Landlords, Refuge and Unsettled Value in a Palestinian Borderland

Jerusalem borderland neighborhoods have become forms of refuge for noncitizen Palestinians. These territories are valued because of their frontier position on the edges of the Israeli-demarcated municipal lines and the physical separation wall. One form of bordering is reinforced by law and the other by concrete, although both are settler colonial techniques for managing surplus populations. This paper addresses the borderland neighborhood of Bir Ona on the West Bank side of the separation wall as a refuge for people whose identity cards under Israeli rule prevent them from living together in almost any other territory. Since 2003, the institution that governs the unification of personal status for married Palestinian couples separated by different legal statuses under Israeli law has been frozen. Within this extended deferral, Palestinians who could otherwise not live together do so, achieving so-called normal life, in and because of these borderland neighborhoods. Property valuation follows. By attending to the ambitions and concerns of a small-time landlord operating within this minute borderland, this paper seeks to understand how partial belonging translates into multivalent forms of value including property, the family, and claims of founding a neighborhood.

Presenter(s): Thayer Hastings

Discussion

1883 Teaching Anthropology by Doing Anthropology: Pedagogy, the Ethnographer's Magic, and Learning Beyond the Classroom

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Since the early twentieth century ethnographic fieldwork has been central to anthropological knowledge. It has also long been the realm of ghosts and spectres. As informed by forerunners like Bronislaw Malinowski, the "ethnographer's magic" (Malinowski 1922; Stocking 1992) is at its core experiential and intensely personal. The legacies and methodologies of early field ethnographers haunt us to this day. Students continue to receive limited advice and training in ethnographic methods. This style, as experienced by many of this roundtable's participants, is by design, informed by the belief that ethnography is something you learn how to do in the field. An individual's success or failure as a field ethnographer is ultimately tied to this rite of passage. This belief complicates the instruction of anthropological methods, especially for us who rarely received formal instruction ourselves.

This roundtable engages with this critical tension between pedagogy and experience at the core of ethnographic research and instruction, and how we as practicing cultural and linguistic

anthropologists teach such methods to college students in various "fields." Our discussion brings together anthropologists at different career stages to reflect on their experiences leading field schools and other experiential learning courses outside the classroom. As a group we have led programs both inside the U.S. (Alaska, Arizona) and abroad (Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Fiji, Guatemala, Hungary, Malta, Nepal, South Africa, Zambia). The diversity of our programs, and what they emphasize, mirrors this range of locations. Our dialogue will pivot around a handful of concerns and topics, including but not limited to the following: the ethics of ethnographic fieldwork and its instruction (accounting for the experiential push and pull of ethnographic research; navigating larger structural inequalities); the challenges we have faced (practical and theoretical); how the changing nature of fieldwork informs how we teach anthropology in the field/abroad; and our experiences leading programs with varying emphases and locales. In engaging with this critical tension between formal pedagogical instruction and emergent skill that come through experience, we navigate the disciplinary spectres haunting our pedagogical efforts to create a more engaged and ethical future.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Christopher Berk, Auburn University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work

Presenter(s): Ellen Block, College of St. Benedict & St. John's University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Karen Brison, Union College, Department of Anthropology, Anton Daughters, Jennifer Guzman, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Erika Hoffmann-Dilloway, Oberlin College and Conservatory, Department of Anthropology, Melanie Medeiros, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Tim Wallace, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Christopher Berk, Auburn University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work

8844 CAE Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 4:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 6:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Napoleon (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Annual board meeting of the Council on Anthropology & Education. Agenda will include reports from president, treasurer, and chairs of standing and ad hoc committees. Open to all. We especially encourage individuals who may be interested in future CAE leadership to attend.

8560 Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA) Awards Ceremony and Open Mic (off-site at the Howlin' Wolf)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 5:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

SHA Awards Ceremony 5:30- 6:30pm; Open Mic 7:00pm-9:00pm

The Howlin' Wolf, 907 S Peters St, New Orleans, LA 70130, United States.

Note: the venue is within a 15-minute walk from the AAA conference site

This off-site, evening event brings together anthropologists, artists, musicians, and community members for a live performance showcase that celebrates the intersections of ethnography and creative practice. Hosted at the iconic Howlin' Wolf Music Club, the salon features an open mic and a featured artist set.

Organized by the Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA) and the Music and Sound Interest Group (MSIG), the event highlights the creative practices of AAA scholar-artists ("scholartists") working across sound, story, and performance.

The evening includes:

- Ethnographic Salon (7:00 PM onward): Short performances by AAA members, including songs, poetry, soundscapes, storytelling, and hybrid works rooted in field research and humanistic inquiry.
- Featured Artist Set: A live performance by New Orleans-based singer-songwriter Dusky Waters, whose work blends blues, folk, and Southern oral traditions.

Call for Participants:

We welcome performances from anthropologists and affiliated artists working at the intersection of research and creativity. To register to perform, please email: kristinajacobsen@gmail.com

8548 Opening Keynote with Jason De Leon, with Awards Recognition

Start Date: 11/20/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

Jason De León is Lloyd E. Cotsen Endowed Chair of Archaeology, Professor of Anthropology and Chicana, Chicano, and Central American Studies, and Director of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is also Executive Director of the Undocumented Migration Project, a non-profit research, arts, and education collective that seeks to raise awareness about migration issues globally. He is a 2017 MacArthur Foundation Fellow and author of the award-winning book "The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail." De Leon's latest book "Soldiers and Kings: Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling" won the 2024 National Book Award for Nonfiction.

8553 Society for Anthropological Sciences: Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 8:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Special Event

Join us for the Annual Business Meeting for the Society for Anthropological Sciences. The meeting is open to all current members as well as those interested in the society. We discuss the previous year's business, plan for next year, and present awards.

8750 SEAA business meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Special Event

Business meeting of SEAA members reviewing year's activities, budget, awards. Further discussion of future events

8854 Joint Section Reception @ Spectral Remix- offsite

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Please join us for a joint section reception hosted by the Society for Cultural Anthropology, the Society for Visual Anthropology, and the American Ethnological Society. The reception will be held from 7-9pm on Thursday, November 20th at Merchant Hall, a fifteen-minute walk from the conference center. The venue is the site of Spectral Remix, an off-site AAA exhibition featuring collaborative multimedia ethnographic work by over forty participants. Come and mingle, take in the exhibition, and sample the appetizers and cash bar that will be available. Hope to see you there!

Organizer: Craig Campbell

8821 Business Meeting (Middle East Section)

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Special Event

Business Meeting, Middle East Section

8737 Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness - Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Business Meeting

8654 Music as a Centerpiece of Culture and Society

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Earlier this year, ASA sponsored a presentation by Tony Seeger titled "Changing People's Lives through Music." That led to an enthusiastic and extended conversation about music and how it helped mold many ASA members into the anthropologists that they eventually became. As a follow-up, we decided to hold an early-evening event to continue the conversation, combined with in-person musical performances. We invite ASA members who are also musicians to bring instruments and share some of the songs that inspired them to pursue their chosen career paths. Our plan is to hold the event in the conference hotel on Thursday, from 5 to 7 PM, after which participants will go to dinner on their own and be encouraged to find local musicians for their entertainment.

8706 C&A and SAFN Graduate Student and Postdoc Social Mixer-Backspace Bar and Kitchen

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Join us in the evening on Thursday, November 20th for the yearly social mixer for graduate students and postdocs sponsored by Culture & Agriculture and the Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition at Backspace Bar and Kitchen, 139 Chartres St, New Orleans, LA 70130.

8856 NAPA Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Special Event

National Association for the Practice of Anthropology Annual Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony.

8751 Reception for SEAA members immediately following SEAA business meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Special Event

SEAA reception immediately following business meeting, for SEAA members and guests.

9085 Princeton University Anthropology Gathering

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Special Event

Gathering for fellowship with Princeton University affiliates. We will have drinks and appetizers.

8615 Critical Urban Anthropology Association -- Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/20/2025 9:10 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Meeting of the Board of Critical Urban Anthropology Association (CUAA)

8764 Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA) Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:15 PM **through** 11/20/2025 10:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

The annual business meeting and awards ceremony for the Society for Linguistic Anthropology.

9084 Brown University Anthropology reception at the AAA conference for faculty, alumni, and students of Brown University attending the AAA conference.

Start Date: 11/20/2025 8:30 PM **through** 11/20/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Special Event

Brown University Anthropology reception for faculty, alumni, students, and friends of Brown Anthropology.

8767 Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA) Reception

Start Date: 11/20/2025 10:20 PM **through** 11/20/2025 11:20 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

SLA reception following the Annual Business Meeting and Awards Ceremony.

Friday, November 21, 2025

8766 Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA) Extended Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

SLA extended board meeting.

8606 Council for Museum Anthropology Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Special Event

Anyone interested in the Council for Museum Anthropology section is invited to attend our annual Business Meeting. We will review section reports and election results, as well as discuss initiatives and concerns related to the section and its journal, Museum Anthropology (including strategic planning). We invite attendee input.

8569 NAPA/AAA Careers Expo - Career Guides Brunch

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Brunch for Careers Expo Career Guides that will include an overview of the event and any needed training.

8671 Society for Medical Anthropology, Section Interest Groups Breakfast

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Medical Anthropology supports several committees and caucuses that address the unique interests and needs of our membership. This breakfast brings together the chairs of all of the SMA SIGs.

8646 New Section President Orientation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

New Section President Orientation for incoming presidents with terms starting November 2025.

8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival-- Day 3

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology screens the best of ethnographic film at the annual SVA Film & Media Festival. The Festival is held as part of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, giving filmmakers and distributors broad access to an audience of thousands of anthropologists, educators, and other attendees.

Ethnographic film and media can be defined broadly as works that emerge through ethnographic fieldwork or that use, are informed by, illustrate, or evoke concepts and principles of anthropological theory, methods, or practice.

2025 SVA Film & Media Festival Directors:

Dr. Anna Neumann

Dr. Mariam Abazeri

8849 Students of Color / LGBTQ Mentoring Session

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Organized by the CAE Graduate Student Representative, this mentoring event will be of interest to students of color and LGBTQ students in the academy. We will discuss the challenges, past experiences, successes, and struggles as emerging minoritized scholars. The aim is to provide spaces of ongoing support for thriving in academia and life.

8726 Ghosts of Environmental Futures: Environmental Changes and Community Voices on the Placencia Peninsula, Belize

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

This installation presents an immersive, multisensory installation that transports conference attendees into the ecological and social realities of the Placencia Peninsula, a coastal community in southern Belize. The installation directly engages with the AAA 2025 theme of "Ghosts" by making tangible the haunting presences of environmental and cultural loss from vanished coral reefs and disappearing mangroves to the erasure of coastlines and the displacement of communities.

The project is based on the research of Dr. Kris-An Hinds in partnership with USF Strong Coasts Belize Community Fellows Monique Vernon, Natasha Gibson, and Delcia McDougall. As a researchers embedded within the Placencia Peninsula community, their methodology is built on

long-term engagement and collaborative knowledge production. This installation is a direct output of that approach, translating four years of interdisciplinary research into a public-facing, sensory experience. The work is further enriched by the contributions of a collaborative team of Strong Coasts Belize Community Fellows, early-career anthropologists, environmental engineers, marine scientists, and community restoration practitioners from the Strong Coasts network.

Drawing on this rich, co-produced knowledge, the exhibit merges technology with ethnographic storytelling. It is designed as a triptych of experiences:

1. A Virtual Reality Experience offers a 360-degree immersion captures the story of coral reef ecosystems surrounding in Placencia Peninsula and the cultural significance of the environment's transformation over the past years. This video is both a ghost and survival story that brings forth the life and voices to the disappearance of the coral reef and the voices of the people, organizations, communities working to revive and protect them.
2. A Walking Art Gallery features photo vignettes from Belizean environmental champions, documenting remembered changes.
3. Tactile 3D-Printed Models of coral reefs that provide a physical form to abstract biodiversity loss, serving as visual and tactile metaphors for ecological "ghosts" and the power of restoration.

This installation does not merely document loss. It creates a space to witness and engage with the vibrant community responses to these crises, highlighting local visions, cultural heritage, and the ongoing work of ecological and cultural safeguarding. It is a story of both ghosts and guardians, inviting reflection on memory, loss, and the transformative power of community-driven action.

Organizer(s): Kris-An Hinds, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Sherilyne Jones, Rebecca Zarger, Maya Trotz, Monique Vernon, University of South Florida, Strong Coasts Community Fellow

306 Society for Linguistic Anthro Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Maia Rosenberg, University of Pittsburgh, Dariush Izadi, Western Sydney University, Catherine Evans Davies, University of Alabama, Stefania Becerra Lavado, Matilda Vokes, Yinan Zhang, Harvard University, Kendall Medford

Presenter(s): Maia Rosenberg, University of Pittsburgh, Dariush Izadi, Western Sydney University, Catherine Evans Davies, University of Alabama, Stefania Becerra Lavado, Matilda Vokes, Yinan Zhang, Harvard University, Kendall Medford

Presentation(s): "We could call them the Troika": Phatic labor and the ratified decision

This paper examines a virtual (Zoom) meeting of a group of organizers in the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), analyzing their use of phatic labor (Elyachar, 2010) within the context of a meeting to show that phatic labor is essential in building social ties between interactants, and these ties are what enable the group to achieve what I call a ratified decision, or a decision legitimized and accepted by the group as actionable. I show that it is the democratic socialist values consciously shared by group members that create a touchstone for the interactional norms necessary to achieve a ratified decision. It is these same values that allow for the both the phatic communion and phatic contact that create the structure of legitimation on which the ratified decision is built. A discourse analysis of this meeting shows that small talk produces ties between group members and enables them to transmit social value along communicative channels. This scaffolds certain legitimation tactics (Morton, 2014) that move the group towards a ratified decision. Legitimation tactics are defined as manoeuvres of speech undertaken by participants to legitimize a decision. In other words, we can understand legitimation as the process to achieve the goal of a ratified decision. Under the premise that phatic labor is an umbrella term encompassing phatic contact and phatic communion, I suggest that each of these operate within the context of two layered realms that occur during a meeting: that of the community of practice, and that of the meeting itself.

Presenter(s): Maia Rosenberg

Discourse, Materiality, and Agency: Haunting Traces in Everyday Social Interactions

Markets and shops are more than spaces of exchange; they carry the ghostly traces of the past. Faded price tags, the absent voice of a shopkeeper, or products no longer stocked-these are spectral remnants of past interactions that continue to shape present dynamics. In specific contexts, such as Persian ethnic shops in Sydney, these hauntings take on particular forms: the echoes of economic shifts, migration stories, and linguistic transformations. These material traces-objects, spaces, and practices-are not merely functional; they bear the weight of histories that refuse to be fully erased. The interplay of materiality and discourse in these spaces creates a complex layering of past and present, where traces of history are both tangible and intangible, shaping the present moment in ways that often go unnoticed.

This paper explores how the spectral dimensions of materiality and discourse (Cavanaugh & Shankar, 2017) manifest in the context of Persian ethnic shops in Sydney. Drawing on ethnographic methods, it examines how everyday objects, such as vegetables, shop signs, and store layouts, become active agents in shaping social interactions and mediating cultural meanings. These objects, such as the fading price tags or the layout of a shop, carry traces of historical, economic, and migration forces that shape contemporary interactions. Using actor-network theory (Latour, 1996, 1997, 2005) and the concept of mediational means/tools (Scollon, 2001), I analyze how these material elements are not neutral but are imbued with power and memory, forming connections between past and present. Through this lens, the paper demonstrates how the mundane objects in these spaces-vegetables, for instance-become spectral markers of migration, colonial legacies,

and shifting social relations, showing how history lingers in the everyday through material and discursive practices.

In addition, this paper responds to Deumert's (2021) call to move beyond naïve empiricism by recognizing the affective and spectral dimensions of social life. The agency of discourse in these spaces is not solely the result of immediate interactions but is shaped by residual, ephemeral, and haunting forces-echoes of colonial legacies, economic shifts, and migration histories. These forces infuse everyday practices with deeper layers of meaning, where material objects and discursive practices are not just functional but carry social, historical, and affective weight. Through this lens, the paper demonstrates how sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology can engage with the spectral traces of history, revealing how everyday commercial spaces are not only economic sites but also sites of memory, struggle, and transformation.

Presenter(s): Dariush Izadi

Ghosts as Part of the Family

The presentation will examine a documentary, entitled "The Ghosts of Selma," produced in 1998 by the University of Alabama Center for Public Television for broadcast on Alabama Public Television. The discourse analysis, of the 6 videotaped accounts by local residents of ghosts that shared their homes, is informed by commentary provided by the producer of the documentary, Max Shores.

Work on ghost stories by folklorists has had typically three characteristics: it has used written sources, it has represented mostly hearsay evidence based on the experiences of others, and the stories themselves have tended to produce fear or anxiety about the unknown associated with death. Many written sources were created in the past before audio/video technology, and many modern sources are simply written versions of an oral account. These data are quite different in that they are mostly first-hand oral accounts of experience with ghosts, enhanced by visuals created by the producer of the documentary.

These ghost stories appear to be unusual in the modern world in that the ghosts seem to be treated as "part of the family." Apparently this orientation was more typical in the pre-scientific context in which ghosts were treated as part of the "community of persons"; Bowyer (1980) discusses the medieval Christian situation and its continuation beyond the Reformation in some parts of Europe, and Nyce (2014) examines the same situation in the world of the late 19th century Pennsylvania Dutch. In this particular situation in Alabama, the orientation to ghosts as part of the family was established by the well-known storyteller from Selma, Kathryn Tucker Windham (1918-2011). Children who read her series of 7 books, first appearing in 1969, were familiar with the ghost named Jeffrey who lived in her house. She was clearly unafraid of him and talked about the advantage of having a ghost in the house because you can blame things on him. The producer of the documentary was familiar with her work and in fact went to her first when he was in the planning stage. Her influence may well have shaped the attitudes of the tellers of these ghost stories.

Presenter(s): Catherine Evans Davies

Haunted Voices: Raciolinguistic Ghosts and Quechua Resistance in Lima, Peru

This project examines how colonial legacies continue to structure linguistic and racial hierarchies in contemporary Peru, focusing on Quechua speakers in Lima. While Quechua is Peru's most widely spoken Indigenous language and is recognized as an official language, Quechua speakers in the capital city face widespread linguistic discrimination. These sociolinguistic hierarchies are present in schools, hospitals, markets, and legal institutions-where Spanish dominance shapes access and belonging.

Based primarily on preliminary ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Lima from May to August 2025, this project presents how Quechua speakers navigate and contest these sociolinguistic hierarchies. I draw on raciolinguistic theories (Rosa and Flores 2017) and the concept of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) to explore how the racialization of Quechua intersects with broader class-based and colonial ideologies of modernity. In Lima, modern citizenship is often imagined through Spanish, rendering Quechua and its speakers backward or ghosted (Huayhua 2015).

Through interviews and participant observation in everyday settings-such as community markets and hospitals-I document how participants experience linguistic exclusion while articulating resistance and memory. I show how language becomes both a site of oppression and of political presence. Participants' stories reveal not only the endurance of colonial structures but also how Quechua speakers mobilize linguistic agency to challenge erasure and reclaim public space.

This research contributes to anthropological conversations on language, race, and urban inequality in Latin America, while addressing broader questions of language justice in multilingual societies. Ultimately, my project seeks to advance discussions on language justice and promote equity and recognition for Quechua communities in Peru.

Presenter(s): Stefania Becerra Lavado

Reshaping Social Distancing: How does Competitive Signage Affect Meaning in the Linguistic Landscape of Covid-19?

Landscapes come from "how we view or interpret space" (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010:3), including the perception of signage like posters or graffiti. Signs have an informative purpose, and their symbolic meaning also influences the landscape (Leeman and Modan 2010, Lou 2007). But how is the landscape shaped if these meanings are contested? This study explores the phenomenon of competitive signage, or signage that intentionally challenges other signs in its surroundings.

Using signage related to the Covid Pandemic in East London, I discuss how competitive signage creates and shifts symbolic meaning in the landscape. Competitive signage occurs when signs found together have contrary positions. Typically, at least one sign changes or obscures the information of others in its vicinity. The perception of these signs is then intertwined with the signs' individual meanings.

Over a year, I documented Covid-related signage across the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and surrounding neighbourhoods. Competitive signage about Covid was frequent. Therefore, I created a

sub-corpus of 220 signs that a) explicitly address Covid; and b) show evidence of competitive signage: overlaying, ripping, crossing out or adding to the original sign.

Applying Goffman's (1986) concepts of layering and footing reveals how competitive signage can change symbolic meaning. On an informative level, different signs can position themselves differently within a frame. On a symbolic level, this positioning could become an additional frame layer as information that was presented as integral is now contested: indicating a shift in their symbolic meaning.

Three key trends emerge from the competitive signage data: defacing social distancing signage with contradictory signs, obscuring anti-lockdown signage, and cooccurrence of these two phenomena in one location. I find implicit information, such as presenting social distancing advice as integral, is troubled by the addition of anti-lockdown signage. The challenge inherent to some anti-lockdown signs is curtailed by the damage to these signs, which in turn implies support for public health messaging. These examples indicate fierce discourses at work on public health and misinformation. I argue the act of layering in itself creates symbolic meaning: the ghost of a torn down sign is then a symbol of resistance or illegitimacy in an emerging pandemic landscape.

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Lou J, (2007), *Revitalizing Chinatown into a Heterotopia: A Geosemiotic Analysis of Shop Signs in Washington, DC's Chinatown*, *Space and Culture* 10, 170-194

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Presenter(s): Matilda Vokes

Speaking into the Air: Semiotics of Euphemism and Avoidance Registers in China's Anti-Zero-COVID Discourse

This paper discusses the social semiotics of euphemism as avoidance registers in China's Anti-Zero-COVID discourse in 2022. I examine two cases in which explicit denotation gets suppressed and the non-denotational quality becomes salient: the "Red-Blue Design Competition" at Tongji University, Shanghai, where a student's blunt complaint against the administrative authority is recoded and improvised into various forms with the color combination of red and blue; the A4 White Paper Revolution, where the protestors wear masks and hold a piece of blank paper during their assembly. While the former "red-blue" is an online, decentralized, and improvisational reproduction of memes, the latter is performed within constraints of the register and genre of protesting through a collective anonymous "blankness." Both cases are radical avoidance registers

deeply indexed in the physical lockdown, psychological fear, and a metapragmatic awareness of censorship. When words are censored and therefore euphemized, denotation vapors. Yet, the color, the blankness, and the indexical air begin to gain salience. The Peircean firstness takes the place of thirdness and comes back as a stronger phantom, upon which a metapragmatic discourse emerges against the censorship. These cases ask the same question: where else can communication reside when "language" is no longer available? This paper thus proposes reconsidering the inclination of looking for denotational forms in linguistic anthropological analysis. It also invites our attention to communication at the edge of language, even at the edge of our visible world, for what is not spoken always comes back like a ghost.

Presenter(s): Yinan Zhang

The language of Haiti's past, alive in today's Cuba: A case study of the immigrant time capsule effect on language revitalization efforts

Haitian Creole (Kreyòl), the national language of Haiti, was first brought to neighboring Cuba after the Haitian Revolution of 1804. Throughout the early 19th century, several large, subsequent migrations of Haitian sugarcane laborers maintained the language for generations. It is often considered the second most widely-spoken language in Cuba, after Spanish. However, the dire economic situation of today's Cuba means that the once-steady flow of Haitian migrants into the country has stopped, and with it, the maintenance of Kreyòl in younger generations.

This paper explores contemporary grassroots efforts to preserve and promote the Kreyòl language amidst this relatively recent and abrupt demographic shift. Building on the concepts of the immigrant time capsule effect (Lung 2024) and Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) approach to transnational migration, I demonstrate how the linguistic features and sociocultural status of Kreyòl as used by 19th and 20th century Haitian migrants have had a lasting effect on the variety of the language found in Cuba today. Based on ethnographic interviews conducted in Havana in 2024, I show that many linguistic features of the variety are "outdated" and reflect the language of 19th and 20th century Haiti. I also argue that the lack of literacy in the original migrant generations has directly hampered contemporary efforts to revitalize and promote the language. Community organizers who are struggling to teach and promote the language on a large-scale often cite literacy challenges as their primary roadblock. The sociolinguistic reality of the past, in this way, lingers in the present reality of speakers and community organizers, as a reminder of the migrants who came before.

Presenter(s): Kendall Medford

531 Combined Flash Session #10

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Scarleth Herrera , Brooke Ann Coco , Shweta Radhakrishnan , ANNICK DELANNAY,

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Eduardo Piqueiras, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Helen Blouet, Utica University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Jose Angel Santana Guerra

Presenter(s): Scarleth Herrera, Brooke Ann Coco, Shweta Radhakrishnan, ANNICK DELANNAY, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Eduardo Piqueiras, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Helen Blouet, Utica University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Jose Angel Santana Guerra

Presentation(s): Empowering Domestic Workers in the age of AI: A digital Anthropologist's fight for privacy, Immigration Rights, justice and Visibility

This paper explores how digital anthropology, combined with community-engaged practices, is being applied to support and uplift the domestic workers movement-particularly through the lens of immigrant and women-led labor organizing including myself. Drawing from my work with Women Working Together, a grassroots nonprofit supporting domestic workers & Immigration rights, I demonstrate how digital ethnography, participatory research, and critical engagement with technology can foster collective empowerment, visibility, and resistance.

This presentation centers on three key areas: (1) how participatory digital ethnography captures the lived experiences of domestic workers often excluded from dominant labor narratives; (2) how digital tools, including storytelling platforms, mobile research methods, and community-led training, have been co-developed to increase digital agency and leadership; and (3) how emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, present both opportunities and threats to this labor force.

As algorithmic management, surveillance technologies, and biometric data systems increasingly shape the conditions of informal labor, this paper critically examines the implications of AI on privacy, autonomy, and exploitation within domestic work. It considers how digital anthropology can help communities navigate, resist, and reshape these systems by producing culturally grounded, ethically informed knowledge and action.

This work contributes to broader conversations about the role of anthropologists in technology ethics, labor justice, and public-facing research.

Presenter(s): Scarleth Herrera

Knowledge Organisation as Governance: Lessons in Adaptive Infrastructure Design

As digital technologies increasingly mediate social interaction, they are fundamentally reshaping how information is produced, shared, and controlled. As datafication accelerates the proliferation of information, knowledge organization emerges as a critical site of governance and resistance. While critical media studies have typically emphasized the centralizing tendencies of digital platforms -- often characterized by hierarchical, top-down structures described as implicit feudalism (Schneider 2022) -- this study explores alternative possibilities by investigating how digital tools and infrastructures might instead be designed to distribute decision-making authority.

However, decentralised and permissionless organizations that lack defined boundaries, clear leadership, or cohesive vision risk succumbing to what Freeman (1972) termed a tyranny of structurelessness, where ambiguity undermines collaboration and threatens sustainable governance. Through ethnographic methods, this research examines how Metagov -- an online laboratory for digital self-governance -- navigates these tensions through the implementation of a Knowledge Organisation Infrastructure (KOI). KOI is an experimental sociotechnical system designed to empower communities with greater collective control over how their knowledge is curated, managed, and shared, fostering localized forms of resistance to centralized control and institutional vulnerability.

Preliminary findings suggest that while KOI aims to improve the accessibility and discoverability of localized knowledge, it also resurfaces longstanding governance dilemmas, such as aligning values, structuring decisions, and facilitating participatory practices. Although KOI does not resolve these issues, it offers a critical testing ground for innovative approaches to knowledge organization, coordination, and sustainability within decentralised networks. In this way, KOI seeks to challenge dominant platform logics by supporting local groups in maintaining autonomy and interconnectedness, thus addressing vulnerabilities inherent to digital infrastructures and promoting resilient, sustainable modes of collective knowledge governance.

References Cited:

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Schneider, N. (2022). Admins, mods, and benevolent dictators for life: The implicit feudalism of online communities. *New Media & Society*, 24(9), 1965–1985.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820986553>

Presenter(s): Brooke Ann Coco

Photographing the Goddess: Media, Mediation and the Medium

This paper explores the shifting relationship between ritual possession specialists (velichappatus) and photography in Kerala, with a focus on those who embody the Goddess Kodungallur Bhagavathy. Traditionally, oracles were deeply wary of being photographed during possession. As my interlocutor Kamala explained, "Many years ago, no oracle would allow you to take their picture when the Goddess had descended. Why? Because once you have a photo of the Goddess, what good is the oracle's body? The oracle would die after." The fear was that capturing the Goddess in an image would displace her presence in the oracle's body-and even hasten the oracle's death.

Today, however, velichappatus perform before a sea of cameras and smartphones. Social media pages come alive during the annual Kodungallur temple festival, dedicated solely to photographing oracles as they dance the Goddess. Promotional materials from state and private tourism ventures routinely feature images of oracles in trance. Some oracles even hire professional photographers and videographers to document their moments of possession-sometimes archiving these images in private collections, sometimes distributing them widely.

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, this paper examines how velichappatus' relationship to the camera has transformed: from anxious resistance to active collaboration. What does it mean when the camera, once viewed as a threat, is now welcomed into the sacred ritual space? How did the camera move from being merely a witness to another participant in the ritual activity? What theological, ethical, and aesthetic negotiations enable and are enabled by this shift? I argue that this transformation is not merely technological but ontological: it reflects a changing theory of presence, mediumship, and divine embodiment. As images circulate across platforms and publics, I ask what is at stake for the oracles-not just in terms of visibility, but in how they understand the Goddess's presence, their own ritual labor, and the role of media in sustaining divine encounter.

Presenter(s): Shweta Radhakrishnan

Social struggles and identity constructions in Guadeloupe, ex-french colony

For those who passed by the windows of primary schools in Guadeloupe, hearing "our ancestors, the Gauls..." recited in the 70s by schoolchildren could seem normal. However, despite a political strategy of mind-shaping by the French government, ranging from the absence of references to Africa in school textbooks, massive emigration programs for the overseas french regions populations to mainland France such as BUMIDOM (migration office of the Overseas Territories) to the exercise of popular repression (armed shooting of May 68), Guadeloupeans never gave up fighting for better social living conditions to a certain form of political autonomy.

The May 68 shooting triggered by the French army in a context of wage demands, remain an essential social marker for understanding the struggles of recent decades and particularly the social mobilization of 2009 known as LKP (lyannaj kont pwofitasyon) which paralyzed Guadeloupe for 2 months.

In my dissertation work, I start from the social fact of 2009 which will be used as an analyzer in Guadeloupean society because it is an identifiable social fact in time and space (geolocatable) which makes it possible to recognize actors, behaviors, a set of dynamics and a whole symbolic dimension which will be approached from the angle of semiology, in a logic of meaning.

Indeed, the leaders of the LKP (Lyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon), claimed in many respects to be the heirs of May 68 which marked an imprescriptible turning point in the emergence of an identity demand distinct from that of metropolitan France. And if Eli Domota, leader of LKP 2009 explains that it is not a white/negro conflict, he recognizes that Guadeloupean society evolves into class and race relationship. Very few strikes stand out from the socio-racial conflict says sociologist Patricia Braflan-Trobo, which according to her opens a new field of expression where history and culture are constantly manipulated consciously or unconsciously for the conflicting fact revolves around a main axis: the racialization of social relations". .. [this notion of "racialization" of social relations that Michel Wieworka defines as a process by which a society represents itself..., as made up of social groups of races, in competition and in opposition..."] (Braflan-Trobo 2007).

This communication focuses on the memory of slavery in the indigenous and autonomist discourses held by the LKP members, using different strategies for constructing a social body. To

establish our analytical framework we will refer to Balandier's "Political Anthropology" where the colonial situation results in a generative socio-anthropology since... "The new world order is prefigured in a return of politics which accompanies the changes and mutations which are continually taking place. This movement leads to a progressive anthropological appropriation of the political field, ... in the forms of explicit tradition and those revealed under the test of the present..." (Balandier 2006).

Presenter(s): ANNICK DELANNAY

Urban Design as Diagnosis:

Rethinking Mental Health through the Anthropology of Infrastructure in Anchorage, Alaska

This paper contributes to the emerging anthropology of the built environment by examining how infrastructures in Arctic urban centers are enmeshed with ecologies, care practices, and affective life. Focusing on Anchorage, Alaska, it considers how urban design and redevelopment processes shape residents' experiences of mental well-being, not simply as outcomes of environmental conditions but as emergent from lived, spatialized practices. Drawing on Actor-Network Theory, proxemics, and spatial ethnography, the study traces how environmental stressors-such as noise, air pollution, and the ambient threat of crime-interact with social networks, everyday spatial routines, and dominant representations of space to produce, complicate, or ease mental distress. Rather than approaching infrastructure as a fixed or solely material domain, this paper conceptualizes it as relational bundles-contested, performed, and co-constructed through ongoing negotiations of space, meaning, and affect.

Through an ethnographic account of redevelopment in Anchorage's city center, the study explores how transformations in the built environment are linked to shifting perceptions of mental health, evolving neighborly relations, and fluctuating senses of agency and empowerment. Particular attention is given to the role of urban planning and design under the pressures of climatic extremes, resource limitation, and oscillating states of depopulation-conditions that complicate standardized models of care and challenge assumptions about livability in northern cities. By foregrounding the lived experience of urban residents through space and temporality in the circumpolar North, this research reframes mental health not as a static diagnostic category but as an emergent quality of dynamic infrastructural, ecological, and social entanglements. Ultimately, it calls for planning practices attuned to the affective textures of place-ones that move beyond safety and efficiency toward the intentional cultivation of urban atmospheres and the co-production of collective well-being.

Presenter(s): Eduardo Piqueiras

What Can One Do with an Anthropology Degree? Addressing this Ghost of a Question in 2025

How do we as anthropologists, with varied roles and responsibilities in public and private organizations, bring stakeholders together to sustain and transform our discipline in present and future generations? This paper presents how anthropology programs and initiatives may respond to

recent threats to their existence, including decreased funding, declining enrollments in academic programs and in higher education in general, relatively low salaries compared to those found in other careers, and political attacks on the social sciences and related professions. Overall, this paper explores how anthropologists might currently address a familiar ghost in the question, "What can one do with an anthropology degree?"

Presenter(s): Helen Blouet

When the Children Are Gone: Re-making Segregationist Futures in Sacramento, California

Histories of segregation and racial exclusion haunt California's capital city, Sacramento. In the city's revitalization project, what many residents call gentrification, the historically Black and Latinx neighborhood of Oak Park is being reconfigured. Since the revitalization project began 20 years ago, 37% of the entire Black community has been displaced. Latinx people remain among the most impoverished. White residents, however, see a return to what they call "the golden age." Through establishing new historical districts, preservation projects, and creating architectures which resemble the "lost history" of the neighborhood, segregationist pasts are mobilized to imagine the future. Simultaneously, Black and Brown business owners claim the same sites as placemaking projects for their communities while BIPOC activists refute the business owner's claims. In this presentation, I attend to the granular experiences of everyday community members to discuss these processes of racialization and place-making. I argue that materializations of memory carry affective power, connoting entanglements with temporal registers that align with specific forms of racialized experience. Through an analysis of art, children's parks, and life stories, this presentation works to show how material manifestation of certain expressions of the future are made through the dispossession of Othered futures.

Presenter(s): Jose Angel Santana Guerra

537 Society for Anthropology of Food and Nutrition Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Brittany Power , Veronica Gonzalez, University of California, Irvine, Lucia Canul , Carla Daughtry, Lawrence University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Onyango, University of Alberta, Brennan Williams, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Brittany Power, Veronica Gonzalez, University of California, Irvine, Lucia Canul, Carla Daughtry, Lawrence University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Onyango, University of Alberta, Brennan Williams, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): A` La Maison or F'l Dar: Moroccan Jewish Celebrations and Observances in the Domestic Sphere

This article examines Moroccan Jewish commensal events such as shabbat observance and holiday celebrations that have taken place in Fes. My experiences of celebrations "à la maison" or

"f'l dar"(at home) have occurred in the home of my close companion and interlocutor Madame Camille al-Fassi Martin (pseudonym). The Majority of our Shabbat observances were very intimate, with only Camille, our friend Esmerelda Toledano (pseudonym), and I in attendance, although, there were on several occasions surprise impromptu guests, family visiting from abroad, and even Jewish out of towners needing a host for Friday night dinner. What I describe in this article reflects my observations and my participation in Shabbat and holiday commensal encounters with two Fassi Jewish ladies, Camille and Esmerelda, and encounters with some of their acquaintances, friends, and family members in Camille's home in Fes, Morocco.

This article interrogates ways in which foodways and commensal practice, or the act of eating and drinking together at the same table, as part of the process of "making home" might shed light on Moroccan Jewish subject formation and belonging. The overarching question which I seek to answer, through a foodways lens, is "How do Jews living in Morocco construct primary identities as Moroccan and as Jewish while "making home" as an ethnocultural minority living among an Arab Muslim majority with little conflict?" I argue that Jewish and Moroccan cooking, and the idea of Moroccan Jewish food should be situated within a "vernacular cosmopolitan" framework (Werbner, 2018, p. 145). A framework that at the level of commensality operates within the context of vernacular cosmopolitanism operationalized through foodways, while depending upon the performative practice of a cosmopolitan ethnicity in order to achieve cultural legitimation (Jonas, 2013; Werbner, 2002; Werbner, 2018). This article aims to examine Moroccan Jewish foodways using the frame of vernacular cosmopolitanism which is made visible through the lens of "vernacular foodways" as well as the concept of the "food voice" as manifested in "culinary chats" (Abarca, 2006, 2023; Jonas, 2013). Meredith E. Abarca (2006, 2023) describes culinary chats as uncontrived conversations about food; and "food voice(s)" as powerful expressions of subjectivity connected to everyday encounters with food (p. 2, p. 4). The domestic sphere, which encompasses commensal gatherings "a` la maison or f'l dar" (at home) is interrogated as a site of cultural (re)production for the Jews remaining in Fes, Morocco. For the Fassi Jewish community, the domestic sphere primarily strives to maintain its vernacular culture and produce a simulacrum of their traditional family dynamics. These commensal gatherings "a` la maison or f'l dar" work to maintain the ethnic vernacular culture of the Fassi Jews through commensal hospitality. The domestic sphere is also where individual food voices are most fully articulated.

Presenter(s): Brittany Power

Breaking Bread, Breaking Silence: Food and Feminist Methodology in the Field

In research on gender-based violence, particularly in rural and marginalized contexts, establishing trust and creating emotionally safe environments is both ethically necessary and methodologically complex. This paper explores the deliberate use of food as a feminist methodological tool in ethnographic interviews on intimate partner violence (IPV) in rural Michoacán, Mexico. Drawing on fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2023, I examine how shared meals—specifically *comida corrida* sourced from local women—served as an opening to conversations that might otherwise remain constrained by formality, stigma, and fear. The act of sharing food disrupted traditional

power dynamics between researcher and participant, transforming interviews into co-constructed, relational spaces where stories of survival, silence, and strength emerged more organically.

Through sensory engagement and cultural familiarity, food fostered emotional openness while simultaneously raising ethical questions around reciprocity, autonomy, and care. Building on literature in feminist and decolonial methodologies, this presentation reflects on the possibilities and limitations of incorporating food into qualitative research design. It argues that shared meals can challenge extractive research paradigms by centering relational ethics, cultural grounding, and the participant's comfort and agency. In breaking bread, this method also helps break silences-inviting narratives that are often buried beneath shame or social control. The paper concludes with reflections on how food-centered interviewing practices can be ethically adapted to other research settings, particularly those involving sensitive topics or structurally vulnerable populations.

Presenter(s): Veronica Gonzalez

Cultural and Spiritual Intermediaries: How traditional healers in Oaxaca, Mexico are preserving Indigenous food and nutrition knowledge

Migration profoundly impacts dietary behaviors, exacerbating chronic disease disparities among Latino and Indigenous Latin American Communities in Mexico and the United States. As Indigenous foodways shift away from nutritious, home grown foods toward ultra-processed diets, rates of Type 2 diabetes, obesity, and chronic kidney disease continue to rise. In Capulálpam de Méndez, Oaxaca, curanderos (traditional healers) serve as cultural and spiritual intermediaries, preserving ancestral food and health knowledge despite systemic pressures toward biomedical and Western dietary models. Their work represents a living connection to pre-contact health systems, offering pathways for chronic disease prevention rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. Using ethnographic methods, including semi-structured interviews with community members and curanderos, this study examines the cultural and structural barriers to maintaining traditional, nutrient-dense diets in the context of migration and globalization. Findings highlight how curanderos play a pivotal role in food sovereignty movements, advocating for the reclamation of Indigenous agricultural and healing practices. This research calls for a paradigm shift in food and nutrition spaces emphasizing the integration of Indigenous dietary wisdom alongside Western frameworks to address chronic disease disparities. By positioning curanderos within ongoing struggles for food and health justice, this study engages with the legacies of colonial erasure and the urgent need to decolonize dietary interventions.

Presenter(s): Lucia Canul

Co-author(s): Nadia Hemmat

Ethical Engagement in the Anthropology of Food: Community-Based Learning Across Disciplines

Through course readings, assignments and class activities, both Anthropology 378: Anthropology of Food (taught by Carla Daughtry) and Philosophy 115: Food Ethics (taught Chloe Armstrong) work in collaboration with the former Center for Engagement and Social Change (coordinated by Garrett

Singer) at Lawrence University to create a cluster of courses for students interested in food security and community-engaged learning. This flash presentation briefly introduces our courses and how we address various dimensions of food security with an emphasis on access and agency. The focal point centers on our community-based learning (CBL) course redesign process, including lessons learned from instructor reflection, and feedback from students, colleagues, and community partners. The CBL course redesign process includes two facets: 1) course pedagogy and assessment as codified in a CBL course design/redesign chart and 2) four values of ethical engagement (respect, beneficence, justice, reflexivity). Our collaborative experience in food studies underscores the value of introductory CBL experiences and offers teaching tips for instructors thinking about CBL pedagogies.

Presenter(s): Carla Daughtry

Measuring cultural food insecurity for culturally responsive food security interventions: What do we know and what matters?

Household food security is a significant public health concern that has worsened with increasing cost of living due to inflation, climate change, political instability, global, geopolitics, and the lingering effects of COVID-19. In Canada for example, 22.9% of Canadians lived in food insecure households in 2023, constituting 8.7 million Canadians, including 2.1 million children. Racialized groups, particularly immigrants and refugees are at heightened risk and in 2023; about 1 in 4 racialized newcomers in Canada were food insecure. Contributing factors to immigrants and refugees' vulnerability to food insecurity are – need for sociocultural adjustments in their host countries coupled with systemic resettlement challenges, which influence overall food security status and access to cultural/familiar foods. Cultural food security, which refers to the ability to acquire, afford, and eat the traditional foods of one's ethnic origin is an important social determinant of health, especially for migrants. It enables the continuation of food traditions and customs, which fosters cultural identity, improved health outcomes, and successful integration in the host country. Additionally, having access to culturally appropriate food serves as a lifeline for maintaining healthy dietary practices and fostering a sense of place in immigrants and refugees' post-migration experiences and resettlement.

In spite, its significance in the health and wellbeing of most migrant communities, cultural food insecurity has not been given the attention it deserves in the assessment of individuals and household food security. Existing studies food security rely on the FAO's four foundational dimensions (access, availability, utilization, stability) with limited to no focus on cultural appropriateness the foods and food initiatives available. Existing measures are criticized for their inability to capture the cultural dimensions shaping food preferences and diverse experiences of food insecurity. As a preliminary step to addressing this knowledge and substantive gap, we comprehensive review of existing food security indexes and qualitative interviews with immigrants in Canada to determine the existing indicators for assessing cultural food insecurity and the explore relevant indicators based on the narratives of the newcomers. In this oral flash presentation, we will share about the process we undertook, the existing measures and the indicators that matter to the

different immigrant populations with the goal of formulating a cultural food insecurity index. This is important in the creation of relevant tools for assessing food insecurity in a world that is experiencing increased migration.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Onyango

Co-author(s): Godfred O. Boateng, Patrick Mbullo Owuor, Destiny Otoadese, Silvia Odhiambo, Toyin Ajibade, Janet Onyango, Joyce Kiplagat

SUNSHINE AND SUPPER: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF FEEDING TAMPA BAY'S FOOD PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM IN PINELLAS COUNTY, FL

This research evaluates the effectiveness of Feeding Tampa Bay's (FTB) food prescription (food rx) program in Pinellas County, Florida. Despite FTB's efforts to distribute nearly 15.8 million meals annually, thousands of individuals and families in Pinellas remain uncertain about their access to nutritious food. In many ways, food insecurity itself haunts these communities, casting a shadow of uncertainty and deprivation over individuals and families who are left to navigate the unseen and often overlooked barriers of unemployment, poverty, and systemic inequities that prevent them from accessing essential resources (Dewey et al., 2024; Feeding America, 2025). The Southern U.S. is particularly affected, with this region exhibiting the highest concentration of food insecurity in the country. Rural areas, in particular, struggle with high poverty rates, limited access to fresh food, lack of transportation, and elevated unemployment (Rabbitt et al., 2023; Owens, 2024). The persistence of these "ghosts" of inequality, haunting communities and systems, further exacerbates the problem, as eight out of the ten highest food-insecure counties in the U.S. are located in this region (Dewey et al., 2024). This study builds upon the ghost of a previous research study conducted by the University of South Florida's Department of Anthropology, which identified barriers and benefits to the program but suggested the need for further investigation to better understand clinical outcomes and improve program utilization. The current qualitative research applies anthropological theory, particularly Foucault's biopower and Mintz's political economy, to explore how systemic inequalities continue to haunt food-insecure populations. Through a detailed analysis of the food rx program's impact, this paper offers actionable recommendations to enhance the program's effectiveness and contribute to FTB's goal of a hunger-free Tampa Bay.

Presenter(s): Brennan Williams

4111 Indigenous Foodways and Traditional Food Knowledge in North America

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel is presented by four scholars who conduct ethnographic research about Indigenous foodways throughout North America (also known as Turtle Island among Indigenous peoples), including diasporic Indigenous communities from Alaska to California. By centering traditional food

knowledge of the Dena'ina, P'urhépecha, Nahua, and Mexican peoples, our panel will demonstrate how Indigenous peoples engage in cultural resistance and resilience by utilizing ancestral knowledge and traditional culinary practices despite various colonial and neocolonial sources of oppression, marginalization, and erasure. Inspired by the theme of this year's annual meeting, our collective research represents the powerful omnipresence of ancestral knowledge within Indigenous communities as ancestral spirits guide descendants in honoring their traditional cultures as a source of intergenerational healing while enduring displacement from their homelands. With the hauntings of historical trauma initiated by colonialism and perpetuated by neocolonialism, Indigenous peoples continue to navigate decolonization through cultural continuity, preservation, and revitalization by participating in continued communal gatherings and placemaking in various foodway spaces to sustain traditional culinary practices and access to traditional foods. Food has emerged as a generative motivation for continuous communal gathering for Indigenous peoples, as the Indigenous communities featured in this panel reclaim their food heritage through traditional culinary practices, including the production of ancestral recipes passed down for generations and the consumption of Indigenous foods of their homelands, which provide critical nutritional and medicinal value. These acts of Indigenous survivance exhibit manifestations of social justice activism among multiple Indigenous communities to advocate for Indigenous food sovereignty, environmental relationality and reciprocity, traditional medicine, and anti-gentrification to advance communal wellbeing and efforts of decolonization.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Vanessa Moreno Wilcox, University of California, Santa Cruz, Itzel Zagal, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Itzel Zagal, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Gabriela Olmos Rosas, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology, Itzel Zagal, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology, Varpu Lotvonen, Vanessa Moreno Wilcox, University of California, Santa Cruz

Presentation(s): The People of Corn in a Corn-less Land: Cultural Identity, Medical Narratives, and the Place of Corn in Alaska

Corn—el maíz—is more than a staple; it is a sacred symbol of ancestry, identity, and belonging for many Indigenous and Latin American communities. Yet in Alaska, where the growing season is short and corn cultivation is rare, this foundational element of cultural life is largely absent from the land. This presentation asks: What does it mean to be the "People of Corn" in a place where corn arrives primarily in processed, imported forms—stripped of its cultural and nutritional significance? How do ancestral foods haunt contemporary lives far from their place of origin? Drawing on ethnographic research with diabetic and prediabetic Latinx people in Anchorage, we examine how biomedical narratives often pathologize traditional corn-based foods, such as tortillas, as unhealthy. As a result, individuals seeking better health are often pressured—explicitly or implicitly—to distance themselves from foods that hold deep ancestral meaning. This paper considers corn not only as a source of sustenance, but as a site of cultural resilience and symbolic power, where ancestral foodways haunt contemporary health practices in subtle but powerful ways. We explore the intersections of medical advice, migration, food insecurity, and cultural

bereavement, and reflect on how Latinx communities in Alaska navigate the tensions between health imperatives and the desire to honor foodways that carry the presence—and the longing—of those who came before.

Presenter(s): Gabriela Olmos Rosas

Anahuac to Alaska: Indigenous Foodways as Cultural Resistance and Resilience of the Mexican Diaspora in the Arctic

This paper explores the reclamation of Indigenous foodways by the Anahuacan (Mexican) diaspora residing in Alaska, highlighting their cultural resilience and resistance through the practice of traditional culinary practices. By examining the intersections of identity, environment, and food sovereignty, the study reveals how these communities draw upon ancestral knowledge to foster a sense of *buenvivir* (living well). Through interviews, participant observations, and the documentation of traditional food preparation and gathering techniques, the analysis illustrates the vital role of food in cultural preservation and community cohesion. The findings demonstrate that despite geographical and cultural dislocation, the community actively engages in the reclamation of their food heritage as a means of asserting their identity and promoting sustainability in their new environment. This research contributes to the broader dialogue on Indigenous resistance and adaptation, offering insights into how food serves as a powerful tool for cultural revitalization and social justice in the context of colonization and diasporic experiences.

Presenter(s): Itzel Zagal

Dena'ina Plant Knowledge and Food Sovereignty

Wild, culinary plants have long nourished Dena'ina people—physically, spiritually, and socially—diversifying a traditional diet centered on fish and game. Today this ancestral knowledge of wild foods (e.g., berries, greens, and roots) is part of a broader revitalization of traditional foodways that connect land, culture, and health. This research, conducted in collaboration with Dena'ina knowledge holders and within their ancestral homelands, explores historical and contemporary practices with wild, culinary plants. In a time of environmental change and ongoing colonial pressures, traditional food remains central to Dena'ina survivance, sustaining relationships with place, supporting intergenerational teaching, and fostering food sovereignty in both rural and urban areas of Dena'ina Ełnena. As an immigrant scholar drawn into the powerful ethic of care and reciprocity embedded in Dena'ina traditions, I reflect on the ways Indigenous foodways offer not only nourishment but also a model for healing and cultural resilience in the face of displacement and marginalization.

Presenter(s): Varpu Lotvonen

Placemaking in the Aguilillense Diaspora of Northern California: Indigenous Foodways and Ancestral Maternal Knowledge

The Aguilillense Diaspora of Northern California are originally from the pueblo of Aguililla, Michoacán, Mexico and initially established their diasporic community near Redwood City,

California in the 1940s following Aguilillense men's migration during the Bracero Program. Aguilillenses in diaspora still maintain a strong pueblo identity and ancestral connection with Aguililla as they continue to practice their traditional culture and honor their P'urhépecha heritage, especially through the production and consumption of the Indigenous food of Aguililla which is deeply guided by their ancestral maternal knowledge of traditional culinary practices. Aguilillenses from throughout the Northern California diaspora gather in various foodway spaces that are territorialized as Aguilillense to consume their favorite traditional dishes, meet with family and friends, share nostalgic memories of Aguililla, and discuss current happenings within the pueblo and the diaspora. Aguilillenses are experiencing simultaneous displacement in Northern California due to extreme gentrification and in Aguililla because of the extensive cartel violence in the Tierra Caliente region of Michoacán which has caused the pueblo to become a near ghost town. This paper will present ethnographic research conducted at multiple Aguilillense owned restaurants and taco trucks in Northern California, which have become major sites of Aguilillense cultural continuity, collective memory, and placemaking in diaspora.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Moreno Wilcox

506 Association for Political and Legal Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Peter Yuhao Yang, London School of Economics, Daisy Hunter-Haydon, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Jordan Levy, Yuewen Wu, Raja Swamy, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Anthropology, Liana Katz, Andres Leon Araya

Presenter(s): Peter Yuhao Yang, London School of Economics, Daisy Hunter-Haydon, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Jordan Levy, Yuewen Wu, Raja Swamy, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Anthropology, Liana Katz, Andres Leon Araya

Presentation(s): Castro went away, but Fidel stayed behind: the growth of multiple times and the disconcerting of society in Cuba

Different temporalities converge, as they chronologise and disconcert Cuban society today. While recent reforms have ushered liberal ideas of economic 'development' and business into popular expectations, official discourses and legislation continue to reiterate the historical progress towards socialism. When people still plan for careers, businesses, and life cycles based on anticipations of state policies and provisions, young Cubans begin to say 'there is no future' in the economic decline after COVID. As Party cadres talk nostalgically about the past ('lo antes'), millennial churches have proliferated among the revolutionary generations. Ghosts of Afro-Cuban 'religion' travel from the past, while different ideas of debt and uncertainty make threats from the future. Based on more than three years of fieldwork since 2017, this paper outlines the dominant conceptions of time in Cuba today and how they create senses of disorientation and division in the society. Drawing on Palmié's pioneering work on the anthropology of history, it seeks to show the

material forces and conditions that allow elements of the past to haunt the present and perceptions of the future to split the present. The Cuban calendar has perhaps already begun to confuse when Fidel famously declared that Cuba would 'retreat' to capitalism to reach socialism in the future.

Presenter(s): Peter Yuhao Yang

Cloudy with a 10% Chance of Persecution: Statistical Fictions and Risk Forecasting in U.S. Asylum and Convention Against Torture Claims

Asylum adjudication in the United States requires not only the narration of past persecution, if present, but also the substantiation of a "well-founded" fear of future harm. The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted "well-founded" to mean that the applicant has a "1 in 10 chance" of persecution (*INS v. Cardoza-Fonseca*), thus effectively installing an unverifiable statistical probability threshold into the legal standard. In the event that an applicant is statutorily barred from asylum eligibility, the parallel relief mechanisms of Withholding of Removal (WOR) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT) hinge on an even more demanding threshold, requiring petitioners to demonstrate that it is "more likely than not" that they would face persecution, torture or death if returned to their home country. Such an analysis is particularly crucial in CAT claims, in which an applicant must establish a precise yet speculative chain of events whose unfolding would aggregate in a 51% or greater likelihood of their torture. This instantiation of non-mathematically grounded "probability" determinations is a key deciding factor for many claimants undergoing consequential immigration proceedings. While these hypothetical future events are not grounded in any formal statistical reasoning, they are confidently deployed in order to demonstrate a threshold of certainty when assessing individual applicants' uncertain futures.

Many anthropological treatments of asylum adjudication have highlighted the troublesome nature of using a transnational legal process in order to establish truths about what happened in the past. Less attention has been paid, however, to the role played by forecasting and future-oriented storytelling in these proceedings. Legal logics that require an applicant to demonstrate what would occur under hypothetical conditions are arguably more constitutive of asylum claims as those concerned with establishing what has occurred.

This paper examines how actors in the United States' asylum system engage in what I term "proleptic reasoning"-anticipatory judgments that work through hypothetical chains of events and, in so doing, archivally actualize this hypothetical future as past precedent. Through an ethnographic analysis of both key jurisprudence and daily legal practices, this paper explores how "probability" standards become operationalized as evidence in the production of legal truth within immigration adjudication. I contend that such modes of reasoning operate proleptically, as precedent made from such speculations becomes binding on cases that come after it, whether or not the events originally forecasted ever came to pass.

Drawing on the author's training in both law and anthropology, this paper examines both the sociolegal forms of thinking that gives rise to such quantitatively articulated standards as well as the

practical consequences of these standards for applicants seeking humanitarian forms of immigration relief.

Presenter(s): Daisy Hunter-Haydon

Honduran Migrants and the (Un)Makings of Asylum

Drawing upon ethnographic research with Honduran migrants in Washington State, and sustained expert witness testimony for more than 150 different Honduran asylum cases in the U.S. and U.K., this paper examines how Honduran migrants and asylum seekers reflect on how to most effectively communicate contexts of violence and organized crime to foreign immigration courts—who have little understanding of Honduran political realities on-the-ground, and amidst the haunting possibility of asylum itself ceasing to exist. My analysis emphasizes a marked shift in Honduran political culture since the 2009 military coup, characterized by heightened awareness of how the Honduran state works and how migrant receiving countries view these processes. I argue that such political consciousness informs asylum seekers' strategies for articulating their reasons for persecution and the Honduran state's inability or unwillingness to intervene effectively to alleviate violence.

Presenter(s): Jordan Levy

The 'Perfect Migrants' Not Welcomed Either: Revisiting the Vulnerability and Deservingness of the Chinese Diaspora under Trump 1.0

Since the Reform and Open in 1978, the Chinese diaspora has emerged as a transnational asset for development. Through an expansive network of talent recruitment programs, the Chinese state has courted skilled returnees as engines of technology and economic transition. Among destination countries, the United States, historically the largest recipient of Chinese skilled migrants, pulled them in with a fertile ground for individual development, while the ascension of Donald Trump marked a profound discursive rupture. The normalization of accepting migrants who are more deserving and valuable was one of the characteristics of Donald Trump's political rhetoric of meritocracy and national renewal against illegal immigrants. Yet, the self-contradictory migration narratives of Trump's administration were highlighted when the most alleged "deserving" and high-achieving Chinese migrants were even flagged as non-traditional threats to U.S. national security.

This paper ethnographically examines the securitization of Chinese skilled migration during Trump's first term, exploring how diasporic individuals were reimagined through the lens of geopolitical rivalry. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, it interrogates how state narratives and policy shifts disrupted the moral and social boundaries of belonging, rendering the Chinese diaspora politically hyper-visible but socially excluded. It argues that the Chinese skilled diaspora has become a site where global mobility is no longer a marker of integration or success, but rather a reflection of broader anxieties of a deglobalizing world. As U.S.-China relations deteriorated, diasporic subjects—once constructed and celebrated as perfect migrants—found themselves caught within an ambiguous terrain where citizenship, identity, and loyalty were continually questioned. By analyzing this transformation through the frameworks of securitization, deservingness, and diasporic

governance, the paper contributes to the political and anthropological debates on migration, national security, and the moral economies of citizenship. The findings reveal the paradox of deservingness surrounding perfect and skilled immigrants across the moral border, and the affective and material consequences of securitized migration regimes for those navigating life between territories.

Presenter(s): Yuewen Wu

Thinking with ghosts, spirits and other scary fuckers in the context of disasters and catastrophic events.

In this paper I examine stories gathered from fieldwork and from secondary research that pertain to the agency of the invisible, specifically the more than natural agents that inhabit human social worlds. This paper seeks to show how those at the receiving end of power work with the invisible and unseen, as part of their defensive strategies against exclusion and marginalization. I draw upon research conducted in coastal India after the tsunami of 2004, focusing first on state efforts to render people invisible so as to make it easier to dislocate them in the name of recovery. I then examine through vignettes compiled from fieldwork among communities facing displacement, the active mobilization of the sacred power of death, bereavement, loss and hope in staking claims to place. I aim to show readers that an anthropological study of stories people tell about what happened to them, and through these their relationships to place, reveals a rich array of invisible allies - spirits, ghosts, the restless dead, and others - who are as much a part of defensive struggles today, as are the equally important and more obvious political and social practices we commonly associate with resistance. Here, the living invoke the memory of the dead, or sometimes channel the power of the dead to stake or defend claims, especially when they are unable to do so with conventional tools such as appeals or legal processes. In short, I'm going to share with readers my fascination with the invisible allies of the oppressed in a world that demands more than human responses to the hell of capitalist tyranny. I conclude with a reflection of why the spectral remains a vital (even if unstated or understated) part of popular politics, especially when the stakes involved center on material social conditions and the reproduction of life threatened by the overwhelming power of the menacing vampirical combine of capital, state and social elites. I conclude by examining key differences and (potentially productive) overlaps between such a conceptualization of politics and those that focus on the deployment of religion in the service of political struggles.

Presenter(s): Raja Swamy

This Is Not a Political Forum: Municipal Land Use Boards as Everyday Legal Space

Municipal planning boards are a locus of small-scale and, to some degree, publicly accessible decision-making about how land is used in the United States. At planning board meetings, elected and/or appointed officials, planning experts, attorneys, and members of the public scrutinize, debate, and ultimately pass judgement on proposals for local development projects. As such, planning board proceedings are constituted through political struggle. Yet, participants often describe the planning process as structured by apolitical legal frameworks, as "quasi-judicial" in

nature. This creates a tension between the imagined space of municipal land use planning as a neutral arena of decision-making and how it is constituted on the ground.

This presentation draws on over a year of ethnographic research in "Watertown," a community in suburban central New Jersey that has been embroiled in a multi-year battle over warehouse construction waged on the floor of local planning board meetings. Following a group of involved members of the public as they make their case against warehouse development, this presentation considers how planning board meetings are constructed as a "quasi-judicial" legal space that admits only certain forms of participation and evidence presentation. It contends that municipal planning boards are a site of everyday law, namely "the manifestations, performances, contestations, and constitution of the informal and official law in mundane places and situations" (Kymäläinen 2024, p. 353). It considers the material and discursive space of the planning board meeting as a living field of interaction where "law is experienced, practice, translated, reappropriated and in turn redefined by its many users" (Cloatre and Cowan 2019, p. 447).

This presentation argues that in order to render themselves and their arguments legible to the planning board, local activists fashion themselves as "citizen experts." The counterevidence they present, however, reveals intractable gray areas in planning law and a fundamental vagueness inherent in local zoning ordinances. This presentation concludes with a discussion of the potential political openings generated by both public participation in land use planning and the gray areas revealed in the process. Engaging with Kai Bosworth's (2022) concept of "resigned pragmatism," this presentation questions whether public participation further entrenches the hierarchies embedded within municipal planning boards and how they might be contested by other means.

Works Cited:

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Cloatre E and Cowan D (2019) Legalities and materialities. In: Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos A (ed) Routledge Handbook of Law and Theory. Routledge, 71–90.

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Presenter(s): Liana Katz

"We Must not Allow the Tragic Outcome in Indochina to be Repeated in Central America": U.S. Narratives of Counterinsurgency in Central America

During the 1980s thousands of US personnel traveled to Central America as part of a counterinsurgency project aimed at stopping the alleged "spread of communism" in the region. Some of them were Peace Corps, helping build wells, others were Engineer Corps building schools and bridges, while others were soldiers taking part in massive joint exercises with the Central American armed forces, and yet others were Green Berets training the regional special forces in their fight against the guerillas. At the same time, according to the official statements of the Reagan

administration, the US was not involved, in any shape or form, in a war in Central America. In this presentation, I contrast the narrative of the US government with stories told by US personnel, who speak about the Central America of the 1980s as a theater of war. With many of them going so far as to compare their time in Central America with prior experiences in the Vietnam war.

My objective is twofold: first, to analyze the involvement of the US in Central America during the 1980s from the perspective of those who were "on the ground" and produced it. Raising questions in the process of the official story of this conflict. Second, to think critically about the tensions between ideas and narratives of peace and war when we think about US involvement abroad, and the longer historical thread of counterinsurgency warfare connecting the occupation of the Philippines with the Vietnam War, Central America, and beyond.

Presenter(s): Andres Leon Araya

509 Combined Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Aziza Bayou , Rebecca Martinez, Purdue University, Gabriel Jderu , Jessica Dickson, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology, Raha Peyravi , Jessica Gleason, University of California, Riverside, Anais DJOUAD , Zara Mirmalek

Presenter(s): Aziza Bayou, Rebecca Martinez, Purdue University, Gabriel Jderu, Jessica Dickson, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology, Raha Peyravi, Jessica Gleason, University of California, Riverside, Anais DJOUAD, Zara Mirmalek

Presentation(s): Class Conflicts and Dignity in Labor: A Public Sector Union's Struggle to Represent Government Employees

As the working class struggles with stagnant wages, institutional reorganization, and threatening redundancy, what are the prospects for unionization and collective action? While private sector unionization has declined, public sector unions have grown since the 1960s even while battling legislative restrictions, distributing benefits and protections to a limited segment of the working class. What strategies can be implemented to spread unionization's benefits and protections to more of the working class? My research investigates questions regarding one public sector union's challenges and goals to suggest future pathways for solidarity-building action in an increasingly divisive political climate. The Fairfax Workers Coalition (FWC) is a grassroots labor union of county government employees that represents members' grievances and fights to forge policy changes to bring greater dignity to county-employed laborers. In this presentation I will outline the context and significance of this growing union and discuss the structural obstacles they face in effectively representing workers. With over 600 members, the FWC advocates for improved labor conditions, transparent and reliable pay step scales, and they represent employees' grievances. Both the FWC and its competitor, a local chapter of a national union, are campaigning to be elected to represent all county employees in collective bargaining, which was only legalized and implemented for

governmental workers in Virginia in 2021. The current county ordinance places all 12,000-plus employees in one single bargaining unit, which is highly unconventional. The FWC is working to change the ordinance, arguing that it violates state law and creates a conflict of interest. Many members convey a strong sense of duty and commitment to their work, viewing their lower pay in comparison with similar private sector positions as a tradeoff for the job security and benefits they receive. Budget and position cuts, alongside recent political developments, have given these workers a growing sense of precarity, which severely undermines this tradeoff. Individuals' job insecurity and legal strategies that incentivize individual action contribute to employees' reluctance to unionize or engage in collective action, a tendency evident in the history of American organized labor. Union decline has been accelerated by decades of anti-union political lobbying, restrictive governmental policies, protracted lawsuits, and juridical structures that favor employers, all of which detract from union organizing and outreach efforts. Private sector unionization rates have recently increased, and current research demonstrates that 60 million working Americans would join a union if they could, yet a gap in access remains, particularly in "right to work" states. The struggles of growing local public sector unions can shed light on the dynamics and challenges of coalition building, and emergent strategies for effective collective action.

Presenter(s): Aziza Bayou

Ghosts in the Lab: Worldmaking, Belonging, and Resistance in a STEM University

What kinds of worlds are made in university labs-and for whom? Drawing on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in cross disciplinary lab spaces at a U.S. public university, this presentation explores how students and faculty navigate, reproduce, and resist the sociopolitical structures that haunt STEM learning environments. Combining feminist ethnography (Davis and Craven 2022), critical university studies (Singh and Vora 2023), and worldmaking (Kondo, 2019), I examine how lab members engage in everyday acts of collaboration, care, and reparative creativity (Kondo, 2019) that challenge dominant norms of productivity, inclusion/exclusion, and expertise. In these spaces, "ghosts" appear in the form of institutional memory, exclusionary traditions, and unacknowledged labor, but so do counter-practices that reimagine what learning and belonging can look like. This project contributes to anthropologies of education, political economy, and critical universities studies by foregrounding lab spaces as both material infrastructures and affective sites of transformation. As universities increasingly turn towards innovation rhetoric and respond to political assaults on higher education, this research interrogates who gets to shape these futures-and how lab work is (or is not) supported. Ultimately, this presentation invites reflection on the possibilities of co-creating more creative and reparative educational worlds within and beyond the academy.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Martinez

Motorcycles Custom Shops as Spaces of Post-Repair Pedagogies for A-Technical Bikers

How and why do a-technical users of digital-era bikes (seek to) learn to repair motorcycles? In Romania, as elsewhere, over the last few decades, more and more middle-class people have entered motorcycling. Among them, there is a subgroup, also growing, of motorcyclists who

purchase, refurbish and customize old carburettor bikes, a practice that I label retro-repair. Although the maintenance and repair of one's bike is limited to the still sizable, but inevitably shrinking group of carburetion motorcycles, maintenance and repair continue to have an immanent attraction in idealized representation of motorcyclists. Through customization, old motorcycles are brought back to life and reinvented, in a rich web of narratives told by bikers to themselves, to other bikers and to non-bikers. Taking a motorcycle custom shop from Bucharest as an ethnographic entry point, I describe the material, bureaucratic and narrative social lives of older motorcycles that undergo customization.

Presenter(s): Gabriel Jderu

Personhood and the Future of Work in 'the Age of A.I.': Lessons from Anthropology and the SAG-AFTRA Video Game Strike

Since 2023, one of Hollywood's most visible and influential labor unions, SAG-AFTRA (The Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists), has been at the forefront of defining what the future of work in 'the age of A.I.' should look like. While the union's historic 118-day labor strike ended in November of 2023 with fanfare and significant contract wins, less known to the general public is that SAG-AFTRA's video game strike is still ongoing. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork exploring the social worlds of media workers, discourse analysis of recent judiciary hearings on proposed A.I. policy for digital replicas, and insights gained from anthropological research on the cultural impact of other emerging technologies (such as biotechnology), this talk describes how striking video game performers are creating opportunities for new forms of personhood to emerge from the struggles for labor futures.

Presenter(s): Jessica Dickson

Real-Time Work: Temporal Care and Control in Public Transit in the City of Chicago

This paper explores "temporal labor" (Sharma 2013; Bear 2014) in public transit in the U.S., based on fieldwork with bus supervisors and controllers in South Chicago, focusing on how time is enacted in their day-to-day practices. It examines how supervisors, primarily terminal supervisors, "care" (Denis & Pontille 2014) for time. It then juxtaposes this care for time with the "monitoring" and "adjusting" of time-practices through which time is recognized in routinized operations as an object of technical control.

The orientation of care toward time involves aligning and organizing one's work-time around the work-time of operators, practicing vigilance and selective attention to the temporal consequences of events that occur outside the jurisdiction of a terminal supervisor, and engaging in affective labor. At the same time, caring for time does not contradict efficiency or speed. Rather than being slow and sustaining, it involves fast, real-time decision-making.

This paper argues that "care" is not only a mode of practice but also serves as a governing logic that enforces temporal order in parallel with institutional and technical "control." While control is increasingly centralized in locations where data and communication technologies converge, care

for time is centered in terminal locations that function as critical "time-points" in the work of bus operators. The work of terminal supervisors is, for the most part, invisible to institutionally enforced processes of control. This invisibility, in turn, facilitates the flexibility and improvisation that care requires.

Presenter(s): Raha Peyravi

Shunned and Celebrated; Haunted yet Liberated: How Employed Middle-class Full-time RVers Negotiate Historical Stereotypes Against Housing Realities

This paper explores how an emerging demographic of full-time Americans living in Recreational Vehicles (RVs)-middle-class, employed individuals that elected to move out of houses and rentals-navigate the social and symbolic terrain of housing and identity against a haunted past. Through three years of ethnographic research, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of popular cultural media, this study examines how this developing demographic of full-time RVers grapple with the haunted ideal of American home (and land) ownership against the rising popular sentiment around RV living, by interrogating how cultural memory, stigma, and aspirational ideals of domestic life continue to exert force on contemporary housing decisions.

By using haunting as a theoretical framework, it enables us to connect present realities to the past to deeply illustrate the residual presence of historical housing ideologies. In the U.S., the model of the single-family, owner-occupied home-anchored to privately owned land-has long served as a symbol of moral virtue, economic success, and social legitimacy. Born of settler colonial land practices and entrenched through postwar federal housing policies, this ideal seen in the traditional "American Dream" continues to shape contemporary understandings of proper home, and perhaps more importantly, land ownership. Those who do not conform-renters, the unhoused, mobile-home residents, and other 'quasi-homeowners' (those owning the structure but not the land)-are often cast as morally deficient and socially deviant. These judgments, while deeply historical, remain active, spectral forces that haunt present-day housing realities for RVers.

Full-time RVers-even those who live in legitimately recognized parks and are employed-are frequently entangled in this cultural haunting and continue to encounter the ghost of stigma through terms like "trailer trash", echoing back to Depression-era uses of RVs as emergency housing for the poor. At the same time however, full-time RVers face praise, enthusiasm, and wonder from co-workers, friends, and strangers for their life on the road and perceived freedom. Occupying a lineal space-between housed and unhoused, celebrated and shunned, haunted and liberated-illustrates how longstanding cultural memories of the past linger and continue to haunt the present. This paper contends that full-time RV living is shaped not only by economic realities, but by the cultural residues and inherited narratives that refuse to fully disappear. By engaging haunting as a lens in which to explore full-time RVing for this rising demographic, this work contributes to interdisciplinary conversations about housing, decision-making, and the American Dream. It argues that to understand the experience of full-time RVers is to confront the unfinished business of the American Dream-and to trace the ghostly contours of a national imaginary that continues to privilege land ownership in the U.S.

Presenter(s): Jessica Gleason

The phantasmagoria of serious games as a common thread in the evolution of workplace relationships..

In France, since a reform of vocational training in 2008, a training economy has developed to quickly become a lucrative market (€40 million generated in 2010, a large part of which came from public subsidies), namely digital vocational training, including e-learning and serious games.

Based on my field experience carried out between 2011 and 2016 as a Game Designer for a Serious Game company specializing in management strategy and human resources management tools, where I used my knowledge of management sciences, information and communication sciences, I kept a set of field notebooks, in which I detailed the procedural elements of serious games, the educational challenges and their technical and narrative interpretations, relating to the game scenarios and their technical structure, i.e. the gameplay. This collection of materials provides a record of a period when the objectives of these new training tools were being developed.

Since then, the impact of serious games on socialization has been widely documented and these technologies have been incorporated into relevant medical and educational devices. Some authors talk about a reprogramming of the self, an image that goes hand in hand with Lacanian psychological constructivism, Lacan being often used in management and its theories of commitment based on a certain idea of subject theory in particular.

In this context, drawing on the theatre of phantasmagoria, 'the art of making ghosts speak in public' as a mechanism of a fantasized reality, and on my experience as a game designer, I will propose to consider gamification and serious business games as a vehicle for behavioral scripts that are invisible to the subject, who is then unaware of the phantasmagorical effect produced by the use of 'gamified' environments. This effect seems to operate in the social field of work and contribute to the emergence of behavioral norms integrated into corporate culture.

I will show how normative and individualizing rituals are framed by a phantasmagorical mechanism that allows the subjectivation at work in the human-machine relationship during learning sessions to persist in reality. This phantasmagorical effect belongs to the invisible, fantasized realm that plays out between the subject and the subject's avatar in the simulation game.

In conclusion, I will propose an opening with the economy of artificial intelligence and its mainstream commodities.

Presenter(s): Anais DJOUAD

The Road to Mons Mouton: An Ethnographer on a Lunar Mission

Late in 2019, I began work on a NASA lunar mission known as the Volatiles Investigating Polar Exploration Rover (VIPER) mission. On this mission, a tele-operated robot would be launched to the lunar south pole where it would be directed in near-real-time to conduct science investigations. The VIPER scientists would be co-located in California's Silicon Valley, at NASA Ames Research Center,

and would need a work system to support fourteen days of continuous 24/7 operation, which would repeat four times over four months. I figured that the end of the robot's operations on the Moon would be the end point of my research timeline on the mission as well. I joined the mission in part because I knew it was possible to build the work system based on my research as a work ethnographer in several projects with scientists working with remotely operated robots in extreme environments. I was confident that the timeline was suitable for conducting ethnographic research to develop and test a work system and participate in its adoption. With this in mind, I would also join for another reason. As an ethnographer who uses a multi-sited approach, I was just completing a project with scientists using robots for deep-sea science designed to be juxtaposed with scientists using robots on Mars (NASA's Mars Exploration Rovers mission, "MER"). The VIPER mission would be an opportunity for a long-term study that could allow for juxtaposing two space missions.

When I joined the VIPER mission Science team, it was three years before the robot was to land at the lunar south pole. The selection of a geographic site for science data collection and exploration had not yet been selected, and the area had not yet been named Mons Mouton, by the VIPER Science team. But a large number of the mission's structural components were underway. And the material conditions required to enable the science team to become part of the mission operations apparatus would have to be developed quickly in order for there to be enough time for some of the science team's culture to become part of the mission's existing structure and culture. As of winter 2025, milestones have been reached that allow me to begin analysis across three sites. In this flash presentation, I will present a juxtaposition of scientific knowledge production with scientists using robots on Mars, in the deep sea, and on the Moon.

Presenter(s): Zara Mirmalek

4683 Texas Identity, Marginalization, and Belonging: The Shaping of Local and National Discourse in the Lone Star State

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Texas - a state that was once a Republic, a buzzword in national politics, a sanctuary for some, what's been described as a war zone for others, and for over 30 million people - home. In this roundtable, anthropologists and humanities scholars of different backgrounds come together to examine Texas through the lenses of representation, race, education, gender, performance, and migration. We aim to critically explore which identities and histories are valued and cared for within the context of the state and which are overlooked or actively marginalized. Through discussion, we will interrogate processes of identity centralization and enhanced care and hold these in contrast to projects of oppression and marginalization. We will also reflect on the use of both "traditional" qualitative methodologies and those considered "disruptive," particularly in the context of diverse communities in Texas. These approaches offer critical tools for engaging with the complex realities of Texan communities, their heritage, and their claims to culture and belonging. Our research

locations include: San Antonio (Bexar County), Houston (Harris County), Austin (Travis County), and the South Texas region (Brooks, Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr, and Maverick County).

The state of Texas's unique historical trajectory - from its pre-contact Indigenous populations and European colonization to its independence and integration into the United States - has engendered distinct cultural identities that shape local and national understandings of Texas and its peoples. Like other colonial projects, violence, enslavement, and oppression at the hands of European colonizers and Anglo settlers are imbued in Texas history. By centering these historical and ongoing dynamics, our roundtable seeks to unpack how notions of identity and belonging in Texas are not only socially constructed but also products of successful colonial strategies. In doing so, we offer a framework for analyzing contemporary issues in the state, one that not only traces historical roots but opens space to extrapolate and reimagine futures in and about Texas grounded in equity, inclusivity, and community.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Emma Newman, Texas A&M University, College Station, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Madeline Baird, Syd Gonzalez, Northwestern University, Daisy Paredes, University of Texas at San Antonio, Mikaela Razo, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology, Emma Newman, Texas A&M University, College Station, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Mikaela Razo, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology

2813 Part 1: Queer Demography: Thinking Sexuality, Gender, and Kinship in an era of Population “Decline”

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Over the past two decades there have been mounting transnational demographic transformations related to low fertility rates, decreasing marriages, and greater economic interdependence with immediate kin. In the afterlife of neoliberalism and austerity, the lines among wage labor, welfare, and kinship are being redrawn (Martin, Wig, and Yanagisako 2021) and new politics of dependence, personhood, and survival are emerging. This panel asks after the place of sexuality, gender, kinship, and normativity amidst the socio-economic changes wrought by demographic "declines." How do pronatalist state policies and other "demographic anxieties" (De Zordo, Marre, and Smietana 2022) affect queer and trans reproductive politics and family formations? What new forms of subjecthood, survival and kinship emerge as individuals negotiate newfound economic and social dependencies? What do demographic changes mean for hegemonic notions of "straight time" (Wool 2021; Boellstorff 2007) which stipulate economic independence as a pre-condition for a heteronormative life? What subjects become "queered" (Weiss 2022) under these conditions, beyond queer and trans populations? How do age, race, legal status, disability, and other dynamics intersect these processes?

Our panelists collectively seek to address these and related questions through ethnographic research situated in diverse cultural and social milieus. Part 1 of this panel explores relationships between demographic shifts and reproductive politics, critically examining the ways changing reproductive hopes, imaginaries, and foreclosures shape individual, collective, and national horizons of futurity. Part 2 of this panel relatedly focuses on demographic change and transformations of intimacy and kinship, especially those which complicate discreet identity categories and conjugal relationships. Beyond a focus on "queer" as a marker of just non-normative desires and subjectivities, our panelists collectively explore "queer" relations and connections which exceed fixed domains and normative frameworks- in the process opening new epistemological, relational, and theoretical vistas into demographic change.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Alex Wolff, Brown University

Chair: Alex Wolff, Brown University

Presenter(s): Zachary Howlett, National University of Singapore, Sara Friedman, Indiana University, Bloomington, Taylor Silverman, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Janelle Lamoreaux, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Alex Wolff, Brown University

Discussant: Amy Brainer

Presentation(s): The Slow Revolution: Queer Mobilities and the Crisis of Masculinist Growth in China and Beyond

East Asia's transition into ultra-low fertility has disrupted capitalist economies reliant on abundant, exploitable labor, fueling demographic anxiety and aggressive pro-natalist policies. In China, official panic over declining birth and marriage rates exposes tensions between demographic shifts and hetero-patriarchal state power. As women surpass men educationally worldwide, their reproductive decisions constitute a slow revolution that profoundly reshapes patriarchal norms, masculinist agendas, and hegemonic timelines of marriage and reproduction. Drawing on two years of ethnographic research and over 60 interviews with students from China using Singapore as a migration hub, this paper argues that student migrants, despite their modest numbers, epitomize this revolution and wield outsized discursive influence through social and digital media. Focusing on unmarried "leftover women" (shengnǚ) and queer and trans migrant women, it highlights emerging solidarities rooted in shared experiences of marginalization and agency, while showing how persistent queerphobia constrains alliances and complicates collective transformation. Contributing to burgeoning ethnographic work on queer demography, the paper situates China's slow revolution within broader global struggles against hetero-patriarchal state power, characterized by pro-natalist, queerphobic, and xenophobic reactions to degrowth, social ageing, and transnational mobility.

Presenter(s): Zachary Howlett

Reproductive Citizenship in a Time of Demographic Anxiety: Assisted Reproductive Technology Access and LGBT Childbearing in Taiwan

How might we understand the stakes of LGBT childbearing in a time of growing demographic anxieties? As conflicts over reproductive health and assisted reproductive technologies (ART) intensify globally, they percolate through national-level marriage and family policies to foster hierarchies of privileged and marginalized reproductive citizens. This paper examines recent LGBT childbearing debates in Taiwan following the country's 2019 legalization of same-sex marriage and coparental rights. Despite one of the lowest birthrates in the world, Taiwan legally restricts ART access to heterosexual spouses with proven infertility, excluding singles and LGBT couples who must pursue ART-mediated conception in third countries, further stratifying reproductive rights. Building on ethnographic research with LGBT (intending) parents in Taiwan, this paper interrogates the fault lines and "strange bedfellow" coalitions taking shape in ART access and surrogacy debates. It addresses emerging tensions between feminists and social conservatives who oppose surrogacy for commodifying women's bodies and reproductive labors and gay men and LGBT rights activists who support gay fatherhood and LGBT childbearing. Situating these conflicts in shifting configurations of hetero- and homonormative reproductive citizenship, the paper traces the ripple effects of demographic anxieties amidst changing evaluations of intergenerational kinship and diverse family-making practices.

Presenter(s): Sara Friedman

Hauntings in/of the Pediatric Gender Clinic: Reproductive Futures of Transgender Youth in a Reactionary Present

The reproductive futures of transgender youth have become a flashpoint in ongoing reactionary attacks on trans medicine, rights, and existence in the contemporary US. Meanwhile, loss of fertility represents the most fraught aspect of youth medical transition for many parents and health care providers. This emotional and affective salience, I suggest, speaks to/through the hauntings of a multi-temporal assemblage of ghosts of the past (marginalized peoples forcibly sterilized throughout US history, trans youth abused by 20th century medicine or lost to suicide) alongside specters of futures foreclosed (imagined children never born, normative families never formed). Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a US pediatric gender clinic, this talk explores how anthropological analyses can help youth, families, clinicians, and activists honor these insistent presences while simultaneously contending with urgent reactionary threats to trans life and attendant fears of our own ghostly futures. I argue that trans (and) reproductive medicine's attempts to establish a "radical break" with past harms, as well as broader ideas of political "backlash," inadvertently soften reactionary violence by placing it "out of time" (Simpson, 2018). At a time when 26 states have banned pediatric gender care, I consider how queer and medical anthropologists can disrupt popular teleological logics of generational "progress" in ways that combat rather than enable reactionary agendas.

Presenter(s): Taylor Silverman

Pronatalism and its Discontents: Queering Reproductive Reluctance

Selective pronatalism based on techno-optimistic visions of a heteronormative, genderless future increasingly haunts the rhetoric of politicians, silicon valley CEOs, and conservative think tanks in the United States. Such rhetoric is often grounded in the ideal of the "traditional family" and justified by the economic and social threat of falling fertility rates. While fertility rate decline, like overpopulation (Subramaniam 2018), is not in and of itself a problem, reproductive hesitancy among Millennials and Gen Z adults has been described as the result of ecological, political and social environments that threaten individual and collective futures (De Zordo, Marre & Smietana 2022; McMullen & Dow 2022). Based on collaborative research conducted by and with queer and/or Latiné young adults in Tucson, Arizona, this paper thinks through what it means to desire future reproduction at a moment characterized as increasingly uninhabitable, discriminatory and hateful. How do climates of reproductive rights restriction, transphobia, discriminatory deportation and rising heat in the US Southwest shape the ways that queer young adults think about their (non)reproductive futures, and futures of kinship more broadly? How might political, economic and ecological futures be creatively revitalized through understanding reproductive reluctance among queer young people today?

Presenter(s): Janelle Lamoreaux

Of Demographic Queering and Straightening: Reproductive Politics and Privatization in South Korea

This presentation explores how demographic anxieties and pronatalist governance are shaping queer reproductive politics. In South Korea, like many other contexts, austerity and economic precarity have contributed to low fertility rates, decreasing marriages, and deeper interdependence with immediate kin. These transformations have also brought about pronatalist policy regimes that promote heterosexual marriage and reproduction by tying them to welfare provisioning. To better grasp what these developments mean for queer and increasingly non-reproductive populations in Korea and elsewhere, I propose an analytic framework of demographic queering and straightening. These concepts account for how non-reproductive populations become "queered" in relation to dominant notions of heteronormative adulthood based in financial independence, marriage, and parenting, as well as how pronatalist policies attempt to "straighten" them in return. Using data from ethnographic research with queer and lesbian couples in South Korea, I contend that demographic straightening combines with other forms of cisheteronormative inequality to privatize and marginalize reproductive futures for both queer identifying and demographically queered populations. I argue that these developments not only ask us to rethink the place of heteronormativity in anthropologies of demographic change, but also narratives of critique around same-sex marriage in queer and feminist theory.

Presenter(s): Alex Wolff

Discussion

2683 What Remains? Legacies of the Anthropological Skeleton

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Bones are one of the most salient images popularly associated with anthropology – this despite contested histories of skeletal collecting, typological racialization, and the siloing of osteological subfields within the discipline. At the same time, anthropological practitioners and ideas continue to shape understandings of the human skeleton across a vast breadth of locations, from archaeological excavations to disaster sites to investigations of mass atrocity, homicide, and suspicious death, not to mention fictional representations based on them. The histories and practices around the anthropology of the skeleton thus circulate and manifest in unexpected ways and places. Based on the principle that cross-field collaboration, rather than increasing isolation, is necessary to address this array of legacies and institutions, this panel brings together scholars from bioarchaeology, sociocultural anthropology, forensic anthropology, the history of science, and science and technology studies. Across a variety of contexts, we ask: how do the afterlives of twentieth-century anthropology mold the way in which bones are talked about, physically treated, and enrolled in intellectual and political projects?

This set of concerns responds to critiques that the dividing line between anthropology and biology has never been clean or complete (Visweswaran 1998). They are especially crucial following new changes to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act last year, showing that what it means to ethically engage with, and work toward repair for, practices of dispossession remains fraught with problems of implementation and political will. And because anthropological orientations to the human skeleton and its evolution have been key to pedagogical approaches in the discipline, bones have been employed in (re)producing anthropological knowledge inside the classroom as well as outside of it (Colwell and Rutherford 2025). In thinking across historical, theoretical, and practical approaches to the anthropology of the human skeleton and its uptake, this panel opens space for new perspectives on a topic with a long (and ever-present) past.

References

Colwell, Chip, and Danilyn Rutherford. 2025. "Grappling with the Legacies of Anthro-Cast: The Work of Bones in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Current Anthropology* 66 (1): 95–134.

Visweswaran, Kamala. 1998. "Race and the Culture of Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 100 (1): 70–83.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Matthew Rossi, University of Chicago

Chair: Anna-Marie Sprenger

Presenter(s): Isis Dwyer, University of Florida, Han Jiang, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Matthew Rossi, University of Chicago, Iris Clever, Lisette Jong, University of Amsterdam

Discussant: Arielle Reich

Presentation(s): "Bones" as a Social Construct: Instantiating Images of Social Beings in Biological Anthropology

Positioning the skeleton as material remains of a once living, social being, bioanthropological research utilizes osteological analyses to reconstruct human identities and experiences. Osteological analyses allow biological anthropologists to transform individuals into accessible units for scientific inquiry. We put forward that the practice of osteological analysis creates "Bones" - static images of complex biosocial beings that are inextricably linked to both the disciplinary milieu within which they are created and the interpretations of the practitioner. Tracing bioarchaeology, forensic anthropology, and museum anthropology methodological practices, we identify five images instantiated by osteological practitioners to interrogate how "Bones" are circulated in service of colonial ideologies and narratives surrounding the marginalized communities that are often centered in osteological research. By identifying and understanding the extent to which these methods - and the "Bones" they create - remain colonized, bioanthropological practitioners can then incorporate alternative approaches to the analysis of human remains that subvert convenient and hyperportable representations, towards producing more holistic representations of the peoples studied by our discipline.

Presenter(s): Isis Dwyer

Co-author(s): Jordi Rivera Prince

Reconceptualizing Ambiguities in Sex Estimation: A Case Study of Presentation Trends at the Society for American Archaeology Annual Meetings

Ambiguity in sex estimation poses a persistent challenge for bioarchaeologists reconstructing past demographics. While standard methods create space for uncertainty through "probable" or "ambiguous" categories, those entering the field are often trained to treat such individuals as data outliers—removing them from analysis. Drawing from second- and third-wave feminisms, recent feminist and queer critiques of bioarchaeology have called attention to the epistemological limits of binary sex models embedded in analytical norms. Yet theoretical advancements do not always lead to timely methodological change. It remains largely unexplored how the field has integrated and responded to these critiques.

This paper examines how feminist and gender/queer theories have—or have not—shaped disciplinary discourse and practice by tracing thematic shifts in presentations at the Society for American Archaeology annual meetings from 2005 to 2022. Through content analysis of conference abstracts and selected case studies, I explore how ambiguity has been framed: as an analytical category, a technical problem, or a site of theoretical potential. While rhetoric of inclusivity and recognition of ambiguous identities has gained some acceptance, ambiguity in the data itself remains sidelined. By analyzing this tension, this paper considers how we may reconceptualize ambiguity in sex estimation and translate theoretical insights into pedagogical practice and training for future bioarchaeologists.

Presenter(s): Han Jiang

Forensic Intimacies: On the Treatment of Bones in the Bass Archive

William Bass, the larger-than-life forensic anthropologist who founded the first human decomposition research facility, also filmed and produced some of the earliest training tapes for police officers on assessing skeletal remains. Through close archival engagement with Bass's tapes and papers, as well as his fictional and autobiographical written narratives, this paper examines how bones get stabilized as sites of human identity in the meeting of anthropological and police practice. Proposing that forensic ideologies entail not just the abstraction and depersonalization of human remains but also intensely intimate labor, I train my attention on two episodes: Bass's early work excavating Native American remains with the Smithsonian Institution and his work on the unsolved homicide of Mary Louise Downing. In tracing the way that both osteological and narratological materials from these episodes reappear in police training tapes, I consider the extent to which forensic science's mastery of the past requires, too, other forms of social mastery that implicate marginal bodies. This raises the question of what justice means under regimes of forensic knowledge production, and how anthropological racial types continue to circulate far beyond the academy. I conclude with a consideration of "treatment" as a site at which to start cross-disciplinary rethinking on theories and ethics of human skeletal materials.

Presenter(s): Matthew Rossi

Fordisc and Historical Insights into Race, Statistics, and Ancestry Estimation in Anthropology

This paper examines the enduring legacy of race science in biological anthropology through a critical analysis of Fordisc, software used by forensic anthropologists to estimate ancestry from unidentified skeletal remains. Despite disciplinary shifts away from race-based typologies, we show how statistical methods and datasets rooted in colonial science continue to structure contemporary practices. Using an interdisciplinary "data journeys" approach (Leonelli & Tempini 2020), we first trace how skull measurements from colonial contexts—such as "specimens" in Cambridge's Duckworth Laboratory—remain embedded in Fordisc's reference data. Drawing on archival research, interviews, and STS analysis, we then examine how scientific tools absorb and reproduce historical ideologies, even when race is not explicitly named. For example, the Mahalanobis distance - a core algorithm in Fordisc - was adapted from early twentieth century race science. As it circulates across disciplines today, to what extent does it still carry forward its original assumptions? We argue that anthropology must critically reckon with the colonial and racialized roots of its data infrastructures.

Presenter(s): Iris Clever

Co-author(s): Lisette Jong

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Presenter(s): Lisette Jong

Discussion

3591 Ghosts of Past Policies: Understanding the Rapid Changes in Policy for Marginalized Populations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump was inaugurated as president and immediately began issuing executive orders that negatively impact marginalized populations. One such policy halted the United States Refugee Admissions Program, leaving thousands of refugees trapped in dangerous conditions. Trump also immediately enforced violent immigration policies, deporting asylum-seekers and im/migrants in the United States. Sweeping immigration policies also marginalize im/migrant populations with threats of fear, detainment, and deportation. Threats to other departments within the government are targeted at multiple offices that could affect marginalized populations across the United States and throughout the world. This creation of policy chaos has left many people living in the United States in fear of what policies may come next contributing to individual and community precarity. Further, the speed at which these policies have been enacted create a "shock and awe" effect whereby part of the population is thrown into chaos. We argue that such policies negatively impact already marginalized populations, perpetuating inequality and forms of violence such as structural and symbolic. Yet, there are groups that seek to resist these policies. For example, protests have sprung up throughout the United States against these new policies such as the "Hands Off Protest" that drew thousands of protesters of the current administration and the policies it has enacted. Further, there has been opposition among humanitarian organizations as well as institutions such as the National Institutes for Health through lawsuits in Federal courts. This resistance is critical to combating the negative policies enacted by the current administration.

In this panel, we examine the effects of these new policies on marginalized populations to determine the negative impacts that they create in these communities. We bring varying perspectives on the rapid policy changes of the current administration. We examine topics such as im/migration policy and deportations, abortion access and women's reproductive rights, refugee

admissions, policies that affect LGBTQ+ populations, and the removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs from university education. Our research topics vary, yet they are all negatively impacted by policies enacted by the current administration. These policy shifts negatively affect the agency of populations, marginalizing and keeping them in a liminal state where they are subjected to state control. The topics presented here demonstrate the precarity of marginalized populations through these policy changes. This panel aims to shed light on rapid new policy perspectives and how they are detrimental to populations in the United States.

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Russell Rice Manzano, University of Central Florida

Chair: Russell Rice Manzano, University of Central Florida

Presenter(s): Dillon Mahoney, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, James Robbins, Emma Abell-Selby, Dawn M. Rutecki, Grand Valley State University, Russell Rice Manzano, University of Central Florida

Discussant: Sarah Raskin, Virginia Commonwealth University

Presentation(s): Ghostly Changes? Pondering the Future of Refugee Resettlement in 2025

Building on the theme of 'ghosts,' this paper explores ghostly representations of refugees both historically and at the present time. Including resettlement workers (many of whom are former refugees), I argue for the importance of long-term ethnography to understand and give humanity to those experiencing budget and job cuts, political harassment, or worse at this present time. Focusing on the radical changes to refugee resettlement and immigration policy in the spring of 2025, this paper will specifically explore how policy changes have been experienced in west-central Florida. Navigating radical policy changes is not new in Florida. This paper asks, what is new about this particular set of changes? Drawing data from refugees, resettlement staff, and personal experience, this paper will ponder and challenge narratives of these changes as 'ghostly.'

Presenter(s): Dillon Mahoney

The Language of Abortion: Gender, Race, Language Access, and New York City Clinics

Structural barriers (e.g., structural racism, sexism, economic barriers, anti-immigrant prejudice and policies, and language access issues) often limit access to adequate healthcare for Latina/o/e/x/Hispanic populations. Abortion care carries even more significant barriers to access due to political, cultural, and social challenges. Recent policy/legal changes such as the Dobbs decision and many states' policy actions to limit abortion access have exacerbated existing challenges and barriers to accessing this important form of care. One key factor in access to care is language, where the mismatch (or discordance) of language between provider and patient leads to lower quality of care and negative health outcomes. Although research has documented the broader disparities in health access related to language concordance and cultural-linguistic access in care, further research is needed to understand the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latina/o/e/x/Hispanic individuals seeking abortion care in the US. Recent ethnocentric and anti-im/migrant policies have accelerated the need for this work. Through the lenses of reproductive

justice and intersectionality, this project uses various ethnographic methods to understand the experiences of these populations in clinics in New York City. Preliminary observations from clinic visits and conversations with clinic personnel provide insights into the impact of language and policy changes on abortion access in these clinics.

Presenter(s): James Robbins

Navigating Anti-Diversity Legislation: University Instructor Experiences in Florida

This research explores how the history of education policy in Florida, the hegemonic struggle of the university, and the commodification of teaching and learning intersect to shape the academic identities and practices of instructors teaching under anti-diversity legislation, including critical race theory (CRT) and anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) bans, among other restrictions. Drawing from a combination of participant observation, person-centered interviews, and auto-ethnography, this research specifically aims to investigate how instructors of various ranks and disciplines understand, experience, and navigate Florida Senate Bill (SB) 266 and related legislations at a large public university in Florida. This research builds on calls for ethnographic investigations within institutions of higher education by interrogating the concept of DEI in undergraduate student instruction (see, e.g., Yelvington et al. 2015). By employing an ethnographic approach, this research contributes to existing literature on the passing of CRT bans and anti-DEI legislation (see, e.g., Chun and Evans, 2024; Caradonna, 2024; Barsky et al., 2023; Caradonna, 2023; Groton et al., 2023; Russell-Brown, 2024; Schoorman and Gatens, 2023; Schoorman and Gatens, 2024) to elucidate the immediate social and pedagogical ramifications of SB 266 and other emerging anti-diversity legislations as they are passed and implemented at a large public university in Florida.

Presenter(s): Emma Abell-Selby

Specters of Defiance: The Potential of Micro-Policy Implementation

Multi-scalar conversations to understand the intersectional impacts of sweeping policy changes provide useful ways to mitigate the effects of systemic attacks on marginalized communities. While limited by the frameworks of wider, high-level policy, localized policy implementation provides potential avenues to counteract some of the detrimental impacts on targeted communities and individuals. Drawing particular attention to policies impacting LGBTQ+ communities, this paper examines the relationships of policies at different scales and how local policy implementation can act not only to magnify damage but also mitigate negative impacts. By examining how micro-level policies navigate broader policy language in localized ways, it highlights the shades of resistance to particularly harmful and marginalizing policies that are possible when macro-level policies are interpreted and enacted on a smaller scale.

Presenter(s): Dawn M. Rutecki

Fear and Deportation: How New Immigration Policies Affect Marginalized Immigrant Populations

Recent changes in immigration policy have led to sweeping and violent arrests of immigrants, sometimes despite their legal status in the United States. This violence leads to fear among immigrant communities, particularly in households with individuals with precarious immigration status. Further, this fear is also caused by forms of political and symbolic violence whereby violence is enacted through legal policies. I demonstrate that these policies resulting in mass deportations have a ripple effect of fear in immigrant communities. This paper explores the lived experiences of immigrants living in Central Florida, often with precarious immigration status, with such policies. These new immigration policies have spread fear throughout the community of deportation, causing stress and negative mental health outcomes. This is especially challenging for mixed-status family households where some family members have legal immigration documents and some do not. Newly enacted policies worsen the overall mental health and well-being of immigrant populations living in the United States based on the targeting of this population for deportation.

Presenter(s): Russell Rice Manzano

Discussion

5099 Hearing the echoes across diaspora, transience, and signs: The intersections of history, place, memory, and legacies of authenticity

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The notion of "authenticity" in speech communities has long been a contested feature of language revitalization enterprise (see Jones 1999 for Breton, Cotter 2001 for Irish, Jaffe 2013 for Corsican, etc.). This contestation is not new, but the discussion surrounding its facets bears revisiting. Meanwhile, ethnographic exploration of the tension between linguistic authenticity and a universality of use (characterized as anonymity) has produced insights into what Woolard and Frekko (2013) describe as "the late-modern phenomena of boundary dissolution, shifting scale, cosmopolitanism, and changing ideologies of authenticity and anonymity". At the same time, productive work on the notion of authenticity in the performance of identity invites us to return to Appadurai's (1996) notion of flows where "transnational flows have allowed for the restructuring of (imagined and physical) places and membership affiliations along multiple and more complex axes" (McEntee-Atalianis & Zappetini 2014).

Additionally, Eckert (2014: 52) utilizes the concept of "authenticative" moves to address variation as "a more robust and dynamic indexical system" than had been envisioned by Labov, for whom authenticity is bestowed on speech/speakers by the analyst (linguist). Woolard (2016) notes that within an ideological frame privileging speakers' judgement, authenticity "must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory in order to have value" (p. 22). And yet a standard language ideology seems to produce forms which are untethered from place, e.g., a "language elsewhere" (Mena 2022) or a "nowhere Corsican" (Thiers 1993 as cited in Woolard 2016).

Combining these contexts, this Roundtable investigates what the circulation of signs (through language, communication, symbol) relies upon, questions, achieves or fails in the production of "authenticity" and legibly "authentic" identities. Recognizing the intersection between semiotics and an understanding of identity as praxis, whether understood as performativity or stance-taking, we seek to revisit the role of metapragmatic awareness as members of diasporic, transient, established, and/or immigrant communities negotiate the challenges of how communities speak about themselves, whether informed by linguistic insights or developed within the community, as well as the extent to which related disciplines reflect on their own implicit homogeneity and resistance to change as to what might constitute "authenticity". The signs deployed, where "legibility" varies, and how multifaceted and diverse viewpoints are contested or remain stable are questions that come into play.

Assuming that authenticity is a complex negotiation across and for different audiences, we examine how it is deployed by speakers – immigrant, transient, diasporic, and rooted; how identities are indexed; and what the relationship with performativity, authenticity, and, where applicable, indigeneity resides and how it is motivated, shifted, dissol

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Judith Pine, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Colleen Cotter, Queen Mary University of London

Presenter(s): Judith Pine, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Colleen Cotter, Queen Mary University of London, Jennifer Delfino, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Gabriella Modan

Discussant: Dominika Baran, Duke University

2555 Feminist Anthropology and Decolonial Practice in the Andes and Beyond: Discussing Florence Babb's Contributions and Impact

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This is a multigenerational roundtable of scholars of the Andes and Latin America who will discuss Florence Babb's deep and wide-ranging influence on their research, teaching, and scholarly practice. A leading feminist anthropologist whose career spans over four decades, Babb has consistently pushed Andean and Latin Americanist debates in new directions, writing on topics ranging from the economic and family life of Peruvian marketwomen, the shifting political landscape of post-Sandinista Nicaragua, and the cultural politics of tourism in Latin American societies with recent histories of violence and revolution. A hallmark of Babb's trajectory as a researcher has been openness and curiosity in implementing innovative theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Her early research on Peru integrated feminist and Marxist anthropological traditions of the 1970s and 1980s to address debates about women's work and gender inequality in the Andes. In recent decades, Babb's scholarship has provided models and

insights for a reflexive and engaged ethnography as well as for anthropological interventions in areas such as critical development studies, queer theory, and decolonial feminism. Currently, she is working on a book project that examines gendered and racialized geographies in Peru, ethnographically documenting perceptions of difference and mobilities across three field sites (Vicos, Huaraz, and Lima).

In addition to her impact as a researcher, Babb's feminist and decolonial commitments have extended to her work as a teacher, mentor, and colleague. Her support for students and colleagues has included-but has certainly not been limited to-teaching and advising in positions at Colgate University, the University of Iowa, the University of Florida, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as well as leadership roles in the Association for Feminist Anthropology and the AAA Executive Board. She has offered sustained support to anthropologists across the globe, working closely with scholars of diverse nationalities, career stages, and institutional affiliations. A community builder in the best sense of the term, Babb's scholarly practice offers lessons for developing and sustaining an inclusive and engaged anthropology in uncertain times.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Joseph Feldman, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Presenter(s): Maria Elena Garcia, University of Washington, Lynn Stephen, University of Oregon, Linda Seligmann, George Mason University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, M. Cristina Alcalde, Miami University, Eric Hirsch, Franklin & Marshall College, Ruth Goldstein, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub, Jason Pribitsky, Whitman College

Discussant: Florence Babb, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

8469 Traces That Remain: Experimental Ethnography and the Poetics of Absence

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how experimental ethnographic practices engage with the ruin, the fragmentary, and the absent through the materiality of objects, the traces of memory, or the affective presence of the body. Bringing together works across visuals, sound, textiles, and performance, these papers investigate how loss, displacement, longing, and haunting manifest in form and feeling. Rather than treating absence as a void, these presentations engage it as a generative presence: a haptic trace, an ethical dilemma, a site of speculative repair.

Each presentation engages with forms that resist traditional ethnographic capture: quilts stitched with maternal memory, sediment jars and ephemeral soundscapes from climate-ruined coasts, ghostly long takes of Black urban abandonment on 16mm film, and ancestral echoes that render the Black body itself as a haunted site. These presentations demonstrate how aesthetic and experimental approaches-whether through craft, visuals, or sonic environments-can make visible

the spectral forces that shape everyday life. Across abandoned buildings, decaying textiles, disappearing ecosystems, and haunted bodies, the papers investigate how memory, loss, and presence persist—not through narrative resolution, but through sensory fragments, haunted objects, and spectral archives.

Rather than offering absence as lack, the panel reframes it as generative: a trace, a vibration, a haptic record. Across these varied sites and methods, the panel asks, how do traces—bodily, architectural, environmental—become ethnographic? What kinds of storytelling emerge through rupture, opacity, and aesthetic experimentation? And how might absence become a methodology—felt, inhabited, and composed?

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: NARMEEN IJAZ

Chair: NARMEEN IJAZ

Presenter(s): Lydia Donohue, NARMEEN IJAZ, AHMED TAHSIN SHAMS, Priyanka Basu

Presentation(s): The Skein Her Very Skin: fieldnotes from the quilting bee

In post-industrial Manchester—once Cottonopolis—the architectural ruins of mills and smokestacks mark a bygone textile economy. Today, this landscape is threaded with small communities of women who gather in homes, church halls, and community centers to quilt. Quilts are everywhere—heirlooms stored in attics, folded in spare rooms, stitched into memory. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the intimate relationship between body and cloth through the lens of touch, engaging an anthropology of the senses. I reflect on how participation in the craft (techne) shapes knowledge (episteme) and how the running stitch acts as an indexical trace of the quilter's body—a form of self-narration in cloth. Comparing this tactile trace to the photographic punctum, I consider how both hold presence and absence, particularly maternal memory inscribed in baby clothes and family photos. I examine the therapeutic, absorbing quality of quilting and the enchantment of quilts as archives of life, skill, and loss. As a craft, quilting is episodic, folded, and faded—a fragmented practice that echoes the meander of life. I propose that anthropological inquiry into women's everyday experience is enriched by embracing this assemblage of partiality—offcuts from larger fabrics of time and narrative. I argue for a more poetic and patchworked form of writing: one that mirrors the quilt itself in its embrace of fragments, contradiction, and care.

Presenter(s): Lydia Donohue

Spectral Choreographies: The Haunted Body as Ethnographic Trace

This paper, grounded in experimental ethnographic practice, explores the haunted body as a site of memory, resistance, and aesthetic disruption. Through the collaborative film *Ripples in Still Water*, made with Eboni Edwards—a Black woman artist navigating the racialized gaze of predominantly white institutional spaces—the work investigates how the body carries spectral histories: ancestral voices, structural silences, and performative expectations.

Structured through fragmented vignettes, poetic voiceover, and nonlinear rhythm, the film treats performance as both method and message. The body becomes an archive of affective and

historical traces, articulating presence through absence and memory through gesture. Movement, voice, and abstraction function not only as representational tools but as ways of knowing: haptic inscriptions that resist legibility.

Framed by decolonial and feminist ethnographic approaches, this project embraces narrative rupture, opacity, and refusal—refusing to stabilize identity or resolve trauma. Instead, it invites viewers into a space of attunement, where fragmentation becomes a mode of care and witnessing.

In dialogue with material ruins, textile archives, and ecological absences explored by other panelists, this paper reflects on how experimental ethnography might reveal what lingers, what aches, and what resists being named—but still insists on being felt.

Presenter(s): NARMEEN IJAZ

Traces of Absence: Nonhuman Witnessing and Climate Storytelling Through Ruins and River Memory

This paper explores how ecological ruins and damaged landscapes in Bangladesh bear witness to elemental loss through nonhuman-centric storytelling. Engaging the aesthetics of absence and spectrality, I examine how water, soil, and silence act as agents of memory—foregrounding more-than-human forms of ecological witnessing. The paper proposes a "nonhuman archive" framework that reframes ruination not as emptiness but as a sensory, material trace of ongoing environmental histories. Two case studies ground this analysis. The first is the Community-Based Water Museum in Kuakata, Bangladesh, a participatory archive created by villagers, activists, and environmental educators in Bangladesh's climate-vulnerable coastal belt. The museum's collection—bottled water from vanishing rivers, sediment jars, boat songs, and oral myths—functions as a living archive of ecological disappearance, activating what I call an archive of absence. The second case engages Kamar Ahmad Simon's experimental documentary *Are You Listening!* (2011), which chronicles life in a flood-affected village through haptic cinematography, ambient textures, and sensory fragmentation. Together, these cases offer insight into how the elements—water, wind, and soil—mediate trauma and resilience in post-disaster contexts. Rather than frame climate ethnography as collection or explanation, this paper approaches it as attunement to fragments: to what remains, what has been submerged, and what resists legibility.

Presenter(s): AHMED TAHSIN SHAMS

Haunting and the Aesthetics of Absence in Christopher Harris's 2000 still/here

This paper examines artist-filmmaker Christopher Harris's 2000 experimental documentary *still/here* about his hometown of St. Louis, a city deeply associated with urban decline. The black-and-white feature-length film shot on 16 mm is mainly made up of long static and roving unpeopled takes of collapsing structures and blocks of boarded-up buildings and overgrown lots in predominantly African-American north St. Louis. The film's shots linger on the physical materials of these ruined edifices, juxtaposing them with turn-of-the-century architectural materials preserved in regional historical societies in interpolated scenes. Many shots are animated by disjointed

soundtracks of unanswered phones and doorbells, the looping voicemail message of the St. Louis Housing Authority, sounds of footsteps and construction, and other haunting non-diegetic sounds and voiceovers. By these means, the film brings attention to the ways that historical and social forces have shaped material objects and environments and also sets up a play between the materiality of 16 mm film and the film's themes, critical to much of Harris's work. Moving between presence and absence, Harris's film tells the story of the traces left by African-Americans in a Rust Belt city, of spaces they inhabited and continue to inhabit, and of palpable histories embedded within the built environment.

Presenter(s): Priyanka Basu

8602 The Spectral Landscape of the Womb: A Multimedia Art Installation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Jackson

Type: Installations

The Spectral Landscape of the Womb, curated by Lucila Carballo, is a multimedia art collection that gathers reproductive stories of Latinx immigrants living in shelters across New England. The works span experiences from pregnancy and birth to abortion and infant loss. Rooted in a borderland perspective that intertwines languages, territories, and temporalities, the pieces reveal the womb as an existential nexus — a space where life and death, trauma and pleasure, ancestors and unborn beings converge. This uterine limbo unfolds in three dimensions: geopolitical borders, intergenerational memories, and futuristic liberatory visions.

Featuring experimental film, mixed media collages, zines, soundscapes, and penumbral womb ambiance.

INSTALLATION COMPONENTS & DESIGN

At the heart of this exhibit is a 45-minute experimental film weaving together the testimonies of Latinx immigrant participants. Shot on Super 8 and 35mm, the film unfolds in six chapters, each a spectral loop evoking feelings and thoughts that resist articulation. Surrounding the film are six mixed-media collages and zines that compile poetry, prayers, dreams, and remedies. Together, these pieces reflect a process that unfolded over two years, revealing intimate and collective perspectives.

Over the course of 2023–2025, *The Spectral Landscape of the Womb* evolved at the intersection of art, anthropology, and reproductive justice. Beginning in May 2023, Lucila Carballo collaborated with participants as both full-spectrum doula and ethnographic researcher. In 2024, participants transformed their interview transcripts and audiovisual materials into multimedia narratives that trace the liminal passages of pregnancy and birth, border crossing and shelter life.

More than depicting ghosts (though some do appear), the exhibit evokes quotidian images revealing layered subjectivities, colliding temporalities, and paradoxical experiences at the thresholds of life.

Rooted in epistemologies that move through opacity and affect, these works embrace unknowing and contradiction without seeking resolution — attending to aspects of everyday experience often overlooked and creating a space where the spectral opens up possibilities of knowing and caring.

VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHER & INSTALLATION DESIGNER

Lucila Carballo is an Argentinian scholar, artist, and doula based in Western Massachusetts. She has an interdisciplinary background in medical anthropology, feminist theory, and experimental filmmaking. Her debut feature film, *Idalia and the Niño Santo*, won first prize at the Gender Lab during the Muestra Internacional de Cine con Perspectiva de Género (MICGénero) in Mexico City in 2018. Carballo is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at UMass Amherst, where her dissertation research focuses on Latinx reproductive experiences in the U.S. Her work has been supported by the 2024 Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grant.

In addition to her academic work, she serves as a full-spectrum doula with the Abortion Rights Fund of Western Massachusetts. By integrating doula work, ethnography, and art, she creates immersive installations and experimental films that explore rich testimonios beyond trauma narratives grounded on ontologies of victimization. Her work emphasizes pleasure, care, and imaginative possibility, tracing how experiences of migration and reproduction unfold across the complexities of time and affect.

Organizer(s): Lucila Carballo

3253 'A specter is haunting anthropology': Ethnographic investigations of psychoanalysis across contemporary clinical, scientific and cultural landscapes

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Since the 20th century, anthropology has thought with, against, or through psychoanalysis (Hollan 2022), as both disciplines emerged as the 'counter-sciences' of modernity (Foucault 1966). This long-held companionship led to strong forms of collaboration, disenchantment, and opposition. During the same time, psychoanalysis became a significant therapeutic and cultural product, influencing expert and lay publics, elite and pop cultures (Hale 1995), and disseminating well beyond the liberal, industrialized West (Pinto 2019, Oliveira 2005, Plotkin 2001). Curiously, despite their companionship (e.g. psychoanalytic anthropology, ethnopsychanalysis) and the place of psychoanalysis in modern culture, anthropology did not develop a cohesive research program about psychoanalysis as a sociocultural reality, unlike other disciplines (Plotkin 2017, Berger 1965) that even have their own specialized journals (e.g. *Psychoanalysis and History*).

Far from being a mere uninterested omission, this gap in the discipline is part of psychoanalysis' broader haunting existence within our anthropological landscape. Psychoanalysis is (one of) anthropology's ghost(s). With the decline of psychoanalytic therapy —mainly in the Global North—

anthropology's engagement also decreased (Crapanzano 2015). In the past 15 years, as global mental health revisited psychoanalysis (Jimenez 2023), a renewed anthropological interest rose (Rahimi 2021, Good 2011). This time, however, we aim to go beyond the well-established combination of anthropology and psychoanalysis to rather realign the reflectors of anthropological inquiry towards psychoanalysis itself, for its social life stands as an optimal gateway to unpack the contemporary.

The ethnographic investigations composing this panel –covering Latin American, North American, and European cases– place psychoanalysis at the center of their study. They explore psychoanalysis as a genre that connects forms of intimate and public listening; as a therapeutic practice with an ambivalent relationship with technoscience; as a tool to resist institutionalization and bio-reductionism; and as a contested discourse to address racial justice, health equity, and therapeutic pluralism. The intersections of these varied social worlds and geographies illuminate broader and complex global dynamics in which psychoanalysis is entangled.

This panel is a timely initiative that fits perfectly with the AAA's 2025 theme of Ghosts, for psychoanalysis has had an ambivalent absent presence within both anthropology –with numerous cycles of death, haunting, and rebirth– and contemporary culture, knowledge, and health (Leze 2017). The panel is also a step forward in building a more cohesive dialogue among anthropological scholars(hip) on psychoanalysis, whose work has remained constant (Brotherton 2020, Wolf-Meyer 2015, Schechter 2014) but dispersed, scattered across broader conversations in anthropology (e.g. Pandolfo 2018, Lakoff 2005, Luhrmann 2000).

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Rogelio Scott-Insua, Cornell University, Xochitl Marsilli-Vargas, Emory University

Chair: Rogelio Scott-Insua, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Dominique Behague, Vanderbilt University, Xochitl Marsilli-Vargas, Emory University, Rogelio Scott-Insua, Cornell University, Michael D'Arcy, Haverford College, Department of Anthropology, Marisa Berwald, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Douglas Hollan, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Memory and the Politics of Psychoanalysis in Brazil

Since the early 20th century in Brazil, psychoanalysis has unfolded as a plural, plastic, and paradoxical field—sometimes reproducing elitist forms of self-making while at others serving as a vital source of critical consciousness and resistance against state oppression. This presentation explores the complex role of psychoanalysis within the diverse memory practices that emerged after the dictatorship (1964–1984). Drawing on a longitudinal ethnographic study with participants of the 1982 birth cohort in Pelotas from ages 15 to their 40s (1997-2024), I demonstrate how psychoanalysis contributed to reproducing historic structures of dispossession, as expectations for Brazil's democratic future intersected with prevailing norms of "societal progress" and "psychosocial development." In this psychoanalytic ethos, only the erudite were generally deemed

capable of the biography "deep" memory work needed for the creation of an autonomous self, while learning how to forget became accepted as therapeutically valid for marginalized populations. Yet, eschewing both modalities, some of my interlocutors sought psychoanalytically infused clinical encounters that used memory practices and intergenerational place-making to disrupt norms of "development and progress" in ways that resonate in their lived to this day. I argue that this psychoanalytic modality is due, in part, to its cross-fertilization with Brazil's enduring traditions in critical pedagogy and collective health.

Presenter(s): Dominique Behague

"What if my mother finds out?": The circulation of psychoanalytic discourses in Buenos Aires' mass media

In this presentation I analyze the circulation of psychoanalytic discourses in Buenos Aires' media outlets from commercials, to talk shows, radio programs, and graphic humor, and highlight the intersection between expert knowledge and lay interpretations of psychoanalysis. Widespread exposure to psychoanalysis—by undergoing therapy, through personal connections, or media representations—has nurtured a large and active public within which people freely engage in psychoanalytic interpretations, often bringing these to bear on everyday interaction. Through these circulatory routes and modes of practical application, a vernacular psychoanalytic logic has been woven into the city's cultural and social fabric, as an explanatory model of both ordinary (e.g., casual use of a phrase or word, the ordering of two names) and extraordinary (e.g., a politician's campaign promises) behavior. Central to this phenomenon is the concept of communicability: the way in which discourses disseminate through ideological channels (Briggs & Hallin 2007). This notion can help us understand how text producers and disseminators are positioned relative to them, and how these various positions are not fixed but rather contextually refracted. I specifically analyze the figure of "the mother" that emerges through regular invocations of the Oedipus Complex, as well as depictions of mother-son relationships in advertisement and graphic humor that imply a particular, and largely negative, form of femininity.

Presenter(s): Xochitl Marsilli-Vargas

De-Oedipizing Heredity: Psychoanalysis, Kinship, and Neuromuscular Dystrophies at a Brazilian Genomic Clinic

Psychoanalysis has stood as a treatment that intervenes on disordered kinship relations inscribed in the psyche through the Oedipal complex. By the late 20th century, psychoanalysis' Oedipal narrative became problematic. Critics argued that rather than identifying pre-existing Oedipal forces, psychoanalysis enforced Oedipizing practices, forcibly fitting everything into a nuclear familial drama. In parallel, genomic medicine started identifying diseases caused by genetic mutations, many of which were intergenerationally inherited. The assimilation of kinship into genetic heredity became salient in families whose members were affected by (the risk of) genetic disorders. This presentation discusses the results of an ethnography conducted at a genomic clinic in Brazil, that established a collaboration with Lacanian psychoanalysts to jointly treat cases of

neuromuscular dystrophies (NDs). NDs (re)write family relations by naturalizing kinship as heredity, by reconfiguring forms of care, and by rewriting the limits of self and kin. I explore the reinvented functions of psychoanalysis in this landscape, as both disciplines draw from homonymous notions of family, kinship, and lineage. The biogenetic conscription of kinship produces new forms of familial misfortune and interrogation, now framed under the parameters of genomic medicine. In this new 'bio-Oedipized' scenario, psychoanalysts play a de-Oedipizing role, aiming to take suffering beyond the (genetic) familial drama.

Presenter(s): Rogelio Scott-Insua

'Tranq' as an Object of Non-Knowledge: Xylazine, Opioid Adulteration, and the Politics of Public Unconsciousness in Philadelphia

This paper draws upon fieldwork in Dublin, Ireland and Philadelphia, PA to explore the "problem" of public unconsciousness for community health and addiction medicine. Topically, it centers the rise of xylazine in the US drug supply, a veterinary tranquilizer and increasingly common opioid adulterant in Philadelphia. Though public health officials have issued urgent warnings about the chemical mélange called "tranq," largely advocating for harm reduction policies promoting low-barrier care and socioeconomic support, the spectacle of tranq use has inspired misinformation, political outrage, and widespread horror at the sight of users' semi-somnolent bodies, simultaneously cast by popular media as monstrous threats to public safety while also hovering at the threshold of sleep. To grapple with this aporia, this paper draws on two epistemological traditions within anthropology: the discourse of psychoanalysis and Science & Technology Studies. As moral panic overwhelms data-driven public health, it seeks to theorize an ethnographic approach to the foreclosure of medical knowledge and the proliferation of collective fantasy in times of clinical and political crisis. Further, drawing from the history of psychoanalytic anthropology, it interrogates the tension between shared symbols and the symptom (Obeyesekere 1990) to offer an "untimely" critique of bio-reductionism within the health fields (Pandolfo 2018). From the spectacle of sleeping bodies, a psychoanalytic specter emerges.

Presenter(s): Michael D'Arcy

A Psychoanalysis "Of Our Days"

Within contemporary discourse in a professional psychoanalysis located in New York City, a post-pandemic refrain emerges: "Of our days," and "Today." Lacan defines, in his Seminar III, perhaps not coincidentally on psychosis, a master signifier in this way: "Everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier. It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated" (1993, p. 268). This paper discusses the place and the no place of psychoanalysis indexed by this signifier, established historically and in psychoanalysis's contemporary clinical and professional practices in the pandemic and post-pandemic. At the same time, the question of "our days," appears to point somewhere beyond psychoanalysis, which has historically, at least in its clinical forms in the American context, focused on the individual. While arguing that this focus results from an original assimilation in psychoanalysis of racial difference,

this paper considers the possibility that what one might call a "censorship" becomes less and less feasible as the field moves in response towards explanations of mass phenomena. I further suggest that developing the field of psychoanalytic anthropology into the space of "our days" (Hollan 2022), could benefit from theoretical tools offered by psychoanalysis that address conscious and unconscious life that emerges in response to a dislocating global context (Pandolfo 2018).

Presenter(s): Marisa Berwald

Discussion

7129 John Bowen through Discourse: Reflections on a Inspiring Career

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In this roundtable, several former PhD students of John R. Bowen discuss the legacy and impact of his scholarship in honor of his recent retirement. Topics of discussion will reflect the many broad impacts of his research. We discuss the transformational legacy of Muslims through Discourse on the anthropological study of religion, with a look at how scholars have drawn from this ethnography in shaping not only their studies of Islam and Muslims in diverse contexts, but also many versions of Christianity, including Baptists in the Philippines and Mormons in Utah. We will consider the significance of Dr. Bowen's work in shaping the study of law and legal practice in Islamic contexts. Panelists also consider the impact of his research and teaching on the anthropology of institutions and, finally, his legacy in shaping pedagogy in the anthropology of religion, focusing on the significance of Religions in Practice and how this has shaped the teaching of the anthropology of religion.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Erin Stiles, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Laura Cochrane, Central Michigan University, Department of Philosophy, Anthropology, and Religion, Jacqueline Wagner, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Lauren Crossland-Marr, University of La Verne, Department of Anthropology, Anna Jacobsen, Washington University in St. Louis, Erin Stiles, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology, Brian Howell, Wheaton College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Brian Howell, Wheaton College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

1024 Framing Climate through Black Geographic Ancestral, Spiritual, and Religious Invocations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

Efforts to address environmental degradation implemented through the expert-led management of

nature or top-down, market-based models of development impose complex social disasters upon Black communities, reproducing and recasting the logics of colonialism and racialized difference. Alongside the transformations these social disasters bring, Black communities are disproportionately impacted by unprecedented changes to the natural environment: Weather patterns are more unpredictable, sea levels are rising, and average temperatures are more variable. Still, Black communities' preoccupations with the ancestral, spiritual, and religious haunt the eco-modernist solutions that proliferate within today's context of global ecological deterioration. This panel gathers scholars across Black geographies to discuss the particularities and connections across regions within the context of ongoing entanglements of environmental, political, and socio-economic catastrophes. We invite panelists to contemplate how communities articulate environmental claims and contend with the ghosts of colonial modernity through ancestral, spiritual, and religious frameworks and/or ecological histories and philosophies. Panelists will address these questions: What are the desires and commitments that animate the ways African and Afro-diasporic communities make sense of and confront the metaphysical, socio-political, and biophysical flux that climate change brings? What do these desires and commitments suggest about Black ecological futures and their engagement with complex pasts? How do these futures reveal the adaptations that anthropological methodologies need to undertake to respond to ecological matters of concern within Black geographies?

Organizer: Chazelle Rhoden, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Amelia Moore, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Adrian Cato, Raffaella Taylor-Seymour, Duke University, Pasama Cole-Kweli, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Chazelle Rhoden, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lydia Gibson, Georgetown University

Presentation(s): The earth is a living thing: On Black Feminist Island Ecologies

As Lucille Clifton's poem *The Earth Is a Living Thing* so clearly articulates, the aliveness of the earth is inseparable from Black life. While not entirely refuting the narratives of the Anthropocene, Black feminist political ecologies allow for an understanding that there are continued and persistent acts of resistance/refusal that guide Black women's lives from within their present ecological conditions. Their acts towards futurity do not ignore the current ecological moment but continue to imagine living into the future. This paper will draw from narratives of ecological loss and disaster in the Sea Islands of coastal Georgia and the inevitable survival that exists in the interstices of climate catastrophe. This work focuses on the particular – the quotidian aspects of Black women's lives in the Sea Islands, an archipelagic space of the US South. These coastal geographies remain in precarity from sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, and coastal gentrification, but continued living despite threats of loss are a counternarrative to the environmental crisis and its foreclosures.

Presenter(s): Adrian Cato

Remaking Sacred Geographies: Spirits, Ghosts and God in Zimbabwe's Landscapes

This talk examines struggles over the meanings of and orientations to the sacred in Zimbabwe's landscapes in the context of the dispossession and theft of Black lands over the past two centuries. It focuses on Matobo, a region of dramatic mountains and balancing rocks that has long been the site of Zimbabwe's most important rain shrines and a burial place of chiefs and kings. The country's first mission station was established in the area in the mid-nineteenth century, and white missionaries played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the extraction of the country's mineral wealth and full-scale settler colonialism in the late nineteenth century. They also worked to deter Black people from engaging with landscape's materialities and nurturing longstanding relations with spirits that reside in it. These changes are part of longstanding racialized struggles over the meanings of the sacred under modernist religious and political orders in Zimbabwe, which worked to remake the landscape and transformed orientations to the sacrality of the area's mountains, rivers, and pools. This paper analyzes these histories through the lens of literature in Black geographies, approaching the landscape as a locus for interlocking material, spiritual, and political struggles. The paper argues that colonial efforts to remake landscapes and transform religion in Zimbabwe were two sides of the same coin, crosscutting discursive and material boundaries.

Presenter(s): Raffaella Taylor-Seymour

“We are an island of praying people”: Invocations of prayer, protection, and ancestral belonging on inundated Black landscapes

In the South Carolina Lowcountry—where the ghosts of chattel slavery haunt material landscapes through racial capitalism—climate change and gentrification are accelerating Black land dispossession. These dual forces of dispossession are especially harmful to Gullah/Geechee descendants of rural Sea Island communities, where traditions of land inheritance and sustainable stewardship have preserved culture and collective memory since Emancipation. As descendants fight to protect these relationships amid rising sea levels, property taxes, and predatory development, religious and ancestral spiritual traditions serve as vital practices of resistance. In this presentation, I examine how Sea Island descendants employ spiritual invocation to disrupt structural processes of land dispossession and reroot familial and communal ties to sacred landscapes. Drawing on two years of engaged ethnographic research in the South Carolina Lowcountry and interdisciplinary frameworks in Black Geographies and Ecologies, I illustrate how descendants articulate and embody environmental claims through spiritual invocations. Ultimately, I argue that examining how metaphysical summonings counter biophysical inundation in land and climate justice initiatives provides critical insight into how people negotiate power, agency, and belonging on rapidly changing landscapes.

Presenter(s): Pasama Cole-Kweli

Afro-Religious Eco-politics: Centering the Spiritual within Brazil's Climate Developments

In this presentation, I bring attention to the Brazilian Atlantic Forests in the city of Salvador, where Candomblé practitioners conduct rituals, honoring more-than-human spiritual entities that dwell in

rivers, waterfalls, rocks, and other biophysical elements. Candomblé itself is a religion that has its roots with descendants of enslaved African and Indigenous peoples, and its practitioners claim ancestral origins to Salvador's forests dating back to Brazil's slavery era. While practitioners make these forest ecosystems sacred, thus preserving them, the forests are vital not only to Candomblé. At the same time, they are locales in which the Brazilian state carries out conservation processes amid efforts to facilitate carbon sequestration and transform Salvador into a global climate city. I show that Candomblé creates distinct standpoints and grounds from which practitioners encounter and negotiate Salvador's environmental projects. Motivated by M Jacqui Alexander, who teaches how the "spiritual is political," I consider the spiritual, made evident through Candomblé rituals, as a continued praxis of Black sovereignty and ontological determination in these times of pronounced ecological transformations and decay. Through analyses wrought from practitioners' relationalities with spiritual entities, my ethnographic work allows us to rethink notions of incommensurability between the post-human turn and Black histories and worldmaking practices.

Presenter(s): Chazelle Rhoden

Discussion

7048 In Memory of Development: Orienting Ethnographies of Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition Infrastructure in Anthropology (part 1 of 2)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Climate change is indisputably a pressing and urgent crisis requiring both political and material planning to achieve meaningful mitigation. Large scale engineering and infrastructural projects have emerged as a predominant strategy by which national and regional economies anticipate the looming dangers of climate change. Proponents of such major construction endeavors argue that they will bring benefits far beyond their technical functions of supplying renewable energy, storing captured carbon or holding back ocean water. Inclusive prosperity, economic justice, and societal beneficence are just a few of the key moral discourses for justifying massive public expenditures in new technological and environmental infrastructure across the globe.

In light of the urgency of climate change adaptation strategies, a growing body of anthropological scholarship has rightly set about examining the societal and ecological impacts of these immense investments in climate mitigation (Boyer 2019; Cross and Neumark 2021; Vaughn 2017). This panel responds to emerging patterns across this literature finding injustice, expropriation and exploitation in green transition projects (Argenti and Knight 2015; Schwartz 2024). Consequently, we open a dialogue about the barbed complexities of responding to climate change at an adequate scale without these urgencies eclipsing either a necessary skepticism of industrial interests or the multidimensional costs of adaptive intervention.

Disquietingly, visions of a just green transition resemble the promises of society-wide improvement in conditions of human life promised by the development agendas of the latter half of 20th century (Li 2007; Duncan 2004; Scott 1998). Beyond promises, the political economy of green technology iterates on colonial patterns wherein technologies developed for the global north are transposed to former colonies, extracting profit from global south national funds and natural resources. Nevertheless, the 21st century's climate adaptation and energy transition infrastructure projects, as they evoke re-emergent dreams of technologically facilitated affluence, rarely confront or incorporate social knowledge of development's prior failures: environmental destruction, expulsion of indigenous people, forcible embedding in capitalist exploitation, elite empowerment, and dependency economics.

To begin unpacking the scholarly dilemmas of green transition agendas, this panel seeks to explore how the planning imperatives and expansive, pro-social promises of climate change mitigation are balanced against social and theoretical knowledge of expected limits. We will consider how anthropological scholarship and ethnographic commitment can engage constructively with the challenges of adapting to climate change without erasing or obscuring its discontents.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Asmus Rungby , Mallory James

Chair: Mallory James

Presenter(s): Nikita Taniparti, Asmus Rungby, Dana McLachlin, Roxana Bucata, Julia Hiltonsmith, University of Maine

Discussant: Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley, Jamie Cross, University of Edinburgh

Presentation(s): Promising Green Growth: Development in Namibia; Decarbonization for the World

Namibia's story reflects its recent emergence from apartheid's lingering social structures of segregation. After Independence, economic development was driven by increasing exports of minerals and agricultural commodities. While this increased incomes per capita, it also reproduced and exacerbated socioeconomic inequality. After a global commodity crisis and COVID-19, growth and development in Namibia has stalled. Still, the government of Namibia periodically produces development plans that promise "shared prosperity through inclusive growth."

Namibia recently discovered a new source of potential development, one that also could help the rest of the world. Namibia has vast potential for generating renewable energy and green hydrogen, thus attracting large investment flows into mega-projects. This green fuel could decarbonize carbon-intensive industries throughout the world. The country's development goals are now intimately entangled with global decarbonization efforts. If Namibia can become a leading global producer of green hydrogen, then it can both secure the future prosperity of its growing population and curtail carbon emissions. I chart governmental narratives of "development through decarbonization" in the context of Namibia's bet on "green growth." I analyze the narrative strategies of making hope against the materiality of manufacturing commodities for export to the Global North. In this tension, how will Namibians "live out" or "live out of" these changes?

Presenter(s): Nikita Taniparti

Selling Fast Air – “Wind Resources” and the Post-Colonial Frontiers of Climate Capital

The seemingly innocuous term 'wind resources' emerged along with commercially-viable wind energy in 1970s corporate agendas and corresponding regulations. As used in the new US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations of the late 1970s, the term as a cipher for imposing resource logics onto phenomena hitherto outside of economic management. Systematically entering official documents, research papers and corporate communication, 'wind resources' grows wildly in use into the 2010s.

From this origin, I follow the movement of wind technologies from their corporate centers in Scandinavia to energy planners in Southeast Asia. Drawing on extensive fieldwork among energy planners in ASEAN, I show how wind energy companies export off-shore wind-mill solutions to the global south, invoking narratives of green growth modelled on 20th century developmentalist visions. This in turn drives the production of new 'wind-resource' maps of Southeast Asia.

Thus, wind is transmuted from atmospheric condition to a potential material and economic asset, which owing to the urgency of climate change, should be exploited fully. I conclude that 'wind resources' is a vehicle for expanding frontiers of capital across post-colonial geographies and that iterating on development narratives to promise future prosperity supports the entrenchment of post-colonial dependency economics under the banner of climate adaption.

Presenter(s): Asmus Rungby

Grids of Disconnection: Solar Energy and National Electrification Projects in Bangladesh

My paper examines the awkward relationship between energy transition and climate adaptation in solar energy in Bangladesh. Bangladesh once had one of the world's largest off-grid solar energy network: from 2002-2018, state and development organizations distributed millions of solar home systems, providing electricity access for around 20 million people (Cabraal et al. 2021). Since 2018, the now-deposed Awami League government rapidly expanded national grid connections, ultimately claiming 100% electrification in 2022 and purportedly rendering off-grid solar energy obsolete. Still, citizens complain over unreliable electricity and the endurance of solar home systems. My paper draws on 15 months of fieldwork among Bangladeshi state electricity workers, technicians and solar home consumers to analyze the fraught pursuit of national electrification and energy transition. Given how climate change disturbs technocratic projections for the future, climate adaptation is a fundamentally imaginative process of producing visions of the future. In the afterlife of off-grid solar, I examine contradictions between government-imposed ideals of Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) futures based on industrial and infrastructural growth, and alternative ideals of prosperity rooted in food, land, and biological diversity. Electrical infrastructure projects—as one of few remaining public and nationally integrated services in Bangladesh—mediate these conflicting ideals of national development.

Presenter(s): Dana McLachlin

Planning Sustainable Transitions. Community Energy Development in France and Romania

Energiewende made Germany a renewable energy front-runner, and a model for sustainable energy policy among European states. Judging by scale, the global transitions inspired by Energiewende are reminiscent of major energy infrastructure planning, but, unlike the state centered electrification campaigns of the 20th century, they leave the door open both for corporate takeover and for encouraging bottom-up alternatives. This paper explores community energy, understood as a fast-growing global movement that puts community initiatives at the heart of the fight against the capitalist, fossil fuel-based energy system. Community energy works as a planning framework for citizen-led renewable energy projects. I explore two developing energy cooperatives in France and Romania in which Energiewende principles were transmitted through policy and financial incentives. In France, the dominant disposition of nuclear power is counteracted by militant community energy projects developed by environmentally conscious middle-class citizens. Meanwhile, the coal and gas reliant infrastructure in Romania offers little room for a post socialist precarious entrepreneurial class to develop community projects mirroring German standards. The two cases portray how the community energy framework can lead to different forms of planning for sustainable transitions in the energy sector, each embodying contradictions, tensions, and conflicts that reveal the unequal and uneven nature of EU development.

Presenter(s): Roxana Bucata

Unearthing Rhetorical Legacies of Modernity: the Case of Offshore Wind Port Planning in Sears Island, Maine

The state of Maine has positioned Sears Island, a forested 941-acre island near Penobscot Bay, as a solution to regional economic decline following the collapse of key industries in the 1960s. In 2024, Sears Island was identified as the preferred site for the nation's first offshore wind port, generating considerable debate that echoes earlier contestations over development proposals for the island—including an industrial park (1969), a nuclear power plant (1974), and a container port (1980s). In this latest iteration, the state continues to promise economic revitalization while promoting Maine's technological ingenuity and commitment to clean energy. However, this language fails to recognize the incommensurable ideological interests of this debate and obscures the modernist logic that equates progress with development.

Drawing on historical archives from four major Maine newspapers, I examine which frames are mobilized, and by whom, in coverage of Sears Island over time. As with previous proposals, the core conflict remains a values-based struggle between conservation and development, and official narratives consistently marginalize community-driven visions for the island. By analyzing how these discourses shape public understanding and narrow possible futures, this paper argues that infrastructure projects are never mere technical or economic interventions, but political ones—structured by historical precedent and contested meanings of progress, place, and power.

Presenter(s): Julia Hiltonsmith

Discussion

2872 Complicating Care: Exploring the Messiness of Caring Relations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Within literature on health and rehabilitation, care is often rendered as positive, familial, life-sustaining acts (Thelen 2015) despite the fact that care can inspire resentment and extreme overwork, inflict violence (García 2016), and sustain systems of power (Stevenson 2014). As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa writes, classical feminist scholarship defines care as "anything done to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Tronto 1993). However, she pushes us to question what it means to "maintain" the structural violence that characterizes our world (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). This roundtable brings together medical anthropologists to interrogate care as a dialectical interplay between contradictory interpersonal and institutional relationships. Care can construct alternative imaginaries of collectivity and survival while also demanding a denunciation of the unjust social conditions that make interpersonal relationships of care necessary and shape the ways they unfold. Care can also cause harm towards the purpose of repair, inspire distance rather than intimacy, and impress abuse alongside love. In this discussion, we will explore the underbelly of care, thinking through the undertheorized perspectives of care-receivers, the ethically complex intentions of caring acts, and the state of care under neoliberal precaritization of social systems that shifts the responsibility for care onto families or renders care unrecognizable. We will discuss how our field sites, which range across institutional sites of community health around the world, have underscored how organizational and interpersonal provisions of care can coexist with, compose, resist, or obscure forms of neglect or refusal. Ultimately, we will aim to envision potential frameworks that better address the complexity of the care we witness, give, or receive by asking: How might attending to care practices in different ethnographic settings open up new ways of theorizing care? And how can we both affirm the centrality of care and attend to its inherent tensions and ambiguities, remaining in its messy potentials without turning to the comfort of definitive romanticization or critique (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017)?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Brienna Johnson-Morris, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Sienna Ruiz, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): Faith Cole, Sienna Ruiz, University of California, Los Angeles, Zoe Boudart, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Izem Aral, University of California, Los Angeles, Cristian Yanes, Brienna Johnson-Morris, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Diana Rinza

Discussant: Alize Arican, CUNY, City College, Department of Anthropology, Gender Studies, and International Studies

8716 Sonic Anthropology Radio - Ghosts in the Ether: A Hauntology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

Find us at the Marriott, second floor by the windows in front of Galerie 2, all day Friday and Saturday!

Sonic Anthropology Radio is a live-streaming pop-up radio station and online audio archive curated and produced by Tom Miller. Previous installments were presented at the AAA annual meetings in 2023 ("Toronto Mix") and 2024 ("Performance & Democracy"). Other editions have popped up elsewhere including the Society for Ethnomusicology Sounding Board in Austin, the North American Short Wave Listeners Association in Philadelphia, WGXC-FM Wave Farm Radio in New York State's Hudson Valley and WFMU worldwide.

In keeping with the theme of the 2025 AAA annual meeting, this year's proposed installation is 'Ghosts in the Ether: A Hauntology' - a participatory Internet radio station, livestreaming from the meeting site in New Orleans. Programs will include onsite interviews with AAA attendees, live readings, performances, remixes, sound documentaries and music. The broadcast will be archived on the Sonic Anthropology Radio website for future on-demand listening, free downloads and creative remixes.

Planned episodes and works already in progress include

Archive Fever: Ghost Stories - Wax-cylinder voices of the past from the world's oldest ethnographic sound archives, remixed and reimagined.

New Orleans Music Archives - Oral histories on New Orleans music history from the Special Collections archives at Tulane University.

Radio & Decolonization - Case studies by interdisciplinary scholars from the 2020-2024 project on Radio & Decolonization that was organized at the University of Denver and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Dr. John's Gris-Gris - Mac Rebennack speaks: previously unheard and unpublished interviews with the renowned late New Orleans pianist, singer, songwriter and Hoodoo man.

Je me souviens - An excursion through the common roots and divergent branches of Cajun and Acadian fiddle music from Québec to Louisiana.

Open Call - Live interviews with AAA attendees, and selections from their field recordings.

Activists of the Airwaves - Focus on community radio stations around the world.

This is Zambia Calling - Floating waves on the Zambezi River, from colonial radio to the 21st-century African mediascape.

The Haunted Forest - Field recordings of Siberian shamans from the last Soviet generation.

Spectral Wars - Historic shortwave broadcasts captured from past conflict zones and occupied territories: spy signals, official propaganda and clandestine messages sent to freedom fighters.

Radio Garden Roulette - Worldwide live radio sampling and interactive broadcast games.

Archived audio programs and information from past AAA Sonic Anthropology Radio installations can be accessed here:

<https://leonardo-cardoso.com/sonic-anthropology-radio/>

and here:

<https://sonic-anthropology.mixlr.com/collections/1022>

Tom Miller is Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology at Brooklyn College-CUNY City University of New York and an independent radio producer. He has been a presenter, exhibitor and/or discussant at more than a dozen AAA annual meetings. A former Guest Curator and Senior Scientific Assistant at the American Museum of Natural History, he curated and produced anthropology exhibitions and media installations for AMNH and the American Anthropological Association, including 'The Bureau of Memories: Archives & Ephemera' with the Ethnographic Terminalia collective. Dr. Miller's degrees are from Columbia (PhD in Anthropology) and Wesleyan (Honors in Music).

Organizer(s): Tom Miller

2778 There is a House: Untimely Dwellings

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

THERE IS A HOUSE invites reflections on ghostly dwellings. Houses are anchors of social relationships and forms of life, but can also be out of joint and, as such, unassimilable into the prevailing lexicon of culture and politics. They are concrete units with inside and outside, back and front, split and leveled, that shape and are shaped by relations of partition and containment. But they are also material indexes that refer beyond themselves by engaging other signifiers such as speculative finance, war, conceptions of heritage, of the sacred, of domesticity, or nature, and that anchor the house in one way or another. The house that there is can be still standing or in a state of abandonment, renovation and addition, destruction, or ruin, as in Benjamin's oppressive rubble of history, and, as such, produce a disjuncture in time and space and occasion reflection on the limits of obliteration and conventional ways of seeing. Sketches and biographies of houses might bring forth architectural planning, social relationships, political worlds, forms of life, as well as death. Participants might reflect on these relations and forms or the forces of enclosure and destruction—such as liberal and neoliberal vocabularies, settler colonial states, or climate change encroachments—that surround them. Houses built anew involve some form of erasure of what came

before, or testimonies to what remains, in ways that make archaeological excavations open-ended narratives into and about ancestrality. A house that there is might probe the status quo, which, to paraphrase August Strindberg, is where the real catastrophe lives, or, alternatively, highlight the untimely character of the dwelling for concepts and images of a future yet unknown. This panel will bring into conversation various angles whose common focus is the house. Acknowledging the classic place such an object occupies in anthropological theory, we propose to explore new iterations of, not just a house, but adverbially activated housings that are both experientially felt and analytically examined from within a variety of perspectives.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Milad Odabaei , Maria Jose de Abreu, Columbia University

Chair: Milad Odabaei

Presenter(s): Aamer Ibraheem, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology, Milad Odabaei, Moad Musbahi, Princeton University, Gaston Gordillo, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Basit Iqbal, McMaster University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Catherine Fennell, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Part That Has Two Parts

What happens when the house is overwhelmed by welcome and unwelcome residents, when it is suffocated by competing claims of belonging, and when it becomes uninhabitable precisely because it is overcrowded with dwellers? I take my title from a concept of the political proposed by Jacques Rancière, reworking it with a radical twist. For Rancière, those who inhabit such unintelligible and anonymous modes of living are privileged subjects of politics, as they have the potential to render visible the partiality of the system. I am preoccupied with the opposite problem—with positions, places, and temporalities marked by an excess of legibility, where they are overcounted, over included, and simultaneously claimed by many. I ask how one's house takes shape and becomes overtly legible when it is governed by more than one sovereign state. Ever since the defeat of 1967, the occupied Golan Heights has been one of the most critical symbols of sovereignty in modern Syria. However, in the past decade, this very landscape has emerged as an urgent site to the conceptual understanding of the settler-national project across historic Palestine. Reflecting from the Golan Heights, a political space which resides neither inside nor outside one framework but is saturated by both. I illustrate what might be called "the part that has two parts," offering a reminder of how a single landscape can emerge as a site that is also internal to multiple political orders and regimes of duration.

Presenter(s): Aamer Ibraheem

Ghostly Dwellings as Political Indices

This presentation tells the story of a house in Kermanshah, a predominantly Kurdish city in Western Iran on the Iraqi border, to highlight the gap between political history and the experience of revolutionary Iran, and to reflect on the limits of contemporary politics of origin and place. Drawing on familial memories, narratives, and images, including my own, I highlight three historical-political

moments in the house's story: the mid-twentieth century, when the house served as one of the last vestiges of an urban way of life centered around the bazaar economy and land ownership; the 1979 Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), when, at a time of ethnic and religious sectarianism and geopolitical violence, the house served as a hub for the distribution of medicine in the region and as a hiding place for a leftist revolutionary on the run from the government; and the present, where the uninhabitable house sits disjointedly next to apartment buildings and much newer constructions, serving as an index of an unresolved past. I reflect on how the house animates political and moral emotions, enables discourse, and demands interpretations. Following David Scott and Talal Asad, I suggest that the house fosters a tragic political orientation marked by humility and responsibility.

Presenter(s): Milad Odabaei

An implausible beseechment: when the disappeared can hear you whisper

The concept of visitation in Islamic practice, ziyaret, is a periodic journey seeking beseechment from a buried body, out in the city, with the items representing this figure located in the domestic space as photographs or relics. Ziyaret are a way to maintain the public locatability of the dead and create personal routes/roots to them from individual points of departure [Ghazzālī 1989]. The visitation is a suture that maintains the privacy of the home with a web of relations that exist out in the world, characterized by different forms of speech. In March of 2013, armed men ideologically opposed to this religious practice set out to destroy the tomb of Sidi Andulsi in Tajoura, Libya and yet found the body of the saint had been disappeared. In a series of visits with members of my family who held personal connection to this site, knowledge of a re-burial was narrated to us. The body was placed in the backyard of the private home of one of Sidi Andulsi's followers, with its location known only to an inner circle to protect it from further violence. In describing the co-habitation of this devout family with the saint, whose daily life was interrupted due to the immediate proximity, I will highlight the catastrophe of disappearance as it impacts personal and political life in Libya. This paper questions the role that spiritual authority has, in its emergence from the desaturation of state power and necessity for personal attachments in undertaking such fieldwork.

Presenter(s): Moad Musbahi

The Rubble of Gaza

This presentation reflects on the affective power of the rubble of Gaza, and in particular its capacity to affect the Palestinian people who engage daily with its materiality and also its capacity to affect those of us who are disturbed by that rubble from the distance. Based on first-hand accounts shared on social media by Palestinians and journalistic pieces, I describe, first, how the rubble in Gaza has become the most potent symbol of the genocidal levels of destruction unleashed on Palestine by Israel. This is therefore rubble haunted by the ghostly presence of the more than 60,000 dead, most of whom died crushed by the rubble of bombed out buildings and remain buried there. Yet I also describe how people in Gaza have engaged positively and creatively with the rubble

of their cities: for instance, men using it as construction material to rebuild homes, children appropriating it as playgrounds, or artists using it to create public art that highlight Palestinian steadfastness. These engagements do not negate the pain and the ghosts evoked by the rubble but reminds us that subaltern people worldwide often draw on rubble to rebuild disrupted worlds and envision alternative futures.

Presenter(s): Gaston Gordillo

Domicide and the Ruination of Form

Among the Syrian regime's repertoire of techniques of dispossession and extermination lay what some have called "domicide": the destruction of home (Azzouz 2023). My displaced interlocutors showed me, over and over, images and video footage of ghost cities: East Aleppo, Ghouta, Idlib, and Homs reduced to rubble, slabs of concrete and twisted rebar, their names become emblems of ruin (kharab). A world gone flat. Other scholars have examined how sites of displacement from home then turn into spaces of resilience, as refugee camps and tent settlements transform "from shelters to dwellings" (Dalal 2022). I myself have argued that Zaatari Refugee Camp in north Jordan became, through the sharia studies of some of my interlocutors, a site of sustenance and passage (Iqbal 2025). Here, however, I follow an attempted return to home: a reluctant revolutionary, who long ached to return to Syria, was finally able to do so in early 2025. This paper outlines his futile effort to inhabit his ruined house, prompting a reflection on what Yassin al-Haj Saleh (2021) calls the ruination of form in the destruction of Syria—a ruination that touches both bodies and buildings, leaving them unrecognizable: examples from a parallel, hellish world, that is also our own.

Presenter(s): Basit Iqbal

Discussion

2406 Engaged Anthropology: Illuminating the Crevices of Urban Inequalities

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Engaged anthropology is uniquely positioned to expose the hidden forces that obscure the material and immaterial impact of social and structural inequalities in contemporary societies. Further, engaged research emphasizes ethical accountability, relevance, collaboration and specificity to contribute to change in local contexts. As illustrated by Laura Nader, by asking questions up, down and sideways, anthropologists are astute at interrogating power. Engaged anthropological praxis is highly relevant in the context of Memphis, a majority Black city in a red state, where the legacies of redlining and other race-based policies continue to be visible in spatial and built environments as well as in resource distribution. Such inequitable living conditions have led to environmental injustices and uneven development in the most vulnerable areas of the city. Despite the city's reputation as a center for medical research and care, health outcomes in Memphis are highly

unequal from birth to death. In the crevices between the failures of the local, regional, and national governments to respond in meaningful ways to these conditions, numerous nonprofit and grassroots organizations are attempting creative, and sometimes subversive, strategies to build solidarity, make visible inequitable policies and practices, and push for systemic change.

Papers in this session highlight anthropological research conducted with and by the next generation of engaged anthropologists in Memphis. They collectively explore how Memphis and other places are shaped by local, regional and national forces, both visible and invisible. What are the relationships of power that shape urban and healthcare landscapes? What features are unique to the Memphis context? How do grassroots organizations, nonprofits and other members of civil society work towards ethical, collaborative and transformative practices to build the kinds of communities they want to live in? As Memphis residents, how can anthropologists best collaborate in efforts to make systemic change?

The individual papers take up themes of authenticity and equity of heritage tourism, question the meanings and practices of inclusive philanthropy, examine the relationship between space, emotion, and masculinity, explore structural barriers to cancer treatment, interrogate the ways nonprofit ideologies shape organizational partnerships, and trace the environmental risks of development on the city's drinking water. While diverse in theoretical orientation and subject matter, they all share an attention to the ways cities are shaped by and shape unequal social relationships, the dynamics within and between nonprofit organizations, and the possibilities for social transformation. Finally, this session asks participants to critically consider the role of engaged anthropology in confronting systemic inequities, amplifying silenced voices, and shaping futures of our communities and the discipline.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Katherine Lambert-Pennington, University of Memphis, Kathryn Hicks, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kathryn Hicks, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, William Robertson, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Caroline Warner, Olatomiwa Olusesi, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Samson Mobashar, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Jordan Spuryer, Trinity Chism, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, William Babcock

Discussant: Megan Carney, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Erin Mellett, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): "That Memphis Sound": Tourism, Authenticity, and Complexity in Memphis Music Venues

The concept of a "music city" is an emerging designation used in Urban Studies, urban planning, and community development to discuss cities where music is foundational to the city's cultural identity and contributes to the city beyond the music industry. Cultural heritage tourism, whether historic or contemporary musical tradition, is one such contribution. In places like Memphis, known as the home of the Blues, Soul, and Rock and Roll, musical legacies bring visitors from

around the world. Yet, the well-known narratives of B.B. King, Elvis, and Beale Street obscure the multi-layered dynamics of the local music ecosystem. This paper considers venues as a key site for exploring a complexity model of authenticity and interrogates the way music cities use their cultural heritage as capital and the challenges therein. Drawing on interviews with independent venue operators and participant observation at shows in midtown Memphis, my analysis suggests that authenticity, legacy, and equity are central to how venue operators assert their contributions to the music ecosystem. I argue that they negotiate negative authenticity (stigmatized behaviors present in a tourist location) through specific forms of cultural and social capital, like intentionally creating music spaces for residents and build community, to generate the economic capital necessary to survive. I conclude by pointing to the importance of interrogating the complexity of authenticity to increase equity in music cities.

Presenter(s): Caroline Warner

YOUTH, AGENCY, AND IMPACT: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PHILANTHROPY AND YOUTH-LED SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

As the world continues to experience increasing levels of global inequalities, young people, who have often been seen as mere recipients of developmental policies and projects, are emerging as agents of social transformation. Taking as its point of departure the inclusive philanthropic practices of Peace First, a nonprofit organization that supports youth-initiated innovation in 166 countries, this paper asks, how do young change-makers navigate systemic barriers and leverage available resources to drive transformation? Drawing on ethnographic insights, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires, this paper traces the change-making journeys of young social innovators in the global South. By highlighting the agency of young grant recipients, I explore how historical inequities continue to influence contemporary philanthropic practices and explore the potential for participatory grantmaking to create pathways for systemic transformation. My analysis suggests that while young innovators' use of strategies like storytelling, peer mentorship, and localized innovation to overcome systemic obstacles and create impact that outlives the grant cycle, past inequities continue to express themselves in current funding practices. Ultimately, this paper suggests that philanthropic institutions must move beyond assumptions of impact and towards a more collaborative and reflexive model of support; one that both funds young grassroots changemakers AND actively learns from and with them.

Presenter(s): Olatomiwa Olusesi

The Impact of Ideologies on Memphis Nonprofits

While typically overlooked, prevailing ideologies guide and shape the work of nonprofit organizations. Understanding the relationship between these ideologies and the ontology of a nonprofit can help explain organizational practices, perceptions, and impact. Altogether, these dynamics produce ripple effects that extend beyond any single organization, shaping the realities of the personnel they employ, the communities they aim to serve, and even other organizations. This paper explores the impact of ideologies on a heterogeneous group of organizations conducting and

supporting community development and human service work in Memphis, Tennessee. Their organizational positionalities are arrayed along a vertical slice, ranging from local grassroots and community-based organizations to philanthropy and a large-scale thinktank. My analysis draws on semi-structured interviews with representatives from each organization. It examines the relationships between the foundational ideologies articulated within each organization—by both the institution and its personnel—and routine operating paradigms. My work highlights meaningful convergences and divergences that are rooted in subtly differing worldviews and contributes to nuanced understanding of the interplay between individual assumptions, ideologies, organizational practice, perception, and impact.

Presenter(s): Samson Mobashar

Protecting Memphis' Water: The Hidden Threats to the Memphis Sand Aquifer

The Memphis Sand Aquifer represents a vital source of fresh, clean drinking water for the City of Memphis, yet its sustainability faces significant threats from rapid urban development and inadequate transparency. Recent developments such as Blue Oval City and XAI have intensified concerns about the aquifer's structural integrity and water quality. This paper explores the complex dynamics between industrial expansion and public health, focusing on the network of agencies, including the Memphis Health Department, MLGW, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, as well as private corporations involved in aquifer extraction. Despite their critical roles in managing and protecting this resource, these stakeholders often operate behind the scenes with limited public oversight or community engagement. I examine how current monitoring practices and regulatory frameworks obscure the impact of their decisions and perpetuate risks, particularly for adjacent marginalized communities that have historically carried the burden of environmental injustices. Analyzing both publicly documents and data that remains largely unseen, this paper begins to unearth the cumulative impacts of industrial activities on aquifer sustainability, and how insufficient water quality data and corporate influence on policy contribute to public distrust. I argue for stronger regulatory mechanisms, increased community input and ethical responsibility to protect Memphis' essential water supply.

Presenter(s): Jordan Spuryer

Products of Our Environment: How Ethnographic Methods Can be used by Young Black Men to Understand their Emotions as a Practice

Situated in the largest majority black city in the United States, Memphis, TN, this paper draws on a study of the relationship of physical space and the practice of emotion among young black men. Conducted in collaboration with Helping Inspire Men (HIM), a Memphis-based nonprofit that employs culturally relevant practices to foster conversations among black men designed to provide black men with tools to better understand their emotions, this engages young black men in ethnographic mapping and autoethnography to trace sites of discipline and emotional expressions. Following Allen et.al's assertion that "black masculinities might be understood to be a collection of practices constructed through social anxiety and fear of black men...mediated through particular

hegemonic, discursive, and repressive practices" (2019, 20), I explore what practices young black men use to understand their emotions, how these emotions are interpreted, and how this may manifest depending on their environments. I argue that emotional practices are formed by specific social settings and power relations that enable and/or disable young black men to be able to name, mobilize, communicate, and regulate their emotions according to their environment. I conclude by considering how ethnographic tools might serve as a personal resource for individuals situated in systems of power to understand how their emotions and lived experiences are impacted by their environment.

Presenter(s): Trinity Chism

An Anthropological View of Biomedical Enactments of Cancer in Memphis, Tennessee

The domain of biomedicine has controlled the diagnosis, management, and treatment of cancer for over a century, directly interacting with and creating the patient's subjective experiences of cancer. Almost all cancer treatments intersect with biomedical practices, procedures, and knowledge, which incorporate definitions of illness and disease within the physical body, leaving social realities of health and disease unexamined. The intensive physical and social interactions in the biomedical model of cancer actively contribute to the subjective experience of patients knowing their bodies with cancer. Drawing from research at a cancer center in Memphis, I examine the ways that biomedical practices and discourses enact cancer, bringing it into reality and influencing how cancer is felt, known, and experienced. Through clinical observation, interviews, and work with a national trial of the Enhancing Oncology Model, this paper explores how patient-reported outcomes reveal the multiplicities of knowing cancer based on context, setting, and practices. Taking steps toward seeing cancer beyond strict biological approaches, I examine the ways clinicians, through their practices and discourses, construct cancer as a biopsychosocial process. This paper directly addresses the dualism between the cancerous body as a medical object and medical subject. I suggest that by addressing cancer as multiplicities, we can better treat the physical and social realities of cancer.

Presenter(s): William Babcock

Discussion

4168 Vital Remains: Spectral Materiality in Environmental Toxicity

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel builds upon Avery Gordon's influential concept of haunting as a social fact that "refers or directs us to what is living and breathing in the place blinded from view: people, places, histories, knowledge, memories, ways of life, ideas" (Gordon 2017). Anthropologists have applied Gordon's framework to understand demands of justice and ways to address the unspeakable following state violence (Strong 2021), war (Rubaii 2025), and economic-political instability (Klima 2019). This literature positions the spectral as an absent presence, often outside space and time (Langford

2016; Good et al. 2022). We propose expanding the conversation to examine spectral materialities where haunting manifests through vital remains in land and waterscapes. The temporalities of "slow violence" (Nixon 2011) and "alterlife" (Murphy 2017) produced through environmental destruction, toxicity, and racism reshape our understanding of spectral presence. We ask: How might we also consider those elements that may not "live or breathe"-oil, pesticides, pollutants-yet still actively reconfigure place? Can the concept of "vital remains" help us attend to the accumulation of environmental harm not merely as remnants of the past but as active forces shaping the present? This panel investigates how the disruptive return of vital remains might enrich our understanding of the ghostly in material contexts.

"Vital" describes the liveliness and force of material substances (Gordillo 2014; Lyons 2020). "Remain" functions both as a noun describing materiality-pesticides, pollution, and tidal waters-that defy oppositions of absence and presence and as a verb signifying the ongoing haunting of environmental racism, degradation, and toxicity. From pesticides in Karen refugee camps to petrochemical pollution in post-Franco Catalonia, we examine toxic substances as spectral presences that are "blinded from view" but engage other senses. From oil spills interacting with algae in Turkey's Gulf of Izmit to plantation histories in South Carolina's tidal waters, we illustrate how environmental materials disrupt linear time as "what seems to be out front, the future, comes back in advance: from the past" (Derrida 1993). While the landscapes we study are marked by traces of environmental degradation, extraction, and toxicity, this panel also highlights moments where nature strikes back, refugees refuse, and communities engage in liberatory movements. Drawing on Derrida's proposition that "learning to live with ghosts" (1993) creates possibilities for more just modes of existence, we suggest that recognizing the vitality of materiality allows us to acknowledge and respond to the spectral presence of environmental toxicity and its ethical demands upon us.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Eda Tarak, Brown University, Natalie Ng

Chair: Natalie Ng

Presenter(s): Terese Gagnon, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Eda Tarak, Brown University, Kathryn Gougelet, Brian Walter, James Madison University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Kristina Lyons, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Toxic Remains and the Hauntings of Home: Critiquing Tasteless Life in Mae La Camp

I investigate sensory politics in Indigenous Karen refugees' discourses about living and dying with synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides in Mae La refugee camp. In Mae La, located on the Thailand-Myanmar border, gardens have become a means of survival in the nightmarish wake of "humanitarian abandonment" (Dunn 2017) since the mid-2000s. A humanitarian imperative of "self-reliance" necessitates that camp residents sell the produce from their gardens in the camp market to make ends meet. Selling to the camp market prompts many gardeners to adopt the use

of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides which are considered by residents to grow "bigger", "more beautiful" vegetables thought to sell better at the market. This is even while many residents critique the use of synthetic inputs as "unhealthy" and the camps as a place where "tasteless" and "old-tasting" food is grown. My interlocutors contrasted this with the absent presence of "flavorful", "healthy" and "fresh-tasting foods" remembered and longed for from their home villages. Such sensory critique and refusal took on a darker edge when—seemingly exhausted by the imperative to sustain bodily life in the absence of freedom of movement and self-determination—some camp residents chose to take their own lives by ingesting these same herbicides and pesticides. This stark biopolitical refusal of tasteless life creates new forms of haunting in the camp.

Presenter(s): Terese Gagnon

Environmental Disaster as Time Out of Sequence: Algal Phase Shifts of Oil

In August 1999, the faultline passing through the Gulf of Izmit, a narrow basin crowded with an oil refinery and multiple heavy chemical industries between the Black and Mediterranean Seas, broke, causing a 7.9 magnitude earthquake. The coastal ground where the refinery stood was almost liquified, causing PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) to leak into the sea from uncontrolled discharges of petroleum industries for weeks. Marine biologists traced the molecular dialogues between spilled oil chemicals and algal proliferation in the Gulf for the following decade. In 2007, an unexpected algal aggravation took over the majority of the water column. Similar algal formations repeated in 2015 and turned into a major breakout in 2021. This paper attends to the 8-year gap between the 1999 earthquake and the first sighting of the algal aggravation as a space of spectral temporality, time out of sequence, where the interactions between oil remains and the algae were negotiating the ecological rupture opened by the sudden spill from the refinery. The seafloor archives the spilled chemicals for decades while coastal upwelling opens their circulation. Looking through the molecular conversations between algae and spilled oil, within the speculative space of the temporal gap between the spill and the aggravation, the environmental disaster appears as an act of vital materiality and a temporal collapse where the spill of 1999 mixes with the aggravates of 2007 and further.

Presenter(s): Eda Tarak

"They Take Advantage of the Night:" Spectral Fascisms between Mercè Rodoreda's Death in Spring and Nighttime Pollution in Petrochemical Catalonia

When the renowned Catalan writer Mercè Rodoreda returned to Barcelona after living in exile during the Franco regime, she wrote her final novel Death in Spring. Based in a fictional mountainous Catalan town, Rodoreda's characters navigate landscapes that threaten fear and violence: rivers groan, neighbors cannot be trusted, bodies of the dead are buried in living trees. Night becomes a time to navigate these landscapes and discover the dark underbelly of the mountain town. As an ethnographer, the novel haunted my fieldwork in Tarragona, Spain, a place in which the Franco regime's implementation of petrochemical infrastructure lives on in altered

ecosystems and chronic illness. In this paper, I explore the ways in which Rodoreda's treatment of the spectral might train us to ethnographically read post-fascist and emerging neo-fascist violences that act upon the nexus of bodies and landscapes. I juxtapose Rodoreda's writing about

the night with a phrase that my interlocutors used when discussing petrochemical pollution: "they take advantage of the night," they'd say, to pollute while residents are sleeping. I consider the haunting of nighttime pollution alongside the material qualities of volatile organic compounds that are especially noticeable at night and foundational to plastic production as petrochemical industries re-assert their relevance for the future. How might Rodoreda's final novel enable us to trace spectral presences, whose forms, of course, shift at night?

Presenter(s): Kathryn Gougelet

Tidal Hauntings: The Maintenance of Violence and Traces of Liberation

In the South Carolina Lowcountry, the ghostly forms of plantations can be glimpsed from above in the checkerboard of rice fields slowly holding water as they dissolve into the sea, a testament to the enduring influence of slavery on the built and natural environment. Closer to the ground, attendant white supremacist projects mark, shift, and route water across the landscape— reconstruction-era phosphate mounds mire runoff, segregationist drainage ditches separate communities, and legacy pollutants swirl in floodwaters. In the current rapid sea-level rise, tidal water is colloquially described as animate, finicky, and spectral in that: it "remembers," "knows no boundaries," and "has nowhere to go." I explore how flows of water and the toxins they carry illuminate the conduits for past violences into the present, while also considering material traces in the environment that might not have the same capacity for endurance. How do Lowcountry landscapes remain haunted by whiteness while emancipatory environmental histories seem to dissipate? Though the Lowcountry is often figured as a haunted space, this risks eliding active projects and continual maintenance required to hold its eroding form. White supremacy continues to shape landscapes of extraction and oppression. But conversely, the Lowcountry is also saturated with the liberatory traces of fugitivity, marronage, and abolition—forces that haunt white elites—yet hold the possibilities of reconfiguring coastal horizons.

Presenter(s): Brian Walter

Discussion

2775 Between the Studium and Punctum: Omissions, Refusals, and New Modes of Visual Witnessing

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable interrogates the power and implications of the images we choose not to create or share, moments intentionally left unrecorded or hidden from public view. Drawing on theoretical insights from Ariella Azoulay, we ask: What does it mean to withhold photographic evidence of

painful or quotidian encounters? In not showing these encounters, do we disrupt violent representational practices or risk replicating them in more insidious ways? Our discussion highlights how memory, responsibility, and complicity are entangled in the seemingly simple act of pressing, or refusing to press, the shutter.

We examine photographs that remain unrealized or fail to surface due to ethical concerns, trauma, or uncertainty about how best to depict haunting realities shaped by racial, colonial, and political forces. Paradoxically, these absent images carry their own haunting presence: they remind us that seeing is not always believing and that what remains unseen may exert just as much influence on our understanding of the world. Drawing on Azoulay's idea that photography "always includes more than what one wants it to contain," we acknowledge how images exceed their frames, conditioned by shifting contexts of creation, circulation, and interpretation. By focusing on moments when the camera or its products are deliberately withheld, this roundtable moves beyond traditional debates on visual documentation, suggesting that such refusals and omissions can challenge dominant "scopic" regimes and invite alternative modes of witnessing. In doing so, we aim to open new conversations about the ethical stakes of photographic practice and the transformative potential of writing through what cannot, or should not, be captured on film.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Ulises Espinoza, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Camilo Leon-Quijano, National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Ulises Espinoza, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology, Yair Agmon, Miranda Dahlin, University of California, Los Angeles, Harris Solomon, Duke University, Viki Eagle, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Alexandra Diana Hanae Sastrawati, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Jason De Leon, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA

2529 Re-incarnation: The Afterlives of Past Events in Present Bodies.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The notion of "the specter" (Derrida 1994) is useful to engage ethnographically the world of spirits while also allowing for a treatment of time that accounts for what is neither fully present nor absent, but instead lingers. The papers in this panel address the ways in which various ghosts of the past not only haunt the present, but actually re-materialize in living human bodies. Engaging the idea of re-incarnation to explore how oppression and resilience, displacement and attachment, pain and joy, are reanimated through new bodies, we explore the perilous lives of seafarers from the Asian Global South, the afterlives of Ba'th Party rule among Syrian women farmworkers, the ghost-like faces of Brazilian women at the crack of dawn, and the racialized bodies of abandoned infants in 19th-century Peru. These papers move beyond the assumption that past experiences of the self and of territory (national or maritime) are ephemeral or ethereal, and analyze the specific ways in which specters linger and are experienced in the flesh of bodies that play host to the ghosts of

colonialism, slavery, and war.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Paloma Rodrigo Gonzales, Barnard College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Samuel Novacich

Presenter(s): Liang Wu, Cornell University, China Sajadian, Vassar College, Department of Anthropology, Paloma Rodrigo Gonzales, Barnard College, Department of Anthropology, Samuel Novacich

Discussant: Stephanie Love, University of Pittsburgh

Presentation(s): Maritime Mobility Violence of Seafaring: the Leviathan, the Argonauts, and the Deadly Sea of Global Supply Chains

From the legendary ghost ship Flying Dutchman to the phantom island Antillia and the monstrous cursed spirit Umibōzu, the sea has been a cross-cultural source, space, and symbol of powerful apparitions thanks to its unexplored and unforgiving nature. This presentation looks at seafaring as one of the most dangerous industries in the world and the lifeways of seafarers who regularly experience existential threats at sea, including extreme weather conditions, industrial hazards and risks, and looming piracy. I argue that the deadliness and dreadfulness of seafaring is not merely due to the perilous nature of the ocean, but also results from the neoliberal arrangement of capital and labor haunted by the specter of colonialism. My presentation examines the interplay between the "integral accident" (Virilio) of modern shipping's technological developments and the international political economy of crew circulation and control. Such interplay disproportionately subjects seafarers largely from the Global South regions of Asia to the maritime and mobility violence of shipping, as these modern "lascars" of global racial capitalism are circumnavigating not only physical currents but also market ones, with the unruliness of the sea being amplified by capital-induced climate change. My presentation thus sheds light on the invisibilized shipping industry with its uneven geography of social toll that delivers 90% of internationally traded goods and sustains everyday lives across the globe.

Presenter(s): Liang Wu

Inheriting Displacement: Afterlives of Ba'thism in Post-Asad Syria

The monumental fall of the Asad family's 54-year regime in Syria on December 8, 2024 was undoubtedly a watershed. Its profound significance – to all those who lived in fear and languished in the regime's prisons, to the families of the dead and the disappeared, and to those who were forcibly displaced – cannot be underestimated. But moments of transition are also moments of inheritance, no matter how seemingly profound the break with the past. This paper reflects on the many afterlives of Ba'th Party rule among Syrian women farmworkers from the Euphrates region, based on two years of ethnographic research at the Lebanese-Syrian border. Tracking their reckonings of time spanning the long arc of Syria's transition from a state-led model of development, the fraught aftermaths of land reform, the liberalization of Syria's economy that pushed their families into labor migration, the uncertainties of war and displacement, and the

prospects of return that confront them at this momentous juncture, the paper reflects on the ghostly traces of agrarian displacement that these workers have inherited and continue to navigate in their daily lives. Less a wholesale 'transition' to a new era than an afterlife of the many struggles that came before, this is an embodied experience of time that is shot through with grief, attachment, and reckoning with obligations to the living and the dead after more than a decade of war and generations of rural displacement.

Presenter(s): China Sajadian

Inscribing the Spectral: Registers and the Racialization of Orphans in Late-19th-Century Lima, Peru

Registers produced in Lima's Santa Ana Hospital between 1890 and 1900, present two sets of inscriptions: birth certificates, and the registration of nursing orphans surrendered to the hospital's care. While orphan records specify without exception a racial category for every infant, Santa Ana's birth records never overtly identify a child's racial identity. This contrast reveals two dynamics that are central to race relations in Peru. First, the taxonomy that is created, not by placing people into specific racial categories, but by separating those who are categorized into "a race," from those who are not. Second, the role that family relations play in avoiding explicit racial categorizations and allowing mobility towards, or in-and-out of, whiter racial identities. Orphans present an exceptional opportunity to reclaim the importance of the body in the experience of race in Peru. In the absence of social networks, known lineages, and other racial/cultural signifiers, their phenotypical body became increasingly significant as evidence of otherwise volatile racial identities. In Peru, the inauguration of an independent liberal state ostensibly erased colonial hierarchies and promised equality for all. This paper argues that it was during the early Republican period that incorporeal social differences were actually inscribed on the phenotypic body.

Presenter(s): Paloma Rodrigo Gonzales

When Makeup Lingers Long After the Party: Late Nights and Becoming a Zombie in Mangueira

While working with makeup artists and their clients in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro in 2018 and 2019, I often heard snickers over people's appearances, usually articulated as technical critiques of their makeup. One criticism stands out from what were otherwise relatively mundane aesthetic assessments. Aimed at young, Afro-Brazilian women returning home from a night out at the baile funk or local samba school – and still dressed for the night and decorated with bold cosmetics – these critiques highlighted a disjuncture between made-up faces and the embodied fatigue of staying out late. Negative attention often came from the moto-taxi drivers who brought these women home. The drivers, mostly young men, described the women as ghost-like in the light of dawn, calling them "zombies" for the odd contrast created by resilient layers of makeup perfectly preserved above faces that had been drained of blood, energy, and color. This paper argues that such playful disdain is more than typical misogynoir and stems also from the problem of getting stuck in one's face. While theorists often describe the surface of the body and especially the face as mutable and fluid, at least relative to the assumed fixity of essentialized interiors, these episodes invert those frameworks. Indeed, it is the problem of frozen faces, suspended artificially

as bold makeup above ephemeral states of being, that produces the comical, unsettling, and uncanny appearance of the zombie.

Presenter(s): Samuel Novacich

Discussion

1942 From Refusal to Repair: Global Ethnographic Perspectives

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Inspired by Professor Deborah Thomas's timely contribution to the 2024 Annual Review of Anthropology, "Refusal (and Repair)," this panel brings together ethnographic engagements with refusal as a political practice and explores its generative relationship to repair in the face of systemic oppression and exploitation.

Taking refusal not merely as resistance, but as an active reimagining of political and social possibilities, our panel asks: how can acts of refusal lay the groundwork for repair-whether in restoring community ties, reconfiguring power relations, or envisioning futures beyond oppressive and extractive systems? We treat refusal as a necessary precondition for repair: a means of unsettling the legitimacy of dominant structures and creating openings for renewal, regeneration, and reparation.

This session features six doctoral students at different stages of dissertation writing, each drawing on recent ethnographic research. Their papers examine practices of refusal across diverse contexts: Black activists navigating the legacies of the Dutch empire, unionized Latino tenants in Los Angeles, anti-poverty organizers in austerity Britain, West African migrant youth in France, grassroots Catholic actors in the United States, and queer Muslims* in Berlin. Together, these cases illuminate refusal as both a critique of the present and a catalyst for imagining otherwise.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Lea Coffineau, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Ramon de Haan, The New School for Social Research, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ramon de Haan, The New School for Social Research, Department of Anthropology, Paulo Suarez, CUNY, The Graduate Center, Erin Simmons, Lea Coffineau, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Nathan Shearn, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Fufu Seref, CUNY Graduate Center, Center for Human Environments

Discussant: Miriam Ticktin, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Refusing the Afterlives of Slavery and Colonialism: Repair Activism in the Afro-Dutch Diaspora

In many ways, Black activists in the Afro-Dutch diaspora are part of the forefront of global developments in reparations and repair for colonialism and slavery. This presentation, based on multisited fieldwork among Black activists in Curaçao, Suriname, and the Netherlands, zooms into

a neglected corner of the African diaspora to ask: how are activists refusing the afterlives of slavery and colonialism and what alternative futures of repair do they work towards?

Catalyzed by key developments over the past decade—including the push to confront racism and the blackface figure "Zwarte Piet" in the Netherlands, Suriname's collaboration in CARICOM, and a reinvigorated civil society in non-independent Curaçao resisting a neocolonial Netherlands—movements for repair reached a crescendo after King Willem-Alexander in July 2023 apologized for the Dutch role in the Transatlantic slave trade, asked for forgiveness, and called for healing and repair. Yet refusal—i.e., the fight against the continuation of the afterlives—looks different in each context, despite a shared colonial history. Visions for repair and the strategies to reach them are likewise shaped by local conditions and manifestations of the afterlives. This presentation examines: (1) how the afterlives of slavery and colonialism are locally understood; (2) forms of activism present and their genealogies; and (3) the alternative futures of repair being envisioned and built.

Presenter(s): Ramon de Haan

Hegemony or Refusal? Migrant Tenants and Popular Politics in Los Angeles

In December 2023, the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU) rallied hundreds of people to march for the permanent freeze of annual rent hikes. Hikes allow landlords to increase the rents of tenants living in rent-controlled units at a rate determined by the city; however, during the COVID eviction moratorium, evictions were banned and rent hikes were "frozen". That summer, L.A. city government decided to unfreeze the hikes and increase them from the 3-5% standard to 7-9% in order to make up for landlords' losses during the moratorium. Although seemingly innocuous, these "landlord reparations" opened racialized low-income tenants to heightened risk of displacement.

LATU's march, "From Palestine to LA", threaded together different struggles under the banner of a concerted refusal to displacement. Its planning engaged dozens of working-class tenants, primarily indigenous migrants, through the formation of committees that incorporated a Oaxacan band and dance, a vigil, Mexican food, and popular theater to the march. The city rescinded its decision and compromised with a 4-6% increase; yet, it was not LATU's march that directly forced their arm, but the lobbying efforts of a coalition of non-profit organizations. Thinking with the category of refusal, my paper examines 1) how the march's explicit intentions ultimately folded within the hegemonic liberal compromise and 2) how the non-eventful excesses of its planning prefigure libidinal attachments to popular politics.

Presenter(s): Paulo Suarez

Time Against Transaction: refusal and repair in the British anti-poverty movement

After 14 years of austerity policy in the UK, brutal cuts to services, and the dismantling of a once robust welfare state, there was hope that 2024's new government would bring in much needed welfare reform. Now, in mid-2025, there have been reforms: sweeping new cuts to benefits, particularly affecting disabled people and their carers. It is estimated that the changes will push

roughly 250,000 people into relative poverty by 2030 (Murray 2025). Already in crisis mode after responding to the UK's departure from the EU, the social breakdown of COVID-19, and the subsequent "cost of living crisis," the anti-poverty movement is under increased pressure to find solutions, make an impact, and offer tangible—and measurable—results.

Drawing on ethnographic material with anti-poverty activists and community organizations across the UK, this paper explores work that meets this urgency with a refusal to rush to solutions and a refusal to understand change through the lens of traditional, quantifiable, metrics of success. In asking what potentialities and limitations this refusal engenders, particularly for how activist and community organizations engage with formal structures of power, this paper also begins to tease out alternative forms of evidence—narrative, relational, open-ended—that make space for different conceptualizations of change and open the possibility of repair.

Presenter(s): Erin Simmons

Refusal of Colonial Charity and Collective Politicization of West African Migrant Youth in France

Each year, thousands of young men and women walk through the doors of Paris' minority evaluation centers, seeking protection from child protective services. They have traveled from Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, entering France irregularly after "doing boza"; crossing the Mediterranean Sea aboard an overcrowded inflatable boat. The vast majority of them are denied the "unaccompanied minor" status, which would provide them with legal status until their majority, and choose to challenge the decision in juvenile court. During the six to twelve months leading up to the review of their case, they fall into a legal limbo where, neither children nor adults in the eyes of the French State, they are left to fend for themselves on the streets. Sleeping in public parks, they survive with tents, blankets, and hot meals donated by local migrant-aid associations.

In this context, young West African migrants have organized in Paris into a collective, refusing to keep silent and rely on humanitarian support. "We don't want food! If we wanted food, we would have stayed in Africa! We want a future!" Becoming loud and visible through frequent rallies and occupations, they reclaim political subjectivity by holding the French State accountable, if not for its failure to respect children's rights, then for the colonial debt incurred as a result of the continued exploitation of West Africa. This paper posits refusal as making space for repair at the individual and collective levels.

Presenter(s): Lea Coffineau

Radical Hospitality as Theopolitics? Care, Critique, and Catholicism in the United States

As nation-states increasingly eschew their political obligations to refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants—or people on the move—faith communities are stepping up to provide critical material aid: food, water, shelter, and clothes. This paper explores the moral and political valences of radical hospitality, a mode of care and critique enacted by grassroots Catholic actors in the contemporary United States, and asks whether radical hospitality works to constitute a form of theopolitics. The first part of the paper describes the context surrounding an ongoing legal case

involving Annunciation House—a Catholic nonprofit that operates migrant shelters at the US-Mexico border—and suggests that when the state's political obligations to people on the move recede, the moral obligations of people of faith become a potent site of political contestation, rendering radical hospitality a juridical problem for American political secularism. The second part of the paper examines radical hospitality as a mode of generating counter-hegemonic social formations based on relations of mutuality, horizontality, and collective responsibility, with a focus on the Catholic Worker in New York City. The goal is to contextualize radical hospitality within Catholic theological traditions and trace the ways in which its relations, valences, and practices not only present a challenge to secular state power but also offer alternative ways of living in the world together.

Presenter(s): Nathan Shearn

Queer Refusal as Holding Space: Deportability, Queer Kinship, and Intimacy Beyond Love in Berlin

John Borneman approached kinship through the prism of caring and being cared for (2001), thus viewing practices of relating such as "feeding and living together" as central to the "making of kinship and relatedness" (Carsten 2020). However, Perveez Mody (2020) warned us that kinship is "equally about the dynamics of constraint, coercion and choice." Drawing on ethnographic data with queer Muslims* in Berlin, this paper examines the confluence of love, intimacy and care with power and racialized oppression.

With careful attention to my interlocutors' experience of deportability, I first formulate bordering relatedness structures as hegemonic prescriptions on the conventional nature and limits of interpersonal or communal dynamics. Focusing on the exclusive expectations within and categorical boundaries between "true romantic love," friendship, and allyship, I argue that they transform intimacy into a site of domination and that the selective care they govern is closely related to the selective harm of European border policies.

I then follow Deborah Thomas to suggest that queer refusal goes beyond an aspiration to the modern, free subjecthood and entails sets of practices toward repair. "Soli-marriage" and polyamory become crucial border-crossing relatedness practices to mend the harm of deportability. In their refusal, my interlocutors experiment with unique legal and affective kinship structures while holding space for their displaced/displaceable members.

Presenter(s): Fufu Seref

Discussion

5037 "Dissident Peace" Book Launch and Roundtable

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will stimulate a lively discussion around "Dissident Peace: Autonomous Struggles

and the State in Colombia." The book provides a rigorous reassessment of the terms of peacebuilding through an ethnography of ongoing struggles for autonomy, based on over fifteen years of research and activism in Colombia.

About the book:

In 2016, the peace accords between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC–EP) and the Colombian government promised to bring an end to over fifty years of armed conflict. Yet, despite widespread international acclaim and heavy investments in the peace process, war continued. By questioning the potential for peace under the aegis of the state, *Dissident Peace* opens up critical space from which to imagine more liberatory forms of peace. From the coca fields of southwestern Colombia to the negotiating table in Cuba, *Dissident Peace* brings the contradictions of peacebuilding and organizing to life. Throughout the book, Dest locates contemporary violence within longer histories of colonial capitalism and centers the lives and insights of black and indigenous communities in Colombia. He identifies "dissident peace" as a potent alternative to dominant, state-centric peace frameworks—one based on evolving principles of autonomy and self-determination by marginalized communities. With vital implications for social movements globally, this book provides a gripping account of what it means to struggle today.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Anthony Dest, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presenter(s): Christen Smith, University of Texas at Austin, Shreya Subramani, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Winifred Tate, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Mamyrah Prosper, Anthony Dest, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Discussant: Anthony Dest, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

8320 (Un-)black-boxing AI Agencies: Ghostly and Ghosted Machines, Part 1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The collection of technologies routinely thrown into the "AI" kitchen sink has become as ubiquitous as the value-laden narratives about them. While contemporary computational systems present genuinely new techno-scientific, machinic affordances, many of their supposed novelties are anything but—nor are the narratives, values, or interpretations assigned to them by individuals, groups, and institutionalized personae across both expert-technical and nonexpert domains. This panel explores how regimes of value, narratives, and implicit-to-explicit understandings of personhood and/or agency, reflexively framed as belonging to prior social spacetimes, continue to haunt AI in the present, not despite, but because of diverse narratives asserting its radical novelty (Choi and Babcock 2024). We ask: what enfolded, immaterialized, or absented agencies trail behind or snake through AI? How do epistemic and systemic violences—racism, sexism, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, ableism, and other intersectionally compounding oppressive

structures (Wilf 2023; Seaver 2022; Semel 2021; Benjamin 2019; Noble 2018)-linger, become ghosted from, and interpenetrate with the functioning and uses of, as well as narratives about, AI? And how does the functioning of AI get rendered inscrutable in some contexts-made "invisible by its own success" (Latour and Woolgar 1979)-while in others, it is opened wide to explanations with varying degrees of "truth," "facticity," or legitimization? This panel contributes to ethnographic explorations of AI by synergistically bringing together grounded-theoretical approaches to technological (un-)black-boxing from scholars across fields and (sub)subfields of anthropology (with a particular focus on linguistic and semiotic anthropology; Wortham and Reyes 2015), along with diverse (inter)disciplinary approaches to techno-scientific and material agencies, from STS and HCI to interactional sociology, sociolinguistics, the history of technology, and beyond.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Joshua Babcock, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Beth Semel, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Xin Qu, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Xinyue Liu, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Flamenbaum, California State University, Maria Giulia Dondero

Discussant: Beth Semel, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Becoming a ghostwriter: The scale of literary imagination

Internet literature is a born-digital literary ecosystem in China. Writers typically publish and distribute their first 15-20 chapters for free as a literary gift in the hopes that readers will subscribe for subsequent plots. When tracing the ecosystem of internet literature, an unexpected discovery surfaced from my literary anthropology fieldwork: an internet novelist was sentenced to 10 months in jail for employing AI as a ghostwriter to write 'forbidden narratives' including sexually explicit descriptions.

Machines become increasingly agentive in a Latourian sense (Latour, 1999; 1993) whereas humans seem merely 'language repeaters' in a Derridean sense (Miller, 2009; Derrida, 1998; 1984). Creative writers are meanwhile accused of offloading their literary intention to innocent machines. Between humans and AI, who, then, is whose ghostwriter? To whom do these AI-generated literary works belong, linguistically, epistemologically and legally? Building on two years of ethnographic fieldwork with Chinese creative writers and one year of online textual fieldwork, this paper examines, under the rubric of 'ghostwriting', the ownership of literary imagination through the linguistic, literary and legal lenses. More broadly, this project contributes to the field of literary anthropology by integrating cognitive science, linguistic anthropology and literary studies.

Presenter(s): Xin Qu

In Attaining the Unattainable: Agency and Creativity in AI-generated Liminal Space

The rise of Generative AI (GenAI) begets a novel modality of human-machine interaction featuring enhanced feedback, reduced human control and intensified machine agency. It also introduces

affordances and constraints to human creativity, along with opportunities and challenges to practitioners in the creative industry.

Artists and technicians experiment with GenAI to generate content, usually following the pipeline of "human-intended prompt"- "machine-generated content"- "human-finalized outcome". Noticeably, to patch the inevitable gaps between the expected result and the AI-generated content involves not only humans' creative agency, but also inspirations drawn from machine-generated contents. The process of attaining "the unattainable" (Bellour 1975 & 2010) hence reflects the immaterialized machine agency conjured in a cognitive space.

Drawing from ethnographic research in an AI-powered tech start-up, along with a close study of a human artist's practice aided by GenAI, this paper initiates a semiotic reading of the AI-involved creative process. It advocates for theorizing the gap between human expectations and machine-generated contents, to explore the potential creativity and dynamics of human/machine agency conceived therewith. Based on Victor Turner's "liminality" (1969), an anthropological concept that signifies concurrent ambiguity and possibilities in transition, this paper explores the potential of reading the gap as an AI-generated liminal space.

Presenter(s): Xinyue Liu

Generating Anxiety: students' ethical grappling with generative AI, authorship, and the self

With AI technologies framed as the newest tool in a plagiarism arms race, are students' technosocial views on authorship and the self diverging from the Romantic notion of authorship at the root of academia's practices, as Blum's (2010) ethnography of internet plagiarism suggested over a decade ago? Interviews with current undergrads reveal many aren't inclined to engage with AI at all, much less to "cheat." Drawn from a larger ethnographic project on student and faculty AI perspectives, this paper explores student narratives around AI as they grapple to ethically position themselves vis-à-vis these and other technologies. A language ideological lens reveals students' fraught relationship with AI's affordances for authorship is informed less by transactional perspectives on higher ed or the allure of remix culture (as Blum argued), than by anxieties around their own efforts being misapprehended as AI-generated, alongside a moral logic centering agency over consumption. The ethical landscape students articulate is haunted by neoliberal fears around 'authentic' self-making and distinction (Gershon 2014, Hsiao 2022); the standardizing specters of racial capitalism, classism, and ableism (Smalls 2021); and longing for the ostensibly less technologically-entangled 90s. All this suggests students are increasingly aligned to Romantic notions of authorship and self-making—albeit with a context collapse (Marwick & Boyd 2011) and animation (Silvio 2010) informed twist.

Presenter(s): Rachel Flamenbaum

Visual Stylistic Stereotypes in Generative AI: A Semiotic Enquiry on Enunciative Agencies

Drawing on a corpus of images produced by diffusion models such as Midjourney and DALL·E, this paper explores how the stereotypification of visual forms influences our perception, visual culture,

as well as aesthetic and moral values. Unlike much of the existing literature on Generative AI—which largely focuses on sociocultural stereotypes (such as race or gender and other discriminatory structures), situating them on the plane of content—I focus on the formal plane of expression to address "stylistic stereotypes," i.e., simplification and homogenization of visual compositions. I will identify visual marks and graphical signs deployed by Midjourney and DALL·E both when different styles are explicitly specified in the prompt (e.g., a painterly style, an artistic movement, etc.), or when no style is mentioned at all. In all these cases, stereotypes manifest through the simplification and kitschification of figurative forms, the homogenization of light and color, the lack of nuance in hues and outlines, etc. I argue that to understand how these stylistic stereotypes are produced within Generative AI systems we need to focus on enunciative agencies: the training databases, their annotation, the algorithms of the models, the user's prompt, the model's reinterpretation of the prompt, etc. This type of semiotic framework furthers the understanding of the diversification of "voices" and enunciative instances and their effect on people unexperienced in art history and visual culture.

Presenter(s): Maria Giulia Dondero

Discussion

8588 Past Presidents Breakfast

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Crescent (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

An annual meeting of Past Presidents of the AAA to come together and learn about updates to the association from the Executive Director.

7168 Continuity, Collapse or Sublation? Thinking Change When the Old Becomes New

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How do we think radical change while we are living it? Events like the war in Gaza and the Trump-Musk mayhem shatter faith in the order of things; climate change shatters faith in the future; AI shatters faith in humanity, at least for some, even as it bolsters it for others. In this chaotic moment, believing in the end of the world as we know it is a political force in itself, ripping text from context to circulate in strange new forms (Kockelman 2020; Hebdige). Representation fails, intensifying political, structural and epistemic violence worldwide (cf. Spivak 1985). Continuous patterns cannot resist time, nor can their collapse erase the ghosts of the past.

This panel revisits the perennial anthropological problem of continuity and change with a focus on "sublation," the notion that oppositions both cancel and consume each other in time, giving rise to new contradictions that reconfigure old forms in unpredictable ways. This dialectic, central to the

Marxian-Hegelian tradition, has haunted critical theories of history, power and value. Critics argue that a syllogistic logic of negation and synthesis constitutes a totalizing ideology, erasing multiplicity and repressing alternative forms of meaning and being (Derrida 1974, Deleuze 1968, Mbembe 2019). Other interpreters have emphasized that sublation is an essentially contingent process, entailing the failure of coherence due to the inevitability of change (Rose 1992, Buck-Morss 2009, Žižek 2013). While the abhorrent supremacist legacy of Hegelian thought should not be overlooked, we have found that a nuanced reading from the standpoint of our tumultuous present raises important theoretical and methodological problems for our discipline. From diverse field sites and thematic interests, our papers converge on the question of how to think the changing present without assuming that it will be like the past. How is institutional collapse continuous with the internal contradictions of a dynamic system? How do sociocultural practices that have been negated through processes of domination reemerge through collective action? How can explanation or narration of a situation allow for the indeterminacy that makes it new?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Lisa Simeone

Chair: Lisa Simeone

Presenter(s): Sarah Luna, Tufts University, Sean Mitchell, Rutgers University, Newark, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Gregory D Morton, Lisa Simeone, LaShandra Sullivan, Northwestern University

Presentation(s): The Intimacies of Violence for Mexico City Transfeminista Activists

This paper examines the intimacies forged by both consensual and nonconsensual forms of violence for transfeministas in Mexico City. Mexican feminist philosopher Sayak Valencia's definition of transfeminismo emphasizes the Latin American context in which it arose and arguing that cis women, trans women, and sexual and gender dissidents should be political allies because they are all targets of violence (including murders, rapes, and disappearances) by a necropolitical heteropatriarchal cisgender system (Valencia and Zhuravleva 2019). Transfeministas are further united by their rejection of the exclusions of mainstream feminist and lesbian movements, embracing techniques and tools that TERFS and SWERFs define as violence, such as practicing BDSM, making postpornography, manufacturing dildos, and centering sex workers and trans people in their feminism. Based upon ethnographic research in Mexico City in 2021-2024 among activists, artists, and pleasure pedagogues, this talk centers the critical pleasure activism of Latin American transfeministas who make pleasure a communal value that lubricates the frictions of violence from within and outside of lesbian and feminist movements. Their community is sustained in part through practicing consensual forms of violence as well as sublating violence (both from the outside world as well as the community's practices) and pleasure.

Presenter(s): Sarah Luna

Political Antagonism and Sublation: An Ethnographic Theory of the Brazilian Popular Right

How did a figure like Jair Bolsonaro—veteran of the most venal politics—come to symbolize repudiation of corruption for many Brazilians? Generally, how do political figures come to stand in

for the repudiation of the very things they embody? The answer may help us understand the emergence of contemporary popular right-wing politics, along with the structures of contemporary political antagonism, in Brazil and beyond. The last decade of Brazilian history has witnessed a popularization of forms of political sentiment invested with increasingly antagonistic affect--from rifts over the legacies of recent governments, to those involving ethnoracial, religious and other forms of identification and affiliation. Many of my interlocutors who were uninterested in politics two decades ago now describe certain others as threats to the nation. This is usually glossed with the spatial metaphor of polarization, depicting the polity as pulled from the center by two radicalizing extremes. This metaphor can be useful, but it neither captures the cross-cutting nature of these political antagonisms, nor the sometime radicalism of the self-styled center, nor the dialectical process through which seeming opposites structure a transforming totality. Drawing on ethnographic research in Rio de Janeiro and Maranhão and focusing on working class people who recently voted for the right, this paper offers an alternate theory of political antagonism, focused on this relation of seeming opposites.

Presenter(s): Sean Mitchell

Refusing to Fear: When US Immigration Policy Changes, What Remains?

“We’re not going to be afraid of Immigration.” Juana spoke those words to her undocumented niece Sonia while they agonized over Sonia’s upcoming court hearing. Sonia missed a previous hearing and might have a deportation order awaiting her. It was February 2025. But Juana advised against fear. She told her niece, We’ll go to court together. Juana’s phrase echoed the activists who, in 2010, proclaimed themselves “undocumented and unafraid” while getting arrested at the US Capitol. From 2010 to 2025, the context had turned upside down, yet that nugget of text – the reckless, deliberate word “unafraid” - remained. This paper reaches for the notion of sublation in order to understand the refusal of fear, a gesture whose meaning has changed. In the 2010s, immigrant activists pioneered the “unafraid” tag to declare a new political style that was more confrontational and personal. Democratic leaders took up the “unafraid” line, both canceling and preserving it by turning it into administrative practices: you should be unafraid to apply for financial aid, WIC, or a license. This paper’s ethnographic challenge is to track the dispositions that immigrants developed under this regime, in upstate New York, and to chart the Trump transformations. Or, perhaps, the Trump sublation. Today’s authoritarians do not destroy Democratic precedent but bring out its contradictions, leaving Juana and Sonia to mirror the stance by now claimed by Trump himself: defiant, battered, unafraid.

Presenter(s): Gregory D Morton

Jackson’s Commons: Sublating Violence at the Burundi-Congo Border

Separated from his family by civil war when he was six, Jackson Nahayo fled from Burundi to Congo to Tanzania to Mozambique to Zambia, finding temporary protection with strangers without ever living in a refugee camp. Twenty years later he returned to the place of his abduction, at the Burundi-Congolese border, to establish a medical clinic, organic farm, orphanage and primary

school. Named Ubuntu, “I am because we are”, this project is governed by an ethos of open reciprocity: from each according to their abilities and to each according to their needs (Marx 1867; Sahlin 1972; Graeber 2011). It is a community based not on mutual identification but on a habitus of improvisational practice among linguistically and culturally heterogeneous participants, including locals, patients, volunteers and refugees. Based on preliminary fieldwork in Burundi, this paper considers the Ubuntu Project as a commons that both preserves violence as a symbolic resource and negates it through the emergent norms of collective action. The commons is a conceptual site of contradiction insofar as the conservation of shared property subsumes the hierarchy of individual claims (Ostrom 1990). The history of modernity has entailed the sublation of the commons by the violence of capitalist accumulation and the state. In the current context of political dysfunction and climate stress, however, Jackson’s commons sublates violence past and present by mobilizing uncertainty as a foothold for invention.

Presenter(s): Lisa Simeone

Throuple Trouble: Racialized Regimes of Property and Sex in the New South

Since the late 1990s, reconfigurations of property regimes in the so-called New South have coincided with transformed regulations of sex and family. This period has featured increased manufacturing, proliferation of agribusiness plantations and toxification from agroindustries, dispossession of (particularly Black) small landholders, suppression of labor unions, and ever-expanding prison industrial complexes. Likewise, the region has been at the forefront of draconian homophobic, transphobic, as well as anti-reproductive justice legislation, including restrictions on access to birth control and abortion. Regimes of both property and sex, however, arise from and echo sexual and economic orders from prior regimes of racialized land and labor. Through the concept of sublation, this paper explores some of the ways we can make sense of these continuities and transformations through a focus on a 2021 homicide involving a queer interracial “throuple” on the property that was the site of Camp Sister Spirit, a lesbian feminist educational and cultural retreat center in rural southern Mississippi. The spectacularized media coverage, as well as the particularities of the juridico-legal unfolding of the case, offer insights into articulations of “family values” at the limits of its most nightmarish transgression. This amidst everyday queer pleasures and intimacies transpiring among those overtly challenging racialized property and sex regimes in forms of LGBTQ+ activism in the region.

Presenter(s): LaShandra Sullivan

3867 Shifting Ground: Politics of Eroding, Crumbling, Collapsing, and Burying - Part 1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel approaches the ways that we might examine the concept of erosion, as both a material process and powerful metaphor for the Anthropocene. Erosion often arises urgently as a problem in

places where the land-water interface itself is increasingly blurred and shifting—for example, built shorelines, rivers, wetlands, streams, canals, and other "muddy margins" (McLean 2011)—but just as critically in ecologies of forest, dirt, sand, and dust, where movement might be intensified by the progressive loss, rather than addition, of water. Processes like erosion are variously parsed as natural and unnatural, "problematiz[ing] modernist divides between nature and culture" (Vaughn 2021: 851). This panel considers the temporal and environmental politics of eroding, crumbling, collapsing, burying, and other forms of 'breaking down', asking: Through what forms of knowledge and expertise do people construct the problem of erosion and other land movement? What kinds of politics and practices does erosion bring about? Through what temporalities do these processes unfold, and what does it mean to think with these forms of temporality? At what material, temporal, and political scales might we consider erosion to be operating? How is repair envisioned within such multi-scalar temporalities?

We are interested additionally in the relationship between these material processes and broader ideas of breakdown. 'Crumbling' and/or 'eroding' infrastructures, landscapes, structures, materials, and more are often written alongside other phrases such as collapsing, burying, or breaking. What then becomes of these terms, especially in their various spatio-temporal registers? How is crumbling related to accumulation—as antonym? as effect? We encourage greater specificity around the language of environmental 'breakdown', recognizing that crumbling and erosion do not only signify ecological loss, but are also a question of how and where material reemerges. What kinds of political imaginaries do they foreclose, and what alternatives might they open?

References

McLean, Stuart. 2011. "BLACK GOO: Forceful Encounters with Matter in Europe's Muddy Margins." *Cultural Anthropology* 26(4): 511-706.

Vaughn, Sarah. 2021. "Erosion by Design: Rethinking Innovation, Sea Defense, and Credibility in Guyana." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64(4): 849-877.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Stephanie Ratte , Antara Chakrabarti

Chair: Stephanie Ratte

Presenter(s): Ipsita Dey, Antara Chakrabarti, Stephanie Ratte, Ashley Carse, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Dean Chahim, New York University

Discussant: Nikhil Anand, University of Pennsylvania

Presentation(s): Embodied Knowledge and Plantation Re-Worldings in Fiji

Recent environmentalism initiatives in "disaster resilience" and "sustainability" in Fiji have turned to indigenous/traditional knowledge systems to envision what environmental restoration and adaptation might look like in a time of climate change. Because traditional knowledge practices have been politicized in ethnonationalist rhetoric as a return to pre-contact/pre-colonial "indigenous" Fijian lifestyles, this focus often obscures plantation histories and how they have irreversibly altered and created "new" landscapes. In this paper, I take a phenomenological

approach to studying Indo-Fijian sensory knowledges of the farmscape, often expressed through weather forecasting, seedling selection, and taste. I argue that local knowledge in Sigatoka draws from Indo-Fijian embodied knowledges and plantation memory and thus becomes a dynamic record of landscape transformation, introduced plants, and built environments, challenging colonialist interpretations of indigenous knowledge as ethnobiology limited to endemic species and ecosystems. Indo-Fijian farm work and the embodied knowledge about food, land, and labor that it produces redefines Fiji as a place of many reworldings, a landscape that has been changing much before the media turned its lens to the Pacific for jarring visuals of rapidly devolving environments. In conceptualizing Fiji as an always "new" place, Indo-Fijian farmers challenge who and what can be considered as "local".

Presenter(s): Ipsita Dey

How to Train a River – Anti-Erosion Engineering along a River-Border in the Bengal Delta

Between the districts of Murshidabad in India and Rajshahi in Bangladesh lies the Ganga-Padma river, a "river-border" between the two countries. The land-waterscapes in this region are constantly shifting because of the amphibious nature of the Bengal Delta, resulting in widespread erosion and disastrous loss of homes as riverbanks keep eroding. While explaining his department's anti-erosion plans along the catastrophically eroding banks of the Ganga-Padma at Murshidabad, India, an engineer shrugged and said, "The whole thing is an impossible task". The catastrophe of river-erosion itself is merely the act of the river's movement. But this otherwise natural act has been made disastrous through the effects of a barrage (or a diversion dam) and an imposition of mobility restrictions with a border infrastructure. To 'solve' the problem of erosion, the engineer knows he must simultaneously confront multiple things – a border, a barrage, and a river that won't stop shifting. An impossible task. Drawing on archival and ethnographic fieldwork, I examine this 'impossible' endeavor to engineer and 'fix' a landscape. I trace anti-erosion engineering interventions, also called river-training, along the river-border, navigating through existing histories of engineering and bordermaking and intensifying climate crises.

Presenter(s): Antara Chakrabarti

Silt, Sediment, Sludge: Erosive and Accreting Materialities in Honolulu, Hawai'i

In the upper volcanic ridges framing Honolulu's northeastern edge, an amalgamation of long-term ecological and social forces has created highly erosive conditions, from which forest debris and sediment clog nearby streams and exacerbate flooding along them. One solution for reducing the risk of flooding in the suburban valleys and urban lowlands, according to this assessment of the city's environmental conditions, is to remove the source of sediment and debris by eradicating the brittle invasive trees that have taken shallow root, and swiftly spread, since the early years of Hawai'i's Territorial Period. At the watershed's base, a polluted canal accumulates silt, sediment, sludge, and debris, accreting on and under its surface the materials of a landscape that appears to be further fragmenting. The problem of erosion here raises questions of pace and dispersion, implicating the temporal and spatial scales of an erosive and accreting materiality, one which

moves across categories of the urban and forest, of land and water, of the natural and unnatural. Through ethnographic research conducted across eighteen months in Honolulu, this paper probes the connections between erosion and scale-crossing. I consider how material dispersion implicates ordinary and continuous acts of labor, as much as it draws in events of history—invasive trees and the territorial occupation that brought their introduction—as well as the still to come—'nature', as it might have been and might yet be.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Ratte

Wasting Sediment in Savannah Harbor

Savannah's port and logistics hub depend on dredging, and the work never ends. One can find a dredge sucking sediment from the lower Savannah River at any hour of any day. Around six million cubic yards of sediment, roughly 625,000 dump truck loads, are dredged from the inner harbor every year. The journey of those sediments began in the Appalachian Mountains (probably long ago) when weathering processes separated particles from larger rocks and eroded soils. Wind and water transported the sediment downhill and into the river, where its movement was shaped by the articulation of physical processes with institutional and infrastructural arrangements. This is a political geomorphology, a phenomenon illuminated by the fate of sediment dredged from the harbor. Silt and sand are piped into the Savannah Harbor Dredged Material Containment Areas, a government-managed facility that covers eight square miles and stores the unfathomable volume of earth removed from the harbor since the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on historical and ethnographic research, my presentation puts an emerging body of scholarship on geology and society into conversation with discard studies. I show how, through dredging, containment, and institutionalized value regimes, sediment becomes waste. I conclude by discussing efforts to reimagine dredged sediment as a resource for beneficial use.

Presenter(s): Ashley Carse

Dumping Responsibility: Sediment as "Garbage" in Mexico City's Drains

Every time it floods in Mexico City – which is nearly every week during the rainy season – the government redirects the blame towards the victims themselves, alleging that it is their practice of dumping "garbage" (basura) in storm drains that is the root cause of their own suffering. Through fantastic imagery of piles of consumer waste and implied (and flawed) analogies to a household plumbing system, the government asserts the apparently obvious: garbage clogs drains and causes floods. What this analogy ignores is that the vast majority of the so-called garbage removed from the system is in fact sediment, a combination of both dirt ripped from the hillsides by the rivers that flow into the city's drains and, in smaller proportion, human excrement. Such sediments must be removed regularly from the drainage system, but a lack of funds means that the government rarely does so until after a flood has already happened. This talk examines how the government and media have erased sediments visually and discursively from the public sphere, leaving only consumer waste as the lightning rod for all the city's drainage woes. It traces how both drainage workers and residents, including flood victims, encode this mythology of garbage with racist and

classist tropes about the uncivilized urban denizen. This reproduces social division and renders nearly impossible any serious critique of – and collective response to – the government's failure to maintain the drainage system.

Presenter(s): Dean Chahim

Discussion

2436 Cyborg Intimacies: Explorations in the Technological Mediation of Intimate Relationships

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

For an ever-growing proportion of human beings, late 20th and early 21st century technologies (computers, the internet, software applications) have come to mediate our most intimate relationships. We evaluate and initiate contact with prospective romantic partners through smartphone applications, we explore sexual fantasies through interactive live pornography mediated by webcam modeling and content sharing platforms, we follow, interact with and form communities around pop idols through social media and messaging platforms, we utilize digital applications to track and plan our reproductive efforts, and we contemplate a near future in which robots not only facilitate sexual intimacy between human beings, but provide it themselves. The six papers composing this panel explore the technologically mediated intimacies described above and contemplate the intersection of culture, technology and intimacy around the world. Half of these studies center the perspectives and experiences of providers of commercial sexual services. Sexual commerce makes up a large proportion of internet traffic globally, incentivizing sex workers to pioneer the frontiers of digitally enhanced intimacy and making their perspectives particularly valuable for understanding the technological transformation of intimacy. The remaining papers explore other relationships mediated by technology, including couples planning their fertility, singles looking for romantic partners, and fans pursuing intimate connections with pop idols. Each study highlights ways technology mediates intimate relationships, or soon will, and explores what we gain through these technologies, how they transform our relationships, and how they reproduce existing structures of power.

This panel also explores the commodification of intimacy as this process is transformed by new technologies. Both commercial and non-commercial intimate relationships are commodified by the platforms and devices that facilitate our relationships with one another. On the one hand, these technologies potentially offer to expand access to intimacy for some consumers, and to allow erotic entrepreneurs to tap into safer and (sometimes) more lucrative markets for commodified intimate/sexual services. On the other hand, the technological mediation of intimacy may also provide opportunities for the companies that control these platforms to shape our intimate relationships in ways that they profit from but which do not match the objectives of users. Finally, by placing studies of commercial sexual economies in conversation with studies of other intimate

relationships, this panel aims to combat the stigmatizing exceptionalism with which erotic labor and commercial sexual relationships have been examined in the social sciences and illustrate commonalities between commercial and non-commercial intimate relationships and the overlapping processes of technological mediation that shape them.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Alex Nelson, University of Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Alex Nelson, University of Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Delphine DiTecco, Carleton University, Fernanda Veiverberg, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies, Holly Love, University of Southern Mississippi, Patricia Fernandez, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology, Maura Stephens-Chu, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Discussant: Alex Nelson, University of Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Beyond the Binary: Robots and the Future of Commercial Sex

The relationship between sex work and robots has become a focal point in academic and media discourse, often framed through utopian hopes of ending prostitution or fears of expanding its harms. Central to these debates are constructions of sex robots as "sex workers," shaped by narratives that position sex work as inherently harmful—yet rarely informed by engagement with the sex work community.

This paper draws on preliminary findings from a qualitative study with sex workers and clients on their views of robots and commercial sex. Early interviews suggest participants approach robots with an openness shaped by sex work culture—a culture of navigating stigma, embracing experimentation, and often at the forefront of technological change. While mainstream narratives can frame robots as threatening or grotesque, most participants viewed their adoption as inevitable and expressed curiosity about their use. At the same time, invoking sex work's status as "the oldest profession," participants emphasized that robots cannot replace the emotional labor central to sex work, particularly the experience of feeling seen, accepted, and not judged by another human. While robots may not judge, they also cannot offer the relational experience of overcoming judgment. Reflecting the cultural logics of sex work, participants viewed robots less as existential threats and more as tools to be negotiated, adapted, and incorporated within complex human economies of intimacy.

Presenter(s): Delphine DiTecco

Sex, Work, and Screens: Camming and Digital Intimacy in Brazil

This study examines the intersections of labor, intimacy, and digital economies through a case study of Camera Prive, a leading Brazilian camming platform. Brazil's cultural landscape, where beauty and sensuality are celebrated, yet sex work remains deeply stigmatized, shapes how cam models engage with digital platforms. Using digital ethnography, the study explores how performers navigate platform affordances—such as local currency payments and promotional narratives framing camming as both aspirational and entrepreneurial—to establish legitimacy and economic

stability. Through systematic observations, analysis of platform materials, and content produced by a prominent Brazilian cam model on YouTube, this research highlights how camming is discursively constructed as skilled labor and a pathway to social mobility amid economic precarity. However, this positioning also entangles sex work within broader power structures of gender, class, and digital visibility. By centering on the Brazilian context, this study contributes to anthropological discussions on how technology mediates intimacy, commodifies digital labor, and shapes work in platform economies.

Presenter(s): Fernanda Veiverberg

Desire and the Digital Self: Mate Preferences and Identity in Online Dating Profiles

The use of dating apps has surged in recent decades, becoming the most common way U.S. adults meet new romantic partners (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). This paper explores how cultural norms and sexual orientation shape self-presentation and partner preferences in digital dating spaces. Using mock dating profiles and survey data from U.S. based participants across four groups - heterosexual and non-heterosexual women and men - I examine how individuals express mate preferences and view their own mate value. While all groups are analyzed, I emphasize non-heterosexual perspectives, which remain underrepresented in mate preference research. Early findings suggest that there are gendered and sexual orientation based differences in commitment-seeking language among female participants, and a stronger focus on physical appearance among male participants. The data also shows preliminary observations that non-heterosexual participants often challenge "normal" courtship behavior through flexible preferences relating to things such as age and trait prioritization. By analyzing profile text and preferred partner traits, I explore how dating profiles commodify intimacy, reflect curated identity, and differ from the face-to-face dating world. By combining qualitative content analysis with statistical comparison, this research offers insight into how online dating spaces mediate intimate connections in ways shaped by both personal identity and broader social norms.

Presenter(s): Holly Love

Streaming the Self: Transgender Women's experiences of Intimacy, Identity, and Labor on OnlyFans

This paper draws from ethnographic interviews with 11 transgender women engaged in online sex work on OnlyFans to explore how digital platforms shape intimate labor and identity formation. I examine how transgender women use internet-facilitated sex work not only as a way to generate income on their own terms, but also as a space to affirm gender identity, negotiate desire, and resist transphobic exclusion from mainstream platforms and economies. Through my informants' accounts I illustrate: (1) how cultural narratives around transgender femininity and hypervisibility influence platform adoption and shape relationships formed with viewers and other content creators; and (2) How OnlyFans enables transgender women to monetize their gender and sexualities in ways they can control, which they report as empowering and a source of economic opportunity. However, not all aspects of this work are perceived as empowering among models. OnlyFans also puts pressure on models to conform to fetishized expectations or market

themselves in ways that reinforce stereotypes to sustain their income. Finally, I argue that while platforms like OnlyFans can reproduce neoliberal capitalist and gendered power structures, they also create room for transgender women to challenge norms of intimacy and claim agency through their performances of self-representation and erotic play.

Presenter(s): Patricia Fernandez

Scheduling Sex: App-Mediated Intimacy in Japan and the United States

This paper applies a mixed-methods approach to analyze people's experiences with fertility awareness apps in Japan and the United States, two countries with quite different reproductive landscapes. In the 1920s, doctors Kyusaku Ogino in Japan and Hermann Knaus in Austria independently observed the timing of ovulation within the human menstrual cycle. Now, one hundred years later, people around the world can access fertility awareness apps on their smartphones, with algorithms providing dates for ovulation and menstruation based on user-provided data such as basal body temperature, menstrual bleeding days, and more. Preliminary qualitative and quantitative content analysis of Japanese developer websites and the apps themselves show a strong emphasis on facilitating optimally timed sexual intimacy between heterosexual couples who are in the midst of *ninkatsu* (trying for a baby), reflecting widely-held beliefs about the purposes of sexual intercourse in intimate relationships, the availability and popularity of non-hormonal contraceptive methods, and prominent public discourse surrounding the country's declining birthrate and shrinking population. On the other hand, content analysis of Euro-American apps and ethnographic interviews with app-users in the U.S. demonstrate more varied contraceptive and sexual intimacy practices, as well as greater concerns for data privacy in the context of weakened legal protections of reproductive rights.

Presenter(s): Maura Stephens-Chu

Discussion

3994 New Ethnographies of the US Carceral State: Authors Meet Readers

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Until recently, anthropological attention to systems of policing, confinement and control in the United States have been modest. This roundtable will feature a discussion of three new ethnographic monographs that explore distinct aspects of the US carceral state. "The Criminal Record Complex: Risk, Race and the Struggle for Work in America," by Melissa Burch, chronicles the daily interactions of hiring managers, workforce development professionals, and job-seekers with felony convictions in the Southern California, revealing a set of actors, institutions and industries that stand to benefit from the erroneous idea that people with criminal records are dangerous to employ. "Life beside Bars: Confinement and Capital in an American Prison Town," by

heath pearson, illuminates an alternative history of the unruly and unexpected ways that people resist, get by, make money and, most especially, build radical social life beside systems of large-scale confinement. "Healing Movements: Chicana-Indigenous Activism and Criminal Justice in California," by Megan Raschig, tracks a grassroots abolitionist project cultivated by formerly incarcerated women and men, whose praxis of cultural healing centers mutuality and joy while countering local correctional institutions and more pervasive carceral logics of deficit and disposability.

Comprised of six anthropologists (Catherine Besteman, Melissa Burch, Kristin Doughty, heath pearson, Megan Raschig, and Damien Sojoyner), this roundtable will engage in dialogue centered around the many intersections of the books: from the haunt of confinement ordering the land to the afterlives of convictions haunting people trying to find work; through the generation of novel practices of care and worldbuilding against and beyond the non-profit industrial complex; between the forces of abolition and the baby steps of reforms; and, amidst the struggles for survival and the futures made through solidarity and with joy.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Megan Raschig

Presenter(s): heath pearson, Georgetown University, Melissa Burch, University of Michigan, Damien Sojoyner, University of California, Irvine, Megan Raschig

Discussant: Catherine Besteman, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Kristin Doughty, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology

8996 The Changed Federal Funding Landscape for Anthropology Research

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

Since January 20, 2025, federal research funding has radically changed. The Executive Order freezing foreign aid immediately impacted USAID-funded anthropologists. Additional Executive Orders throughout Spring transformed what agencies deemed "fundable." In late April, NSF began issuing termination notices following its comprehensive reviews to align current funding with new policies. Many termination notices stated projects did "not effectuate NSF priorities" because impact was "limited to subgroups" and didn't "create opportunities for all Americans everywhere." The May 23 "Restoring Gold Standard Science" Executive Order could substantially redefine fundable research depending on interpretation. Its emphasis on reproducibility risks eliminating qualitative research and ethnography funding central to cultural anthropology. NSF's July 30 "Update on NSF priorities" stated: "NSF is continuing to prioritize cutting-edge discovery science and engineering research, advancing technology and innovation, and creating opportunities for all Americans in every region" further signaling an end to funding for cultural anthropology or qualitative social science research.

Roughly \$1.5 billion in active federal research funding has been terminated. The FY2026 Budget Request proposed eliminating nearly \$5 billion of NSF's \$9 billion budget. Congress hasn't voted on FY2026, so NSF budget cuts remain uncertain. Since May 2025, NSF has undergone massive reorganization and downsizing, though court orders and injunctions have paused/slowed changes.

Private foundations have responded to the crisis. Spencer, Kapor, William T. Grant, and Alfred P. Sloan Foundations launched rapid response bridge funding providing up to \$25,000 grants for scholars impacted by NSF cancellations. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation extended support to investigators whose federally-funded health equity work was cancelled. Private foundations saw applications spike in 2025. Wenner-Gren Foundation cited these events when closing Sapiens magazine to direct more resources toward anthropological research. However, private foundation funding is insufficient to fill the gap.

This townhall brings together anthropologists whose federal grants were terminated, those whose high-scoring proposals weren't funded due to current priorities, and those with insider perspectives on federal agency evaluation processes. We represent cultural anthropology, medical anthropology, archaeology, and applied anthropology subfields. Some projects involved interdisciplinary collaboration. Panelists will share insights, compare differential impacts between private and state-supported universities, provide navigation guidance, and contemplate ways forward for supporting anthropological research.

Organizer: Jennie Burnet

Presenter(s): Tarini Bedi , Jennie Burnet , Jean Hunleth, Washington University in St. Louis, Molly Morgan, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Cheryl Rodriguez, University of South Florida

Discussant: Tarini Bedi

8611 Hunting the Sensibles: Performing Anthropology Across Media (Part A & B)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

This workshop will be led by six anthropological filmmakers, artists, and music composers, structured in the format of Workshop A/B. The workshop will include rich interactions between the facilitators and participants, utilizing a multi-media approach that features anthropological films, dynamic images, artist books, and musical works to present topics such as multi-species anthropology, materiality and labor, and feminism. After the workshop, participants will receive thoughtfully designed materials that extend the experience. The specific agenda for the workshop is as follows:

Workshop A: Screening of Experimental Anthropological Films, which includes four short films and a post-screening discussion:

1. Xiaohui Liu (Director): Arbors, Herbs and Banana Leaves, documentary, 30 minutes.

2. Juntao Yang (Director): Light and Cold Conversations: Atlantic, Algorithms and Visibility, single screen digital moving Images, 13 minutes 11 seconds.

Post-screening discussion facilitated by Xiaohui Liu, Pengrui Ou, and Juntao Yang.

Workshop B (Artist Presentations and Interactions):

1. Wang Xue Sophia: Henna, Documentary Photo Book, and Henna Ritual Workshop.
2. Renee Yu Jin: I'm Rooted but I Flow, Artist Book Presentation on the relationship between sculptural materials, the human body, manual labor, and the surrounding environment in China.
3. Yuwan Zhang: Multi-species Music Sharing and Interaction, including audience participation in music creation.

2861 Ghosts and their Multimodal Stories in the South through an Afrofuturist Lens

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The ghosts of our ancestors from Precolonial Africa to the first Black explorers of the Americas are not merely echoes of history that exist in archival records; they persist in present relationships, and they shape the future (Concha-Holmes 2025, Lamarre 2022). Afrofuturist thought provides frameworks to examine the speculative to spark courage and summon spirit for liberatory praxis from Pangea to beyond 2000s. Latin American Afrofuturist frameworks help us interpret Afro-Mexican archives to imagine beyond colonial temporalities (Tenorio 2023). Those that jumped overboard to resist the Middle Passage have their songs within the hearts of those who remained on board and gave birth to generations of African descendants who have cultivated the lands and fought for freedom (Stevenson 2019). The ghosts speaking in our ears become echoes of social influences that infiltrate medical establishments that deeply impact black maternal health and even infant feeding choices (Banton 2011).

The ghosts' stories also impact Afro-Colombian political mobilizations, which are founded upon the spirits of humans and more-than-humans (Cárdenas 2024). The supernatural play a crucial role in uprisings. Rights-based claims to the state have become necessary and pragmatic tools in the intersecting struggles for racial, economic, and social justice, yet they continue to be ineffective due to Colombia's entrenched colonial racial hierarchies. These hierarchies influence many Argentines who are haunted by Afro-descendants in their family history. They feel they cannot claim their Blackness because of the national mythology of whiteness regardless of phenotype (Anderson 2022).

These untold stories of everyday people tapping creativity and collectivity help us to understand "ghosts" in the media mix of Hip-hop, comics, anime and online worlds. Black diaspora content creators archiving and building Black knowledge exemplify the skillful use of digital tools to create

spaces where people can imagine and create multiple meanings of Blackness in the present and the future (Heyward-Rotimi 2023). Likewise, in Florida places like LaVilla, known as the Harlem of the South because of the rich cultural heritage of African descendants, has been preserved through digital tools (Victor 2022). Referencing the ghosts of "unseen" everyday acts in popular culture makes visible those daily vulnerabilities that historically have been ignored or erased (Fischer 2024, Hurston 1934).

All of our works highlight the sonic, visual and multimodal methods of storytelling. The presenters reflect and build on Harrison's legacy through the art-integrated research methods of ethnographic inquiry. We illuminate how understanding these ghosts and their stories through a Black feminist lens and multimodal, digital anthropology serve as a catalyst to cultivate a shared sense of humanity through cultural competency (cf Stevenson) and combat race-based violence to improve a shared sense of humanity.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Amanda Concha-Holmes, University of Florida, Faye Harrison, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Presenter(s): Judith Anderson , Roosbelinda Cardenas Gonzalez, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Maya Victor , Magdalena Lamarre , Ariadna Tenorio

Discussant: Kamela Heyward-Rotimi, Knowledge Exchange Research Group (K.E.R.G.), Dawn-Elissa Fischer, San Francisco State University, Department of Anthropology

1868 GLOBAL PALLIATIVE CARE AND THE MAKING OF GOOD DEATH

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

While definitions vary, palliative care can be understood as an interdisciplinary form of care that seeks to increase quality of life in people with serious and terminal illness by mitigating physical, psychological, and moral suffering. Originating in the United Kingdom and the United States in the 1960's, palliative care has become increasingly prevalent worldwide. Nevertheless, severe inequities in access mean that only a fraction of people in need can receive palliative care, with the largest access burdens affecting low- and middle-income countries. As palliative care globalizes, its meaning, arrangement, and form are inflected with local cultural values, moral concepts, and political and economic configurations, raising pressing questions for anthropologists about personhood, intersubjectivity, and what it means to die well or badly (Samuels and Dekker 2023). Drawing on our ethnographic research in diverse world regions such as Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Asia, this panel considers how palliative care takes shape in local settings to reflect on several questions. How does palliative care translate to diverse cultural contexts and come to shape local ideas and goals around death and dying? How do palliative care providers in different parts of the world shape the temporal horizons of death? How might their vision of "good death" align or clash with growing movements across the world for medically assisted dying? How are bioethical commitments to autonomy, disclosure, and truth-telling negotiated in palliative care

wards in different cultural contexts, and to what degree do they reflect local moralities? What does palliative care look like in resource-scarce settings? And how, ultimately, does the emergence of palliative care in new regions shape global quests for "good death"?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Elyse Ona Singer, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Adrienne Strong, University of Florida

Presenter(s): Elyse Ona Singer, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology, Kimberly Arkin, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Megan Cogburn, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Annemarie Samuels, Natashe Lemos Dekker, University of Amsterdam

Discussant: Mara Buchbinder, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Scott Stonington, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): A Moment to Die: Mexican Life Debates and the Paradox of Choice in Palliative Care

Enduring contests between church, state, and individual control over the body in Mexico have recently manifested in a contentious "life debate" over the definition and ethics of "dignified death" (Roberts, 2012). In 2008 Mexico City passed the Advance Directive Law, legalizing "passive euthanasia"—the right to refuse or withdraw life-sustaining treatment—and affording comprehensive palliative care services to the terminally ill through public hospitals for the first time. While these measures have ostensibly helped ameliorate end-of-life suffering, a growing movement of activists argue that the law falls short, rallying around the legalization of assisted dying ("active euthanasia") as central to "dignified death." Drawing on one year of research in Mexico's National Cancer Institute, we analyze how palliative care clinicians work to foster, in their patients, both "death consciousness" and a will to live, a model of care predicated on surrendering to the body's preordained rhythms of life and death. We argue that this orientation gives rise to a paradox at the heart of Mexican palliative care, which simultaneously expands end-of-life choices while making certain choices inconceivable. Our argument has implications for anthropological theories of human agency, provoking hard questions about who is authorized to draw boundaries around life and death.

Presenter(s): Elyse Ona Singer

Thinking Through the Limits of "Relational Care:" The Impossibilities of Accompagnement in French Palliative Care

Palliative care is seen as a model for how to orchestrate "good" deaths inside and outside the North Atlantic. Even in France, where palliative care came late to the medical scene and struggles for resources and legitimacy, recent legislation identifies it as one of the most important solutions to public anxieties around medicalized death. This is because it offers what practitioners call *accompagnement*, or a commitment to relational care that meets patients "where they are." In this paper, I explore the limits of palliative care providers' ability to "accompany" their patients by

exploring two "problem" cases encountered in public hospitals in southern France. There has been a lot of attention in medical anthropology to the ways that "relational care" rather than "choice" allows for better medical outcomes, particularly in contexts where providers and patients are linked through shared cultural norms. But what happens when providers dedicated to "care" do not see patients who hail from similar class, religious, and/or ethnic backgrounds as "sharing" their ontological assumptions about what it means to be human? By attending to this problem, this paper highlights the limits of "relational care" as a solution to the problems created by biomedical models of "choice."

Presenter(s): Kimberly Arkin

"So That No One Can Say Anything": Situating the Hospital in a 'Good' Death in Tanzania

In this paper we push back against dominant understandings of 'African' home-based care at the end of life, showing how community members in rural Iringa, Tanzania are using the hospital to fulfill social and biomedical care demands. Based on participant observation, interviews with doctors, and community focus group discussions, we argue that hospital death became a way "so that no one can say anything" about kin's responsibility to care at the end of life. Here we highlight the way the place of the hospital is enmeshed in moral economies of end-of-life care, and the material capabilities and performances of kin. Even when a relative was clearly close to death, people chose to bring them to the hospital to die to demonstrate they had done everything possible to care for their family member. Doing everything possible was a key component of a "good" death in this setting, protecting relatives from future accusations and uncertainty. This goal of being socially seen as "doing everything possible" often also put physicians in a difficult position vis a vis how to treat these clearly terminal patients as family members' ideals (and financial constraints) were in tension with biomedical imperatives to diagnose and try to cure.

Presenter(s): Megan Cogburn

Co-author(s): Adrienne Strong

Rethinking the "Global" in Global Palliative Care

With socio-cultural roots in the UK and US, palliative care has now become part of global health approaches. Thinking with current calls for "decolonizing end-of-life care" (Ntizimira et. al. 2022), we ask how palliative care is not only implemented and adapted, but also innovatively developed in diverse socio-cultural settings around the world. Drawing on ethnographic research in India, Indonesia and Brazil, in this paper we highlight three dimensions of the 'local' making of 'global' palliative care, namely the ways in which palliative care initiatives assemble and develop new insights, the productive flexibility in definitions of palliative care, and the socio-cultural and power dimensions of palliative care practices. Building on anthropologists' calls for attending to "otherwise" practices and interventions of global health (Yates-Doerr et. al. 2023; cf. Kalofonos 2021), we highlight ways in which 'global palliative care' develops through situated local practices that are often a mix of grassroots initiatives, (inter)national training, and socio-culturally sensitive care. Given palliative care's unique position at the intersection of non-curative biomedical care and

social medicine, we suggest that the situated, non-linear and rhizomatic development of palliative care offers pressing insights for rethinking the "global" in both global palliative care and global health.

Presenter(s): Annemarie Samuels

Societal shifts in dying and end of life care: Potentiality and commitment in Palliative Care Activism in Brazil

In this paper I address the changing cultural landscape of dying and end-of-life care in Brazil. Palliative care has been developing rapidly in Brazil as a new paradigm of end-of-life care, which is being led by health care professionals who have organized themselves as 'PaliAtivistas'— a subject position that combines activism and a professional commitment to changing how care is provided for chronically ill and dying patients. Based on ethnographic research in palliative care centers in Brazil, I show that these professionals strive to establish a form of continuous care for those who do not qualify for curative treatment in the biomedical system. I demonstrate the work they put into achieving this envisioned societal change, to develop care infrastructures, to acquire resources and public attention, and to put palliative care on the political agenda at local and national levels, tying into a momentum of political change in Brazil. I elaborate in particular on the potentiality, future orientations, and creative approaches that enable palliative care advocates to overcome societal resistance to change and to propel the gradual integration of palliative care into the culture of death and dying in Brazil.

Presenter(s): Natashe Lemos Dekker

Discussion

7490 Ghosts of Coloniality and Resistance in Youth Lives and Education

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Looking across communities and geographies, this panel aims to track the enduring impacts and violence of coloniality and the possibilities of resistance as persistent hauntings. Engaging deeply and interepistemically across time, space, and place, the papers presented on this panel work to reveal the contours, overlaps, and reverberations of colonial hauntings and ghosts in youth's lives and education (Allweiss, 2025; Peña-Pincheira & Allweiss, 2022). Espinosa-Miñoso and colleagues (2022) explain how coloniality endures through a range of violent processes that "aim to destroy peoples' selves, their relations to each other and to the habitat" (p. xv). These violent processes operate epistemically, ontologically, linguistically, and spatially (Calderón, 2014; Fúnez-Flores et al., 2022; Lugones, 2007, 2010) through spectacular and quotidian forms of violence that are as pervasive and normalized as "el aire que respiramos"/["the air we breathe"] (Segato, 2018, p. 99).

At the same time, the papers take up the recognition that coloniality is an ongoing process, and therefore incomplete. To do so, we center the ongoing resistances and refusals to colonial violence

that aim to imagine an "otherwise" that is past, present, and future (Morrison, 1987; Rhee, 2021). Overall, the papers in this panel conceptualize coloniality and resistances to it as hauntings that are incomplete and uncontained by temporal or spatial enclosures.

Since the enduring work of disrupting these systems and their interconnections must be multifaceted in order to illuminate and create space for decolonial (re)imaginings (Espinosa-Miñoso et al., 2022; Lugones, 2003), we bring together work from different geographic locations (Chile, Ghana, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the United States) and spaces (schools, communities, universities, and activist spaces) to make visible and collectively challenge interlocking structures and processes of domination (King, 2016, 2019). Through the examination of colonial grammars, ghostwriting, haunted pasts, haunted movements, and haunted futures, the papers in this panel show the resistances and colonial entanglements ever present in language education, mathematics education, student activism, ecological crisis and precarity haunting youth lives, and teachings through/with historic sites. Through reflective interepistemic conversations and engagements (e.g, Walsh, 2009) across geographies, this session aims to "plant seeds of coalition" across different spaces, frameworks of engagement, and entanglements (Tachine et al., 2022, p. 497).

This panel invites audience to engage with the following questions:

What different forms of imperial and modern/colonial violences and unfinished resistances haunt and persist across different times, places, and spaces?

What possibilities for understanding, thinking and doing otherwise are made visible when looking across geographies, spaces, temporalities, and colonial systems of violence and resistance?

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Romina Pena-Pincheira, Gustavus Adolphus College, Alexandra Allweiss, Michigan State University

Chair: Alexandra Allweiss, Michigan State University, Romina Pena-Pincheira, Gustavus Adolphus College

Presenter(s): Romina Pena-Pincheira, Gustavus Adolphus College, Alexandra Allweiss, Michigan State University, Yaa Oparebea Ampofo, Jennifer Goett, Michigan State University, José Martínez Hinestroza, Texas State University, Rachael Rudis

Discussant: Melissa Adams Corral

Presentation(s): Language in/and Education: Colonial Grammars and Entanglements of a Haunted Space

This paper brings together the presenters' individual and collaborative auto/ethnographic research in K-12 schools, youth-led organizations, and universities in Chile, Guatemala, and the United States to reveal the various ways coloniality haunts language in/and education. Specifically, we draw on decolonial feminist scholarship (e.g., Lugones, 2007) to expose and disrupt colonial hauntings (Tuck & Ree, 2013) that persist in language in/and education and explore pathways for building coalition across geographies. Our work reveals ways colonial grammars are embedded in

epistemic and material violence, the rupturing of relationships based on interconnected life-affirming modes of being, and efforts to control people, land, and futures to maintain power and control that shift across time, place, and space (King, 2016). In Chile, we discuss the use, reproduction, and futurity of coloniality through nation-state symbols, religious rituals, and rote memory native-speakerism. In Guatemala, we share how Maya Chuj students and educators navigated, took up, and resisted persistent policies and practices of Indigenous language bracketing and erasure. We connect these moments and lessons to our roles and experience as teacher educators in the United States. Looking across these different geographies, we trace the conquistador-settler grammars (King, 2019) made visible when we look at language in/and education across Abya Yala and center "otherwise" possibilities.

Presenter(s): Romina Pena-Pincheira

Co-author(s): Alexandra Allweiss

Language in/and Education: Colonial Grammars and Entanglements of a Haunted Space

This paper brings together the presenters' individual and collaborative auto/ethnographic research in K-12 schools, youth-led organizations, and universities in Chile, Guatemala, and the United States to reveal the various ways coloniality haunts language in/and education. Specifically, we draw on decolonial feminist scholarship (e.g., Lugones, 2007) to expose and disrupt colonial hauntings (Tuck & Ree, 2013) that persist in language in/and education and explore pathways for building coalition across geographies. Our work reveals ways colonial grammars are embedded in epistemic and material violence, the rupturing of relationships based on interconnected life-affirming modes of being, and efforts to control people, land, and futures to maintain power and control that shift across time, place, and space (King, 2016). In Chile, we discuss the use, reproduction, and futurity of coloniality through nation-state symbols, religious rituals, and rote memory native-speakerism. In Guatemala, we share how Maya Chuj students and educators navigated, took up, and resisted persistent policies and practices of Indigenous language bracketing and erasure. We connect these moments and lessons to our roles and experience as teacher educators in the United States. Looking across these different geographies, we trace the conquistador-settler grammars (King, 2019) made visible when we look at language in/and education across Abya Yala and center "otherwise" possibilities.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Allweiss

Haunted Futures: Colonial Specters in Ghanaian Youth Experiences of Socio-Ecological Crisis

This paper examines how colonial specters manifest in youth educational experiences amid socio-ecological crisis in Ghana across three interconnected dimensions: individualization, temporal fragmentation, and moralization. I examine how the institutions and learning spaces that make up daily life for many Ghanaian youth reproduce colonial continuities in their engagement with youth about crises. The analysis demonstrates how family networks, religious institutions, and schools consistently frame crisis response through individualized moral imperatives, echoing colonial logics that emphasize personal character over structural attention. Recasting systemic failures as

personal moral challenges, educational institutions reinscribe colonial logics that also fragment collective response while reinforcing entrepreneurial, market-based "solutions" to crises. Youth engage in multiple temporalities: they simultaneously inhabit colonial pasts, precarious presents, and uncertain futures. Yet, these individualizing logics operate alongside temporal splits that separate immediate survival needs from longer-term socio-ecological considerations. The paper discusses how youth navigate these colonial hauntings as they move across different spaces, developing frameworks for understanding and living through crises. The paper traces how colonial legacies continue to shape knowledge production about socio-ecological change while highlighting youth-generated pathways toward more hopeful futures.

Presenter(s): Yaa Oparebea Ampofo

Nicaraguan Student Insurgency and Revolutionary Afterlives

This paper examines how student participation in the 2018 April Insurrection in Nicaragua was haunted by the politics of the past, particularly the specter of the Sandinista Revolution (1979-1990). The uprising was ignited by cuts to social security made by the neo-Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega, which responded by massacring protesters, often targeting popular urban barrios and rural areas. Wanton youth death at the hands of the state catalyzed demonstrations throughout the nation, with "Free country and life," a retooling of the revolutionary slogan "Free country or death," as a rallying cry. In most accounts of the uprising, students are the central protagonists, giving the protests a uniquely generational character. Forged under a neoliberal regime, the youth subjectivities that drove the protests appear to lack the (real or imagined) ideological coherence of the revolutionary past, even as most accounts look to that past to explain the uprising. In interviews, student activists narrate their mobilization in terms of opposition to an authoritarian political system and culture that they view as irredeemably corrupt. Without naming it as such, they critique the coloniality of power, expressing opposition to state violence as a mechanism of control and dispossession for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy and calling for a future liberated from the ghosts of the past.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Goett

Exorcising Ghostwriting and Immateriality as Mechanisms of Coloniality in Mathematics Classrooms

Western mathematics imposes itself as universal, dismissing alternative mathematical systems as primitive (Fúnez-Flores et al., 2024). Mathematics education often perpetuates Eurocentrism, erasing indigenous ways of knowing (Gutiérrez, 2019). This paper reimagines mathematics that "takes as a point of departure students' experiences, families and communities, and Indigenous technology" (Fúnez-Flores et al., 2024, p. 9). I argue that ghostwriting—writing a text for which the author is not credited (Gallagher, 2024)—and immateriality—overemphasis of abstraction (de Freitas & Sinclair, 2013)—are common in mathematics classrooms and perpetuate coloniality. Ghostwriting and immateriality treat children as ghosts resembling—but not really—human. Despite their phantasmagorical nature, ghostwriting and immateriality can be exorcized. In this

participatory research study, bilingual Latinx children, teachers and a researcher—all part of the Global Majority living in the United States—animated mathematical concepts and supported children in co-authoring ideas in nonnormative ways. I illustrate these processes with a third-grade multiplication lesson on El Puente de Q'eswachaka, a bridge that indigenous communities in Peru rebuild annually. The lesson favored collaboration over competition and preserved the inseparability of mathematics and sociocultural phenomena. Entanglements of bodies, materials and indigenous traditions supported the collective authoring of ideas.

Presenter(s): José Martínez Hinestroza

Teaching History as a Haunting

If we are haunted by the injustices of the past (Gordon, 1997/2008), then confronting our ghosts requires a knowledge of history and an ability to reckon with what it means for our present. Although U.S. social studies instruction is meant to support students in connecting past, present, and future, in actuality it separates time periods (Van Straaten et al., 2016) and marginalizes narratives of enslavement and colonization (Calderon, 2014, 2015; Jones, 2022; Moffa, 2022; Sabzalian, 2019). If students are not taught to make these connections, it becomes harder to recognize the ways that past injustices affect us today, thus facilitating a haunting.

Using data collected during a youth participatory action research project centering hauntings of place, I conceptualize how we can teach history as a haunting. Zembylas (2013) theorizes "pedagogies of hauntology" for history education, which can teach students to live with our ghosts rather than seek to exorcise them. Coexisting with our ghosts can lead to decolonization (Tuck & Ree, 2013).

Applied to a U.S. settler colonial context, such pedagogies can support students in connecting past to present and taking action, therefore leading them towards the "something-to-be-done" (Gordon, 2011) that haunting necessitates. If social studies education is framed through the lens of hauntology, it can shift from a repressed haunting to a "generative haunting" (Palmer et al., 2022), (re)creating alternative possibilities.

Presenter(s): Rachael Rudis

Discussion

3328 Specters and Speculation: Hauntings and how they teach us about the worlds that we have, the worlds that might have been, and the worlds that must be.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"The ghost, as I understand it, is not the invisible or some ineffable excess. The whole essence, if you can use that word, of a ghost is that it has a real presence and demands its due, your

attention... Haunting is a frightening experience. It always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present. But haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done."

--Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2008, xvi

How do we build a way out of the various resilient modes of violence plaguing us? This question motivates each of us as anthropologists in different ways as we contend in our work with the devaluation and harm against people racialized as other, gendered and sexualized as non-normative, and overall categorized as threatening and disposable. While the master narrative of modernity is that of progression, a linear forward march to something better, how we often register the world --as things simultaneously advance, regress, and feel stagnant--is that of temporal and spatial layering. What could be most frightening in this temporal disjuncture are the specters of times supposedly past-behavior, ideologies, structures, etc., we thought we had resolved. "If there are ghosts, then what was supposed to be a New Beginning, a clean break, turns out to be a repetition, the same old story. The ghosts were meant to have been left in the Old World... but here they are (Fisher, 2013, 51)." While ghosts are most often taken up as indicators of stuckness, that is, the convergence of the present and past with a stalled future, we might also find potentiality for movement in attunements to their presence. This panel takes up this provocation as we explore hauntings not simply as communicative but as constructive: hauntings make lifeworlds and bodies just as much as they tell us something about them. Turning to state documents, colonial visual media, communal practices of remembering and re-remembering, and other forms of affective material, we ask, how do hauntings reveal the DNA of imperial, national, and local projects of delineating who is normatively human--who is to be protected --whose life and death matters? How do close readings of political projects replicating, renovating, and reasserting themselves tell us about what is necessary to sustain them and how they might be undone? How do hauntings lead us to forgotten relations, feelings, and strategies for navigating processes of dispossession? And finally, how might we carefully excavate hauntings to think not just about what is or what was, but what might have been and what could and must be?

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Leniqueca Welcome

Chair: Leniqueca Welcome

Presenter(s): Pyar Seth, Sarah Bruno, Michigan State University, Leniqueca Welcome, Emily Bock, George Washington University, Brendane Tynes, Wenner-Gren Foundation

Discussant: Deborah Thomas, University of Pennsylvania

Presentation(s): The Afterlives of the Autopsy

Clinical notations, in their meticulous accounting of death, create a particular kind of subject, one whose presence feels like absence, one whose name is carefully subverted by hollow recognitions. Medical documents contribute to the ongoing spectral presence of racial categorization. As Zakiyyah Iman Jackson theorizes, "non-representability haunts the terms and operations of hierarchical distinctions between subject and object, science and fiction, and speculation and

realism." The state performs detachment through documentation. Its administrative language can reshape how we understand and speak of Black life. This paper examines the autopsy as both a medical and a cultural artifact, focusing on its role in perpetuating racial violence against Black communities even after death. Spectacularly violated, objectified, disposable, and silenced. The violence that occurred against Black people murdered by the state is transferred to documents that further count, condemn, assess, and evoke them. What emerges is a document with a unique institutional discourse, one that can either grant or deny respect, one that makes determinations about what it means to become human.

Presenter(s): Pyar Seth

The Batey that Haunts, that Blesses, that Calls: Bomba, Afro-Puerto Rican Emotional Histories, and Embodied World-Making

Sometimes, we feel called by the work, and at other times, we might feel haunted by it. Aisha Beliso de Jesús felt haunted and drew attention to the ways ethnographers might be impacted by their research subjects on a spiritual level. I have felt both called and haunted, or guided, during my field research and subsequent digital humanist archiving and plotting out Afro-Puerto Rican women's affective histories. Katherine McKittrick presents us with her own arguments, scaffolded by a Wynterian understanding of Black women's cartographies as "outside of the bounds of reason" (2006:25). Tiffany Lethabo King (2019) understands this presentation of demonic grounds as being able to exceed full "mappability."

In my paper, I draw on multimodal research methods: digital archiving, interviews, and dancing to articulate how an embodied approach to the question of "What are the histories of Afro-Puerto Rican women's feelings?" can help maneuver the unpredictability of opacity and imperial hauntologies. Through three ethnographic encounters, I engage in a nonlinear story-telling that is activated by epiphenomenal time in post-colonial nations to surmise how the past haunts the present so that Black woman are preparing and creating their futures.

Presenter(s): Sarah Bruno

The Idyllic, the Horror and the Worlds in Between: An Interrogation of the Power of Media Making and World-Building

This multimodal presentation takes up the visual colonial genre of the "idyllic," which is central to ongoing extraction in the Caribbean and beyond, and experiments with methods of distorting its sensory experience and authoritative power. The British archive is wrought with images of life in its West Indian colonies produced pre-independence to cultivate innocence for its regime, whereby the horrors of and challenges to its rule are masked by scenes of supposed "passive" and "happy" colonized subjects. Yet even as these visuals attempt to construct a hegemonic narrative—that Western liberal governance is ultimately civil—one can still feel something is not right: the haunting contradictions of political fiction. In this talk, I will show and discuss a series of short collage films I produced, made from layering archival photos, video footage, and audio. In these reworkings of colonial media, I amplify the eerie undertones and affective warnings of the original work in an

attempt to push the limits of what this historical material can say. I do this with the aim of remembering and refusing the attempts at colonial world-building held in these visual products. I treat this engagement with historical material as a training ground for better reading and responding to new but familiar colonial and imperial visual products presently being produced. Media that continues to seek to constrict our understanding of the workings of power and our capacity to imagine and enact freedom

Presenter(s): Leniqueca Welcome

Obituaries and Other Minor Genres

Arguably one of the most horrific and ongoing catastrophes haunting queer life, and by extension queer worldbuilding projects, in the United States are the violent, targeted, and largely unsolved murders of predominantly black and brown trans women. As a response to the catastrophe, queer activists, artists, and scholars have reached for the tools available to fight against the systemic violence undergirding American political, economic, and social life. But are these tools—the ones made available in and through a liberal form of life—sufficient for combating anti-trans violence? This talk explores the obituary as one of the "tools" people have taken up in the fight against a world in which the murders of black and brown trans women have become horrifically ordinary. While the obituary is a relatively minor genre in the political, social, and theoretical struggle for trans and queer liberation, I argue that its use and function nonetheless open up a series of questions worth asking about how we theorize and respond to anti-trans and anti-queer violence and tragedy. Using some of the rituals for mourning developed in the ballroom scene as a foil to mainstream LGBTQ+ political movements, I show how struggles to be included in certain genres limit our capacity to break out of the very systems and structures that created the catastrophe in the first place.

Presenter(s): Emily Bock

"All the Ways We Can Die, But We Don't": Making Life in the Haunting

This paper opens the sociological concept of "haunting" (Gordon 1998) to the transgenerational, embodied experiences of Black women. While Gordon theorizes that something lingers from the indescribable violence of enslavement, I argue that her theorization does not fully encapsulate how the haunting & the haunted of slavery are inscribed onto Black people's bodies, which are not unfamiliar to home but are essential to its construction. I build upon Spillers (2003 [1987]), duCille (1994), Hartman (1997; 2008; 2016) and others to describe Black women's social position as the haunt: the figure that causes much distress and worry, that troubles, yet is critical to the social fabric of this nation. Utilizing Toni Morrison's method of "rememory" -- "recollecting and remembering as in reassembling members of the body, the family, the population of the past" (2019: 324) -- I aim to reassemble and to mark haunting at its embodied site(s), through the tracing of scars left behind by interpersonal and anti-black violence perpetrated over generations. Through a critical Black feminist reading of ethnographic interview data and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* (1975), I examine themes of haunting, reproduction, violence, and slavery's afterlife to illuminate the haunted-haunt-haunting bind. Within this bind, I ask: How does one make life at the intersection of

being the haunt while being haunted by legacies of structural, institutional, and interpersonal violence?

Presenter(s): Brendane Tynes

Discussion

3588 Ghostly Translations: Apparitions and Power in Ethnographic Reading, Writing, and Research

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable addresses the ghostly aspects of translation. Reading, writing, and research in anthropology are all influenced, more or less, by apparitions ranging from anthropological ancestors, to the colonial past, to haunted memories of spirits in the field. Who speaks for whom in translation? What is being translated? What are the ethics of translation? At stake are issues of power, inclusion, and equity. Ethnographic research has been described as a process of cultural translation, but it also entails linguistic translation. Translation bears the ghostly presence of the original author or speaker as well as the translator. The translated versions of a field narrative, a theoretical idea, a text, and even a life provoke considerations of equity and justice. As Martiniquan writer Chamoiseau (2024) has put it, his life was "under translation": "I had to translate my entire existence into French, under the threat and fear that the latter engendered." Translation in its various forms has been debated. Cultural conceptualizations, let alone metaphors, can be misunderstood and meanings can get lost in translation. Viewing anthropology as cultural translation risks essentializing a society, and linguistic translation risks losing nuance. At the same time, however, translation can be a creative, illuminating, and liberating act whereby much is gained even in the presence of the ghostly thing(s) translated. Reading itself may be a conduit for translating the emotions, ideas, and meanings of an author into a transformed sense-making for the reader. Hannerz (1993) suggests that the translator may either convey meaning in a literal "impartial" way, or to be more creative, "to respond in aesthetic and intellectual terms both as a reflection of the original work and as a work in its own right." With respect to cultural translation, Clifford (2013) notes that "the theory/metaphor of translation keeps us focused on cultural truths that are continuously 'carried across,' transformed and reinvented in practice." As Behar (2020) has observed, she and the Mexican woman Esperanza whose life story she recorded, were involved in a mutual cultural and linguistic translation: "We were two translated women. She was translated in one way, I was translated in another." The discussion of past, present, and future issues in the relationship between anthropology and translation fostered by this roundtable will facilitate reflection on methods and uses of translation in the contemporary world. Earlier questions of what is "lost" in translation when we want to convey meaning are now joined by new ones arising from the increasing use of technologies such as AI that perform or assist with translation. This modern "ghost in the machine" evokes both enthusiasm and anxiety -- as a potentially helpful tool that may be a hindrance to creative and meaningful translation that is, as Apter (2021) proposes, "just."

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Deborah Reed-Danahay, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Helena Wulff, Stockholm University

Presenter(s): Rachael Elekes , Ulf Hannerz, Stockholm University, Paul Stoller , Petra Rethmann, McMaster University, Department of Anthropology, Deborah Reed-Danahay, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Helena Wulff, Stockholm University

Discussant: Caroline Brettell, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

2978 Death, Ghosts and the Afterlife in Asia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel seeks to investigate the continuity and innovations in death rituals including funerary practice, ghost possession, war commemoration, and end of life care in various contexts across Asia. Within the understanding of the role of death in political, economic, and social spheres, we observe numerous instances of the continuity of the social fabric within death rituals and conceptions of the afterlife. However, with the rise of technology, increased migration, and evolving notions of what constitutes a "modern life" or a "good death," many traditional practices are undergoing rapid transformation. Ethnographic and historical investigations into how individuals are adapting to these changes can enrich our comprehension of the significant social, economic, environmental, and political shifts in our time.

End of life care and death rituals as well as the associated financial and legal context supporting funerary infrastructure are key sites that shape the transition at the end of life for the dying and for the bereaved. In turn, perceptions of what constitutes a good death are often directly reflected in our views of order and morality concerning the afterlife world, which includes ghosts, ancestors, and other spiritual beings. These changes illuminate how individuals navigate evolving environmental, social, political, and economic landscapes, while also unveiling the power structures that govern perceptions and practices related to death across Asia.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Leilah Vevaina, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Jacqueline Zhenru LIN, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Chair: Joseph Bosco, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Leilah Vevaina, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Angel Nayden, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Jacqueline Zhenru LIN, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Pu Yang, Anna Sehnalova, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Joseph Bosco, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Hinging the Afterlife: Trusts and the Zoroastrian Muktaḍ Ceremonies

Charitable giving is one of the pillars of Zoroastrianism, where the acquisition of wealth is righteous if earned honestly and shared liberally. Conducting charity is practiced at all class levels of the Parsi (Indian Zoroastrian) community in Mumbai, and is incorporated into several ritual practices such as annual muktad remembrances for the dead. It is at these rituals wherein the souls of deceased kin (fravašis) are called down by name for feasting and convening with their living families on earth, that future charitable intentions are often announced. While the muktad rituals reconvene the living and the dead annually, the charitable trust is the formal legal mechanism, which hinges this cosmological cycle of giving in the realm of the worldly, perpetually. Not simply analysing the trust as an econo-legal mechanism, this paper will investigate the trust as part of ritual practice through the metaphor of the hinge.

Presenter(s): Leilah Vevaina

Communicating Presence: Synchrony in Funeral and Commemorative Ritual in Rural Sichuan, China

This paper critiques the notion of belief as an atemporal category, instead positing that life-cycle events and ancestor worship in rural China betray a deep-seated awareness of the social world's temporal contingency. These events are not about fixing or reiterating cosmological truths but about synchronizing action for a righteous purpose. The use of symbols like firecrackers, fenpiao, spirit money, and grave carvings underscores the visibility and communicative intent of these performances. Ultimately, practices of genealogical recognition reaffirm or question communal vitality as a transient living form with a knowable past but contingent future. By examining these events through the lens of performance dynamics and a pervasive concern with face, this paper offers an understanding of how human connection is continuously negotiated and reconstituted in the face of irreversible time. Ultimately, rather than 'resolving' transience, acts of filiality only point at the possibility of genealogical continuity. By doing so, the emphasis on acting out connection leaves ample space for ambiguity with regard to what is known about it. The transcendence of a self-same and temporally bounded individual is in the final instance left opaque and the gap with the other only ever bridged through performative gestures through which self, other, and audience "play" each other's presence without presupposing or claiming ontological certainty.

Presenter(s): Angel Nayden

National Heroes in Bad Death: Ghost Narratives in WWII Commemoration in China

Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork, content analysis, digital ethnography, and oral history, this study investigates the significance of ghost narratives within a historical redress movement seeking justice for marginalized fallen soldiers in the national commemoration of the Second World War in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The research frames war commemoration as a mechanism reinforcing the hierarchical order of the deceased. While the state employs these commemorative practices to assert its legitimacy and moral authority, the lived experiences of local activists engaging with the marginalized war dead reveal dynamic interactions with established top-down remembrance structures. Through the lens of ghost narratives, activists highlight disparities in

mourning practices and the injustices stemming from political violence against stigmatized fallen soldiers. The resultant emotions of anger and guilt propel local actors towards participation in initiatives such as exhumation, repatriation, and restoration projects for these marginalized spirits, leading to a sense of empowerment while inadvertently perpetuating the hierarchy of the dead within nationalist frameworks. Furthermore, within grassroots commemorative settings, the newly established connection between the living and the dead facilitates the transmission of memories concerning political violence against the fallen, enabling the reclamation of memorial spaces and the regionalization of war memories.

Presenter(s): Jacqueline Zhenru LIN

Iblīs/Ghost Possession as Familial, Economic, and Political Discontent among Chinese Muslims

The Qur'ān refers to invisible creatures capable of both good and evil, and of possessing and sickening humans, as jinn, with the most rebellious ones called shayāṭīn (plural of shayṭān). The proto-Shayṭān is Iblīs, who refused Allāh's order to prostrate before 'Ādam, was expelled from Jannah, and deceived 'Ādam and his wife into tasting of the forbidden tree. By contrast, Hui people (Chinese-speaking Muslims) cohabiting with Han Chinese and Tibetans in Northwest China use "Iblīs" as an umbrella term, conflating it with ghosts (gui) or untended spirits and souls in Chinese cosmology, and ascribing varying degrees of evilness to Han, Hui, and Tibetan Iblīs/ghosts. Women experiencing pregnancy, abortion, and miscarriage often report emotional instability, spiritual weakness, and being possessed (shangshen) by Iblīs/ghosts when their husbands return home after socializing or lose their temper. Low-income farmers and workers tend not to visit doctors, instead attributing death and diseases like COVID-19 infection to being haunted (naogui). Dissidents dub the regime "the largest Iblīs/ghost," accusing "the specter of Communism" of haunting Muslim life and afterlife. Drawing on fieldwork with these people, this study examines how Iblīs/ghost narratives mediate familial, economic, and political discontent among Muslims in rapidly changing Chinese society, who deem Islamic piety an antidote to family disharmony, poverty, oppression, and spiritual attacks.

Presenter(s): Pu Yang

Becoming Two After Death: Postmortal existence in dual cosmologies in Tibet and apotheosis of heroes accelerated by the PRC occupation

'This is the thangka image of my father, he is a deity now'. A traditional chieftain in East Tibet shares a photograph of his father, now a territorial mountain deity and also a Buddhist reincarnate in the body of his own monastic grandson.

The liquidation of elites during the violent takeover of East Tibet in the 1950s generated a recurring heroic narrative about traumatic deaths: some prominent figures became deified. Buddhism has in fact in all cultures coexisted with another religion or cosmology. Although it has since its beginnings aimed at monopolising death rites and the interpretation of afterlife based on the morality reincarnation principle, it has not entirely succeeded. In Tibet, an individual can gain two kinds of rebirth: a Buddhist one (or more) through consciousness and another one through a vitality

principle within a local cosmology of mountains and ancestors tied to the ecological environment and traditional socio-political elites. The PRC presence and acts have pushed towards strengthening the latter, a solidification of local identities of shattered Tibetan polities, traditional knowledge loss, and an alternation of the related burial practices.

The apotheosis of important individuals not only enables a constant enlargement of local divine pantheons but also interacts with the Buddhist reincarnation principle and pattern. The outcome is a socially prestigious dual postmortal existence in which an individual succeeds in both cosmologies simultaneously.

Presenter(s): Anna Sehnalova

Discussion

3575 Ancestral Ghosts and Ghostly Ancestors in Contemporary China

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Throughout history, both "ghosts" and "ancestors" have taken shape and continue to emerge as important sites of meaning-making in Chinese families and Chinese society more broadly. Both refer to the spectral traces of those who have come before, and both are entities with whom the living can experience a relationship of "resonance and response." Indeed, ongoing communication between the living and their deceased ancestors is often seen as a preventative measure, satisfying the ancestors enough so that they do not become the kinds of vengeful or "hungry" ghosts that wreak havoc in the world of the living.

Looking beyond conventional imaginaries of kinship and human-ghost interaction in contemporary China, the papers on this panel work towards the development of a phenomenology and semiotics of ghosts and ancestors in China today. Across our papers, we specifically seek to productively unsettle the boundaries between past and present, personal and political, and religious and secular realms. Our ethnographic interrogations examine the presence, purpose, and practices of "ancestral ghosts" and "ghostly ancestors" in various urban and rural settings throughout China, including a large Buddhist temple and second-hand markets in Beijing; family grave sites in rural Shanxi; and a county-level middle school in Southwest China. We address the following questions:

- How do ghosts populate everyday life in contemporary China? Where, when, and how do they reveal themselves? What knowledge or experience is required in order to "read" them in images, sounds, material objects, bodily sensations, or states of mind?
- How and why do people communicate with ghosts and ancestors? What, where, and who are the mediums through which such communication occurs?
- What is the purpose of such communication? What desires or aspirations ground it, and how does it contribute to everyday forms of relationality?

- To what extent does (unspoken) historical, social, or political trauma emerge in the form of "ghosts" or "ancestors" in contemporary China?
- What is the moral and emotional tenor of communication with ancestors and/or ghosts in contemporary China? Where, when and by whom does engaging with ancestors/ghosts feel like spiritual reverence, a burden, or a form of intimacy and joy?
- What space-times are occupied by ghosts and ancestors? How are such space-times understood in relation to social realms such as religion or politics? How are these space-times accessed by Chinese citizens in various contexts and over time?

These questions are especially pertinent in the contemporary Chinese context, marked by recent demographic shifts such as declining birth and marriage rates and population aging; massive changes in the organization and distribution of power in the family; and the ongoing repression of serious public engagement with troubling political histories.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Zhenzhou "Andy" Tan, CUNY, Graduate Center, Sonya Pritzker, University of Alabama

Chair: Zhenzhou "Andy" Tan, CUNY, Graduate Center

Presenter(s): Gareth Fisher, Syracuse University, Yuan Zhang, University of Oxford, Hanna Pickwell, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Zhenzhou "Andy" Tan, CUNY, Graduate Center

Discussant: Sonya Pritzker, University of Alabama

Presentation(s): Spirit Possession? Shifting Ontologies of Ghost Belief in a Chinese Buddhist Community under Secularism

Based on fieldwork at a Buddhist temple in Beijing, this presentation explores two stories of ghostly encounters to consider how experiences with the supernatural expose cracks in the boundaries between secular and religious, public and private, and internal fears and external behaviors. In one case, after ridiculing a ritual to appease hungry ghosts (gui), a temple visitor was followed home by a ghost, leading her to frantically recant her moment of disrespect and seek an exorcism. In another case, adherents begged a popular monk at the temple to help exorcise spirits (futi) that they believed were causing them stress, paranoia, and depression. A graduate of the National Buddhist Academy of China, the monk was deeply influenced by a secularized approach to Buddhism as a philosophy that offered liberation to its adherents through the mastery of "no-self" (wuwo) rather than as a religion that trained its clergy to control occult forces. Yet, faced with the adherents' persistent requests, he eventually took his own "ontological turn" by concluding that the spirits were real as long as the adherents under his care believed they caused suffering, and he explored ways to take their problems with possession more seriously. In both cases, ghosts and spirits functioned to blur the boundaries between the religious and the secular in urban space, served as mediums to bring unspoken private problems into public light, and provided justifications for unacceptable behaviors.

Presenter(s): Gareth Fisher

Between Material and Spectral: Rethinking Ancestral Presence through Grave Goods in Rural Shanxi

Based on ethnographic research in rural Shanxi, China, this paper challenges conventional understandings of the "parallel worldview" in Chinese cosmology through an examination of grave goods practices. Rather than reflecting a straightforward mirroring between human and ancestral realms, I argue that funeral garments and paper offerings reveal a more ambiguous, negotiable boundary where uncertainty and innovation coexist with tradition.

I focus on women's practices of creating "longevity clothes" and other funerary objects within patrilineal structures. These material engagements transform the preparation for death into a form of intergenerational care, as elders craft their future ancestral identities while reducing anticipated burdens on descendants.

What emerges is a distinctive engagement with ancestral presence characterized by the paradoxical coexistence of reverence and playfulness. As residents incorporate modern elements into offerings and share humorous narratives about "wild ghosts," they acknowledge death's fundamental unknowability while maintaining material connections across cosmological domains.

Taken together, this anthropological study reveals how contemporary rural Chinese navigate ancestral presence not through fear or obligation alone, but through practical, flexible, and sometimes playful material practices that simultaneously honour tradition while creating space for negotiation and change.

Presenter(s): Yuan Zhang

Ghostly Paths of Secondhand Things: The Powers and Potentials of Object Biographies in Beijing

This paper explores the value and affective dimensions of the secondhand economy in Beijing. At the heart of this investigation lies the concept of *lai lu bu ming*—"the path of origin [of something/someone] is not known"—which condenses the ambivalence many of my interlocutors expressed toward material things previously owned by strangers. Like ghosts, who are figured as potentially dangerous strangers in Chinese popular religion and can affix to material things, secondhand goods also carry contagious qualities or social entanglements with unknown others that can provoke anxiety and hesitation.

Yet for others, the very same usedness is highly valued as a kind of social and historical richness. Dealers of used goods, who rely on the value of secondhand things in the marketplace, must brighten the unknown past paths of used goods in order to assure customers. Some even project a trajectory for their wares into the future, reframing the sale and recirculation of used items as a cultural and emotional inheritance or a kind of non-familial kinship, emphasizing an ethic of continued circulation and appreciation rather than letting good things go to waste. By attending to the parallels between ghost/ancestor and stranger/kinship relationships alongside the perceived contagion/appeal of secondhand things, this paper articulates a resonance between popular religion and everyday material practice.

Presenter(s): Hanna Pickwell

The Intergenerational Haunting of Anxiety over “Salvation Through Education” in a Southwestern Chinese County

This paper examines how anxiety over (un)fulfilled educational aspirations becomes ghostlike, haunting multiple generations amidst rapid social change. Based on fieldwork conducted in a county seat in Southwest China from 2023-24, I explore a common predicament among teachers and parents who, despite their own exhaustion as active participants in educational competition, lament their middle school students' and children's declining motivation compared to previous generations. Drawing on interviews with ten middle school teacher-parents, this paper traces how an anxiety over "salvation through education" persists beyond its original political-economic foundations. Rooted in their ancestors' traumas of poverty and political stigma, this inherited anxiety continues to demand salvation from teacher-parents who have already lifted their families out of hardship through educational success. It further drives them to impose the same aspirations on their students and children growing up in a booming economy and receiving far more intensive schooling—conditions that render such anxiety over salvation increasingly unnecessary and unsustainable. As a result, many of these teacher-parents recount painful adjustments to their expectations after school-related physical and mental issues and domestic conflicts occur to their children and themselves. In light of these narratives, this paper reflects on the potential unraveling of this intergenerational haunting and the human costs involved.

Presenter(s): Zhenzhou "Andy" Tan

Discussion

7827 Empire and its Haunts

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In this roundtable, we explore the various manifestations, impacts, and resistances to colonial and present-day empires, as well as the rationalities that undergird disparate manifestations of the imperial. Through examining specific tactics and logics of empire in various locales and time periods, we draw attention to the "ghosts" of empire - the often unseen, unsettled, and unfinished ways that past policies of empires continue to haunt present-day economic, political, and social landscapes.

By examining the ramifications of empire, our roundtable participants invite a discussion foregrounding the centrality of the imperial in people's everyday lives while simultaneously challenging reified understandings of empire as a concept. Our presenters interrogate the current-day material manifestations of empires in plantation agriculture, armed conflict, emerging and long abandoned extraction zones; the genealogy of "imperium" as the modality of power undergirding of Western imperial formations; and the ways the recognition of empire is masked in imperial cores.

This round table moves beyond an understanding of empires as stagnant, all-consuming entities to unpack how empires are simultaneously formed, reformed, contested, and acquiesced to both across time and place. Drawing from scholars of state formation, we are less interested in an immovable definition of empire, and more in search of the complicated and historically rooted ways that empire-making has been threaded into the banal interactions of daily life. Central to our discussion is the role of shifting political economies and forms of power in masking broader acknowledgement and awareness of the work of the empire. In paying attention to how empires function and who comprises empires (governments, civilians, or both), this round table also addresses the difficulties inherent in confronting and dismantling empires.

Key Questions for include:

- -What are the impacts of empire in discursively "post-colonial" societies?
- -In what ways have empire and Imperialism been remade to continue to haunt both the colonized and colonizers?
- -How does the empire's invisibility influence how it is understood and resisted?
- -How has the discourse of "empire" prevented us from conceptualizing "the imperial" as a modality of power?
- -In what ways have empires reshaped peoples' relationship to and understandings of land and nature?
- -How do people engage with, adapt to, and contest legacies of imperialism in their everyday lives and aspirations for the future?
- -How have empires built relationships with minority communities, selectively "uplifting" and subjugating them and how have minorities supported and resisted imperial endeavors?

Through our interrogation of empire we hope to contribute to broader discussions about neoliberalism, territorial and power ambitions of empires, and decolonization, while also suggesting new pathways toward resistance and liberation.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Chelsey Dyer

Presenter(s): Tatiana Rabinovich, North Carolina State University, Johnathan Favini , Chelsey Dyer , Erin Jordan, North Carolina State University, Sabeen Ahmed

Discussant: Carwil Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

7100 Haunted Futures: Relationships, Collectives and Places

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Landscapes are haunted by the ruins of progress and its promises – tales of collapse, extinction, and exhaustion. Yet, both the dead and the undead are resuscitated by cycles of history and projects to revive and renew what was once buried underground. How are futures then recast by

these haunted projects and cycles? What ghostly forms appear as futures when we direct attention to how the past is made to live in the present? And crucially, what forms of relationality emerge between past and present that may gather in future assemblages? Given the pervasive haunting of colonial legacies, how do actors in various places confront the undead or negotiate their presence? This panel attempts to inter "progress," to mute its metronomic effects, so as to clear air for excavations of the dead and undead. We not only track and trace people, places and things that haunt, but pursue haunting as temporal method for unsettling presumed tomorrows. The "arts of noticing," as called for by Anna Tsing (2015), thus can draw upon more than a present tense that swells and suspends. It can draw upon the past to enliven the present with spirits, projects, music, homes, forms of care and solidarity. The panel interrogates ghostly, peri-capitalist incarnations that forge tension, gesture toward relation, and offer means for otherwise being in the here and now. Specifically, we unearth material specters of the good life, such as those that haunt log cabins of Tennessee and their capitalist appropriation for escapist futures. We excavate traditions of neighborly relation in Tunisia that scaffold urban survival even as these relations are sites of capture by social media corporations. We conjure the colonial ghosts of anarchist pasts as they disrupt coordinated punk futures in Indonesia. And we disinter specters of past failure and disillusionment in Lebanon as these haunt current caring practices and uncertain futures amid ongoing war and displacement. In these disparate sites, ghostly pasts shape relationships, collectives, and places, spilling out of the present into haunted futures.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Karem Said, Denison University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Yasemin Ipek, George Mason University

Presenter(s): Steve Moog, Texas A&M University, Central Texas, Department of Anthropology, J. Hope Amason, Central Washington University, Department of Anthropology & Museum Studies, Karem Said, Denison University, Department of Anthropology, Yasemin Ipek, George Mason University

Discussant: Christopher Morris, George Mason University

Presentation(s): Punk Futures, Anarchist Vacations, and the Ghost of Colonialism Past

For the last twenty years or so, Indonesia has been home to the largest and most active punk scenes in the world. A small yet highly influential subset of these scenes are anarchist punk collectives in urban areas which have steadily grown in popularity. These collectives offer a place where folks who are disillusioned with the false hope of an expanding consumer class and dissociated by the nation-building project of Indonesia can forge new realities extending beyond imposed conditions of living. Through 'worlding from below' collectives' global networking predicated on anarchist and DIY principles actively create alternative futures to predatory capitalism and mindless nationalism thereby resisting dominant power structures—or at least that is how the anarcho-punks envision things.

In this paper, I focus on an annual anarcho-punk music festival, Libertad, organized by a collective operating in Bandung, Indonesia. For organizers, Libertad is viewed as an opportunity to assert their

place in the global punk scene while promoting anarchist ideals of mutual aid and solidarity. However, tensions emerge when European and North American punks treat the festival like a tropical Sandals resort, expecting local punks to enable their booze-fueled escapades with little regard for the ethics and ideals on which the event is built. I explore the global power dynamics at play in punk tourism revealing that even anarchist futures are haunted by the lingering specter of colonialism.

Presenter(s): Steve Moog

Log-Cabin Fantasies in Gatlinburg, Tennessee: Salvage and Translation of the Domestic Appalachian Idyll

Gatlinburg, Tennessee, (pop. 3,577) is a gateway community to the most visited national park in the United States, the Great Smoky Mountains. Here, the "log cabin" is a key symbol for tourism; a mascot used to sell everything from pancakes to putt-putt golf. Thousands of log cabins sprout from Gatlinburg's forested hills, each built to accommodate tourists who come to sip moonshine, hike mountains, or explore Dollywood. Despite the abundance of cabins, Gatlinburg's residents live with housing insecurity. As one resident noted, "It's not that we don't have enough houses. It's that we don't have enough places to live." The growth of short-term rental apps (AirBnb and VRBO) has heightened the intensity of cabin construction and the rate at which long-term housing is converted into nightly accommodation. This paper examines the log cabin as a site of salvage, where capitalist accumulation occurs through processes that are not entirely controlled by capitalism. Tourism discourse is haunted by the specter of pre-capitalist life, wherein the "log cabin" is imagined as a harmonious site of integration between work and home. Yet the maintenance of touristic "log cabin" discourse requires not only alienated labor and commodities, but also residential displacement. What haunted futures are conjured by the "log cabin" as it is salvaged and translated into a short-term domestic commodity?

Presenter(s): J. Hope Amason

Ghosts of Time, Care and Connection: Haunting Transactional Futures in Tunis, Tunisia

This paper explores how traditions of neighborly relation in Tunisia haunt urban relations in Tunis, Tunisia and the entangled relational futures of online social media. Some residents of Tunis describe the city as a non-place or as a nowhere. The perceived anonymity of the city contrasts sharply with emplaced social connection in small towns. In spite of much change, town households more commonly share food, and women sit outside homes in the evenings to gather and chat with neighbors. But for urban residents in my field site of Hay Ettadhamon (Solidarity District) – the most densely-populated collection of low-income neighborhoods in Tunis – financial duress shapes the terms of neighborly relation and local friendships. High rents, high electricity bills, and low pay push people to undertake small-scale lending and borrowing, including with people they don't know well. These transactional bonds, fueled by financial exigency, are further reflected in social media use. The emergence of widespread social media use established local digital traffic by incorporating existing urban relationships of solidarity into social media platforms.

As Facebook use has developed over the past 10 years, residents increasingly use online profiles for entrepreneurial purposes, generating cynical opportunism about relational futures. The paper shows how memories of care, of time, of connection with family and neighbors in hometowns haunt transactional encroachment on urban relation.

Presenter(s): Karem Said

Caring and Connectivity in Lebanon between Haunting Past and Uncertain Futures

This paper examines how narratives about the past and the future foster competing imaginations of care and connectivity in Lebanon, specifically in the context of war experiences and grassroots care practices during the 2024 Israeli invasion of the country. Between September and December 2024, over a million people—primarily from Shi'i communities—were displaced across Lebanon, while thousands of Lebanese sought refuge in neighboring countries. Although many Lebanese elites were alarmed by the crowding of Beirut's shelters and streets, various local communities and activist groups stepped in to support the displaced individuals. They fostered new relationships through humanitarian assistance and other forms of care. What kinds of pasts and futures do these caring practices invoke in the face of shock, devastation, grief, and loss? How do diverse residents relate to each other amid protracted wars and crises? I situate caring practices in Lebanon within postwar histories of activism and struggles related to national identity and belonging. I show how caring relationships generate lifeworlds haunted by complex narratives of both the past and the future. Engaging with the profound impacts of an ongoing war enabled many to tackle uncertain futures by forming new connections and claiming agency. Yet, the past—marked by "failed projects" and associated feelings of disillusionment—haunted these engagements.

Presenter(s): Yasemin Ipek

Discussion

7355 Contours of Ghosts: Recognizing the Past and Creating Old Futures

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Seeing is believing. But if so, how do we make sense of ghosts? Are they truly seen? Can they even be visualized? The pursuit of rendering the spectral visible illuminates not only the past but also the future. Ghostly contours might emerge by tracing often hidden, lasting structures, yet they should remain visible to those who come after. This panel explores various visualizing methods from technologically driven approaches such as facial recognition systems, live streaming, and paranormal equipment, to more traditional practices like portraiture and symbolic representations through demonic or animalistic tropes.

These visualization processes reveal a complex interplay between recognition and reconciliation, as each, with its own fixed point, oscillates between realms of knowing and not knowing. Such oscillation allows ghosts and the spectral to function as historical and imaginative forces, framing

ongoing conversations about haunting issues. Eom explores "haunted historiographies" shared by Indonesia and Korea under Japanese colonial rule through the discovery of a Japanized Korean soldier's grave and portraits of comfort women in a "house of ghosts." Choi examines epistemic anxiety in rendering ghosts into a quasi-material construction through live-streaming ghost hunting in South Korea. Zhao shows that the spectral representations of national enemies with demonic and animal tropes can contribute to producing public discourses on national security and justify the state's sovereign interventions in crimes and misconduct. Bulelani's work on Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa shows that by adopting Chinese facial recognition technologies, governments not only surveil their populations but also predict criminality using images of past criminals, whose legacies continue to haunt the present. By highlighting various pursuits to visualize the ghostly within ethnographic sites, this panel examines how making the invisible old visible enables the recognition and transmission of memories from the past for future-making-memories once suspended between the individual unconscious and collective reality.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Shanni Zhao, Stanford University, Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS), Gangsim Eom, Harvard University

Chair: Byron Good, Harvard University

Presenter(s): Min Ji Choi, Harvard University, Gangsim Eom, Harvard University, Bulelani Jili, Harvard University, Shanni Zhao, Stanford University, Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS)

Discussant: Clara Han, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Florence Galmiche

Presentation(s): "Do you believe?": Science, Shamans, and Epistemic Anxiety in South Korean New Media

This paper examines the intersection of new media and "anthropology of ghosts" through a case study of the South Korean live streamer Yoon Si-won. Yoon has attracted a large viewership through his wide array of horror-related content including interviews with mudangs (Korean shamans) and real-time ghost hunting. In his streams, the existence of ghosts and spirits is uncontested; folklore equates history. Characteristic of his live-streaming is his use of "scientific" equipments, such as EVP recorders and infrared cameras. As Dylan Anderson analyzed for Anthropology News, such usage of technological tools by paranormal investigators attempts to "materialize the unmaterializable" by rendering ghosts into a quasi-material construction, and technology into a symbol of intellectual authority.

What, then, could be made of the regular presence of (self-proclaimed) mudangs in his investigations? How does the apparent objective authority of scientific empiricism coexist and contend with the subjective authority of spiritual privilege? How do these questions come into play with the invitation to skepticism enabled by viewer chatrooms and real-time streams? What kind of epistemological contest is being put on display, and what might this tell us about the creation of folklore, proof, and "truth" in the sphere of new media--and their shakiness?

Presenter(s): Min Ji Choi

Revisiting the Dead: Haunted Historiographies Between Indonesia and Korea

From pilgrimage to dark tourism, the dead can reveal more than the living ever could, providing an infinite source of stories that sustain potent afterlives. This paper juxtaposes two such afterlives to foreground the ambiguities and interstices that haunt the discourse of postcolonial historiography. First, it traces the discovery of a Japanized Korean soldier's grave in Indonesia in 1975. His interpellation as a posthumous Indonesian independence hero and subsequent reclamation of the soldier's identity as an ethnic Korean, highlight the transnational imbrication of lives and deaths following the deployment of colonial subjects during the Asia-Pacific War. The second part contrasts this military history with the dimming legacy of gendered violence through the "narrative experience" of an Indonesian feminist activist, who created 53 portraits of her elderly neighbors, former comfort women, while caring for them. The act of drawing released the trauma extended to her and transformed her home into both an art studio and a spiritual refuge—a "house of ghosts" whose voices might get lost by historical amnesia and nationalist historiographies. These instances of "haunted historiographies" illuminate how spectral memories of war, empire, and resistance intimately entangle Indonesian and Korean postcolonial presents, blurring the boundaries between us and them.

Presenter(s): Gangsim Eom

Between Dependency and Independence: African Agency Amid China's Expanding Digital Footprint in Africa

Digital technology is often regarded as a neutral instrument—a functional conduit that automatically realizes predefined ends. Contrary to this supposition, I explore digital technology as a cultural artifact, one that reflects and refracts values embedded in African postcolonial societies. Specifically, I interrogate the politics of faith in the technological fix as a solution to longstanding, and often spectral, challenges inherited from the colonial encounter. My focus is on facial recognition technology, which exemplifies the Kenyan state's most ambitious efforts to enhance its capacity to uphold social order and catalyze development. Yet, these technologies also provoke deep concern—particularly given their procurement from Chinese vendors—about their potential to facilitate espionage, bolster authoritarian governance, and expand Beijing's imperial reach across the Global South. Broadly, there has been a persistent tendency to read the present as a moment of rupture or rapture—a pattern especially pronounced in imperial narratives. The rise of advanced digital technologies, paired with China's growing geopolitical presence in Africa, is thus framed both as a harbinger of freedom—a long-awaited emancipation from underdevelopment—and as a forewarning of a techno-authoritarian future marked by the banality of mass surveillance. Moving beyond these dualistic framings requires inquiry into how surveillance tools are embedded and contested.

Presenter(s): Bulelani Jili

Animals with Parents: The Queer Kinship of China's Contemporary Body Politic

Over the recent decade, animal metaphors have emerged collectively in China's public and state discourses to characterize and categorize particular social groups—state officials, educators, consumers, or bachelors and bachelorettes. For instance, the wildlife of tigers and snakes index corrupted officials that the current state leadership deem as national enemies that need to be caged. Demonic beings with superpowers, such as the Wolf Man and Aquaman, index educators committing sexual harassment and swindlers committing love-for-money cons. Domestic ones, dogs, pigs, and fish, respectively, index undesirable bachelors, self-indulging consumers, and victims of financial or sexual offenses. Meanwhile, kin terms are adopted to register national role models, including President Xi Jinping as "elderly uncle Xi" and the First Lady as "mom Peng." This presentation explores these registers' pragmatic usages in urban conversations, TV shows, and political speeches. It further maps out a queer kinship of contemporary China's body politic. The emerging political kinship and its animalistic and demonic alterities will reveal who the current state deems as reproducible and relatable kin, who can be regenerated or humanized, and who have to be caged for regime stability. In doing so, the presentation opens up anthropological imagination for socio-political becoming and national future-making.

Presenter(s): Shanni Zhao

Discussion

Discussion

3224 Sonic Infrastructures and the Materiality of Power

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Discussions of sonic infrastructure usually focus on music, media, and their material production. In this panel we recognize a broader range of material substances that mediate and mobilize power and sentiment through sound, including cruise ships, dwellings, cows, and human bodies. Infrastructures often underlie and naturalize hierarchies of power; our panel pays special attention to colonial and imperial histories in the movement of sound and substance. We consider how infrastructures connect the micro-level of bodies and emplacement to macro-level systems of power and movement. We build on recent work that has brought the anthropology of infrastructure into the aesthetic and sensorial realms. For Brian Larkin (2013), infrastructures are things and the relations between things. They move and mediate things that are both concrete and abstract--structures and ideologies. Different material structures produce different ambient conditions and sensorial experiences. Infrastructures often operate outside of awareness, though they are not necessarily invisible. While infrastructures are often forward looking, they also carry historical forces into materialities and imaginations. For Kyle Divine and Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier (2021), "auditory infrastructures" are about music's material bases; as such, they invite the exploration of the correlation between natural resources (upon which such a material base is built) and aesthetic practices. Though our panel is not limited to the musical commodity as an object, we note the recurring theme of "surface" aspects (i.e., actual sound) in contrast to deep aspects of

music making through material infrastructures, often large-scale ones upon which the very circulation of sound is based. In conceptualizing this panel, we want to point out that since the connection between these surface and deep elements is often not obvious, the very condition of audibility becomes a problematic to be explored. The ethnographic and historical studies in this panel consider a range of sonic infrastructures across four continents. Panelists discuss the sensorial, cultural, and material dimensions of infrastructures that fall apart through economic decline or environmental disasters; infrastructures of natural and supernatural mediations; and infrastructures of peripheral networks related to tourism and war. In these studies, sound and the sensorial are not detached as musical commodities, but rather embedded in densely woven materialities, ideologies, and experiences.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Amanda Minks, University of Oklahoma, Ana M Ochoa, Tulane University

Chair: Amanda Minks, University of Oklahoma, Ana M Ochoa, Tulane University

Presenter(s): Amanda Minks, University of Oklahoma, Lila Ellen Gray, Dickinson College, Iracema Dulley, University of Lisbon, Louise Meintjes, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Ana M Ochoa, Tulane University

Presentation(s): Colonial Acoustics: Sound, Spirituality, and the Built Environment in Antigua, Guatemala

What is the relationship between religious architecture and ontology as an infrastructure for empire? It is well known that religion was an arm of the Spanish empire, and that monumental architecture reflected and shaped political power, but how did this take place at the level of the body, voice, and spirit? The close economic and social relations between church institutions and colonial settlers manifested in nuns' spoken and sung prayers to facilitate benefactors' entrance to heaven (Burns 1999). The materiality of convents reproduced class divides by distinguishing between nuns of the black veil (educated, often noble women who were prayer and song leaders as well as administrators) and the white veil (illiterate members of the servant class, often Indigenous). Exploring the sonic relations of bodies and buildings, this paper considers Antigua, Guatemala, a planned city with orderly blocks periodically damaged by earthquakes, which ultimately led to abandonment in 1776. Whereas cities of continuous habitation get torn down and rebuilt bit by bit, Antigua heritage discourses present the experience of a colonial city through ruins and reconstructions. The paper argues that colonial religious architecture encapsulated Baroque cosmologies and sensorial regimes through material structures (fountains, cells, inside-outside and upper-lower distinctions) and embodied techniques of the voice, the audible, and the invisible as manifesting the soul.

Presenter(s): Amanda Minks

"A Portuguese Home": Listening to Lisbon's Transformations

"A Portuguese Home" (Uma Casa Portuguesa), a mid-twentieth century song written in Mozambique and popularized by some of the Lusophone world's greatest stars, invokes values associated with regime-era (1926-1974) propaganda for some Portuguese. Others might invoke this

song ironically to refer to the disappearance of the possibilities of home for longstanding residents who wish to remain living in Lisbon, in a city which has become, over the past decade, a European ground zero for tourism-gentrification. Through ethnographic attention and fine-tuned readings of recent forms of cultural production I examine intersecting, and sometimes dissenting, concepts and experiences of home, dwelling, ruins, and salvage in contemporary Lisbon, as it undergoes seismic changes to the physical and economic infrastructures that enable possibilities for being at home. I listen to everyday and aesthetic forms of sense-making for what they might reveal about making "home" amidst transformation, displacement and mobility--from the incessant roar of flights overhead at dawn, the din of cruise-ships in the new port, the buzz and excitement in the flourishing private archive in a warehouse outside of Lisbon where many bring salvaged detritus documenting Lisbon's former everyday—to a play (Penim, 2022) where the protagonist of the story is a decaying "Portuguese home," a site of colonial amnesia and oppressive subterranean infrastructures, revealed and commented upon in sound and song.

Presenter(s): Lila Ellen Gray

Identification as Sound: Ethnic Signifiers in Central Angola (1846-1890)

This paper explores the sonic infrastructures of identification in 19th-century Central Angola through a close reading of writings by travelers and traders Magyar and Silva Porto. Focusing on the sounds of signifiers used to name others, the paper argues that the ethnonym Ovimbundu, now associated with Central Angola and the Umbundu language, was not used as ethnic identification before colonial rule. Instead, other forms of identification circulated within precolonial infrastructures marked by mobility, trade, and language contact. Rather than treating current ethnonyms as stable categories, the paper follows the iteration of terms designating alterity and considers them as historically shifting and sonically resonant signifiers whose audible and material presence—through speech, writing, and translation—helped constitute ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The accounts of Magyar and Silva Porto reveal blurred linguistic borders, with Umbundu operating as a lingua franca beyond the region to which it was later assigned in vernacular and ethnographic discourses. In this context, the sound of language—its phonetic texture, cadence, and recognizability—functioned as a kind of auditory infrastructure mediating distinctions of belonging, status, and alterity. By foregrounding the materiality of language and the auditory dimension of naming, the paper contends that ethnicity in Central Angola was not simply represented through language but acoustically constituted through it.

Presenter(s): Iracema Dulley

Disquiet: The Aesthetics of Cattle Slaughter in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal

Disquiet is inherent to the idea of sacrificial slaughter. At a Zulu wedding in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal, sacrificial slaughter facilitates ancestral presence while materializing new social relations. Ancestors who are tended in turn guide and protect families in uncertain times. Through its collaborative skilled process and in its provision of food, slaughter also creates the party, a sonic liveliness animated by the feeling of the cow. My goal in focusing on the aesthetics of slaughter is to

build on the heretofore transactional and masculinist emphasis on cattle exchange (essential to weddings) as local infrastructure. By cultivating the feeling of the cow through aesthetic engagement surrounding its killing – and that supports its killing – men and women keep cattle close, even as livestock accumulation and herding become unsustainable in a degraded ecology and economy. With herds relocated to formerly white-owned pastures away from home, by those who can afford to do so, and cattle theft an enduring dynamic, I argue that slaughter is disquieted also by legacies of colonial and apartheid violence. I treat sacrificial slaughter ethnographically as a partially recuperative infrastructure from these tough histories, which nevertheless have sustained the "cattle complex" (Herskovits 1926) and cattle as "a special kind of property" (Ferguson 1981). The disquiet of sacrificial slaughter is at once a disquiet of absented relations.

Presenter(s): Louise Meintjes

Oceanic Entanglements: Infrastructures of the Inaudible and the Audible in the Caribbean

Between the 1930s and 1991, the US operated a classified underwater auditory surveillance system called SOSUS, Sound Surveillance System. It consisted of a series of hydrophone arrays that were installed in the ocean floor throughout the Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic and Eastern North America and eventually in the Pacific. While meant to track enemy submarines, these hydrophones were also the first to capture the sounds of whales and other submarine life. By the 1920s the United Fruit Company had created a major cruise system – while banana ships moved cargo to New Orleans and other ports, when returning to the Caribbean, they moved tourists and musicians. Cruise ships depended on a radio network not only for maritime transportation but for circulating Caribbean music. This paper challenges the notion of an aural phonocentric Caribbean by contrasting the infrastructures of inaudibility of classified hydrophones with the audible ones of cruise ships and radio. It explores how aesthetics of the inaudible are entangled with those purported to deploy the audible, in a zone that was deemed one of the crucial extractive zones of the planet. It also questions the idea that a submarine oceanic Caribbean began in the 1990s and rethinks the relationship between submarine and superficial oceanic endeavors as mutually constituted, thus making us rethink sound's very description and materiality as waves and vibrations.

Presenter(s): Ana M Ochoa

5143 Imaginations and Temporalities of Belonging and Enclosures

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable raises new methodological and epistemological questions around how quotidian ideas of belonging and enclosures are imagined across space and time. Vivian Y. Choi, Nidhi Mahajan, Bettina Ng'weno, and Arjun Shankar will discuss their recently published monographs, in conversation with Sharika Thiranagama. Each author will highlight key concepts that animate their work. Nidhi Mahajan asks how marginalized Muslim dhow sailors from India navigate the perils and

possibilities of voyaging across the Indian Ocean as they maneuver multiple regulatory regimes wrought through colonialism, neoliberalism, the rise of Hindutva, insurgency, climate change, and border regimes across the ocean. Through a transregional ethnography of the interplay of moorings and voyages, she highlights how sailors produce capital in the interstices of the global economy. Arjun Shankar asks us to think with the dilemmas that emerge when the savior slot is no longer filled by those who are "white" and therefore cannot be as easily critiqued for being on the wrong side of the "global color line". He produces a unique conceptual framework linking global migration, racialization, and caste capital in order to capture this phenomenon in the case of India and its diaspora. Bettina Ng'weno asks how we make cities home that refuse that premise and are built to exclude us through anti-urban policy, law and practice. She highlights how people contest anti-urbanism through their insistence on building life in the city despite it, even in the current dynamic of ubiquitous demolition and reconstruction. Indeed, through quotidian practices and creative resistance, long-term residents imagine alternatives to displacement, create belonging, and build new urban futures. Vivian Choi asks how new forms of governance and disaster management led to enduring forms of precarity and insecurity in Sri Lanka after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. In particular she shows how the logic of governing both natural disasters and terrorism as threats to national security justified the state's militarized aggression in the war against the Tamil Tigers, while also perpetuating hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Choi ask how life perseveres against perpetual uncertainty and danger-caused by natural disasters and state-sanctioned violence alike. The discussion will thus highlight racial and caste capitalism, disaster nationalism, anti-urbanism, moorings and voyages offer epistemological and methodological approaches to thinking about different forms of belonging and enclosures.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nidhi Mahajan, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Vivian Choi, St. Olaf College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Bettina Ng'weno, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology, Nidhi Mahajan, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Vivian Choi, St. Olaf College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Arjun Shankar, Georgetown University

Discussant: Sharika Thiranagama

4914 Spectral Fluviations: Emergence and Submergence in Damp Terrain

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

If all land is sedimented with pasts, this might be doubly true in the damp and watery environs that make up coastal and riparian space. Here, histories of racialized expropriation and violence haunt the present; old projects of managing terrain necessitate new interventions to mitigate harm; things that circulate through these zones-ships, capital, bodies-run afoul of things that have settled in shallow stream beds; fixed ground dissolves into watery depths, occasionally to re-emerge once again. In these spaces, sedimentation is not just a metaphor, but it constitutes the unstable

material on which pasts and futures contend to reshape the fragile present. Yet, traces and sediments are hardly stable or reliable in damp terrain: while some endure, often at great effort, many emerge and submerge in relation to volatile material and semiotic dynamics. Taking such sedimentation seriously, this panel explores the ghostly natures of deltas, estuaries, wetlands, and river basins. It takes damp zones at the interface of land and water as uneasy palimpsests of expropriation, grand plans and humble hopes, violence, extractions, and management. It sees fluvial terrain as a place where these histories-material, social, supernatural—are constantly in the process of both occlusion and resurfacing. We will discuss fluviations – by which geologists understand a river's deposition of sediments – as spectral processes, where undead pasts produce uncertain presents.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Jason Cons , Franz Krause, University of Cologne

Chair: Franz Krause, University of Cologne, Jason Cons

Presenter(s): Liviu Chelcea, Michael Bollig, Werner Krauss, Franz Krause, University of Cologne, Jason Cons, Rishabh Raghavan

Discussant: Monica Barra, University of South Carolina

Presentation(s): Terrestrial techniques, hydrological denial, and drinking water consumption in New York City

This presentation explores the concept of hydrological denial in New York City, where urban development has long sought to erase the presence of pre-urbanization water systems. Using a provisional framework of first, second, and third waterscapes—respectively, pre-urban surface and groundwater, piped municipal water, and commodified forms such as bottled and filtered water—I examine how these shifting modes of water provisioning shape perception and consumption. I focus on how buried hydrological pasts resurface in material and imaginative forms, influencing contemporary beliefs about the purity of tap water. Despite centuries of transformation—marshes filled, creeks culverted, ponds drained, and inland waterways turned into sewers—New York's pre-urban hydrology has not vanished. It returns as spectral fluviations: ghostly flows made visible through flash floods, the daylighting of long-buried creeks, rusted infrastructure exposed by construction, and subterranean seepages along subway lines. These reemergences disrupt the modernist fantasy of a sanitized and controlled water system. Residents often interpret these watery apparitions through anxieties about infrastructure failure and contamination, merging visions of buried nature with fears of piped pollution. By tracing how ecological memory and infrastructural distrust converge in these spectral encounters, I argue that hydrological denial is not merely historical but actively shaping the urban present.

Presenter(s): Liviu Chelcea

Royal Sediments, Slave-built Channels and Mobile Commoner Land Use: The Intricacies of Turning a Zambian Floodplain into a World Heritage Site

This paper explores the intricate contestations surrounding the proposed designation of Zambia's Barotse (Zambezi) Floodplains as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the late 2010s. Originally advanced by Zambia's WWF, the National Heritage Council, and the Barotse Royal Establishment, the application sparked intense debate among royal authorities, dissident chiefs, independence movements, and the state. The floodplains became a battleground of competing visions: a global natural heritage site, the heartland of an autonomous Barotse identity, or a national breadbasket optimized for intensive agriculture. As tensions escalated, the Zambian president suspended the process, calling for consensus.

The paper analyzes these conflicts through the layered histories inscribed in the wetlands—royal burials on sediment-built islands, precolonial slave-dug channels connecting these islands, and the seasonal, mobile land use practices of commoner communities. It attends to more-than-human histories, including the roles of spirits, aquatic wildlife, and the fluvial dynamics that shape cycles of inundation and habitation. Drawing on contemporary accounts and historical anthropology, particularly Max Gluckman's early work in the region, the paper examines how sedimented pasts, spiritual geographies, and adaptive livelihoods complicate efforts to frame a singular heritage narrative for this volatile and deeply storied landscape.

Presenter(s): Michael Bollig

A Spectral Landscape of Shifting Sediments and Sentiments

At the German North Sea coastline, the Langenwarder Groden serves as a compensation area for the expansion of the adjacent Wilhelmshaven harbor. Rewilding has emerged as a new ecological initiative: a breach in the dike has created an artificial wilderness, now a source of pride for the national park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. However, local residents had to be painstakingly convinced of the ecological value and potential economic benefits this new protected area would bring. This effort succeeded, at least formally. Yet, in the evening, as residents stroll along the dike, they see the lights of the harbor and curse the sight of millions flowing into global business ventures, while they are left with nothing more than a stretch of wilderness.

Between the Langenwarder Groden and the harbor lies a vast mudflat, with constantly shifting sediments, under which entire villages are buried, lost in storm surges of past centuries. Many landmarks serve as reminders of these tragedies, while the lights of the harbor evoke the historical inequality of the region. The compensation area thus bears the ghosts of the past, the terrors of the sea, and the haunting legacy of inequality.

Presenter(s): Werner Krauss

Boom Ghosts and Bust Wrecks: Haunting Past Resource Frontier Futures in the Mackenzie Delta

This presentation examines the spectral afterlives of stalled extractive futures in the Mackenzie Delta, situated within the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in Settlement Regions of Arctic Canada. Once envisioned as a major hydrocarbon frontier, the Delta experienced two brief but intense waves of oil and gas exploration in the 1970s and 2000s. While these booms introduced employment,

infrastructure, and development promises, they also left behind polluted sites, decaying industrial remains, and enduring social disruptions.

Drawing on ethnographic research, I trace how Delta inhabitants contend with the material and affective residues of these cycles—sunk vessels in shallow channels, broken kinship ties from long industry shifts, and ongoing environmental remediation work. These hauntings are not merely remnants of the past, but animate present-day relations to land, labour, and memory.

Further, I consider how memories of the Cold War-era military presence—another dormant frontier—are being reactivated in the context of shifting geopolitical imaginaries. I argue that Inuvialuit and Gwich'in responses to these layered temporalities reflect long-standing practices of navigating uncertainty, wherein tactical engagement and strategic avoidance have been central to life in a volatile social and ecological landscape.

Presenter(s): Franz Krause

Resurfacings: Spectral Returns in Bengal's Delta Siltscape

Specters are haunting Bangladesh's delta zone. Some are the ghosts of climate's futures—looming prospects of catastrophic inundation and loss. These ghosts of the future intrude on the present, both in the form of lived environmental change and a cascade of initiatives seeking to remake the delta in anticipation of loss and decay. Yet these projects are themselves haunted by projects past—older attempts to manage delta space; longstanding political economies territory and rent; other imaginations of security, prosperity, and extraction. This paper explores these ghostly entanglements as resurfacings, moments when past and future collide in the present to troubling effect. Figuring delta terrain as a siltscape where life is lived not just on, but also through its mutable, damp terrain, the paper explores three moments of spectral resurfacing: negotiations for the reconstruction of a government embankment; attempts to keep inland waterways circulating through dredging; and conservation policies that seek to secure the mangroves for the future of humankind. These projects are all freighted with frontier pasts—specters that transform possibilities, foul workings, and create new opportunities for expropriation in the present. In these projects, to borrow Faulkner's felicitous phrase (written of a different delta), the past is not dead, it's not even past. This paper thus takes these spectral resurfacings as moments to untangle and think the delta's hazy present anew.

Presenter(s): Jason Cons

Ghostly Pasts and Deprecate Futures: Sensing Ennore's Industrial Transformations

The fishermen of Ennore—an estuarine suburb in the northern margins of Chennai—often spoke of what their landscape used to look, sound and feel like before it was built over by coal fired thermal power plants and other large industries. In examining fishing in Ennore, I show how fishing was a sensorial practice by which fishermen recorded the industrialization of Ennore—from feeling the growth of industrial debris caking their riverbed, to sensing an increase of "chemicals" in the water as rashes erupted upon their skins. Yet fishing was also a way to keep Ennore's wetland and riparian

past alive. In their accounts of a changing landscape, the smell of fly ash from the power plant was evaluated alongside the smell of casuarina trees and rice plantations lost to industrial expansion; the blare of the coal conveyor belt was juxtaposed against memories of the calls of jackals echoing in mangrove forests and marshes, as the men reminisced fishing in a river that had once flowed freely into the sea. In the entanglement of the labour of fishing with the labour of keeping a past landscape alive, it was the fishermen's own sense of belonging that was at stake. This paper shows that these entwined labours could even, on occasion, become the basis for refusing to cede to the industrial future that was being routed into their landscape, refusing to cease from calling Ennore their home, and crucially, refusing to give up on calling themselves fishermen.

Presenter(s): Rishabh Raghavan

Discussion

8985 Canceled Vaccine Requirements and the Social Landscape of a 'Healthy Again' America

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo made headlines the first week of September, 2025, when he announced an intention to cancel all vaccine mandates for children. "Who am I to tell you what your child should put in your body?" Ladapo asked at a press conference. The same week, Washington, Oregon, and California (later joined by Hawaii) formed the "West Coast Health Alliance," a coalition that aims to provide recommendations on immunizations to residents, healthcare providers, and public health officials "based on science, not politics," without regard for (or, in defiance of) federal policies. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the surface a critical intersection in the social landscape of American healthcare: a nation with a robust infrastructure for developing the COVID-19 vaccine is also home to a wellspring of resistance to recognizing COVID-19 as a serious illness and the COVID-19 vaccine as a critical medicine. In what represents a seismic shift away from consideration of the mode of transmission of infectious diseases, the "medical freedom" movement commends citizens for exercising control over their own vaccination decisions. Five years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, massive upheavals in healthcare research funding by the second Trump administration and government-led pressure on university structures highlight today's tensions between the biomedical system and the American populace. September 4, 2025 sparked a swell of debate over requirements for childhood immunization and has the potential to dramatically alter the next 20 years of public health, and with differential effects across the varied geographies and contexts in the United States. This roundtable brings together anthropologists from a variety of geographic and institutional positions and with a range of areas of expertise to discuss current developments around vaccine beliefs and policies in the United States and situate these developments within their social, historical, structural, and political context. Anthropologists must speak on these recent developments, and this roundtable takes as its goal the following actionable interventions: disciplinary conversation with AAA

members leading to a society statement and the generation of a structure for collaboration and participation in information sharing and documentation as a form of collective resistance.

Organizer: Katharina Rynkiewicz, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology, Melina Sherman, University of Southern California Technical Services - Serials Acq

Presenter(s): Shana Harris, University of Central Florida, Kristin Hedges, Grand Valley State University, Martha Lincoln, San Francisco State University, Beatriz Reyes-Foster, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Katharina Rynkiewicz, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology, Lily Shapiro, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Melina Sherman, University of Southern California Technical Services - Serials Acq

Discussant: Emily Mendenhall, Georgetown University

5049 The Politics of Lingering Part One: The preservation, adaptation, and application of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What happens when Indigenous practices, ontologies, and modes of relationality outlast the conditions that are meant to destroy them? This panel explores the politics of lingering-how Indigenous people, traditions, and more-than-human relations persist, adapt, and insist on life in colonial contexts designed to erase or assimilate them. We bring together eight ethnographic engagements that illustrate the nuanced ways Indigenous practices persist in altered forms, often in spaces where they are marginalized, commodified, or actively undermined. In contexts shaped by displacement, diaspora, and settler colonial violence, lingering is not merely a passive survival; it is an active, relational process. The first part of the panel explores how Indigenous ways of knowing and being help to create and manage relationships with human and nonhuman entities, including the environments and landscapes in which they live. Drawing on research from Ecuador, Peru, and the West and Southwest United States, these papers present a case for the importance of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that go beyond the scope of what is considered possible by Western settler societies. The second part of the panel focuses on how various Indigenous communities are navigating their relationships with the world and other beings in the face of colonial intervention. This session centers Indigenous perspective in their interactions with colonial states and governments in an attempt to move past narratives that see Indigenous experiences as reactionary. Ethnographic data for these papers come from Ecuador and the Western and Southern United States. Together, these papers ask how Indigenous worlds linger-sometimes quietly, sometimes defiantly-in spaces that are often apathetic or even hostile to them. We take seriously the labors of making and remaking relationships and of navigating institutions that often refuse to see Indigenous life on its own terms. Lingering, in these contexts, is not a failure to disappear; it is a politics of endurance, of presence, and of world-making.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Camille Brown, Patrick Ryan Williams, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Katie Foster, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, George Eppel

Presentation(s): A Window into Sociality and Power: Llakichina Songs among Indigenous Ecuadorian Women

Quechua is an indigenous language that spans much of Andean South America, but Kichwa is the dialect specific to a population who live within the lowlands of Amazonian Ecuador. Kichwa women are known for singing llakichina songs that strengthen or rebuild relationships that are under threat. Much of the existing scholarship has approached the study of these songs through thematic analysis of song lyrics. Recent research on llakichina songs is sparse, and fewer scholars have studied the ritual processes women perform when singing a llakichina song. This paper pulls from ethnographic fieldwork to explore how women's songs give insight into Kichwa women's

understandings of their human and non-human relationships as well as their relationship with energy and power, as well as how these women are shaping the world around them through this continued practice.

Presenter(s): Camille Brown

Fantasmas, Acueductos, and Indigenous Waters in the Puquios of Nasca: 500 CE to Today.

Our research on the subterranean canals of the Nasca region, their archaeological origins, and their contemporary importance in social formations today highlights the importance of memory, indigenous knowledge, and deep historical dynamics in water histories and survival. Initially constructed by the Nasca society 1500 years ago and continued in use today, the puquios tap underground aquifers and bind rural communities together through the generations. The contemporary dynamics of these underground aqueducts of Nasca, a region on the desert south coast of Peru, highlight the challenges facing contemporary society as these millennia aged technologies face modern challenges. We explore the water memory of the puquios and how they connect to the current experiences of community, the hydraulic landscape, and the challenges from contamination, climate change, and social transformation. Rural communities of Nasca grew together with this ingenious infrastructure and continue to be shaped by the ancestral knowledge of water behavior and the social memories of water, antepasados, and activity in the recent and distant past.

Presenter(s): Patrick Ryan Williams

Co-author(s): SOFIA CHACALTANA-CORTEZ, Ana Londono, Pablo Vega Romá

Indigenous-led Approaches to Post-wildfire Flash Flood Mitigation in the US Southwest

Drylands of the Southwest United States are highly susceptible to wildfires, which are increasing in frequency and intensity due to changing climate conditions. The sudden loss of vegetation and hydrophobic soils that occur in the aftermath of wildfire leave the land susceptible to flash floods,

creating a cascade of compounding social and ecological effects. In the face of these challenges, Indigenous nations of the region are leading efforts to rehabilitate burned forests, leveraging their deeply embedded knowledge of the landscape and innovative techniques in natural infrastructure design to slow the movement of water along elevation gradients, thereby building resiliency to flooding in post-wildfire contexts. This presentation profiles recent restoration efforts of the Santa Clara Pueblo of New Mexico in the wake of the Las Conchas Fire of 2011, which was the largest wildfire in the state's history at the time. The Pueblo's work also offers lessons on the establishment of multi-agency partnerships for disaster response, as well as the ways that researchers and practitioners can respectfully collaborate with Tribal nations to enhance climate adaption in the region. In contrast to the prevailing model of externally-driven climate mitigation and adaptation programs which can reproduce coloniality in both subtle and overt ways, these Indigenous-led practices offer a path that reinforces Indigenous territorial and intellectual sovereignty.

Presenter(s): Katie Foster

Danced Dialogues: The Choreography of Human-Nonhuman Relationality

Dance is an embodied means of facilitating, renewing, and perpetuating relationships – both with humans and nonhumans – and can also help dancers to disrupt and reimagine those relationships. Indigenous and folk dance styles often include elements of human-nonhuman relationships, be that through mimesis, directional focus, physical touch, symbolic movement, or other meaning-laden patterns which help make the abstract understanding of relationality tangible and physical. In a globalising world and in the face of escalating environmental issues, these dances are changing as the people who dance them migrate, the dances are adopted by new communities, and the nonhuman actors within them become increasingly absent. This paper explores how those changes are impacting the built-in human-nonhuman relationships of dances from a range of regions and cultures. It draws on 18 months of informal observation and six months of formal research in the Brigham Young University Cultural Dance Department and culture-specific dance studios in Utah. Through this analysis, it is shown that both the dancers and the dances receive influence from each other and that – though altered – the human-nonhuman relationships can persist. By dancing traditional styles, dancers – indigenous or not – are able to add these dances into their vocabulary of human-nonhuman relationality, and thereby also accept influence from indigenous and folk worldviews which have been marginalised.

Presenter(s): George Eppel

2584 Shifting Childhoods and the Lingering Ghosts of Global Change

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This session examines the ongoing challenges faced by children and their families in a context of global change and instability. Drawing on case studies from Peru, Guatemala and Ghana, the papers explore shifting experiences and meanings of childhoods amidst the spread of neoliberal

economies, the ongoing consequences of colonisation, environmental and climate change, the imposition of transnational politics onto local communities, and the influence of globalized media and narratives. We focus primarily on children's lives at the local level and then frame these within a broader analysis of intersected challenges and global shifts, seeking to bridge two main approaches in studies of childhood and youth: (1) an ethnographic, child-centered approach that takes a close look at children's everyday experiences; and (2) the analysis of childhood as a social category that is culturally and historically constructed.

Each paper considers both how local childhoods are impacted by global processes, and how children and families actively address these influences through creative forms of negotiation and reinvention of established social values and practices. Jessica Taft explores how Peruvian working children develop unique environmental imaginaries in a context of child-centered climate politics, navigating tensions between local values and global frameworks of climate activism. Sam Okyere's paper examines the lingering impact of colonialism in Ghana's Lake Volta region, focussing on the value clashes between Western anti-slavery NGOs and local understandings of childhood, and the detrimental consequences these clashes have on local children and families.

Drawing on her longitudinal research with Mayan families in Guatemala, Barbara Rogoff analyses videotaped interactions to examine the persistence of cultural values of collaboration and harmony across generations, highlighting cultural resistance to the pressures of globalization. Lastly, Camilla Morelli's paper explores how Matsigenka children in Amazonia develop new cultural meanings and shared imaginations by blending traditional ecological knowledge with globalized media. Together, these papers provide a comprehensive view of how children's lives are shaped by, and actively shape, the forces of global change in times of instability and uncertainty towards the future.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Camilla Morelli

Chair: Camilla Morelli

Presenter(s): Jessica Taft, Sam Okyere, University of Bristol, Camilla Morelli

Discussant: David Lancy, Utah State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Peruvian Movement of Working Children, Environmental Imaginaries, and the Global Politics of Children's Climate Activism

This paper explores how young activists involved in the Peruvian movement of working children make sense of and resist the impacts of environmental destruction and climate change in their communities. Made up of nearly 10,000 working children from rural and urban communities across Peru, the movement has provided an organizational and pedagogical context that has enabled these young activists to develop a shared environmental imaginary. Drawing on ethnographic research, interviews, and the analysis of public pronouncements and archival documents, I first outline some of the contours of this political-environmental imaginary, foregrounding working children's orientation toward materiality, interdependence, and the interplay between economic

and environmental conditions. Next, I will address how working children's movements have tried to bring their distinctive forms of environmental knowledge to the global institutional landscape of climate policy, illuminating the dynamic tensions between three different strands of child-centered climate politics: a) working children's situated and relational analyses of the nexus between climate change, poverty, and their working conditions; b) the individualizing framework of children's right to a healthy environment being promoted by children's rights institutions; and c) the often universalizing temporal and moral imaginary of Fridays for Future and other "global" child- and youth-led climate groups.

Presenter(s): Jessica Taft

Child protection in the shadows of slavery's undead past

In tune with the year's AAA conference theme, this presentation explores how the undead past of the transatlantic slave trade, colonisation, and imperialism continues to haunt international children's rights and humanitarian practices. It draws on research examining the plural and contested understandings of freedom, sociality, and childhood held by fishing communities on Ghana's Lake Volta, alongside those promoted by US-based antislavery NGOs seeking to 'rescue' children from what they define as slavery. By centring the lived experiences of the study participants, the paper brings into sharp relief the enduring, ethnocentric, and stigmatising logics that underpin the NGOs' anti-slavery interventions and the highly illiberal and harmful interventions this construction has prompted. The discussion charts how NGOs discourse and actions ostensibly aimed at promoting freedom often inflict harm and on the very children and families they aim to protect. In attending to these findings, the presentation draws parallels between the missteps of contemporary anti-slavery organisations and those of the 19th century anti-slavery movement from which the former draws inspiration.

Presenter(s): Sam Okyere

Forest Spirits, Urban Monsters: A Longitudinal Analysis of Childhood and Cultural Change in Amazonia

This paper examines the shifting significance of mayan ("spirits") for Matses people, an Indigenous group in Amazonia who only recently formed stable relationships with the national society. The Matses use the term mayan to describe shapeshifting, malevolent beings that populate their surrounding environments and prey on humans. But while Matses elders refer to mayan as forest inhabitants, who own trees and disguise themselves as animals to lure away lone hunters, Matses children have a different view. They talk about mayan as action movie villains, characters from illustrated books, and urban monsters who drive helicopters and shoot machine guns. Drawing on over 15 years of ethnographic research with the Matses in Peru, I frame these shifting views of spirits within a longitudinal analysis of changing ecological knowledge and environmental relationships in Amazonia. I argue that Matses children are not passively receiving these impacts but actively creating new meanings by mixing the knowledge of their elders with their consumption of urban imageries and globalised media. Following the classic works of Margert Mead and Edith

Cobb, and bringing these together with contemporary works on Amazonian ecologies, I suggest that Matses children are involved in an imaginative act of "world-making", reinventing shared systems of meanings and driving the trajectories of their society towards new and uncharted horizons.

Presenter(s): Camilla Morelli

Discussion

7643 Reconceptualizing Women's Labor: The Intersection of Material, Spiritual, Religious and Cultural Layers of Experiencing and Perceiving in Türkiye

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Women's labor has been studied across disciplines, focusing on labor force participation and employment with a division of formal and informal labor which are mostly informed by the international and national policy making agendas as the main goal of "empowerment of women." This approach takes patriarchy, capitalism and globalization as macro-level effects in which women are missing and described as taken for granted, homogenous and classless.

This study aims to understand women's labor in a holistic and layered approach by exploring their experiences, meaning, attributions and practices as a socio-spatial, contextual, emotional, ideological, religious, moral and spiritual phenomenon. By examining diverse conceptualizations of labor, we aim to transcend dichotomies such as private-public, formal-informal, paid-unpaid and global-local by an understanding that the experiences of "global" are heterogeneous and depend on textual differences.

In the context of Türkiye, the household mediates capitalist relations for women in both informal and formal labor, functioning as a "domestic" unit shaped by fixed patriarchal norms. Historically, the divide between domestic and public spheres defines "housewife" roles-cleaning, sewing, and caregiving-which are justified as domestic even in public spaces, blurring the public-private boundary. Women often frame their labor through concepts like "family," "solidarity," "morality," "patience," and "struggle," accepting normalized role attributions, even in professional or skilled work.

Preliminary findings showed so far that labor, while being a reality expresses material value in the market, also has different value layers like spiritual, emotional and religious place in the producer's world of meaning which may lead to more sustainable, locally informed, justice based and inclusive policy suggestions. Based on the main research question, how the women experience and perceive their labor in "public" and "private" spheres and give meaning to it, this study is based on an ongoing ethnographic research project conducted in twelve cities of Türkiye through focus groups, in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Early results reflect that although labor is mostly represented as a market element expressing material value, it also has relationally a spiritual value fed by religious, cultural and social values and norms in terms of examining the motivations that create it. Women interpret labor through diverse lenses: culture of struggle, affective embodiment, religious commitment, attributed meanings to womanhood as fitrat, desire to be productive, value based moral duty and economic necessity. In this context, we are planning a roundtable to discuss these nuanced perceptions of women's labor and the factors shaping them, fostering a deeper understanding of its complexity.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nesibe Şahin , Büşra Karasakal

Presenter(s): Furkan Başarslan , Betül Tozlu , Nesibe Demir , Rumeysa Ertuğrul , Yunus Yesil , Nesibe Şahin , Nursem Keskin Aksay

Discussant: Nursem Keskin Aksay , Betül Özel Çiçek

8688 Haunted Restitutions: Restless Ancestors and the Ghosts of Colonialism in Repatriation Policy

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located in the Sheraton in the Grand Ballroom Foyer, all day Thursday and Friday.

The Haunted Restitutions portal glows with an eerie light, connecting brittle, yellowed physical documents with the sharp clarity of digital testimony. A cloud of fine dust billows, tickling the nose and obscuring the already dim light, as it reveals secrets long hidden beneath 35 years of neglect. Whispers of Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act non-compliance echo in the air, mingling with the unsettling murmur of conflicts of interest. A cold feeling settles in the stomach, a premonition of the chilling implications should current legislation move forward, its weight pressing down like the very earth disturbed.

Fabric banners, yellowed like old paper, reveal QR codes that unlock a sinister vault of evidence of Ancestor mistreatment, and promises broken. The innovative hybrid approach dissolves physical limitations, opening up limitless digital vistas for discovery. It casts a stark light on historical misdeeds, revealing how they morph into the contemporary, chilling silence of systematically suppressed evidence and the stench of lingering conflict of interest, palpable as a cold draft. Each QR code, when scanned, links to whistleblower testimonies and digital vaults of evidence. Whispered testimony from a speaker illuminates abstract policy failure. Interaction with physical documents turns the abstract into visceral evidence.

The audience is now the whistleblower, scanning a QR code on a whistle to send a letter to Congress. A dusty guest book serves as a petition to sign.

The installation guides the audience through why 90,505 ancestors are still separated from their community, serving as a spiritual call to action.

The stark installation, devoid of elaborate infrastructure, commands attention with its undeniable evidence. A hushed reverence falls as the sheer number 90,505 echoes in the mind, stirring a collective yearning. A palpable sense of urgency hangs in the air, a silent call to bring these ancestors home.

Organizer(s): Amanda Sanchez

8534 Material Witness: DunDun, Displacement, and the Anthropology of Everyday Objects

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Takes place at the Sheraton, in the Grand Ballroom Foyer on the 5th floor, all day Thursday and Friday.

DunDun is a handmade stool crafted by the displaced villagers of Dameng, Henan Province, China. It is made from abandoned heat insulation foam collected from the construction site that now stands where their villages once were. Due to the government's urban planning reforms, the villagers lost not only their land and homes, but also their way of life. The new architectural space fragmented the close-knit bonds between villagers. In reaction, the villagers made DunDun as a subtle resistance. Carrying DunDun, walking, sitting on it, and chatting with old friends in the new neighborhood, villagers try to maintain their previous life rhymes. DunDun carries the memory of Dameng community, and embodies residents' connection to their homeland. However, In the near future, the traces of their living experiences could be erased as the concrete rises around them.

After conducting fieldwork in the Dameng community last summer, we initiated Rehoming DunDun, an adoption project based in NYC. The project draws attention not only to urbanization and gentrification in China, but also to the broader, often overlooked losses that accompany global modernization. Through adoption, we hope to ensure that the experiences of loss among the people of Dameng are not forgotten, but remembered through embodied engagement. In everyday interactions between adopters and DunDun-such as sitting on it, using it, or simply living alongside it-the objects become storytellers, bridging New York and Dameng, and fostering connection and shared experience.

Rehoming DunDun is an exploration of the intersection between museum anthropology and artistic practice, and how ethnographic materials can cultivate public engagement projects. The theoretical framework for Rehoming DunDun explores materiality through the lens of object agency, new museology, and actor-network theory. The AAA installation will be a milestone for our project and part of our ongoing experiment in reimagining the museum exhibition without glass. At the Annual Meeting, Rehoming DunDun will take the form of a participatory, multimedia installation. Visitors will be invited to sit on or rearrange the DunDuns. The space will also feature DunDun's Pack, a pair of zines we created to tell the story of Dameng and DunDun. The exhibition will also weave together photographs, fieldnotes, and oral histories.

We see this project not only as a way of sharing the histories of Dameng, but also as an invitation to reflect more broadly on the effects of displacement and how people cope with change around the globe. Therefore, as a participatory space, participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own experiences-perhaps through writing, drawing, or conversation-helping to build an evolving archive of shared memories of "loss." It is also an attempt to remember those objects that hold human beings together, which are usually regarded as inert entities.

We will provide DunDun stools and zines for the installation. Each stool measures approximately 16 x 16 x 20 inches. We plan to bring five stools to create a flexible, intimate setting for interaction. Around ten copies of DunDun's Pack will be included-five attached to individual stools to encourage reading while sitting, and the rest available for browsing within the space. Photos of DunDun and zines will be shared during the planning process. We welcome the opportunity to work with AAA to integrate the installation meaningfully into the Annual Meeting.

Organizer(s): Siyang Dai, Zijun Zhao

8644 Nobody Tells the Forest to Do Their Work: Climate Resilience and Scientist-Animal Care in Urban and Amazonian Ecuador

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located in the Sheraton by the Grand Ballroom Escalators, all day Friday.

A multimedia exhibition featuring photographs and segments of a documentary film I created regarding my research in the summer of 2024 on conservation biology work in Ecuador. Combined, the photos, videos, and poster apply multimodal ethnography to explore the immense love and loss of working in conservation on a rapidly extracted planet. The ghosts of these animals -- be they extinct species or specimens sacrificed to taxonomy -- haunt the movement to preserve life on Earth in its richness and vibrance, while biologists balance their own emotional needs and the hope they have for organisms, human and otherwise, to develop more hopeful futures.

Amazonian Ecuador exists in contradiction. Its biodiversity is a powerful cultural monument far beyond the boundaries of the rainforest. However, the national economy relies on its extraction through oil drilling and ecotourism. Conservation biologists bear first-hand witness to this ecological destruction and its complex socioeconomic context but may be expected to remain unfeeling and objective towards it, despite the deep love they develop for their study organisms and the environment through their work. These relationships are intensified for herpetologists, who must contend with a cultural disregard for herpetofauna, particularly in an age of global amphibian population decline. This project contests the harsh (perceived) separation between the natural sciences and emotion, expanding on our understanding of climate action and the unconventional forms of care between conservationists and abjected animals. I conducted participant observation and 20 semi-structured interviews with herpetologists throughout Amazonian Ecuador and Quito over a month. Their relationships with the reptiles and amphibians they study reveal a careful

balancing act between maintaining standards of professionalism and holding a profound, personal love for these organisms; both sides of this quandary inform choices that weigh care for individual organisms against a commitment to broader species conservation. My interlocutors emphasized that the greatest impacts of their work were not felt in "technical" science but in the power of outreach efforts that help their communities develop a love for reptiles and amphibians, despite the stigma. Their labor generates conversations about a biocentric and agentic climate future achieved, step-by-step, in our ecological present.

Organizer(s): Vaidehee Durgude

8697 Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Poetics of Culture

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Takes place at the Sheraton on the 4th floor, all day Friday and Saturday.

Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Poetics of Culture is an artistic exercise in epistemological review. Despite its brevity, Clifford Geertz' 1973 essay "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" builds on Ryle's terminology to assert that "ethnography is thick description" and remains one of the most influential pieces of literature shaping the field of anthropology. Calling for a broader practice of employing interpretive analytics to foster anthropological understanding via the contextualization of human actors and their environments, Geertz positions the ethnographer as an observer, documentarian, and storyteller upon whom audiences rely for "authentic" account of culture.

By crafting an erasure poem using the text of Geertz' essay, I use artistic expression to consider the mechanics of thick description- the process by which the human is transformed into an object of anthropological observation, and its impacts- the exploitation that many marginalized communities feel as they become objectified by the academy and its social scientists. As an individual who holds several marginalized identities while simultaneously operating daily as a researcher tasked with reducing others to method and outcomes, I am using this piece to negotiate and reconcile my realities.

Organizer(s): Ashley-Devon Williamston

8609 Spirited New Orleans: Making a Way in Congo Square

Start Date: 11/21/2025 9:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:00 AM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Meet at the archway at the main entrance to Armstrong Park, 701 N. Rampart St. We will be outdoors, so dress for the weather and wear comfortable shoes. This site visit to the city's historic Congo Square, proposed in association with the executive program roundtable "Spirited New Orleans? On Making a Way in Dispiriting Times," will consider the nurturing of ancestral

Afrodiasporic and Indigenous North American spiritual practices that have long sustained local people and communities. Under French and Spanish colonial rule, Afro-descendant people - both enslaved and free - engaged in syncretic practices of drumming, dancing, vending of wares, and communication across language barriers at Congo Square to connect with self, community, ancestors, and spirit. Communal drumming and dance rituals catalyzed spiritual reclamation and release under oppressive, dehumanizing colonial regimes and their plantation economy. These practices produced embodied, collectively shared knowledge that drummers, dancers, and vendors, particularly those affiliated with the Congo Square Preservation Society, continue to honor. This site visit brings together a few of the people who hold space for community and spirit at Congo Square, including orators, drummers, dancers, and vendors, to connect with conference participants on the roundtable themes of nurturing and mobilizing spirit during dispiriting times. At the site, members of the Congo Square Preservation Society, founded in 1989 to preserve the space's Black and Indigenous traditions, will lead participants in a discussion on the historical and spiritual contextualization of the site's significance, engage the practices of communal Afrodiasporic drumming and dancing that have long sustained oppressed communities, and conduct a ceremony for collective healing.

Organizer(s): Sarah Mellman, Tulane University (primary organizer), Rebecca Louise Carter, Brown University (co-organizer), Martha Radice, Dalhousie University (co-organizer)

8648 Section Assembly

Start Date: 11/21/2025 9:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Section Assembly discussion with the Section Assembly Executive Committee, current Section Presidents, and incoming Section Presidents with terms starting November 2025. Invite only.

3682 Spectral Orders in China: Affective Legality, Emotion, and Politics

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

How do the spectral structures of law and emotion mediate political legitimacy or discontent in contemporary China (Posner 2000; Liang 2002; Qu 1998)? This roundtable focuses on the affective legal life in China, reflecting on how legality and the rule of law in China are not merely rational bureaucratic domains but also spaces haunted by affect, ethics, and aesthetics from traditionalist values, the socialist revolutionary past, and ceaseless nation-building to "conjure and release emotions" (Osanloo 2020: 9). From codified moral sentiments to theatrical judicial performances, the Party-state actively mobilizes sympathy, identity claims, morality, and historical narratives through legal frameworks (Abrams and Keren, 2010). Recent legal developments- from the legally mandated provision of "emotional care" in elderly support, to the tightening regulation of gender and family transformations, and the integration of technologies such as AI, social governance tools,

and reproductive technologies- reveal the state's concerted efforts to delineate the boundaries of public emotion and ethics.

This roundtable will examine ethnographic cases spanning mediation rituals, emerging practices of kinship and care, professional lives, and legal activism, exploring the emotional and affective dimensions of legal processes in contemporary China. We ask: How does the law act as a medium to govern citizens' emotional orientations? How do ordinary people invoke, internalize, or resist the affective demands of law in daily life? What are the processes that cultivate or suppress of anger, empathy, love, pride, or fear? By convening US-based and China-based scholars who bridge legal experiences and ethnographic insight, this roundtable aims to offer new theoretical lenses for understanding the everyday hauntology of political-legal governance as China arrives at the disjuncture of rising nationalistic sentiments, economic precarity and moral crisis (Lin 2024, Wang 2023, Yan 2021). The roundtable aims to contribute to broader anthropological debates on emotion and jurisprudence by situating China's legal experience in the global context of affective governance (Bens 2018, Clarke 2019, Lawther 2020). As liberal legal frameworks are increasingly exposed as ideological illusions worldwide, China's case exemplifies the legal processes to script emotional dramas, cultivate paranoia, provoke moral panic, and produce affective attachments and exclusions, while themselves being shaped by the emotional and political logics they seek to govern. Extending the studies on the social lives of law in China (Brandtstädter 2011, Pia 2024, Zhou and Donahoe 2023), this roundtable contributes to comparative research on affective legalities at a time when legal orders and public sentiments can both debilitate or perpetuate state power in liberal and authoritarian settings.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Heyu Zhang, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Hongyun Yu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Yuan Su , Adrienne Lagman, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, Fei Yuan, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Wenqian Fan , Ruoran Qiu , Rylan Wang, University of Bristol

Discussant: Matthew Erie, University of Oxford, Yi Liao

307 Society for Linguistic Anthro Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Emma Kainz , Marybelle Issa, University of Massachusetts - Amherst | AnthroClub, Caleb Klipowicz, Coastal Carolina University, Department of Anthropology & Geography, Kanupriya Kale , Ana Kisley , Joseph Comer

Presenter(s): Emma Kainz, Marybelle Issa, University of Massachusetts - Amherst | AnthroClub, Caleb Klipowicz, Coastal Carolina University, Department of Anthropology & Geography, Kanupriya

Kale, Ana Kisley, Joseph Comer

Presentation(s): Ghosts of conflict: Invoking resistance with “Not a Blade of Grass”

Dave Martins' seminal 1970s song "Not a Blade of Grass" spoke to a Guyanese nation that was anxious about the future of the Essequibo region. The dispute between Venezuela and Guyana over the Essequibo region began in the 19th century before Guyana's independence from the United Kingdom in 1966 and refers back to even earlier colonial documents in which Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK formed the boundaries of their colonies. The territorial dispute over the Essequibo region, inherited from the colonial era, persisted after Guyana gained independence. Although Venezuela recognized Guyana as an independent state in 1966, it refused to relinquish its claim on the Essequibo region. Relations between the two countries deteriorated in the late 1960s and 1970s, marked by escalating tensions and Venezuela's continued assertion of ownership over Essequibo. In 2015, Venezuela renewed its claim on the region, likely driven by the discovery of substantial offshore oil reserves in Guyana that year, some of which fall within the disputed area. This reignited border dispute has fueled nationalist sentiments, often expressed through the use of Creolese in Guyana. A prominent example is the reference to "not a blade o' grass," a 1970 song by Dave Martins that addressed Guyanese concerns about the Venezuelan border crisis at the time. The song's enduring popularity as a rallying cry is unsurprising. Additionally, the use of phrases like "Essequibo ah we own" to assert Guyanese ownership of the region exemplifies how Creolese is used to communicate national identity. This paper investigates the use of Creolese in media and by citizens to express nationalist ideas and to convey Guyanese identity in the context of the ongoing border dispute with Venezuela. Through qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations, my paper highlights the ways in which language attitudes and nationalism intersect, and how these perspectives reflect broader national debates about immigration, economic challenges, and identity in Guyana.

Presenter(s): Emma Kainz

If The Walls Could Talk: Spaces of Repression as Sites of Defiance in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon

I was in Lebanon on October 7. Driving through the jagged roads of the Palestinian refugee camps, many of which have been around since the Nakba (1948), I became interested in further understanding symbols of protest and the meaning they generate in context. These camps have become neighborhoods: "concrete shelters have gradually replaced tents, and the buildings have grown vertically over the years" (Feldman, 2017: 42). Under a system of economic instability, and social and political marginalization, Palestinian refugee camps are spaces that reflect the conditions to which Palestinians have been subjected for over seven decades by both the state of Israel and their host country, Lebanon. Between the tangled electricity lines and the narrow passageways are walls of graffiti, murals and political posters. Inspired by the work of Kiersten Scheid who argues that "art is relevant to ongoing life in the Middle East and, consequently, key to studying it." (Scheid, 2020: 432), I ask, what can the artistic landscapes of Palestinian refugee camps teach us about spaces of repression and resistance, and how can art provide a lens through

which ideologies and relations between people, land, and state can be seen, heard, and new worlds imagined? Applying a linguistic anthropological lens, this paper draws inspiration from Keane's work on semiotics and materiality (2003) to examine how meaning is generated through artistic interventions. It investigates themes of language, identity, and perceptions on the 'home' through visual and discursive analyses of street art.

Presenter(s): Marybelle Issa

In Search of Affective Alliances: The Poetics and Pragmatics of Marshallese Advocates' Nuclear Narratives in Diaspora

For many advocates from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) living in the US, the unresolved impacts of US nuclear weapons testing in their home islands presents a troubling conundrum: How might advocates teach USian community members - potential allies in Marshallese struggles for recognition and resources in diaspora - about the "American History" of nuclear weapons testing without also rehashing colonialist sentiments embedded in the well-worn narratives of hapless indigenous victimhood? In this flash presentation, I focus on selected scenes from one Marshallese advocate's nuclear legacy presentation and highlight a few of the communicative strategies they deploy to navigate this fraught position. I argue that through pragmatic moves like deictic shifts, ironic visual imagery, and shifts in linguistic register, this advocate seeks to interpellate their White audience members into what I term "affective alliances" with Marshallese-led causes. I suggest that narrating the nuclear legacy's impacts on Marshallese communities in these ways presents one attempt to manage non-Marshallese sentiments as a potential resource for advancing local struggles. However, I also situate this one performance within the broader ambivalences shared by other Marshallese advocates toward the mixed impacts of nuclear legacy narratives, an unresolved tension that speaks to the persistent and haunting qualities of colonial structures within US recognition politics today.

Presenter(s): Caleb Klipowicz

Let's play together: a children's book exploring linguistic relations

'Khelu Anande' is a children's book project that tries to tackle the issues of language endangerment and linguistic sovereignty. The story is set in Nashik (Western India) and explores the complex network of historical forces that have led to the current linguistic landscape of the city. It is intended for children acquiring Marathi as their first language to start a conversation around language imposition, diversity, and maintenance.

In a country like India that is linguistically diverse, language becomes an important tool for self-determination but also dominance and suppression. The state borders are linguistically determined, giving rise to state languages that are dominant in one state but minoritized in others. Regional languages like Marathi which enjoy state-sanctioned support, find themselves in a position where they are simultaneously at threat from a more widely spoken language while also being a dominant force that pushes other minoritized languages to dormancy. The ghost of 'language endangerment' becomes a tool which renders the dialects of such languages as invisible

and can in turn be weaponized against languages that are seeing dwindling speaker populations. This rhetoric of a perceived threat to the continuity of Marathi and its pride (əsmiṭṭā) feeds into the growing regionalist sentiment that has taken political ground in the state. In this imagination then, an individual who is perceived as the other (non-Marathi speaker) is pushed away and the linguistic diversity of the region is ignored.

The story follows Marathi (the dominant language in the region) and its interactions with other languages like Bhili & Kokni (indigenous languages spoken in the region), Hindi & English (dominant languages sanctioned by the central government that are considered a threat to Marathi's sovereignty), and Ahirani & Khandeshi (languages spoken in the region that are considered dialects of Marathi). Through their conversations, the linguistic history of the region along with the growing tensions and insecurities in the population are brought to the surface. This children's book is an attempt to address these issues in a nuanced way that can create avenues for discussions about language rights (Roche, 2022) with young children.

Presenter(s): Kanupriya Kale

New Approaches to the Study of Copador Glyph Bands: Developing a Catalog and Corpus for a Quantitative Analysis of Glyph Band Structure

Copador polychrome ware, found at sites across the Southeastern Maya region, is known for its abundant yet unreadable glyphic decorations. These have historically been explained as socially prestigious pseudoglyphs. The extreme standardization of these glyph bands has long been noted (Longyear 1952), but no detailed analysis was conducted until Caballero Díaz (2017). This project aimed to expand upon that work by developing a corpus of Copador-style "texts", beginning with a new catalog that limits overlap between signs. I worked with a sample of images of 139 vessels from sites across Honduras and El Salvador. I observed 251 different signs, which were systematically recorded and assigned catalog numbers. Similar to Thompson (1962), signs were classified based on their shape (main vs elongated), which patterned fairly well with their distribution. A corpus of 225 short texts was created based on these sign codes. This corpus has yielded new quantitative data on distributional constraints of glyphs and glyph bands. Current efforts involve characterizing the internal structure of the most frequent glyph sequences, and using these common sequences to gauge the likelihood of linguistic hypotheses for the glyphs. Ultimately, I hope that a thorough examination of these patterns and associated iconography may hint at the social and semiotic meaning (linguistic or otherwise) of Copador texts.

Presenter(s): Ana Kisley

Vocational courses in offshore citizenship, academic discourse of 'passport apartheid' and the discursive legitimization of citizenship as commodity

'Investment migration' (IM) and citizenship-by-investment (CBI) programmes rose sharply in prominence and profitability over the early 21st century. Regardless of citizenship's arguable standing as a Polanyian 'fictional commodity', contemporaneous processes of neoliberal globalization and the 'commercialisation of sovereignty' (Palan 2006) now lead 10-12 states (mostly

tax havens) to allow high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) to 'upgrade' their citizenship/residency through direct contributions to state revenue or real estate investment.

Despite small numbers of HNWIs engaging in IM, these practices are highly consequential in material and geopolitical terms. While representing a worrying commodification of sovereignty and statecraft, "passport portfolios" are nevertheless cheerfully marketed to clients as an ultimate "Plan B" for HNWI families.

Undergirded by ethnographic insights from industry events, interviews with key stakeholders, and autoethnographic reflection on participation in industry training, this presentation will offer critical sociocultural linguistic analysis of contemporary CBI discourses: firstly, apprehending how this unique commodity and industry is (re-)imagined and (re-)constituted for prospective clients and other audiences via academic discourses of/about the inequality of contemporary citizenship regimes; and secondly, examining how this niche form of wealth management is presented to those agents who seek to work in the industry. I focus, in turn, on media heralding the 'previously-unimagined' opportunities available to investor-citizens, and heralding CBI as a response to the 'unimaginable' mobility rights afforded to non-Western citizens, and the content of courses explaining how to approach the offshoring of citizenship for elite, secretive clientele in licit and conscientious ways.

CBI firms' metadiscursive 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2012), problematic claims-making and talismanic display of passports frames them as almost magical, invaluable documents, at the same time as they iteratively refashion passports as a banal and necessarily fungible asset class. As I conclude in arguing, examining CBI metadiscourses gleans valuable insight into not just what elite 'HNWIs' imagine as their ideal (self-sovereign, selectively borderless) future, but how they and intermediary brokers ease this future into being through legitimating, multimodal and sometimes rapturous forms of discursive practice.

Presenter(s): Joseph Comer

532 Combined Flash Session #11

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Caleb Sabatka, Georgetown University, Farha Ghannam, Swarthmore College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Botao Zhao, Yale University, Kathryn Rummage, Changran Liu, Yale University, Nithya Kanamarlapudi

Presenter(s): Caleb Sabatka, Georgetown University, Farha Ghannam, Swarthmore College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Botao Zhao, Yale University, Kathryn Rummage, Changran Liu, Yale University, Nithya Kanamarlapudi

Presentation(s): Anti-Carceral Classes in the Age of AI

As higher education increasingly moves online, asynchronous class formats raise new challenges for anthropologists putting into practice anti-carceral pedagogies. Rigid "attendance" tracking and policies around assignment deadlines can recreate carceral logics. This paper examines opportunities to reimagine online classroom norms through an abolitionist lens. It calls for rethinking punitive "absence" and late work penalties that result in harsh administrative withdrawals and grade point deductions. We can also reframe the plagiarism conversation by teaching students how to ethically leverage AI to improve their writing and simulate difficult conversations. Rather than policing student behavior through rigid policies, we can adopt restorative practices that view classroom management through a transformative justice lens. Ultimately, the anti-carceral online classroom becomes a space to model restorative accountability centered on personal growth and learning facilitation.

Presenter(s): Caleb Sabatka

Care to Repair: Materiality, Gender, and Class in Urban Egypt

In low-income neighborhoods in Cairo, objects are cared for by men, women, and children. Things are rarely discarded but they are used, reused, borrowed, and fixed many times before they are sold either to local shops or to venders who tour the city to buy broken TVs, fridges, ovens, and more. Based on long-term ethnographic research in Cairo and drawing on new feminist materialism as well as on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper looks at efforts to repair objects like appliances, which are expensive and difficult to replace. More specifically, the paper traces the gendered and classed dimensions of caring for and repairing objects. While all of those who fix appliances are men, women tend to be in charge of them daily, ensuring their proper daily use and spending lots of time and energy to hire someone to fix them when they break. This may involve asking neighbors for recommendations for competent handymen, coordinating a time for handymen to visit, waiting for them for hours to arrive, serving drinks, establishing rapport with them by chatting and exchanging stories, and often calling them again when the appliance breaks down and needs further repair. Through these actions, women both ensure the continued use of these objects and generate social capital (in Bourdieu's sense), which is a crucial resource for families who struggle to get by. Looking at the case of one fridge and the efforts of its owner to repair it several times before selling it and buying a new one, this paper explores relationalities forged between humans and non-humans, highlighting the significance of the work of women and their care practices to the unfolding of daily life in urban Egypt.

Presenter(s): Farha Ghannam

Contested Identity of Salt, Contested Identity of People: Biopolitics in The Livelihood Transformation of A Tibetan Salt-Producing Village

This article examines the biopolitical contestation surrounding indigenous well salt in a salt-producing village in Markham amid the profound socio-economic transformations since the 1990s. Historically, Markham salt supported tens of thousands in the Sino-Tibetan frontier through extensive salt-grain barter networks, but since the 1990s, its market has dwindled due to the

government's mandatory introduction of non-local iodized salt. Regarding salt as an agential actor that simultaneously containing and reflecting local power dynamics, this paper critically analyzes the dual entry of the official discourse framed in political neutral improvement on indigenous well salt, as well as the local salt producers' resistance and compliance based on three months of fieldwork. On the one hand, the villagers were frustrated by the official discourse claiming that local salt was unhealthy. However, their discursive resistance was not directed solely at the government but manifested in much nearer, multiple-layered interpretations – disdain toward neighbors, steadfast adherence to religious beliefs, and opposition to top-down stigmatization. On the other hand, authoritative discourses seek to redefine local salt as a central emblem for promoting tourism and economic development. This has led to plans to subsidize salt miners as "heritage preservers" to return to the saltworks, a policy that, unlike previous interventions, has been welcomed by the villagers. By simultaneously denying Yanjing salt's legitimacy as a consumable good while commodifying it as a symbolic asset for economic growth, top-down discursive power contributes to the dual transformation of both identity of salt and identity of people. This paper further interrogates the interconnectedness between the agency and identity of commodities and those of people, urging a reconsideration of the relational entanglement between materiality and sociality.

Presenter(s): Botao Zhao

Signals and Noise: Palestinian Dissonance to Occupation's Soundscape

Since October 2023, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have taken to social media to share their experiences of life under bombardment and displacement. These civilian documentarians share with global audiences the atrocities of entire city blocks leveled by tons of ordnance. However, they also share reels of children playing soccer amongst rubble, families sharing scant resources in encampments, and men feeding a portion of their rations to cats; it is precisely this footage of mundanity, this continuation of embodied everyday living under constant threat of death that is dissonant to the noise of war imposed upon them by the state of Israel. Utilizing social media footage posted by Palestinians under siege, this article explores how these competing cacophonies, these dual soundscapes of oppression and resistance to annihilation, inform us-marked as witnesses via our screens-of what survivance sounds like. Grounded in Feld's theorizing on acoustemology, this article deconstructs the social and material sonic sensations of war toward the sounds of Palestinian relationality and knowledge production. It situates the technological production of footage with an audible accompaniment, divorced from its spatio-temporality through dissemination on social media, within the Palestinian ethic of sumud (steadfastness) that informs a genealogy of sounding which is resistant to erasure, contending with the sounds of Palestinian relational care as an indigenous knowledge system. Despite the noise of bombardment, Palestinians continue to signal a soundedness of care.

Presenter(s): Kathryn Rummage

Suicide of Talisman: The Marketization of Tibetan Incense and Its Influence on the Changing Nature-Cultural Complex in Modern Tibet

Tibetan incense has been holding a significant place in the social life of Tibetans, from traditional to modern times, ranging from daily life to religious rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, followed by complete chains of its production and commodification. My research first delves into the long history of local understanding of Tibetan incense, drawing traditional knowledge widely in Buddhist religion(s), local cosmology including the perception of human-nature nexuses, and traditional medicinal practices. The chains of production and inter-regional transactions varied with places, so historical records and archives from local center like Lhasa and local frontiers like towns in Sino-Tibetan border are juxtaposed to form a panoramic collage of this chain. Such complex has been recently shaped by China's market reform which strives to enforce Tibetan incense into a state-wide market. Here underlies a dual crisis within the local nature-cultural complex: the whole constellation of cultural significance surrounding the incense is marginalized and exoticized, hence the divergence of collectible incense in museums as luxuries and mundane incense as daily goods; the ecological value of the incense is over-exaggerated so its production is crystalized as a symbol of sustainability, which legitimizes the nation-state's exploitation of nature in Tibet. In this second part a preliminary analysis is performed based on my filed research conducted in Lu-ho, Garzê, a Tibetan county at Sino-Tibetan border. Cultural and environmental understandings of the incense from both local people and outsiders such as tourists from Han-Chinese regions is mainly examined through interview transcripts and observations, also accompanied by analysis of market data and textual landscape. Last, I make a brief comparison between the marketization of Tibetan incense with other salient market compulsions in modern Tibet such as the "Cordyceps fever" in Nagqu, so as to foreground that this specific transformation is more a (symbolic) suicide in that local people proactively internalize the rationality of "market" and "progress" channeled by acculturation and de-naturalization, than a (symbolic) murder – the direct violence that renders suffering in the dependence of cash and soil nutritiousness, which underlies the latter examples.

Presenter(s): Changran Liu

The Ghost of Caste: Anthropological Reflections on Diasporic Persistence

This paper investigates the spectral persistence of caste within Indian diasporic communities, employing the metaphor of the "ghost" to elucidate the paradoxical invisibility and enduring influence of caste hierarchies across transnational contexts. Through the lens of detailed ethnographic research conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, and East Africa, I argue that caste is not a static relic of the Indian subcontinent but a dynamic, adaptive force that migrates and transforms, embedding itself within the social, cultural, and institutional fabric of migrant life. The ghostly nature of caste is manifest in the reproduction of endogamous marriage networks, the subtle yet pervasive mechanisms of social exclusion, and the maintenance of occupational and residential boundaries-practices that persist even within societies that profess commitments to egalitarianism and multicultural inclusion.

The metaphor of the ghost foregrounds the affective and embodied dimensions of caste: its capacity to haunt subjectivities, shape kinship imaginaries, and animate collective memory, even as it evades formal recognition or legal intervention. Dominant-caste narratives frequently render

caste invisible, masking its presence under the rhetoric of meritocracy or cultural cohesion. Yet, testimonies from Dalit and other marginalized voices reveal a "hidden apartheid" that continues to structure opportunity, mobility, and belonging in the diaspora. Digital matrimonial platforms, religious congregations, and professional environments become contemporary sites where the caste's spectral force is both reproduced and contested. These spaces not only facilitate the maintenance of caste boundaries, but also serve as arenas for resistance, where marginalized groups challenge the legitimacy and persistence of caste-based exclusions.

This paper also interrogates the ways in which caste's spectrality complicates efforts at legal and institutional redress. While anti-discrimination laws and diversity initiatives in host countries often address race, ethnicity, and religion, they rarely recognize the unique contours of caste-based exclusion. Consequently, caste operates in the shadows, shaping life chances and social relations through informal networks and unspoken codes. The transmission of caste consciousness across generations, often through family narratives, community associations, and ritual practices ensures its continued relevance, even among those raised in ostensibly secular and egalitarian environments.

By conceptualizing caste as a ghostly presence, this paper contributes to broader debates on the afterlives of social hierarchies, the politics of recognition, and the global circulation of exclusion and privilege.

Presenter(s): Nithya Kanamarlapudi

328 Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness Flash Session

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Leo Ruickbie , Rebecca Damien , Sandra Christensen , Muhammad Nabil Zuberi , James Deutsch, Smithsonian Institution, Rachel Bomalaski

Presenter(s): Leo Ruickbie, Rebecca Damien, Sandra Christensen, Muhammad Nabil Zuberi, James Deutsch, Smithsonian Institution, Rachel Bomalaski, John Napora

Presentation(s): "Who You Gonna Call?": Popular Ghost Hunting and the Pursuit of Paranormal Experience

Paranormal investigation, or more popularly 'ghost hunting,' has emerged as a significant subculture in which thousands worldwide devote their leisure time to seeking paranormal experiences. Rooted in nineteenth-century Spiritualism and psychical research, ghost hunting evolved into a literary genre in the early twentieth century and has since flourished into today's expansive media franchise. Once a niche interest, it has penetrated mainstream culture through the popularity of television series in the UK and USA (e.g., *Most Haunted*, *Ghost Hunters*) and films such as *Ghostbusters* and *The Conjuring*. Yet critical questions remain: Who are today's ghost

hunters? What practices inform their activities, what motivates these pursuits, what effect has ghost hunting had on them, and how should we interpret this phenomenon?

The conviction among practitioners that they have encountered ghosts suggests that the subculture will be self-perpetuating, even as its broader appeal remains intricately linked to media representations. This nexus of lived experience, reality television, and film production has engendered a complex dynamic comparable to Japanese cosplay, where fictional roles are enacted in everyday life—including through social media personae. In contrast to the relatively benign nature of cosplay, the role-playing inherent in ghost hunting may expose participants to psychological and even spiritual risks. Conceptually, ghost hunting can be reframed as a form of contemporary religious experience in an era characterized by atheistic materialism—a modern cult of the dead with its own psychogeography of sacred sites.

As Avery Gordon observed in *Ghostly Matters* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), "to study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it;" with the phenomenon of ghost hunting we are doing that quite literally. Building on earlier work published by the presenter in *The Paranormal and Popular Culture* (Routledge, 2019) and informed by ongoing ethnographic research using interviews and participant observation, this presentation offers an overview of ghost hunting practices. It examines the behaviors, beliefs, and social dynamics of practitioners while situating ghost hunting within the broader context of popular culture and the evolving landscape of spiritual experience.

Presenter(s): Leo Ruickbie

Dreaming Mirrors: The Nightmares of Anne Rice and Stephen King

Some writers have a way of transforming their dreams into art. Anne Rice and Stephen King have transformed pieces of their dreams/nightmares into novels (Epel, 1993). For Rice there was a woman who seemed to be made of marble, and for King there was the sensation of being bitten. Rice said that she dreamed of a woman walking down the street, and the appearance filled her with fear at a young age. She said that she didn't write *The Queen of the Damned* because of that dream, but that the dream somehow fed her subconsciously. King has said that dreams can be like mirrors to see things from different angles. When he was looking for an ending to *It*, he dreamed of a junk yard with flying leeches that began to suck the blood out of his hand. He said it was a message from his subconscious. Rice and King captured intense dream experiences in their books, which are widely available. The question that will be explored in this presentation is: how can the intense atmosphere from nightmares be meaningful? The value of both authors' literary discourse has been explored (Gelder, 1994). As well as a variety of psychological implications in Rice's work (Davidel, 2020). What remains to be researched is the power of nightmares in writing. It can be considered a heritage that goes beyond waking thought. Jeannette Mageo's (2022) mimetic structure of nightmares will be briefly considered in conclusion. If nightmares act as reflections, then hearing them can be meaningful as well as questioning them. According to Mageo, the purpose of dreaming is to figure out cultural issues that influence personal meaning. Nightmares in writing are meaning-filled records, which can give readers greater reflection on consciousness. However, given the horror genre, it is suitable to explore with caution.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Damien

Healing with Horsetail: Exploring Plant Kinship through Ethnographic Art Practices

This slide show "flash" presentation will be based on a doctoral dissertation (2025) investigating the concept of plants as teachers as a way to decenter a human-centric perspective and worldview. By acknowledging plants as sentient and intelligent beings, this work aimed to facilitate pathways for others to engage in restorative and reciprocal relationships with the vegetal world. More specifically, it explored the relationship between the human animal (*Homo sapiens*) and horsetail plant (*Equisetum* spp.) by employing multispecies ethnography and arts-based research for a decolonizing journey of Indigenization, incorporating a Druidic lens to develop an ecocentric and kincentric worldview.

Horsetail is the focus of this investigation because while working with plants as herbal remedies, an encounter with horsetail opened up sensory perceptions that deepened the researcher's awareness of plants as actively engaging with humans on a transpersonal level. This multispecies ethnography took place over three seasonal cycles between Spring 2022 and Summer 2023, documenting researcher encounters with horsetail plants in the boreal forests of the Canadian Pacific Northwest and the traditional lands of the Coast Salish Peoples. Situated at the methodological and theoretical crossroads of ethnography and decolonization, the data analysis focused on plant and human relations.

This presentation will focus on ethnographic arts-based practices that provided a catalyst and structure for learning with plants from an animist and Druidic perspective. Art practices included a range of media, such as sound, video, photography, botanical drawings, and imaginal artwork. Based on data gathered from three cycles of field research, five themes emerged, inspired by cultural concepts from Druidry: seasons, deep time, Calas (land), Gwyar (sea), and Nwyfre (sky). The researcher's encounters and dialogue with horsetail plants revealed a playful and creative way to restore a healthy relationship with the land. When considering how to respond to the negative impact of climate change and environmental degradation resulting from an anthropocentric worldview, this research illustrates how a kincentric perspective allows for a transformative shift of the collective focus-moving from urgency to agency.

Presenter(s): Sandra Christensen

Sensing the Imperceptible: Miraculous Visions and the Politics of Perception in Bangladesh

Drawing on ethnographic accounts of a widely witnessed miraculous event-the reported appearance of Allama Sayeedi's face on the moon-in Bangladesh in March 2013, this presentation explores how miracle sensing unsettles moral and political landscapes. This visual event, which triggered mass mobilizations and deadly violence, exposed deep fractures within the nation's sensory order, highlighting the existence of two distinct aesthetic regimes-each with its own epistemological assumptions, embodied dispositions, and moral frameworks that dictated what could be seen, believed, and discussed.

The secular-modernist regime, emphasizing objective vision and empirical validation, immediately dismissed the miracle as a crude visual deception or mass delusion, interpreting belief in it as evidence of irrationality. Within this framework, the vision was met predominantly with satire, parody, and moral condemnation, disseminated through memes and satirical imagery aimed at reasserting rationalist authority. Vision, here, was understood as detached and reflective, strictly bound to empirical verification, rendering anything transcendent or miraculous as inherently suspect and irrational.

Conversely, the second regime was anchored in embodied aisthesis—a sensory disposition shaped by theological belief and habituated faith. Here, perception was inseparable from moral purity and religious orientation, and the eye functioned not as a neutral observer but as part of a larger embodied sensory ecology. In this perspective, the miracle's truth was thus not empirical but affective, embodied, and morally resonant, capable of mobilizing bodies, emotions, and political action.

Drawing upon Wittgenstein's notion of gestures, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, and Rancière's distribution of the sensible, the presentation argues that miracles are not irrational anomalies but sensory ruptures that disrupt dominant symbolic and moral orders. They gain significance through intercorporeal, habituated practices shaped by theological, historical, and metaphysical discourses, thereby constituting distinct worlds of experience where miracles affirm rather than defy cosmic order. Ultimately, this analysis reveals the political potency of sensory disruptions in redefining what is perceptible and articulable, challenging both secular and religious orthodoxies through deeply embodied modes of perception.

Presenter(s): Muhammad Nabil Zuberi

Spectral Hauntings in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*

Thirteen years after the film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* opened theatrically to critical acclaim in the summer of 2012, it continues to exemplify what various reviews have termed a monomythic coming-of-age story, "a wondrous, visually resplendent fairy tale," "a post-Katrina folk creation myth," "a full-blown magical realist movement," and an ethnographic study of a tightly knit community known in the film as "The Bathtub." Set in the bayous of southern Louisiana (Terrebonne Parish, south of New Orleans), the film follows Hushpuppy, a six-year-old girl who searches for her identity amid an impending apocalypse of floods, prehistoric creatures, and more. It may come as no surprise therefore that the film's 29-year-old director, Benh Zeitlin, is the son of two prominent folklorists based in New York City, Steve Zeitlin and Amanda Dargan.

Curiously, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* does not appear in most discussions of ghost films even though the film's magical realism creates liminal spaces where spirits and ghosts could haunt and even though the film's nonlinear story blurs the line between what's real and what's imagined. Accordingly, this flash presentation will explore how the film employs multisensory strategies—visual, aural, real, and unreal—to enrich our understanding of how individuals and communities may

deal with adversity and disaster in their ongoing search for dignity and identity, and also how memory and imagination may serve as spectral hauntings.

Like many spiritual heroes, Hushpuppy possesses magical powers, perhaps the result of a mysterious birth and a mother who appears ghost-like in the film. "She was so pretty," Hushpuppy explains, that "she never had to turn on the stove. She walked into a room and all the water starts to boil." Like the heroes of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, Hushpuppy encounters a world both of wonder and potential threats, but always stands resolute in order to realize her spiritual destiny. By the end of the film, Hushpuppy realizes that she is "a little piece of a big, big universe, and that makes things right. The scientists of the future, they're gonna find it all. In a million years, when kids go to school, they're gonna know: once there was a Hushpuppy and she lived with her daddy in the Bathtub."

Presenter(s): James Deutsch

The Spirit Behind The Specter: Confronting Historical Trauma in Drill Music

This presentation explores how Drill music serves as a medium for encountering historical trauma and affirming solidarity among marginalized communities. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's hauntology and its philosophical antecedents, as well as René Girard's mimetic theory, this research examines how artists like Chief Keef and Baby Kia confront the specters of historical violence, "bringing the hood together" with the cathartic intensity of their music. This analysis reveals how Drill music articulates the pain of historical traumas such as mob violence, war, and educational discrimination. While not necessarily reflective of the majority of Drill music, the songs of Chief Keef and Baby Kia (including their sonic qualities, lyrics, videography and album cover art) often feature themes of both spectrality and spirituality. The juxtaposition of undead imagery (zombies, demons, and ghosts) with Christian settings and symbolism suggests death and rebirth, reflecting Derrida's assertion that "to live" can only be learned "from the other and by death." Furthermore, by centering themselves within a phantasmagoria of aggression, Drill rappers are positioned as Girardian scapegoats, often receiving the blame for societal issues, while in actuality disrupting cycles of violence and redirecting mimetic rivalries toward themselves. This research challenges simplistic narratives that blame Drill artists for promoting violence, instead suggesting their work represents a complex engagement with historical trauma, a challenging of ontological limits, and a search for belonging. The multi-modal complexity of Drill challenges listeners and scholars to acknowledge the spirit of healing behind the specter of violence.

Presenter(s): Rachel Bomalaski

Spirits of the Ancestors in the U.S.

Despite beliefs that spirits of the deceased ancestors persist in numerous cultures, contemporary anthropology has largely neglected such beliefs and their study in the U.S. People's accounts of experiences with recently deceased family members are often discounted or dismissed in contemporary America. In this paper, I argue that such possible encounters nor the people who have them should be trivialized. Their experiences resonate with those of nonwestern peoples.

Although they are believed to have happened in the present U.S., considering such beliefs as part of the human condition will broaden our understanding of it, and add to our understanding of how some in the West continue to emphasize the importance of spirits in the face of a scientific and political economic discourse which celebrates the material and posits a spiritless universe. I describe the supposed experiences of members of working-class families in the U.S. with a spirit of a recently deceased family member. Those experiences challenge dominant psychological conceptions of perceived experiences with recently deceased family members because sometimes they were functional, at other times disturbing and frightening, and ultimately predictive and heartrending. They contradict a psychological perspective which would dismiss them as simply being either wish fulfillment or the result of guilt emanating from the minds of those who had them. I suggest that such experiences might be seen as indicative of a level of spiritual reality long suppressed by mainstream scientific and religious paradigms in the West, but which remains found in many societies as manifested by beliefs in the persistence of ancestral spirits and their possible effects on the living. The paper should make a contribution to anthropology's research on and interpretation of individuals' believed experiences with deceased relatives within the U.S. and Western societies generally.

Presenter(s): John Napora

4600 Breaking Bread, Building Bonds: Food, Cultural Belonging, and the Construction of Social Networks

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the interplay of food, cultural belonging, and social/relational networks. Across cultures, food has served as a way to connect the self to the group, providing deeply felt communities of belonging. These communities produce relational networks that members can call upon to enact reciprocal exchanges to deepen a sense of community or to further perceived social capital. Through the use of ethnographic and autoethnographic methodologies, the presentations examine how everyday acts of food sharing serve as vital mechanisms for expressing self, cultivating social bonds, and negotiating cultural values as understood through reciprocal exchanges. Whether through formalized network systems or casual connections, food functions as both a symbolic and material anchor in the ongoing construction of relational worlds. In addition to food acting as a bridge between the self and the collective, panelists explore how the role of food emerges as both a symbolic and material force within the networks of society. By analyzing the intersections of food, belonging, and networks, we aim to advance insights into how commensality practices sustain social cohesion and cultural continuity. This panel analyzes communities in Taiwan, Puerto Rico, and various diasporas in the United States.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Sarai Brown, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sarai Brown, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sarai Brown, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Quick, Cottey College, Aklilu Reda, University of Kentucky, Harleen Bal, Margaret Brady, Lucecita Cruz
Discussant: Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Cycle of Giving: Food as a Vehicle of Obligation and Connection in Taiwan

This paper explores the role of food as a medium for constructing and maintaining social relationships within Taiwanese culture through the lens of autoethnography. By analyzing personal experiences of commensality, hospitality, and reciprocity with Taiwanese people, the study demonstrates how food-sharing functions as a key mechanism for establishing *guānxi* (關係), a deeply rooted social network system in Taiwanese and Sino-cultures. Through three case studies, this research highlights the transformation of transactional relationships into fictive kinship, where obligation and reciprocity serve as cultural imperatives rather than burdensome duties. Drawing on theories of Maussian gift exchange, Bourdiean social capital, and social clientelism, this paper argues that *guānxi* is not solely a business practice but a dynamic and personal process that fosters long-term social cohesion. Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of food as a symbolic and practical tool for reinforcing cultural belonging in Taiwan.

Presenter(s): Sarai Brown

Cottey College's Global Potluck: Belonging and self-expression

This paper considers the evolution of a campus event that has moved from a larger-scale celebratory festival to one that primarily focuses on sharing food. We recruit cooks from across campus—faculty, staff, and students—and value the event's process as much as its offerings of culinary diversity to students and the broader campus community. Built into its process are shopping trips within and outside our rural location in Southwest Missouri, these trips allowing students to find "home" through the food purchased that they then share in their food-making as well as at the more public potluck.

Participants and their foods are often difficult to pin down. Many come from the Midwest, and many have multiple homes/homelands through their families' transnational journeys. Indigenous students, Hawaiians (of various ilk) have participated as have first-generation and second-generation students from immigrant families, international faculty, and international students. The potluck brings culturally dispersed foods and folks together, creating shared community through a meal. Nevertheless, this paper allows us to critically reflect on the effectiveness of the event as "a potluck," a space for sharing material provisions alongside (we hope) social networking and cultural exchange. We ultimately probe what belonging means through this campus-sponsored event mimicking a nostalgic North American pastime.

Presenter(s): Sarah Quick

Teff in Motion: Culinary Appropriation, and the Politics of Reworlding in the Transnational Agrifood Network

This study investigates how teff—the world's tiny food-grain central to the Ethiopian culinary and cultural tradition—circulates across the transnational agrifood commodity circuit. Drawing on ethnographic data across five US States, the study examines the shifting meanings and transformation of teff based on three intersecting analytical lenses. First, I investigate how teff becomes a site of epistemic and gustatory appropriation, where racial and cultural difference is enacted and negotiated. Secondly, by following the semiotic and material processes of its consumption, I examined how teff's cultural significance is both reconfigured and mobilized in the appropriated agrifood markets. As teff becomes a fetishized cosmopolitan commodity, circulating in high-end grocery stores and transnational food markets, its significance as a cultural medium of Ethiopian commensality, identity, and memory continuously becomes blurred and contested. This tension reveals the politics of reworlding: the countercurrents of resistance, innovation, and relationality that persist parallel to the extractive commodity logics. Informal food networks and household culinary practices emerge as expressions of resistance, unsettling the extractive value regimes that serve as mechanisms of dispossession. In this context, teff reinvents itself, fostering diasporic space-making, sustaining cultural continuity, and affirming identity through the everyday culinary practices.

Presenter(s): Aklilu Reda

Kitchen Boundaries: Food Labor, Spatial Politics, and Relations of Care within Punjabi Diasporic Life

In many Punjabi immigrant households in California, a spatial division emerges between an pristine indoor kitchen and a secondary "garage kitchen". These spatial arrangements are not merely practical; they structure sensory life, domestic labor, and social configurations, while seeming to reproduce familiar binaries: clean/dirty, feminine/masculine, public/private, and modern/traditional. The indoor kitchen performs American middle-class respectability, shaped by colonial and racialized ideals of cleanliness. In contrast, the garage kitchen becomes a space of sensory abundance, care labor, and cultural reproduction. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with Punjabi families immersed in California's food supply chain, this presentation explores how these kitchen logics are embodied, negotiated, and contested. Cooking spaces emerge as sensory and social zones where roles, boundaries, and cultural values are reconfigured. Langar kitchens—where Sikhs cook together through seva (spiritual service)—further complicate domestic dichotomies as they model an alternative site of food labor that resists caste, gender, and class divisions. Rather than reaffirming dualisms, this paper uses a poststructuralist and feminist lens (Ahmed 2004; Ameeriar 2017; Mahmood 2005) to trace how Punjabi diasporic kitchens are structured by cultural norms but also marked by improvisation, friction, and care—remaking the social through space, embodiment, and food.

Presenter(s): Harleen Bal

What Thrives Here: Hmong Gardening, Gathering, and Subsistence Practices in Anchorage, Alaska

What happens when Hmong families, whose histories are grounded in Southeast Asia and shaped by swidden agriculture, collective labor, and forms of subsistence oriented more toward living off the land than market-based exchange resettle in Anchorage, Alaska as part of a broader refugee experience? How do they continue to gardening, using medicinal herbs, foraging, fishing, hunting, and at times, how and why do they choose not to? What values, relationships, and forms of knowledge guide these decisions, and what are their broader implications for understanding belonging and adaptation in diaspora?

In Anchorage, these practices form part of a relational infrastructure through which Hmong residents express and continually negotiate their place in both local and translocal worlds. They are shaped by collective ethics of care and reciprocity, practical considerations oriented toward family well-being, and spiritual practices, traditions, and beliefs. At the same time, these activities draw people into sensorial engagements with place, memory, and health, often evoking nostalgia for ways of living carried forward in new contexts. Drawing on ethnographic research, I explore how food invites forms of engagement in labor, taste, memory, and care that sustain households and foster relationships within diasporic networks. What emerges is a relational process shaped through lived experience, negotiation of cultural values, and the ongoing cultivation of belonging.

Presenter(s): Margaret Brady

From Bloodlines to Breadlines: TRANSgressing the boundaries of family to make kin. Kinship, Queerness and the Sociality of Sustenance

The making of kin in Queer and Transgender communities relies less on bloodlines and more on intimate forms of sociality like commensality and food aggregation (Fitzpatrick, 2018). There is limited research at the intersection of Queer and Transgender communities in Puerto Rico, food, and kin. This research project is an introductory exploration into the role of food in queer and transgender communities in non-sovereign nations. Puerto Rico is an archipelago where 80% of its food is imported, and what arrives is dictated by the United States (Ayala et al., 2021); it is one of the world's continuously colonized territories. Coloniality is thus imported to the islands not just through food, but also through a neoliberal modernity whose conceptualizations of kin, gender and sovereignty become translated through the Puerto Rican experience. Yet, Puerto Rico is home to a growing food sovereignty movement grounded in queer feminist praxis and "embodied decolonial resistance" (Crowe, 2020:1). This study interviews Queer and Transgender Puerto Ricans to explore how commensality, kin-making through shared meals, and food adequacy which maintain "intimate forms of sociality" (Garth, 2020:5). This study documents decolonial interventions by Queer and Trans farmers and community organizers responding to colonial disruptions in the archipelago's food supply.

Presenter(s): Lucecita Cruz

Discussion

2393 The Legacy of Ernesto de Martino (Part I): Being with Others - Other Humans and the More-than-Human

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the death of Ernesto de Martino (1908-1965), a founding figure in Italian anthropology whose ghost still looms large in the Italian tradition, continuing to inspire countless works today. De Martino's thinking is incredibly timely for the current state of world crisis, as demonstrated by his masterwork on apocalypse (*The End of the World*, published in English in 2023). Bringing together established as well as junior scholars, this double session interrogates the legacy of de Martino's eclectic thought from various angles, providing the opportunity to think with him and acquaint a broader audience with his work. In line with critical "world anthropologies" perspectives, the sessions counter anthropology's anglophone hegemony by focusing on a brilliant anthropologist who is not widely known outside of Italy.

Part I is fundamentally inspired by the political de Martino, who was a highly engaged and public anthropologist. The first two papers take a fresh look at de Martino's work from a historical-biographical perspective. Early ideas of "being with Others" emerge in de Martino's Gramscian-influenced analyses of subaltern culture and in his engagement with politics and literature (Ciavolella). The "others" in many of de Martino's empirical studies were gendered as female: the women who participated in phenomena of magic, funeral lament and tarantism. De Martino's key female collaborators Clara Gallini and Amalia Signorelli subsequently thematized gender as part of the demartinian legacy that they carried on until their deaths (Franceschi). Two further papers apply de Martino's thinking about being with Others to a topic that he did not really address directly but is of great relevance and interest today: that of more-than-human Others. De Martino's analysis of tarantism's spider poison helps us to rethink current environmental poisoning (La Rock). Furthermore, Southern Italian fig trees exemplify complex anthropogenic environmental interactions that produce negative effects on both the trees and the humans whose world they help comprise (Krause). In his final years, de Martino theorized an original reflection on decoloniality, formulating the notions of "critical ethnocentrism" and "ethnographic humanism". Both of these concepts are productive for helping us to flesh out ethnographers' relationships to the Others they are studying (Shapiro). Despite its limitations, Martino's decoloniality can spur us to rethink epistemologies that grasp the non-human and more-than-human in non-Eurocentric ways (Raffaetà). The papers in this session variously address these points and offer new insights about his legacy that open exciting prospects for anthropology today.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Dorothy Zinn , Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews

Chair: Dorothy Zinn

Presenter(s): Zelda Alice Franceschi, University of Bologna, Zachary La Rock, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Elizabeth Krause, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Samuel Shapiro, Université Laval, Roberta Raffaeta'

Discussant: Charles Stewart, University College London

Presentation(s): Amalia Signorelli & Clara Gallini: "Brains and offal". The feminine legacy of Ernesto de Martino

Amalia Signorelli (1934-2017) and Clara Gallini (1931-2017) are considered "students" of Ernesto de Martino. Other women also participated in de Martino's ethnographic explorations, including Vittoria de Palma (1927-2024), Annabella Rossi (1933-1984), and Letizia Comba (1932-2000).

By retracing the life and work of Signorelli and Gallini, this paper seeks to illustrate how these two scholars were able to reassess their perspective through fieldwork and challenging the representation given by de Martino of certain female figures: "the peasant woman", "the tarantata", "the maschiara" "the lamentatrice". Signorelli and Gallini took an ethical-political stance deconstructing some stereotypes that stemmed from "the influence (and the misunderstanding) of De Martino's research". Signorelli's reinterpretation continued until 2011 when she published the journals from the 1959 expedition. Gallini's reevaluation spanned throughout her life, and it is particularly apparent in some of her monographs, such as the one from 1999, in which she published an interview with Vittoria de Palma, and her monographs (1981, 1983). This paper aims to demonstrate how these two scholars placed ethical-political commitment at the center of their work focusing on women's issues. In the vision of these women, "brains and offal" symbolized the union of scientific research, critical detachment, and passion.

Presenter(s): Zelda Alice Franceschi

Crises of cure: Ernesto De Martino and the environmental history of South Italy

In Puglia's Salento peninsula, residents have reported that tarantismo, a phenomenon of symbolic poisoning and ritual therapy, declined after agricultural herbicide use in the 1960s killed the arachnids putatively responsible for the poisoning. Colloquially referred to as medicine, petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers were introduced to "cure" adverse conditions of crop growth as the Italian state tepidly transformed a feudal agricultural system into a capitalist one. Rather than heal vulnerable plants, however, petrochemical technologies instead impoverished soils, leached heavy metals into the water supply, and conditioned possibilities for crop epidemic, especially the "rapid olive dessication complex" (CoDiRo) currently afflicting Salentinian olive trees. Petrochemicals' cultural status as curative therapies is challenged by crises ensuing from their own venomous side-effects.

For Ernesto De Martino, the study of symbolic poisoning marked a contribution to the religious history of Italy's South. Today, an inquiry into the effects of the land's actual poisoning highlights the South's environmental history. Against attempts to situate centuries of agricultural transformation as technological feats divorced from underlying material reality, today's crises of cure in Salentinian agriculture might be better framed as symptoms of an ill-reformed political economy, where growing food has always been an environmental means of structuring unequal social relations.

Presenter(s): Zachary La Rock

Fifty Days of Fieldwork: Figs in the World and the Unsettled Ghost of De Martino

Fig trees in Italy are dying due to an invasive weevil and climate challenges. This paper draws on fifty days of fieldwork to document human efforts to intervene in saving them. This paper speaks to profound relations that humans have not only with each other but with their plant brethren and the soil in which the trees grow or languish. The production of dried figs languished then was revived along with the abandonment then reattachment to the countryside. De Martino's concepts help grasp aspects of abandonment, attachment, loss, and belonging: *appaesamento*, a sense of feeling settled in which the world feels ordinary and familiar, and its opposite, *spaesamento*, in which the world feels bewildering and unfamiliar. How might De Martino's concepts be relevant to a multispecies anthropology?

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Krause

Ernesto de Martino Among the Anthropologists: Critical Ethnocentrism, Categories of Observation and Comparison

Ernesto de Martino's concept of critical ethnocentrism is important to contemporary anthropological epistemology because it makes us question our own (Western) cultural categories of observation. De Martino particularly focused on our awareness of concrete ways of living in society (e.g. cultural situations, choices or aspects) that we have encountered ethnographically. What I want to add is, firstly, that these encounters can be through our personal ethnographies or those of others and, secondly, that this perspective is relevant far beyond the Western/exotic paradigm in which De Martino originally developed it. Central to De Martino's reflection is the relationship between specific ethnographic realities and broader societal transformations, which, in turn, leads to a critical reflection on the limits of our own categories of observation. How might this perspective be especially relevant in distinguishing anthropology's perspective among the social sciences on topics of shared interest to several academic disciplines? How can critical ethnocentrism help us broaden theoretical discussions within anthropology by helping us see that existing wider issues in the literature can be studied from new, different vantage points or field sites? How can we bring critical ethnocentrism into dialogue with more recent, conceptually related work in anthropology and related disciplines, notably Michael Herzfeld's *crypto-colonialism* and Marcel Detienne's *constructive comparatism*?

Presenter(s): Samuel Shapiro

Going beyond the ghosts: nature and knowledge in Ernesto de Martino and the possibility for new alliances

I analyze Ernesto de Martino's thought within the decolonial and posthuman debate, drawing from ethnography across Italy and Hawai'i with (Indigenous) environmental scientists. De Martino pioneered the need to situate knowledge as an ethical and epistemological imperative. His critical ethnocentrism resonates with STS, anthropology, and Indigenous Critical Studies. As an Italian intellectual, he was influenced by Italy's peripheric position within major European colonial powers. Yet, as a man of his time, he advanced a historicist, humanist view of nature as immobile,

immutable and subordinate to culture. Engaged in a Eurocentric, secular, and colonial intellectual milieu, de Martino failed to grasp 'magic' and more-than-human forces as agents, ghosting key aspects of southern Italy's pre-Enlightenment knowledge. This neglect is part of how Eurocentric modern knowledge emerged—erasing both colonized peoples' contributions and European knowledge systems discarded by rationalist modernity. The colonial condition, often seen as past or external to Europe, has ongoing global ramifications. It shapes how European science perceives itself, forming a blind spot that limits its engagement with colonial legacies and its own displaced traditions. Revealing these ghosts enables new alliances across Europe and settler colonial contexts, unevenly connected through the colonization of knowledge.

Presenter(s): Roberta Raffaeta'

Discussion

510 Combined Flash Session #4

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Cristina Pop, Creighton University, Department of Cultural and Social Studies, Shivani Kaul, University of Amsterdam, Katherine Fox, Southern Oregon University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Mohamed Rafiq, New York University, Shanghai, sachamouzin, Nina Francis-Levin, University of Michigan, Anthony Wright, Rutgers University, Tatenda Merken, Priya Sajjad

Presenter(s): Cristina Pop, Creighton University, Department of Cultural and Social Studies, Shivani Kaul, University of Amsterdam, Katherine Fox, Southern Oregon University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Mohamed Rafiq, New York University, Shanghai, sachamouzin, Nina Francis-Levin, University of Michigan, Anthony Wright, Rutgers University, Tatenda Merken, Priya Sajjad

Presentation(s): Distant doctors and invisible tumors: gynecologic oncology encounters in Romania

Medical encounters are sites of bodily scrutiny and intimate conversations. Clinical workers see, hear, and witness what no one else does. Drawing from fieldwork in an oncology clinic in Romania, I take this idea further, and explore the ghostly presence of distant doctors in the examination room. Women's bodies and the semiotics they encapsulate circulate from peripheries to the center, carrying (mis)diagnosis messages between unconnected doctors. The oncology specialists routinely receive small-town patients with advanced cervical cancers who have had inconclusive abdominal ultrasounds from local OB-GYNs but had never received a pelvic exam. Malignant tumors of 2 centimeters (0.7 inches) are detectable by the naked eye during a pelvic examination but can remain invisible to abdominal ultrasound waves. The technological, consumerist-driven medical investigations by small-town OB-GYNs are inscribed on women's bodies and deciphered

accordingly in the oncology clinic, where specialists encounter not only cancer patients but also their distant doctors.

Presenter(s): Cristina Pop

Following spectral origin stories of COVID-19 in Bhutan: The multiversal politics of tendrel (dependent origination) and lenchak (karmic debt)

Political theorists and medical anthropologists have discussed the violence of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in divergent ways using the concepts of biopolitics and necropolitics. Rather than rehashing critiques of the state, liberal humanism, and neoliberalism, what could pandemic experiences in postgrowth contexts suggest about how interventions might be done differently in a geological epoch characterized by a climate emergency spurred by extractive, uneven growth?

Global health experts have raised Bhutan as a unique case study of pandemic management, with one of the lowest COVID-19 case fatality ratios in the world despite its proximity to India and China. But research on this case has tended to depict Bhutanese publics as unitary and compliant recipients of biomedical technologies like testing-tracing, mask mandates, and mass vaccination. These essentialist tropes recur in Himalayan literatures, and obscure the pluriversal histories and post-growth practices that made a rapid public pandemic response possible.

Based on participant observation, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal ethnography, the authors of this chapter present four particular features that have marked the Bhutanese case of health interventions during COVID-19: ritual digital technologies around vaccination and the virus, more-than-human redistribution, merit dedication and empirical displays, and land border sealing alongside food producer relinking. We trace in this distinct approach to intervention the logic of tendrel (dependent origination) and its dance with lenchak (karmic debt): an alternative to universalizing politics in which bodies are enacted as interdependent and indeterminate, and can be delinked from some flows to relink to the liberation of sentient beings.

Presenter(s): Shivani Kaul

Co-author(s): Sonam Pelden, Deki Yangzom, Yedzin W. Tobgay

Ghosts of Former Selves: Grief and Loss in the Context of Long COVID

"Long COVID" refers to a broad array of health problems and disabling symptoms that present in an individual after having been infected with the Sars-CoV-2 virus. In July 2021, the condition was recognized as one that could result in disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Though many biomedical studies had begun to investigate this condition, including some funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Long COVID research is currently being deprioritized, so sufferers continue to manage their condition with little information or assistance from biomedicine. Many people in the U.S. with Long COVID no longer expect to recover, given the lack of available treatments and dearth of promising research.

Meanwhile, despite gains in visibility and public legitimacy, long COVID remains a contested illness, in which symptoms are trivialized or disbelieved by those in the sufferer's social contacts, including medical providers (Ware 1992). These factors together create a social milieu in which people with Long COVID must adjust to a new bodily reality while facing skepticism and disbelief from others regarding their symptoms and experiences.

Against this backdrop, people with Long COVID navigate not only debilitating physical illness, but intense social and emotional distress as they contend with what they have lost - physical abilities, relationships, visions of the future. This is compounded when Long COVID sufferers' social networks do not recognize or understand their mourning processes - which are understood to be important processes for reconstructing meaning and transforming relationships in the face of others' death (Silverman, Baroiller, & Hemer 2020; Neimeyer et al. 2014; Rosenblatt 2008) - in the absence of literal death. At times, participants feel like ghosts of their former selves while simultaneously feeling invisible to those around them. This paper draws from anthropologies of grief to explore Long COVID illness narratives, gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, in order to better understand the complexities of this emerging chronic disease.

Presenter(s): Katherine Fox

Haunted Pathways: Cancer and Referral Reform in Tanzania

In 2019, the Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI) in Tanzania introduced a policy I refer to as the level passing policy. This policy allows doctors across various tiers of Tanzania's health system to expedite suspected cancer cases directly to higher-level, specialized cancer care facilities. On paper, and in theory, the policy signals a rupture from earlier therapeutic pathways in which patients were required to move sequentially through all levels of care via referrals. Instead, it promises accelerated pathways, where certain levels are skipped to save time and improve treatment outcomes. In practice, however, the level passing policy at lower-tier facilities is haunted by the remnants of earlier health policies from both the socialist and market-driven eras: referral bottlenecks, institutional mistrust, and inadequate diagnostic infrastructures. For some patients and their caregivers, bypassing levels is not a choice but a haunted path, shaped by memories of friends and kin who died navigating the slow, cumbersome bureaucratic process; who encountered prohibitive costs and endured misdiagnoses. Thus, the level-passing policy should be understood not only as a procedural innovation but as a haunted policy that is shaped, feared, and improvised in the textures of everyday life. By extension, cancer emerges not merely as a somatic condition but as a spectral force- an index of historical legacies, institutional continuities, policy contradictions, and technological discontinuities.

Presenter(s): Mohamed Rafiq

Co-author(s): Megan Cogburn

Shepherds in the Shadows- the Local and Global in our Food System

The future of food production is, and will continue to be, a major challenge for humanity in the coming decades. The pervasive disastrous effects of industrial agriculture are well documented worldwide. The current practices of pastoralism in Lebanon constitute an intriguing paradox in such context of severe multifaceted crisis, war, food insecurity and critique of industrial agriculture. What does it mean for pastoralism to 'survive' despite it all? Survive to what and how? How does pastoralism differ from 'industrial' agriculture and what would it mean to frame it as an 'anti capitalist' and 'local' mode of production? Based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2023-2024 in Lebanon, this paper will seek to explore the current practices of pastoralism in the Mount Lebanon mountain range and its friction with the 'global' be it war, urban infrastructures, discourses or economic markets. By comparing the ethics and labour relations of a pastoralist family with those of an industrial goat dairy farm, it will show the conflicting take on biosecurity, efficiency, care and control. I will argue that what might differ between pastoralist and industrial modes of production rely on the very situatedness and complexity of the ethics and know-how, welcoming and composing with diversity and ambiguity rather than striving for total control, predictability and global uniformity.

Presenter(s): Sacha Mouzin

Signed, sealed, delivered: Survey research as relational labor

This presentation takes population health science as a point of departure to explore how scientific practice makes knowledge. Specifically, I examine the epistemic cultures (Knorr-Cetina, 1999) driving clinical research about the unmet supportive care needs of adolescent/young adult cancer patients (15-39 years) in the United States. From 2020-2022, I carried out ethnographic field work on the upstart of a hospital-based Program to provide tailored services to youth who are diagnosed with cancer. The Program conducted a baseline needs assessment which I coordinated in my capacity as participant-observer. Survey administration involved an iterative process of identifying eligible participants in a retrospective cancer registry, mailing 1,300 paper surveys and pre-paid return envelopes to patients' homes, receiving and sorting returned completed surveys, entering responses into a database, and mailing participants a payment. Throughout this correspondence, I gleaned piece-meal information about the members of my sample – from their disease pathology to their hometowns, from their birthdays to their sexual orientations. In some instances, I recognized names from other initiatives in the Program. In other cases, I noticed return address labels with differing surnames to the patients' record, suggesting they may have gotten married since they were first diagnosed. In relating with these study participants – my interlocutors, per se – I built a world around the slivers of personal information I culled from disaggregated sources. I became attached to their stories, and I rooted for them as I crafted imaginary assemblages of recomposed persons (Tinkler et al. 2021). Most poignantly, respondents used the paper medium to pen rogue messages – to whomever they imagined me, the researcher, to be – in the margins of the survey. Such superscriptions were filled with uplifting messages, surprising disclosures, and heartbreaking confessions about young patients' unmet needs. Study participants, therefore, related to me as a similarly shadowy correspondent in this epistolary fieldwork. Survey research is rarely characterized as intersubjective between investigator and participant. Rather, data collection is

typically summarized in as an inventory of steps that "someone" on the research team carried out. My ethnographic findings, however, suggest that the assembly of a responsive clinical sample is a relational act; one that is steeped in affective and intimate sociality, however mediated or partial. I argue that applying an ethnographic lens to the production of clinical subjects unveils the materiality (sheer volume of paper), physicality (callouses and paper cuts from handling mailers), and affect (emotional investment in participant outcomes) inherent to the production of population-level data.

Knorr-Cetina. 1999. Harvard University Press.

Tinkler et al. 2021. *Recomposing Persons: Scavenging and Storytelling in a Birth Cohort Archive*. Hist. Hum. Sci.

Presenter(s): Nina Francis-Levin

The Ghost of Oncology Past

For decades, pediatric cancer treatment has been a site of ambitious advocacy and research initiatives that have had a profound impact on the design and enactment of patient care. Historians of pediatric cancer treatment trace this history back to the figure of Sidney Farber, the pathologist who founded the Jimmy Fund Clinic, which was the first pediatric cancer treatment facility to incorporate the kinds of child-centered amenities (e.g., children's furniture, bright decor, toys and games, etc.) that are now standard features of pediatric facilities throughout the United States. Farber and his collaborators reimagined pediatric cancer wards, attempting to transform them from austere spaces associated with death. Throughout the twentieth century, many other pediatric oncology professionals and cancer advocates followed in Farber's footsteps, and pediatric cancer treatment centers became imbued with morally charged discourses of child-centered optimism. While these discourses have undoubtedly helped achieve many of their intended effects, such as compelling people to donate time and energy to the cause of pediatric cancer treatment and inspiring hope among children and families who are in the throes of cancer treatment, they have also had a number of unintended effects. In this presentation, I draw on ethnographic research with pediatric cancer treatment patients, professionals, and advocates to describe how the figure of the child cancer patient, which is so central to canonical discourses of pediatric cancer advocacy, haunts pediatric oncology in ways that distract from the needs of adolescent and young adult cancer patients, who often undergo treatment in pediatric facilities. In the past twenty years, however, professionals and advocates aligned with the "Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Oncology Movement" have begun to call attention to this situation, calling for new forms of AYA-centered cancer care in pediatric contexts. Building on work in medical anthropology and the anthropology of childhood, I show how these activists are engaged in ongoing attempts to generationally order oncological spaces and practices, attempting to foster patient inclusion along lines of age and developmental status. While these efforts are laudable, they have paid too little attention to the racialized, classed, gendered and otherwise multiplex nature of adolescence and young adulthood, at times projecting a homogenized figure of "the AYA cancer patient." Here I argue

that more detailed ethnographic attention to the complex lives of AYA cancer patients can help to dislodge such stereotypes and contribute to more careful modes of representation and recognition.

Presenter(s): Anthony Wright

The Skin That Remembers: Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma and the Spectral Afterlives of Remission

Background: Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL), a rare form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma primarily affecting the skin, is clinically understood as a chronic and relapsing illness. For many, remission does not signal reprieve, but ushers in a different kind of uncertainty—one marked by bodily hyperawareness, disrupted temporality, and an enduring sense of vulnerability. This study draws on anthropological hauntology to examine how illness becomes a form of haunting—embodied, affective, and unresolved—where the skin becomes both witness and archive to suffering.

Methods: This research draws from an ethnographic study conducted at a comprehensive cancer center in the southeastern United States. Thirteen individuals previously treated for CTCL participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using MAXQDA software. The analysis was guided by theoretical frameworks from anthropological hauntology, particularly Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi's (2022) concept of spectral presence and Lincoln and Lincoln's (2015) distinctions between primary and secondary hauntings.

Results: Thematic analysis revealed three distinct yet overlapping dimensions of hauntological experiences among CTCL survivors. First, Haunted Flesh (85% of participants) describes how the skin becomes a site of dread and memory, haunted by chronic itch, pain, and the shame of visible disfigurement. Even after symptoms abate, the body remains marked and suspect, generating persistent hypervigilance. Second, Skin-Time (77% of participants) reflects the temporal distortions wrought by illness. For many, remission does not feel like recovery, but like suspension—marked by re-traumatization, and the looping return of symptoms both real and imagined. Third, Everyday Hauntings (100% of participants) describes how illness inhabits the mundane. From navigating medical appointments to attempting sleep, preparing meals, or responding to invitations, participants reported subtle, persistent disruptions that made ordinary life feel precarious and unfamiliar. The disease was not always visible, but it was never entirely gone.

Conclusion: Drawing on Stevenson's (2014) "life beside itself" and Gammeltoft's (2014) work on spectral presences, this study reveals how CTCL survivors experience recovery not as return to health but as a recursive condition where illness persists beyond remission. Their narratives reveal the skin as a haunted surface mediating between past suffering and present uncertainty, where everyday life becomes a spectral landscape through which illness continues to move—unseen yet deeply felt. CTCL generates an afterlife not of disease alone, but of embodiment itself, with survivorship characterized by symptoms lingering in skin, memory, and ordinary life. This study offers insight into how healing can be haunted, and how patients live not beyond illness but with it, alongside it, in the spectral rhythms of the everyday.

Presenter(s): Tatenda Merken

Co-author(s): Mary Jo Lechowicz, Pamela Allen, Brittany Adams, Darina Paulino, Joel Andrews, Angela Ballard, Kenya Apongule, Charles Waldner, Nish Arumugam, Rebecca Pentz, Zachary Wolner

Unfolding Covid-19 Through the Ghosts of Past Epidemics: Denial, Uncertainty, Public Negotiation, and Retrospection in Pakistan

I will unpack how the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded in Pakistan through patterns shaped by the lingering specters of past epidemics. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Lahore, Pakistan, from March 2020 to July 2021, I explored how communities, healthcare professionals, and the state navigated the crisis in ways that were not entirely new, but haunted by familiar social scripts and institutional responses. Using Charles Rosenberg's dramaturgical model of epidemics as a heuristic, I trace the pandemic's narrative arc-denial, explanation, collective response, and retrospection-as it played out on the ground. This model reveals how epidemics are not only biomedical events but also deeply social dramas that echo earlier outbreaks.

I show how denial in Pakistan manifested in literal, interpretive, and implicatory forms: through conspiracy theories, rejection of biomedical knowledge, and the scapegoating of already marginalised groups. In the phase of managing uncertainty, people turned to practices like stockpiling, ritual prayer, and mutual aid-yet these strategies were shaped by pre-existing inequalities, particularly class and gender. Wealthier individuals had more means to cope, while the urban poor bore the brunt of lockdowns and health risks. Public responses were marked by uneven policies, often privileging elite urban centres while neglecting rural and informal populations. Healthcare professionals-especially doctors and nurses-became both heroes and casualties in a system stretched thin, and their experiences reveal how occupational hierarchies and gendered labour shaped the pandemic's toll.

Finally, in the stage of retrospection, I examine the vaccine rollout and the uneven terrain of trust, access, and acceptance. Here too, the ghosts of past state failures and health campaigns loomed large. Perceptions of the vaccine were filtered through histories of neglect and suspicion, reinforcing existing fractures rather than offering closure.

By attending to the dramaturgical unfolding of the pandemic in Pakistan, this paper argues that epidemics are not just moments of rupture, but reactivations of structural memory-where older patterns of exclusion, mistrust, and inequality return with renewed force.

Presenter(s): Priya Sajjad

7948 Ghostly Informatics of Cringe: A Discussion on the Somatic Representations of Haunting Awkwardness

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Awkwardness-often dismissed as a fleeting social misstep or an aesthetic of discomfort-harbors

horror, melancholy, grief, and suffering. These states, read somatically, reveal profound cultural and epistemological dimensions. This roundtable brings together movement artists and dancers in academia to explore the informatics of cringe: how awkwardness, embarrassment, and bodily hesitation serve as critical signals of sociocultural and historical conditions.

Cringe, we argue, operates as a powerful affective archive that stores micro-failures, shame, subversion, and longing. By drawing on contemporary dance, somatics, and performance studies, panelists explore how awkwardness is cultivated in performance, pedagogy, and artistic research as a mode of inquiry. In an era of hyper-visibility and algorithmic surveillance-where "cringe" content circulates virally as a form of social control-we ask: What does it mean to be awkward now? How might movement practices reclaim and queer the aesthetics of shame, erasure, and bodily uncertainty?

Kimberly Powell examines how disability functions as a form of cringe and how disabled and Hard of Hearing (HOH) artists reclaim it as an intentional aesthetic and political strategy. She explores how ableist media casts disability as spectral, haunting representation through pity, mockery, and comic relief. These tropes, recently amplified in the public ridicule of disabled people, entrap audiences in cycles of secondhand shame and discomfort. Through autoethnographic and artistic methods, Powell situates her HOH positionality within critical disability performance studies to analyze how Deaf and HOH artists confront and subvert "cringe" as a form of resistance.

Julie Snyder shares findings from movement-based research with young performers exploring the somatic terrain of puberty and menstruation. Through collaborative choreography, participants stage their own "scene" of transition, confronting the aesthetics of leaking, changing, and uncontained bodies. Their performances reframe culturally inherited shame and rewrite dominant narratives about bodily emergence.

Yamuna Sangarasivam invites participants to move with the hauntings that result from intersecting and subjugating wars. Through speculative ethnography, she explores the kinesthetic terrain of ancestral regret, resistance, and resurgence, opening a space to inhabit nonlinear temporalities that mark the body through grief and remembrance.

Hortense Gerardo explores how awkwardness functions as a diagnostic threshold in Human | Robot and AI interaction. Through works such as *Dances with Robots* and *A Girl and Her Dog*, she examines how gestures of hesitation, uncanny mimicry, and bodily unease surface as indicators of trust, empathy, and recognition. These performances activate the Uncanny Valley as a somatic and choreographic site where awkwardness becomes data, exposing the limits of empathy, the thresholds of trust, and the poetics of imperfection.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Hortense Gerardo

Presenter(s): Kimberly Powell, Pennsylvania State University, Julie Snyder, Pennsylvania State University, Yamuna Sangarasivam, Nazareth College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hortense Gerardo

Discussant: Julie Snyder, Pennsylvania State University

4290 Performing the Archive: Queer Scenes, Feminist Revolts

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel takes the archive as a repertoire of dissent, where minor histories take center stage. We focus on Latin American resistance to state violence by asking how artistic and literary genres can elucidate archives of queer desires to live otherwise. Through explorations of sex work activism, artistic performances, migrant literature, and public spectacle we uphold these archives as generative forces that foster conditions for breaking away from heteronormative violence to propose alternative ways of narrating subjectivity. Inspired by Ann Cvetkovich's *Archive of Feelings*, we cast hauntings of past repressions that have remained at the margins of history yet contest practices of hostile government takeovers. In doing so, we consider the archive's own "pariah, transnational and migrant condition" (Guerrero 2023) to observe how it revolts against sovereign histories that contain and define it. In this panel's presentations, the repertoire of dissent is also in narratives that oppose male-centric historical accounts. In the scavenging task of reclaiming censored lifestyles, we present Latin American formations through feminist and queer frameworks that underscore collectivity and address what Adriana Cavarero (2000) posits: that narration is political because it is relational. We find these counter narratives in the form of anarchist testimonies in Argentina, traditional songs in Mexico, gay short stories in Cuba, and feminist performances in Bolivia. Through the lens of performance studies, we consider embodiments of desire that enable a politics of refusal. The multiplicity of such scenarios reminds us, as Diana Taylor (2003) claims, of the multiple systems of meaning-making at play. From anarchist refusals of Argentinian sex workers to poetic fabulations of Ecuadorian asylum seekers, feminist interpretations of "regional music" in Mexico, and radical street theater in La Paz, Bolivia, we examine how bodies and the intersubjective act of reading, writing, and worldmaking guide us into queering our analysis of the archives. The panel will ultimately create the space to share feminist and queer methodologies that write our collective actions against violence.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Valentina Ramia, Wesleyan University, Leyla Savloff, Elon University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Valentina Ramia, Wesleyan University

Presenter(s): Leyla Savloff, Elon University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Daniel Runnels, Texas A&M University, Zaith Lopez, Stanford University, Valentina Ramia, Wesleyan University

Discussant: Leyla Savloff, Elon University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Love at the End of the World: Sex Work Politics and Feminist Anarchy in Argentina

After the brutal repression of rural workers on strike in Patagonia in 1921, where 1,200 workers were shot, Colonel Varela, the military campaign's commander, decided to hire the sexual services of women from brothels near the ports to relax the soldiers' mental and emotional state. On February 17, 1922, in the brothel La Catalana in Puerto San Julián, five migrant sex workers refused their services to those soldiers as a form of protest. This refusal was violently repressed by the police and military, highlighting the power of bodies against institutional violence. In addition, hundreds of migrant strikers who identified as anarchists were imprisoned in local prisons or sent to Buenos Aires. This episode, narrated by Osvaldo Bayer, is part of *La Patagonia Rebelde*, revealing an integral part of minor stories to shape the anarchist history of Argentina. While organized sex workers today uphold this history as part of their activist trajectory, the current government destroyed the monument for Osvaldo Bayer, which read "Bienvenidx a la Patagonia Rebelde." This destruction identifies labor movements as a threat alongside the governmental delegitimization of inclusive language to put forth a renewed agenda of sexual and political repression. I consider the archive of the sex workers of San Julian to reflect on the current politics of sex work, the struggles of the labor movement, and the anarchic pasts that continue to infuse contemporary ideas of collective resistance and love.

Presenter(s): Leyla Savloff

Mujeres Creando and the Anarchist Politics of Refusal

This paper considers the public archive of Mujeres Creando, the Bolivian anarchy-feminist collective founded by Maria Galindo, Mónica Mendoza, and Julieta Paredes. Formed in 1992, the group has demonstrated a remarkable continuity for over three decades. During the early years, in an era of Bolivian neoliberalism, Mujeres Creando brought attention to anti-racism and LGBTQ+ rights, issues with which few others in Bolivia were concerned. It was, however, during the presidency of Evo Morales that Mujeres Creando drew increasingly more national and international attention through the widespread circulation of their public art, graffiti, and performances in online spaces. Further, their work confronted a political leader who many on the international left viewed as a source of hope, especially given his emergence during the continent's temporary shift to the left, what many scholars have called "the Pink Tide." This paper will consider Mujeres Creando's public performance archive as well as Galindo's body of written work to posit that the group makes manifest a politics of refusal. Mujeres Creando performs what Galindo has termed a politics "of the street," marking a distinction between the theoretical work that academics (and, to be sure, Galindo herself) engage in and the perceived proximity to "real" politics that the group enjoys due to public theater like the conversion of the centrally-located statue of Isabel la Católica into the Plaza de la Chola Globalizada.

Presenter(s): Daniel Runnels

Musical Cultural Production and Masculine Violence in Mexico

11 April 2025: Luis R. Conriquez announces during his concert in the municipality of Texcoco that he will no longer play narco-corridos. Chaos and aggression erupt: attendants jump onto the stage

and express their anger. The rules have changed, he later posted online. Not long before in Jalisco, Mexico, Los Alegres del Barranco projected an image of narco-leader "El Mencho" from Jalisco New Generation Cartel on stage. Local government officials argued for the prohibition of narco-corridos and their violent practices. Indeed, with Peso Pluma's stardom in the international music industry, narco-corridos have become a theme of debate: does it influence its listeners to commit acts of violence and shape youths' views to join the ranks of drug cartels? As the Mexican government addresses the rampant violence across Mexico, musical production is only one of their targets. In this paper, I am interested in the construction of masculinities in Mexican cultural production, from the 1940s in mariachi/rancheras songs to contemporary narco-corridos. I trace the concept "No rajarse," not cracking, given its historical importance in Mexican culture and query other cultural and linguistic figures of concern to address violence. Today, "no rajarse" continues to be a mode of performing masculinities. The question is whether, and to what extent, this public archive of cultural production shapes Mexican masculinities and whether it is constituting masculine violence in contemporary Mexico.

Presenter(s): Zaith Lopez

Calvert Casey and My Ethnographic Simulation

In the novella "Notas de un simulador" (1969), the Cuban writer Calvert Casey portrays the life of a bureaucrat obsessed with watching people die. Casey's brief corpus—this novella and sixteen short stories—queers predominant conventions of his time by estranging form and content. Literary critics have likened Casey's characters to the author's bilingualism, noting that his switch between Spanish and English evokes a sense of foreignness, an in-betweenness that linguistic registers fail to convey. In this paper, I reflect on Casey's queer storytelling as a means to interpret what I call "ethnographic simulation." Drawing from my experience as a Spanish-English interpreter for immigration lawyers and asylum seekers, I reflect on my roles as an ethnographer and former bureaucrat in Ecuador, alongside Casey's simulator and his writing self. In my work, living between languages refers not only to the phenomenological task of recounting testimonies of violence in English and Spanish—both in the first person—to experts and immigrants, but also to my role witnessing and participating in the injurious process by which asylum seekers' accounts are transformed into legal language. I conclude the paper by posing questions about simulation through a close reading of my epistolary exchange with Ada, an Ecuadorian asylum seeker. Together, we freely explore our relationship with fear and engage in imaginary arguments with "La Ley," an anthropomorphized representation of the law.

Presenter(s): Valentina Ramia

7380 Queer Hauntings: Ghostly Affects of/for Queer Times

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Sexual and gender diverse communities are haunted by the futures and presents that might have

been and by pasts that refuse to remain in the past. This capacity for haunting is often tied to the legacies of the AIDS crisis (Hammons 2021; Møller and Ledin 2021; Muñoz 2019) and chattel slavery (Spillers 1987). We contend that these are but two of many specters haunting queer bodies. The scars of gender affirming surgeries (Malatino 2020), suppressed histories of personal and historical knowledge (Johnson 2005; Namaste 2000), the queer necropolitics of the present (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco 2015), futures and presents of Black thriving lived and impressed into the past and the now (Allen 2022), records of legal gender marker changes (Currah 2022; Preciado 2020), the afterlives of slavery and its wake (Hartman 1997; Sharpe 2016; Snorton 2017) and the legacies of colonially- imposed gender norms in (post and not-post) colonial contexts (Gill 2018; Saria 2021; Tinsley 2018; Pyle 2019); each speak to queer encounters with ghosts and revenants at vastly disparate scales of time. Such affective intrusions of the past upon the present (Brennan 2004; Chen 2012; Stewart 2011) provoke us to consider how queer life is ontologically (hauntologically) affected and by what projects. In the most haunted city in America at a time when history for queer people seems to be turning back upon itself through the global rise of the far right, what can a queer hauntology offer to anthropology and to queer communities? Thinking with a queer of color critique (Ferguson 2003), our panel focuses on these queer hauntologies as they arise in communities across the globe from North American gender clinics to the Peruvian Andes and Irish cities. We ask: how are histories of colonialism and extraction made hauntologically present in contemporary queer contexts? What are we to make of these hauntings and their palimpsestic returns? Are such hauntings inherently negative or do they bring us closer to a network of queer ancestors across time and space? If queerness is haunted by the past, can it also be haunted from the future? Whose future is at hand when reckoning the timelines of pasts, presents, and yet-to- comes?

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Kit Mitchell, McGill University, Department of Anthropology, SJ Dillon, Emory University

Chair: Kit Mitchell, McGill University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sergio Papa Ruark, AQA Section of AAA, Milo Murphy, Emory University, Christopher Zraunig, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Paula Martin, University of Chicago, Kit Mitchell, McGill University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: SJ Dillon, Emory University

Presentation(s): Two-Spirit

Indigenous dancers aim to transmit multiple feelings to their audience while performing cultural dances. However, few studies explore how contemporary Indigenous people tell stories through nonverbal language to communicate feelings of strength, healing, and resilience. After attending the Two Spirit Gathering in Montana, I learned about the various roles of the Two Spirit people. I now realize that being a keeper of tradition is essential for my Two Spirit identity. The project integrates Indigenous identity into the dance to decolonize binary or Western-based influences. Using performance as the healing process for myself and the community allowed me to overcome generational trauma. Collaboration, an Andean value, was used to engage with family and the local community. This project revealed that stories of gender expression survived in Native American and

Indigenous cultural performances. The journey shares how gender expression in Andean dances may contribute to reducing social stigma and prejudice faced by Indigenous and Two Spirit people.

Presenter(s): Sergio Papa Ruark

Haunted Embodiments: Disability, Gender, and Medical Authority in the Making of Trans* Identities

In this presentation, I argue that the fantasy of an idealized, "normal" (that is, non-disabled) body haunts our ways of knowing gender and, more presciently, our experience of a gendered self. I build from Rosemarie Garland Thomson's theorization of disability as inherently feminized and feminizing to consider disability as, even further, "intersexing," "ungendering," or "trans-ing" the subject. I first consider the production of a stable sex-gender binary through the haunting specters of ableist as well as racialized norms and cultural fantasies of visible and naturalized bodily difference. I then draw a number of parallels between discourses of trans*ness and discourses of disability, including the drive to "save" children by eliminating the condition (of queer/transness or of disability); the anxious cultural fantasy of self-evident difference; and the reliance on medical authority to know and to define the "truth" of identity. I then consider a number of parallels between discourses of disability and transgender "realness," both of which are overdetermined by the imagined self-evidence and visibility of the category (trans* or disabled) and, when that self-evidence is in doubt, by medico-legal authority. Finally, I provide an inroad for considering how medicalized and disabled embodiment and experience haunt our gendered subjectivities and identities, drawing on the works of intersex theorists such as Hil Malatino as well as my own such "hauntings."

Presenter(s): Milo Murphy

The Stickiness of Touch: Intimate Labor in German Geriatric Care Homes

Sexual assistance and sexual surrogacy blur the boundaries between sex work and care in Berlin's geriatric care facilities—neither fully institutionalized nor entirely disavowed. This paper explores how such forms of intimate labor inhabit a liminal space where aging, desire, and care converge yet remain haunted by the sticky norms that constitute professional touch in geriatric spaces. These norms adhere to bodies and relations, shaping which forms of touch and pleasure are expressible and which remain deferred or disavowed. While often framed as enabling dignity and autonomy, sexual assistance also bears traces of extraction—especially from feminized, racialized, and precarious bodies. These tensions rarely surface as direct confrontations but more often as lingering hauntings—in the institutional silence around sex work, in the unease of naming desire, in boundaries that never fully hold. Yet rather than simply extending rights or recognition, these practices become sites of queer utopian tinkering—fleeting, relational efforts to imagine care otherwise. Drawing on feminist notions of care as situated practice (Mol et al. 2010) and theorizations of queer futurity (Muñoz 2009), this paper argues that sexual assistance opens space for alternative futures: fragile, affectively charged, and sustained in the labor of those who continue to imagine care beyond the hauntings of institutional respectability and prevalent sexual morality in geriatric care spaces.

Presenter(s): Christopher Zraunig

Ghosts of Straight Futures

This paper considers how trans youth become haunted by their own possible futures. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among young people and providers of medical gender affirming care, I describe how the process of negotiating medical intervention often invokes the spectre of the future adult self who "regrets," a ghost primarily drawn from the fear and anxieties of parents and adults who preemptively mourn the loss of a young person's normative future as they see it. I argue that this form of haunting is particularly meaningful in the United States in the contemporary political moment, when medical care for trans youth is being restricted and banned nationwide. While the legacy of research on "desistance" continues to over-determine the legitimacy of statistics on transition, providing weight to historical fantasies where youth willingly came to embrace their cisgender future with the right pressures, the turn toward the future enables a more fantastical charge of harm. In other words, such a dynamic is used as a model to cultivate an affective logic which pits the desires of youth against the imagined past desires of their future self; a ghost whose political presence, in the present, is taken so often as more real and meaningful than any current, material position a young person holds.

Presenter(s): Paula Martin

An Inventory of Ghosts: Haunting, obligations, and ancestors in the Irish Queer Archive

Haunting is not always a negative experience. In this paper I utilize both the materials in the Irish Queer Archive and my own reflections on the process of working with them to theorize different forms of queer haunting: the gaps in knowledge and memory left by a generation lost to AIDS and emigration, the past predictions of futures that could not be realized, and the ghostly vestiges that mark sites of queer sociality in Dublin. Guided by both ethnographic approaches to the archive (Dave 2012, Stoler 2010) and archaeological literature on heart-centered methodologies (Supernant et. al. 2020), I argue that haunting can be a productive way to connect with the historical dimensions of our field sites and to consider how the past remains contained within the present conditions we arrive to find in the field. Moreover, I contend that haunting makes present our ethical obligations to these histories, and allows us to consider what we owe not just to our interlocutors on the ground now but also to those whose work precedes us.

Presenter(s): Kit Mitchell

Discussion

4105 Presidential Panel: Emerging Scholar Reflections from the Concha Delgado-Gaitán Fellows

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Conversation/Debate

This conversation brings together the 2024 Concha Delgado-Gaitán Presidential Fellows, awarded by the Council on Anthropology and Education, to reflect on our experiences in the program and

share our perspective on the legacies, present, and futures of the field of educational anthropology. This year's AAA theme invites us to consider the ghosts that haunt our field: the foundational texts that we take up and critique, the institutional structures that scaffold and constrain the production of knowledge, the ethical dilemmas we inherit and work through, the educational inequalities that persist and have been intensified despite decades of activism and scholarship. Our interdisciplinary research interests range from land-based pedagogy and critical language studies to educational policy and international education, but is united by an ethos of contributing to the movement toward social justice for the communities we work with and are accountable to: Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee communities on Turtle Island and across the Global South. Yet we are entering positions of academic power at a time where these/our communities are facing criminalization, persecution, and genocide, and where there is unprecedented repression against professors whose work engages such enduring critical questions, with consequences ranging from censorship to firing to abductions to physical violence. We find ourselves grappling with how to honor the spirits of our intellectual pasts, build and resist alongside the mentors of our present, and make space for new, liberated futures to develop. What does mentorship look like when it is conceptualized as more than professional development but as a negotiation of remembrance and reconstruction of the field? How do we mentor each other and our students in ways that honor our training while also opening fissures through which alternative epistemologies can emerge? How do we manage the balance of action and safety as we position ourselves in the fight against political and ideological attacks on our students, colleagues, and institutions? In the spirit of Concha Delgado-Gaitán's legacy of impact on social justice research and activism, we will use this conversation with each other and our senior colleague, Denni Blum, to reflect on the importance of sustaining multi-generational scholarly communities through efforts such as this fellowship, especially as our collective repression intensifies.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Anthony Harb, University of California, San Diego

Presenter(s): David E. K. Smith, University of Idaho, Kelsey A. Dalrymple, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Sophia Ángeles, Pennsylvania State University, Anthony Harb, University of California, San Diego

Discussant: Denni Blum, Oklahoma State University

3855 Haunted by the Play Spirit: A Roundtable on Games in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Games have seen a resurgence in anthropology from #AnthropologyCon from 2017-2019, to the establishment of the International Network of Sport Anthropology in 2023, followed in 2024 with the founding of the AnthroPlay network and their inaugural conference focused specifically on anthropological modes of play, and particularly playful ways of exploring anthropology. Inspired by this energy, this executive roundtable session brings together anthropologists to talk about the

importance of games in how the immaterial ghosts of culture become tangible through the medium of play. Nicholas J. Mizer (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), Fiona P. McDonald (University of British Columbia), Krista Harper (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Andre Tarleton (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Elliot Wiseman (CUNY), Zihan Feng (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), Kellyn Wee (University College London), and Tom Boellstorff (University of California, Irvine) open a timely conversation on what it means to be haunted by the "play spirit" (Huizinga 1949, Graber 2014) when conducting ethnographies of games, utilizing games and play as research method, thinking with games as ethnographic communication, engaging with games as pedagogy, and deploying games in applied contexts as social change agents. In recent years, new considerations of Dutch Historian Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* have drawn attention to a ghost of anthropology's past for the ways that anthropologists have overlooked his claims that play stands at the origin of human culture (Szokolczai 2012), and that play scholars' formalist definitions of play have missed Huizinga's phenomenological investigation of the play spirit as a force that animates human behavior (McDonald 2019). Because play is not limited to humanity (Bateson 1973), the play spirit (and spirit of play) also connects the human and non-human in ways that also give affordances to address the environment, community, political imagination, queer identities, and world-making. This roundtable considers games as modes, texts, and methods from telling ghost stories, to interactive tabletop games, to digital gaming, to revisiting the concept of deep play (Geertz 1973), to metacommunication (Bateson 1973), and play spirit. This roundtable creates a "magic circle" in which to unpack the praxis of games that illuminates current discourse around the multimodal (Collins et al 2017, Collins & Durlington 2024; Fariás and Críado 2024) where games of collective imagination open up new possible futures (Benjamin 2024), but recognizing that play does not automatically mean good things, especially amidst the dark games of empire, capital, and anti-Black Racism (Trammell 2023).

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Fiona P. McDonald, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Presenter(s): Tom Boellstorff, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Zihan Feng, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Krista Harper, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Fiona P. McDonald, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Andre Tarleton, Elliott Wiseman, Kellynn Wee

Discussant: Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

2545 The Specters and Continuing Legacies of Mesoamerican Anthropology's Forebearers

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropological knowledge of Mesoamerica has been shaped by internal and external influences that predate and continue after the arrival of Spanish colonizers. Surviving Maya, Aztec and Mixtec

codices, the Popol Vuh, and archaeological sites provide insight into complex and sophisticated civilizations. Even contested European accounts of these cultures – e.g., Bernardino de Sahagun's Florentine Codex and Spanish conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* – have enriched ethnohistorical and adjacent disciplinary scholarship of central Mexico. In subsequent centuries, detailed drawings by Frederick Catherwood's and John Lloyd drew attention to the Yucatec Maya region, while French politician Charles Brasseur de Bourbourg described his impressions of southern Mexico and Guatemala. These portrayals complement the pioneering archaeological explorations of Franz Boas' students Manuel Gamio and Alfonso Caso, and the influential research of 20th century ethnographers employed by prestigious research institutes such as Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). Similarly, early Guatemalan anthropologists like Antonio Goubaud Carrera and Joaquín Noval helped reshape national attitudes about Mayas and forge fruitful collaborations with Mexican, European and U.S. anthropologists via the Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala. The profound legacy of these and other luminaries too numerous to name here cannot be overstated.

In keeping with the conference theme, participants in this roundtable pay homage to the early scholarship of this culturally and linguistically diverse region whose lasting impact on the discipline and allied fields continues to influence our research. Each panelist outlines the ongoing legacies of a particular notable Mesoamerican or Mesoamericanist anthropologist. Ana Ortiz discusses Alfred López Austin's influential research on Nahua mythology and cosmovision. Sarah Taylor focuses on the legacy of Robert Redfield's watershed analysis of rural life in the Yucatán Peninsula. Jayne Howell remembers Beverly Chiñas' feminist ethnography of Isthmus Zapotecs and Pedro Carrasco who encouraged her to read it. Miguel Vassallo is inspired by Robert Carmack's monumental ethnohistoric research on the Quiche Maya. Walter Little recognizes Sol Tax's and June Nash's respective seminal research on Maya identity and economics in Guatemala and Mexico. Discussants Bill Wood and Ken Seligson contextualize these talks relative to Michael Kearney's and William Ringle's enduring legacies in this region, including the relationship between Mesoamerican ethnography, ethnohistory and archaeology.

We welcome open discussion of the debt we owe the "ghosts" of anthropologists past who have shaped current scholarship within and beyond Mesoamerica.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Jayne Howell, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Walter Little, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Walter Little, SUNY, University at Albany, Department of Anthropology, Jayne Howell, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Ana Ortiz Sanchez Renero, Miguel Mauricio Vassallo Rodriguez

Discussant: Ken Seligson, W Warner Wood, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

1938 Political Life in the Middle East across the Revolution or Reformation of Tradition

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Are traditions to be preserved, reformed, or overturned? Papers in this panel explore the intersection of traditions, social change, and political transformation across the contemporary Middle East. While revolution and reform name distinct and often counterposed political processes, the discourses and practices surrounding them often produce shared effects—scattering, reorganizing, superseding, and transforming traditions. This convergence makes it worthwhile to consider their resonances and dissonances together. Such dynamics offer rich empirical sites for examining temporal assumptions that link the past, present, and future in varying ways, often articulated through notions of ghosts and hauntings, such as the specters of communism, Baathism, and the Ottoman Caliphate. Key questions to be explored by this panel include: 1) How do people inherit or take up traditions in times of political uncertainty and social change? 2) What are the structures of debates on traditions animated in times of revolution and reform? 3) What temporal assumptions about the past, present, and future emerge in the reconfiguration of traditions through revolution and reform?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Myungji Lee, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Aaron Eldridge, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Basit Iqbal, McMaster University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Erin Atwell, Bard College, Naïma Bouras, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Aaron Eldridge, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Brent Eng, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Myungji Lee, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Amira Mittermaier, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Atheism, Extremism, and the Specter of Doubt in Contemporary Egypt

In his 2014 review of *Ethnographies of Doubt* (2013), Martin Frederiksen offers the provocation that anthropological studies of doubt often focus on believers. In his view, if focused on "agnostics or even atheists," a "more perpetual" form of doubt may emerge. This paper explores the perception among religious leaders at Egypt's al-Azhar that it is precisely this "perpetual" form of doubt that makes atheism a rising, alarming threat. Whereas atheism is often framed as a rejection of belief, in this context it emerges instead as a sneaking uncertainty. What does the movement to atheism entail, and in what ways do those at al-Azhar position themselves as guarding against it?

Ethnographically, answering this question involves complicating common understandings of extremism to apprehend how my interlocutors consider atheism a form of extremism that threatens Egypt's societal telos. In this context, discussions of "the two poles of extremism" are common, with workshops, film viewings, and lectures organized to interrogate the poles. Exploring these

programs and the responses to them by diverse Egyptians, I examine how my interlocutors understand the term extremism, under what circumstances atheism takes on such associations, and the roles of doubt and uncertainty in their construction. Beyond providing insights into an increasingly powerful movement in Egypt, this work seeks to sharpen scholarly understandings of faith and doubt, and the movement from one to the other.

Presenter(s): Erin Atwell

Haunted by the Past: Salafi Women, Zār Rituals, and the Ghosts of Family Tradition

Salafism is often framed as a rupture from local cultural and familial traditions, enforcing a strict doctrinal framework that rejects pre-Islamic and "superstitious" practices. Yet, during my fieldwork, I observed a striking contradiction: some Salafi women in Egypt continue to attend Zār rituals, a spirit-possession ceremony explicitly condemned by Salafi scholars. This paper explores how these women navigate the tension between their ideological commitment to Salafism and the ghosts of their past—the lingering presence of family traditions, inherited memories, and the weight of social belonging. Engaging with this year's AAA theme of ghosts, I argue that Salafi converts are haunted by the very past they seek to leave behind. The specters of family and cultural heritage intrude upon their efforts to conform to a purified religious doctrine, creating both resonances and dissonances—between belief and practice, between religious reform and the persistence of ritual. Their attendance at Zār ceremonies reveals that traditions are never entirely erased but continue to resurface, reshaped, and reinterpreted. This paper examines how these women negotiate the contradictions between the spectral pull of their inherited worlds and the demands of their chosen faith, offering insights into the unsettling endurance of "forbidden" practices within contemporary Salafi communities.

Presenter(s): Naïma Bouras

Inheriting Failure: Thinking Tradition and Revolution from Lebanon

This presentation sets out from some remarks made by Lebanese Marxist theorist Mahdi Amil (1936-1987) in his posthumously published writings on revolution and religious tradition. Writing near the end of Lebanon's fifteen-year conflict (1975-1990) and during the consolidation of Islamist militias and the waning of his own Lebanese Communist Party, Amil averred a "hidden" connection between Islamic Sufism and "materialist thinking." Specifically, Amil argued that it was Sufism that bore the "failure" of a revolutionary movement, the crystallization of a negating force vis-à-vis the seemingly eternal "law" of this world. Inheriting the specter of Sufism's failure thus becomes inheritance of *naqđ*, the negation of a prevailing order, as a materially existing force—a real movement. This presentation, in a time of war, genocide, and revolution in the Mashriq, asks what it means for anthropological thinking to attend to the real movement of contradiction.

Presenter(s): Aaron Eldridge

The Struggle for Images

This paper elaborates on the Syrian anonymous film collective Abounaddara's film *The Iimagemaker* [2024] and the accompanying essay "Waiting for Resurrection," using them as guides to develop a way of looking anthropologically at the symbolic function of political authority. By 'symbolic function,' I mean the logic of images and the way they give shape to the world, following the lead of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer. The paper, following Abounaddara's path, then moves from the work of the contemporary film collective to the 12th century Islamic thinker Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, the philosopher of light, before ending with some brief reflections on the present via one of the intellectual founders of the Syrian Baʿth Party, Michel ʿAflaq. At the paper's core, it explores the struggle for images as a part of an always ongoing struggle of images as narrated through the history of Syria in relation to political power amidst times of revolution and reform in the Levant.

Presenter(s): Brent Eng

The Gendered Reform of the State Fatwa in Turkey's Authoritarian Trajectories

This paper examines the reform of the Turkish state fatwa through the creation of the "Family Bureau." This reform has institutionalized state-appointed women preachers as gendered state agents since the early 2000s. Drawing on ethnographic research and interviews, I analyze how the reform's architects framed the "needs" of observant Sunni Muslim women in light of their experiences under authoritarian secularism imposed by repeated military interventions. While initially rooted in situated and gendered memories of this political violence, the notion of "needs" has since transformed into a flexible, dehistoricized, and de-gendered placeholder within bureaucracy. I argue that this transformation has been crucial for the notion to continue to structure the everyday work of state women preachers under the current Justice and Development Party regime. To analyze the (de-)gendering and (de-)abstraction of these "needs," I draw on theories of translation as a process of discursive repetition that simultaneously preserves and transforms social meaning. In so doing, this paper contributes to debates on bureaucratization and its impact on religious life, questioning whether bureaucracy inevitably leads to standardization and the erasure of human differences. The paper situates these dynamics within the broader study of commensuration as a social process and the shifting effects of state power.

Presenter(s): Myungji Lee

Discussion

508 Association of Political and Legal Anthropology Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Shikhar Goel, New York University, Tuba Akin , Delal Aydin, Geneva Graduate Institute, Muhammad Bilal Ali, Cadet College Hasanabdal, Sertac Sen, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Nazli Ozkan

Presenter(s): Shikhar Goel, New York University, Tuba Akin, Delal Aydin, Geneva Graduate Institute,

Muhammad Bilal Ali, Cadet College Hasanabdal, Sertac Sen, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Nazli Ozkan

Presentation(s): Cyber Crimes, Paper Law: Ethnography of a Cyber-Station in India

In the last decade, India has seen a dramatic rise in cybercrime, with cases reported across the country increasing at an alarming rate. In 2019, an average of just 71 cybercrime complaints were filed each day. In 2024, that number had soared to 6,175 daily complaints, an astonishing 87-fold increase. The Ministry of Home Affairs informed India's parliament that, by August 2024, India's national cybercrime reporting helpline, '1930,' had received around 760,000 complaints. Additionally, The Economic Times reported that in just the first four months of 2024, Indians lost 17.5 billion rupees to cyber fraud. Independent experts and senior police officers have publicly said that the actual figures might be around 10 times these official numbers as most crimes go unreported. To cope with this alarming situation, specialized police stations called "cyber-stations" have been set up in around 300 districts with a mandate to investigate crimes committed via the internet. Most police ethnography in India and across the world has focused on studying the public interface of citizen-police interactions in various permutations and combinations. The pre-trial investigative and clerical processes of the police force remain an under-examined area in the anthropology of law and policing. This paper addresses this methodological challenge by opening the black box of a station and ethnographically studying the internal processes of a cyber-police station in a semi-urban, Hindi-speaking district in North India. While studying these internal processes in the highly technologized environment of a cyber-police station, representing the cutting-edge law enforcement frontier of an increasingly digitalizing India, this paper explores the dialectic between law and technology. On the one hand, it demonstrates how the use of advanced computing and communication technology has radically transformed the investigative methods of the police in India by massively increasing the surveillance capacities of local law enforcement. On the other hand, by granularly zooming in on the clerical tricks, narratological techniques, legal codes, and protocols involved in the construction of police case files for the courts, this paper argues that this technological innovation is constantly tamed and domesticated by the older paper-based regime of law. Lastly, by studying the police force navigating dual registers of digital and paper simultaneously, at a time when law enforcement institutions in India are rapidly integrating digital media technologies into their everyday work practices, this paper utilizes this unique time window to reflect on the tensions and dilemmas that arise when bureaucratic institutions change their means of information production.

Presenter(s): Shikhar Goel

HAUNTINGS OF RACELESSNESS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL VIOLENCE AND ROMA

POLITICAL AGENCY IN TURKEY

The Turkish state has historically framed marginalized communities, including the Roma, through top-down categorizations that reinforced its nation-state-building project, strategically denying them agency over their (re)presentation and decision-making processes. This paper interrogates

the epistemological violence embedded in such frameworks by employing the concept of hauntings to analyze how suppressed histories and unresolved power dynamics persist in shaping present-day narratives. For example, liberal historical narratives obscure the colonial and racialized structures that marginalize Roma communities, influencing how their identities and agency are framed. By invoking hauntings, I reveal how the erasure of race and coloniality in discourses of social science in Turkey continues to shape Roma lives and their political possibilities. These hauntings expose the contradictions within liberal narratives that perpetuate the myth of racelessness (Rucker-Chang and West Ohueri, 2021), obscuring the racialized dynamics underpinning Roma marginalization. While Rucker-Chang and West Ohueri critique the rejection of race in Central and Eastern Europe, I extend their analysis to Turkey, where race is similarly disavowed in understanding marginalization. However, the Turkish context introduces unique dynamics: Roma communities are positioned as both a denigrated, racialized minority and a "model minority," often contrasted with securitized groups like the Kurds. I argue that this dual positionality reflects the Turkish state's strategic use of race-making to manage populations, simultaneously deploying inclusionary rhetoric and exclusionary practices. Poverty discourses and "social pathology" frameworks depoliticize Roma struggles while reinforcing their racialization. This paper examines how the myth of racelessness operates in Turkish social science knowledge production, particularly in studies on Roma communities, by rethinking my own academic experiences. Social science disciplines, including sociology, political science, and social work, serve as key sites for reproducing racelessness, often aligning with state projects that prioritize national unity while denying racial and colonial frameworks. These disciplines shape marginalized groups as political entities, social categories, or subjects of intervention, reinforcing epistemological violence. By analyzing social science studies, I explore how these fields collectively obscure race-making processes and sustain racelessness in Turkey, reducing Roma to socioeconomic actors divorced from histories of racialization and coloniality.

Presenter(s): Tuba Akin

Hevalti and the Politics of Intimacy: Friendship as a Foundation of Contemporary Kurdish Mobilization

This presentation explores the concept of hevalti (friendship/comradeship) and its critical role in the contemporary Kurdish political movement, based on ethnographic field research in Diyarbakir, Turkey's most populated Kurdish city. By focusing on Kurdish young revolutionaries, the paper examines how hevalti serves as both an intimate bond and a political force, shaping collective identity, solidarity, and resistance. Rather than seeing political mobilization as purely an ideological or strategic endeavor, I argue that hevalti forms the emotional and relational foundation of Kurdish resistance movements, fostering solidarity through personal and collective ties.

Approaching hevalti as a form of political intimacy, this study positions friendship as a dynamic and empowering practice that transcends individual relationships to sustain collective political mobilization. This paper is informed by ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Diyarbakir, where I engaged with Kurdish youth involved in the Kurdish political movement in the 1990s. Through

interviews with former Ziya Gokalp High School students, a key site of Kurdish youth mobilization, and archival research, I investigate how hevalti enables the formation of solidarity networks that defy state repression and marginalization.

The contribution of this paper lies in its examination of hevalti as an intimate yet political practice, revealing how personal bonds and friendships are central in shaping Kurdish political identity and resistance. By exploring hevalti's role in the formation of political subjectivities, this paper underscores the significance of relational and emotional dimensions in the ongoing Kurdish struggle for justice, autonomy, and recognition.

Presenter(s): Delal Aydin

History And Role Of A Feudal Regime In Neighboring Districts: A Case Study Of Sargodha, Jhang And Chiniot

Feudalism refers to a dynamic socio-political and economic system in which possession of land is the driving force behind power or authority, with a hierarchical framework. This research highlights the fact that feudalism still continues to exert its control over rural populated districts of Sargodha, Jhang and Chiniot (Pakistan) despite of democratic functional order. This paper examines how feudalism, specifically in the form of lambardara nizam (Feudal regime) in these districts, continues to persist and influence the governance. With the help of qualitative analysis, the research truly depicts the essence of feudalism in these regions and how tradition is in transition. Despite this fact, feudalism poses to be resilient highlighting the weak institutional apparatus which can be seen as a limitation of democratic governance in Pakistan. Taking into account these dynamics, this research demands influential reforms and strong governance to ensure an inclusive system.

Presenter(s): Muhammad Bilal Ali

Infrastructural Uncanny: War Preparedness and Development in Turkey

How do competing political projections, economic motives, and security rationales inform infrastructural policies? How do state actors project infrastructural imaginations into the future when the present is under duress? This article explores these questions by looking at infrastructural development in Turkey through multi-sited archival research and fieldwork. Based on evidence from the late Ottoman period to the early Cold War, it claims that infrastructures are ambivalent and can take on uncanny qualities, particularly in moments of crisis and liminal spaces. It also argues that state actors may seek to implement highly curated forms of infrastructural posturing rather than indiscriminately project infrastructural power across the national space, in recognition of the modern predicament that the infrastructures undergirding our daily lives can also unravel them. It mobilizes the term tactical development to delineate the Turkish response to this dilemma and its lasting consequences, particularly in borderland areas. Finally, the article focuses on the question of infrastructural ideology, demonstrating the importance of identifying how various actors distinguish between different infrastructures, weigh their utility against costs and risks, rank their benefits, and propagate beliefs about what infrastructure is ultimately good for. It argues that we

must take the question of infrastructural ideology seriously to understand the making of infrastructural presents and their long-lasting legacies.

Presenter(s): Sertac Sen

Temporal Displacements and the Making of the Provocation Narrative: Alevis and Secularism in Turkey

This paper focuses on what I call the provocation narrative in Turkey—an enduring explanatory framework for religious discrimination against the Alevi religious minority. This narrative frames attacks and assaults on Alevis as the work of a handful of instigators, effectively obscuring the state-sponsored, structural marginalization the community has faced since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. I trace the emergence and evolution of this narrative from the 1940s to the present, focusing on three key historical moments that shaped it: early republican secularization policies (1923–1945), the transition to multi-party politics (beginning in 1947), and the rise of Marxist-communist activism in the 1970s. I use displacement as a framework to examine the relationship between past and present. My ethnographic research with oppositional journalists in İstanbul (2014–15) first brought the provocation narrative to light. However, it was only through archival ethnography that I uncovered its deeper connection to the early republican discourse of secular rupture. The link between Turkey's secular framework and the provocation narrative was not initially evident, as the term provocation was absent from public discourse during both the early republican era of secularization and the subsequent multiparty period. Instead, other terms—such as "discord," "incitement," "agitation," and "sham"—were commonly used. Provocation only entered public discourse in the 1970s, amid the rise of communist activism and anti-labor crackdowns. By tracing these discursive displacements over time, I will show how the provocation narrative misrepresents its own past as having originated in the 1970s. In so doing, I will highlight how the provocation narrative constructs a temporality that obscures its roots in Turkey's secularization, thereby concealing the state's role in the marginalization of Alevis—and how, like a ghost, this narrative continues to haunt the present, masking structural violence behind the uncanny appearance of spontaneous discord.

Presenter(s): Nazli Ozkan

3623 Unearthing Healthcare Ghosts: The Four Fields of Anthropology Confront Inequalities in Health and Healthcare

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology has long recognized the cultural and historical dimensions of health and healthcare. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, renewed attention to enduring legacies of inequality, structural violence, and systemic exclusion within global healthcare systems. These healthcare ghosts appear in many forms: inherited inequities; lingering distrust in biomedical institutions; and shadows of past pandemics haunting present-day realities. They also emerge in community-based

care, where traditional practices coexist-sometimes in harmony, sometimes in tension-with biomedical systems.

In this session, we propose that a four-fields approach offers critical insights into how healthcare is shaped by culture, language, biology, and the medical practices and beliefs of the past. Drawing from all four fields, our diverse group of scholars aims to unearth hidden histories, amplify marginalized voices, and explore healthcare's deep entanglement with historical and cultural contexts. The papers in this session collectively focus on metaphorical and material ghosts within healthcare landscapes, using a critical lens to reveal how history continues to shape health outcomes.

The papers in this session demonstrate the strength of this four-fields approach through ethnographically and temporally diverse studies, including: an exploration of how beliefs in witchcraft coexist with biomedical suspicion to shape healthcare access for the Awajún Indigenous community; groundbreaking work on vaccine knowledge and hesitancy among Hadzabe hunter-gatherers during COVID-19, which highlights barriers to health information and healthcare access; a theory-driven assessment of "the bioarchaeology of care," offering concrete steps toward more holistic interpretations of health and healing in the past; a linguistic analysis of Chinese government propaganda in Wuhan during the pandemic's early days, exploring how top-down healthcare messaging haunts local perceptions of trust and health; a historical archive study of pseudoscientific dietary interventions in turn-of-the-20th-century psychiatric hospitals, with implications for contemporary paradigms of health and diet; and an examination of how the ghosts of medical institutional violence can be reconciled by integrating anthropology and translational health science.

Together, these papers illustrate how a four-fields perspective enables deeper and more nuanced understandings of the persistent disparities in health and healthcare. By bringing together distinct yet complementary approaches, this session fosters critical engagement across subfields and disciplinary boundaries. In doing so, it opens space for collaborative research and invites new questions that address the complex, multifactorial roots of health inequality.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Miriam Kopels, San Diego State University, Department of Anthropology, Alecia Schrenk, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Chair: Alecia Schrenk, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Miriam Kopels, San Diego State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Paula Tallman, Amber Osterholt, University of Illinois, Chicago, Eric Shattuck, Florida State University, Department of Anthropology, Kathleen Stansbury, Alecia Schrenk, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, zizhen wang, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Christopher Lynn, University of Alabama

Presentation(s): Witchcraft and HIV: Sorcery, Suspicions, and Barriers to Healthcare Among the Awajún of the Peruvian Amazon

The Awajún are an Indigenous population primarily residing in the northern Peruvian Amazon. In this paper, I describe the medically pluralistic nature of healthcare in the study community, with attention to how historical changes and evolving beliefs in sorcery have compromised access to both traditional and biomedical healthcare. The data presented are derived from one year of ethnographic research conducted among the Awajún in 2013. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews (n = 42), I found that community members frequently attributed sickness to witchcraft. However, traditional healthcare was prohibitively expensive as local shamans were pushed out of Awajún communities by American Evangelicals over the last few decades. Additionally, a long history of exploitation by outsiders links to significant suspicion being expressed about the nurses working in the local healthcare post -- impeding access to biomedical care and preventative screenings. Thus, beliefs in sorcery and witchcraft in combination with suspicions of the health post created substantial barriers to accessing both biomedical and traditional care. The confluence of these dynamics is highly problematic, especially in regard to surging levels of HIV transmission among the Awajún. I conclude the paper by discussing recent research showing extremely high rates of HIV infections in Awajún communities and the urgent need to integrate anthropological insights into health promotion.

Presenter(s): Paula Tallman

The Anthropology of Translational Science: Reconciliation and Rebuilding Trust in Clinical Care

Clinical medicine has a sordid history of institutional violence – mistreating, misappropriating, and otherwise misusing the bodies, minds, and souls of under-recognized persons. Echoes of these misdeeds linger well into the present, affecting individual and community health, wellbeing, and joy. Translational science, the field of study that explores how to make the translational process (moving research from bench, to bedside, to clinical practice, and policy) more efficient and representative. Current translational science is primarily the purview of clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health professionals, with fewer social scientists engaged. The field is ripe for a new wave of holistic anthropological translational scientists with perspectives rooted in the past, present, and looking towards the future. We will explore how an anthropology of translational science can reconcile and rebuild trust in clinical medicine by incorporating community perspectives in clinical trials, public health, and policy recommendations.

Presenter(s): Amber Osterholt

"I don't know the good of it, but my children were vaccinated": Hadzabe vaccine hesitancy and the balance between biomedical access and mistrust

Vaccine hesitancy was identified as a key threat to global public health by the WHO before the COVID-19 pandemic and remains a critical area of research and intervention among Indigenous populations. This is particularly true for hunter-gatherers, whose mobile lifestyle compounds barriers like marginalization, medical mistrust, and limited vaccine knowledge. However, little is known about vaccine attitudes in these groups. This exploratory study investigated vaccine knowledge and perceived safety and efficacy among Hadzabe hunter-gatherers of Northern

Tanzania. Ninety-one adults (mean age = 39) in six bush camps were surveyed about their understanding of vaccines, safety, and efficacy. Half of participants reported not knowing what a vaccine is, while one-third described vaccines as protecting health or preventing disease. Many (32%) were unsure if vaccines are safe. Most (72%) agreed vaccines are important for children, though opinions varied for adults. No statistical differences between sexes were found. Measures of vaccine knowledge and acceptance among the Hadzabe lag behind the wider Tanzanian population, highlighting the need for greater communication about vaccines in a culturally appropriate manner. Such efforts are critical to protecting the health of an Indigenous, rural population undergoing increased market integration and greater biomedical access, to include a greater ability to vaccinate against disease, weighed against potential medical mistrust.

Presenter(s): Eric Shattuck

Co-author(s): Alyssa Crittenden

Feeding the institutional body: diet, discipline, and the specters of medical authority

During the Progressive Era, psychiatric treatment increasingly centered on somatic interventions for mental illness, including hydrotherapy and psychosurgery. However, beyond these direct medical interventions, patient diet emerged as a site of pathologization, surveillance, and therapeutic control. Institutionalized individuals were subjected to dietary regimens that reflected broader anxieties about health, morality, and social order, revealing the medicalization of food as both nourishment and discipline. This study examines archival records from psychiatric hospitals in Progressive Era California to explore how diet functioned as a form of medical intervention, reinforcing institutional authority and shaping patient identities. Using nonparametric statistics, we assess dietary restrictions among institutionalized patients in Northern California between 1900 and 1950, testing for differences across gender, age, diagnosis, and perceived severity of illness. These patterns reveal how the ghosts of mental-health pseudoscience continue to haunt contemporary understandings of food, health, and institutional power. Furthermore, by drawing on Foucauldian theory, we analyze the biocultural implications of diet within these controlled environments, tracing how food was weaponized in the regulation of bodies and minds.

Presenter(s): Kathleen Stansbury

Co-author(s): Jennifer Byrnes, Miriam Kopels

Deconstructing the Westernized Past: Bioarchaeology's Need for Non-Biomedical models in Healthcare

Bioarchaeological explorations of disease and healthcare have highlighted the dynamic connections between human behavior and health outcomes to reveal complex ways past peoples navigated illness, care, and survival. Standard practice for diagnosing disease from skeletal remains is rooted in Western medical traditions (biomedicine). While this approach has yielded valuable insights, it imposes a framework that often overlooks the cultural, ritual, spiritual, and mental dimensions of healthcare prior to the 20th century. Emerging bioarchaeological theories

challenge these limitations, prompting us to ask if we can – or should – integrate non-Western understandings of health and healing into our interpretations. While these new theories allow flexibility for non-biomedical frameworks, the underlying Western biomedical paradigms constrain scholars from fully exploring past healthcare outside of the biomedical model. As such, this is the perfect time to reflect on our Western foundations and galvanize the field around a more culturally inclusive, global bioarchaeology of health and healing. This presentation argues that integrating a four-fields approach strengthens bioarchaeology's ability to interpret past healthcare beyond a biomedical paradigm. By moving past the constraints of biomedicine, we can better reflect the holistic and culturally embedded practices surrounding health, healing, and care to challenge Western narratives of life in the past.

Presenter(s): Alecia Schrenk

Framing the Pandemic: A Data-Driven Linguistic Anthropological Analysis of Health Communication in Wuhan, China during the early days of COVID-19

The early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (December 2019–March 2020) in Wuhan, China presented critical challenges for health communication, public trust, and social stability. This study integrates linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis to explore how shifts in government messaging influenced public attitudes and behaviors during this pivotal period. Analyzing government press conferences, state media, and social media discussions, this research examines key terms like "战疫" ("war on the pandemic"), "英雄" ("hero"), and "谣言" ("rumor"). Findings suggest that as official rhetoric evolved from crisis management to a nationalistic "heroic resistance" narrative, public discourse shifted from skepticism to increased compliance, emotional resilience, and proactive health behaviors such as mask-wearing and voluntary isolation. By combining qualitative and computational methods, this study highlights the power of language in shaping public health responses. It underscores how historical and cultural contexts influence crisis communication, revealing the ghosts of past governance strategies that haunt present-day health outcomes. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader discussions on trust, systemic inequities, and the role of healthcare narratives in building a more equitable future.

Presenter(s): zizhen wang

Discussion

2435 Lenticular Perspectives of Diaspora and Empire

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In recent years, Western politicians, think tanks, and NGOs have re-channeled their efforts into "saving" Middle Eastern Christians, as violence against minoritized communities continues to rise in the wake of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Arab Spring, the war in Syria, the emergence of ISIS/Daesh, and ongoing conflicts over territorial sovereignty and self-determination

throughout the region. To the extent that Middle Eastern Christians have registered in Western political imaginaries at all, they are either invoked to justify military intervention, or as an exemption to anti-Muslim immigration policies, because of their putative kinship as Christians with the West. Moreover, in the Middle East, Christians have also been instrumentalized by authoritarian rulers and the state in the service of national unity politics. All the while, local inter-communal tensions and incidents of violence are either utilized or eschewed by those in power, further marginalizing such communities from political action and collective flourishing. In this context, permanent migration to Western countries and the rapid growth of diasporic communities have become an integral feature of transnational Middle Eastern Christian social, political, and religious life. Diaspora expansion has had devastating impacts on Muslim-Christian relations in the Middle East, as their instrumentalization grows by right-wing, conservative actors abroad. Yet, these minority migrant communities also face forms of racialization, exclusion, and securitization in the West that either glorifies their ancient and martyrical sacrifice or effaces the vitality of their distinctive forms of life. This complex paradox lies at the center of two recent books: *Sonic Icons: Relation, Recognition, and Revival in a Syriac World* (Fordham University Press) by Sarah Bakker Kellogg and *Martyrs and Migrants: Coptic Christians and the Persecution Politics of US Empire* (NYU Press) by Candace Lukasik. Both books are the first of their kind, utilizing multi-sited, ethnographic methods, historical anthropology, and conceptual work on the intersection of race and religion to think about pluralism and minority politics in and beyond the Middle East. This roundtable gathers together interdisciplinary scholars of migration, religion, race, and kinship to think through the shared political, social, and theological dynamics and stakes of these two texts, bringing to the foreground how such communities exemplify the transnational workings of empire through migration and exclusionary regimes of recognition.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Candace Lukasik, Mississippi State University

Presenter(s): Martijn de Koning , Michael Herzfeld , Sarah Bakker Kellogg, San Francisco State University, Candace Lukasik, Mississippi State University, Randeep Hothi

Discussant: Valentina Napolitano, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

5514 Coastal Land and Beach Politics: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures, and Critical Ethnographies

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This session examines the political, economic, social, and ecological stakes of coastal land as a historical space, shaped by competing imaginaries and claims. Across diverse coastal geographies, presenters explore the dynamics by which land and water along coasts and beaches are produced, structured, historicized, and contested over multiple scales, creating new material and symbolic realities that refract through histories of racial capitalism and environmental intervention.

As climate change accelerates sea level rise and intensifies storms, it exposes the fragility of shorelines and amplifies existing inequities, making critical, place-based ethnographic inquiry all the more urgent. What new political possibilities or constraints emerge in response to the emergency of climate change? What forms of resistance arise when public lands and beaches are closed off and made inaccessible? What new rationales, planning instruments, and discursive legitimation strategies are employed to hide the real economic and political stakes at play? By addressing these questions, this session aims to illuminate the forces shaping coastal land, its histories, and the futures imagined for it.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Sheehan Moore, Columbia University, Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center

Chair: Sheehan Moore, Columbia University

Presenter(s): Keisha-Khan Perry, University of Pennsylvania, Katherine McCaffrey, Montclair State University, Landon Yarrington, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology and Geography, Matilde Cordoba Azcarate, University of California, San Diego, Theo Hilton, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology, Adrian Cato

Discussant: Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center, Melissa Checker, CUNY - Queens College

Presentation(s): Ethnohistories of Struggle Against the Privatization of the Beach

Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1952-2021) gave us innumerable conceptual tools to understand the complexities of race, gender, and place. Her critical essay "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," first published in the 1990 *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural politics*, illustrates how the homeplace can represent spaces of oppression as well as liberation. In this paper, I narrate stories from coastal cities across the Americas to explore the neighborhoods where the cultural imagination and radical politics flourish even as the poor and people of color experience the brutality of white supremacist violence and spatial displacement. In hooks' formulation, the oppressed make home in inhospitable places, resist the gendered racial domination of space, and demand a sense of cultural and political belonging. I tell the stories of how social movement activists fight to keep beach lands as Black home spaces, where they have forged communities and survived amidst the violence for generations. I focus on localized struggles against the privatization of beach lands in Jamaica, Brazil, and the United States. Based on comparative ethnohistorical research, I examine Black communities' historical relationship to coastal lands, the emergence of women's political agency in fighting forced displacement, and demands for public access that recognizes expansive notions of culture, rights, and leisure.

Presenter(s): Keisha-Khan Perry

La Playas son del Pueblo: The Struggle for Puerto Rico's Coast

Puerto Rico's beaches are an ongoing focus of a multi-pronged fight for popular sovereignty and a sustainable future. On an island nation ringed by 800 miles of shore, community and environmental struggles over coastal resources in Puerto Rico are intensifying. The struggle over coastal resources, development, and access to the shore reveals the intersection of Puerto Rican history,

culture and political economy. The paper describes the historical understanding of Puerto Rico's coast and coastal resources which animates current clashes. A developmentalist approach post WWII, which envisioned the beach as a site of leisure, particularly for a foreign elite, stimulated the earliest protests against privatization of the beach in the 1960s. Then the paper highlights several ongoing battles over the beach that point to this arena as an ongoing site for competing views over Puerto Rico's sovereignty and future.

Presenter(s): Katherine McCaffrey

Haunting the High Ground: Structuring Climate Mitigation in a Coastal American Metropolis

This paper presents research on factors structuring the social order and access to housing in Norfolk, Virginia, a coastal American metropolis bisected and surrounded by waterways that are increasingly vulnerable to sea level rise and climate related flooding. We combine historical ethnography in archives of 20th-century city planners and housing activists with a database of contemporary housing permits filed in the city in the last five years for residential building projects associated with Norfolk's changing climate. We highlight the idea of hydrostatic pressure, ask how mitigation projects attempt to address it, and watch it develop as a discursive companion of climate change. Looking at these very different sources, we ask: who in Norfolk is mitigating risks to housing and where? Who can protect equity in houses? And, ultimately, how is the idea of climate change, lived in part as the experience of sea level rise, affecting ideas about housing, property values, and investment in mitigation?

Presenter(s): Landon Yarrington

Co-author(s): Jonna Yarrington

Cultural Repertoires and a Beach Dispute in Southern California

This paper explores some of the socio-political actions and coalitions that shrinking shorelines, beach erosion, and collapsing bluffs have been created for a beach town in Southern California. It builds on a local mediatic dispute over access to the beach and over rail tracks in the city of Del Mar to engage the beach as a political and politicized terrain where multiple constituencies with seemingly disparate interests come together. The Del Mar beach dispute is a case study in a preliminary effort to develop analytical tools to make sense of broader refusals to state infrastructural projects that might encroach the use of public space in the age of climate change. It proposes the concept of cultural repertoires, or the supply of skills, and devices, used by different social actors to enunciate and communicate competing views and demands on the beach as a physical, symbolic and affective social space. It discusses three different yet related cultural repertoires at play in Del Mar fencing dispute: (a) repertoires of cultural fixation, intended to secure the hegemonic white, enclosed, tourist beach of the status quo; (b) scientific repertoires, that monitor and predict cliff activity according to Western-centric tools such as metrics and projections aimed at climate mitigation; and (c) fugitive repertoires, that emerge broadly in Indigenous-led relational enunciations of water-stewardship.

Presenter(s): Matilde Cordoba Azcarate

A Gulf Divides Us - "America" Along Mississippi's Beachfront

On the first day of Donald Trump's second presidential term, he signed Executive Order 14172 "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness" and designating, for the first time, the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" in the parlance of the U.S. Federal Executive Branch. This revision would soon be taken up by other federal agencies, as well as corporations and NGOs. For many residents in Mississippi's Gulf-adjacent Harrison County, of whom 64 percent of active voters supported Trump in 2024, the move did not sit well. This paper will draw on critical ethnographic fieldwork along Harrison County's beaches to explore ways that residents' sense of place inflect with MAGAism's performative politics of the moment. While the Gulf's suggested renaming in some instances deepens existing political fissures, it also creates a space for new connections as diverse coastal residents attempt to preserve their homes. Myriad environmental, social, and economic crises carry on apace, each facing challenges for consensus about their nature—and very existence. As residents speak up to protect this place in large and small ways, what openings are created to negotiate these broader concerns?

Presenter(s): Theo Hilton

Troubling Tourism & Coastal Conservation of the Sea Islands

Island space as a precarious, ever changing, and fluid geographic formation remains an essential analytic from which to think through McKittrick's notion of Black livingness. The Sea Islands of coastal Georgia occupy multiple roles – living laboratories, pristine beach destinations for tourists, conservation land, and sites of deeply embedded Black ecologies. This condition is particularly poignant on the coastline where compounding issues of sea level rise, conservation priorities, and coastal gentrification generate a paradox – the white spatial imagination imagines futurity, but only amongst white lives. To be Black in the diaspora is to have deep spiritual and emotional connection to specific land and waters, while not being fully recognized as indigenous to space. This paper will focus on the context of the US Sea Islands where intersecting conditions of racial capitalism and climate change threaten the future recognition of Black communities as connected to place. It will discuss the implications of prioritizing conservation and tourist imaginaries of the post-plantation Georgia waterscape and the notions of Black livingness that emerge in the interstice.

Presenter(s): Adrian Cato

Discussion

1056 When The Dead Aren't Ghosts: The Ethical-Political Dimensions of Communicating with Spirits

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

The dead cannot be reduced to haunting; they are often animated and mobilized in future-oriented projects that aim at new life not by reproducing the past but by radically transforming it. These projects are often carried out in ritual interactions through which death and life are configured within and against each other. Just as people draw upon figures of the dead and revoice their sentiments to make political claims and evaluate their ethical entailments, so, in interacting with figures of the dead, do the living find themselves pressed to revoice concerns and explore political directions with surprising ethical dimensions. These directions and dimensions may turn out to offer novel perspectives and tools for investigating inequitable and exclusionary systems and processes-or, in some cases, may create inequities and exclusions of their own. In this session, participants consider the communicative and ethical demands that the dead and the living put on one another: how they talk to each other, what they demand of each other, and what happens when either dead or living fail to carry out the responsibilities expected by the other side. Conversations between living and dead are found in a diverse constellation of cross-cultural contexts, and participants in this roundtable aim to generate new scholarly discussion and analysis focused on enduring questions about how death reconfigures sociality: What communicative practices stimulate the political dimensions of mourning and remembrance? What role do traces and remains play in animating and agitating relations with the dead-and, conversely, what material forms do conversations between dead and living call new attention to? What happens when the dead are insistent in their demands or require ethical reorientations from the living that the living may be hesitant to accept? What temporalities do communications with and from the dead produce, how are physical and metaphysical worlds articulated across time, and what futures do these necro-chronotopes presage?

Session members include anthropologists with expertise on African diasporic spiritual and aesthetic practices that counter the necropolitics of misogyny and anti-Blackness; AI companions that serve to replicate deceased humans but are also said to die themselves when their companies go bankrupt; Spiritualist mediums who articulate visions of the astral plane as the site of our most intimate companions who, in death, mark their new existential distance in speaking distinctly and losing sense of time; secular humanists who work to articulate death's significance for living and dead alike without recourse to the sacred; and how people in Cambodia cope with life's difficulties, including but not limited to the effects of war and violence, by using music and sound to maintain relations of mutual care with the dead. Together in conversation, all participants explore emergent ethical-political dimensions of spirit communication.

Organizer: Matt Tomlinson, Australian National University, Kristina Wirtz, Western Michigan University

Presenter(s): Kristina Wirtz, Western Michigan University, Matthew Engelke, Columbia University, Jon Bialecki, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Jeffrey Dyer, Boston University, Matt Tomlinson, Australian National University

Discussant: Solimar Otero, Indiana University, Bloomington

3708 Queer emergent: Thinking with Justin Perez on queer worlds in transformation, ethnographic collaboration, and the ending of AIDS in Peru

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Justin Perez's *Queer Emergent: Scandalous Stories from the Twilight of AIDS in Peru* (Duke University Press, 2025) explores the transformations and contradictions gay and transgender communities in urban Amazonian Peru experience as the ambition to "end AIDS" unfurls across their lives. Amid entrenched forms of racism, pervasive homo- and transphobia, and everyday violences, Perez examines how gay and transgender communities respond to and subvert the impasses and predicaments brought about by shifting global priorities and new forms of HIV prevention. Through their transgressive, embellished, and "scandalous" stories, gay and transgender communities challenge both the underlying moral assumptions of "end of AIDS" triumphalism as well as imagine and inhabit emergent social worlds. This roundtable brings together experts in medical anthropology, queer anthropology, and the anthropology of Peru to discuss the conceptual contributions and ethnographic possibilities posed by *Queer Emergent*. Likewise, as we observe a changing socio-political landscape today marked by a withdrawal of support for community-based organizations that support marginalized and stigmatized groups like LGBTQ communities, and intensifying transphobia, we consider how *Queer Emergent* poses meaningful tools for analyzing the forces threatening to erode the meaningful progress made at mitigating vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS and imagining space for queer social worlds to thrive.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Natali Valdez, Fordham University

Presenter(s): Carina Heckert, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Carlos Martinez, University of California, Santa Cruz, Casey James Miller, Muhlenberg College, Florence Babb, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Cori Hayden, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Justin Perez, University of California, Santa Cruz

2434 Anthropology of White Supremacy Book Roundtable

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

White supremacy is not a ghost of the past—it is alive, moving through our institutions, shaping our economies, policing our borders, and dictating who lives and who dies. It is not just lingering; it is living. A number of contributors from the recently published book, *The Anthropology of White Supremacy* (Princeton University Press, 2024), gather in this roundtable to confront how white

supremacy continues to structure global politics, everyday life, and the very discipline of anthropology itself.

Our focus on anthropology of white supremacy began with a panel in 2016 and has since evolved into both a special issue of *American Anthropologist* and this recent volume. At the time, some critics dismissed the use of "white supremacy" as an outdated or anachronistic analytical framework. Nearly a decade later, however, few would deny that what we are witnessing in the United States is the culmination of a white supremacist mode of governance—one that operates through fascist and authoritarian means to revive a vision of white-settler empire that was never fully dismantled.

Drawing from research in Brazil, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, South Africa, and the United States, panelists reveal how white supremacy operates through finance, advertising, militarism, policing, migration, and development—not as a spectral remnant but as a present, on-going, embodied and systemic force. We ask: How do we reckon with white supremacy's continued animation? How does anthropology's own history make it complicit in sustaining this force? And what will it take, before it is too late, to bring another world into being?

Engaging the AAA's theme of Ghosts, this roundtable insists that the ghosts of white supremacy are not dead. They breathe through our institutions, speak through our media, and dictate our futures. To understand them is not enough; we must decide whether anthropology will continue to host them—or finally become a site of transformation and liberation.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Aisha Beliso-DeJesus, Princeton University, Jemima Pierre

Presenter(s): Michael Blakey, College of William & Mary, Shannon Speed, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Omolade Adunbi, University of Michigan, Anthony Jerry, University of California, Riverside, Britt Halvorson, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Junaid Rana, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sarah Ihmoud, College of the Holy Cross, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faye Harrison, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

8883 "Monsters, Devils, and Survival: The Persistence of Plantations and People in

the Scholarship of Pujo Semedi"

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together American scholars influenced by the impact and influence of Professor Pujo Semedi's scholarship on capitalist extraction and colonial afterlives. Pujo Semedi is

Professor of Anthropology at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Colorado Boulder during Fall 2025. His work interrogates the curious contemporary formations of plantation cultivation, a form of extraction designed under colonial conditions which has outlived that era. His individual and collaborative ethnographic research broadly analyzes the monstrosity of extraction and the sociality of survival over long historical periods and varied geographic settings. From oil palm plantations in Kalimantan and tea plantations in Java to vineyards in Germany, he broadly asks how forms of extraction which were designed to maximize accumulation at the cost of human sociality may in fact produce the inverse: financial loss and human survival. At the crux of these questions are the entangled fates of the human and the more-than-human. In addition to the timely nature of his analyses, his research also suits the annual theme and location of this year's annual meeting remarkably well. His research on the monstrous haunting that the plantation form generates, around the world, will dovetail well with the plantation legacies of the greater New Orleans area.

As a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Colorado, Professor Semedi is working closely with faculty and graduate students, generously sharing his scholarship with US scholars whose research on extraction and imperial formations benefit from his global and post-colonial expertise. Professor Semedi's expertise is urgently valuable in the current moment when political and economic imaginaries face crises of authority, legitimacy, and belonging. Professor Semedi's Fulbright status was approved in Fall 2024 but was stalled for several months in early 2025 while US foreign policy budgets were frozen. We received final approval for his fellowship two days after the April annual meeting submission deadline, thereby obliging us to fulfill our initial promise to Fulbright to host a session in his honor via the late-breaking submission process. Although Professor Semedi collaborates widely with scholars in Asia, Europe, and North America, this is his first visit and introduction to the US.

All proposed panelists are enthusiastic about engaging his work and his impact. The roundtable includes Professor Semedi as respondent, Jerry Jacka as chair, and six presenters, Carla Jones, and five advanced doctoral students in Anthropology at the University of Colorado: Kathleen Donlan, Yuxiang Lin, Jessica Misiorek, Chilton Tippin, and Sanggay Tashi.

Organizer: Carla Jones , Jerry Jacka, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Chilton Tippin , Sanggay Tashi , Katie Donlan, University of Colorado, Boulder, Yuxiang Lin, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Misiorek, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Carla Jones

Discussant: Pujo Semedi

3779 The Social Properties of Concrete

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Concrete is the most ubiquitous human-made building material in the world. What might be

learned about social life from thinking through the manifold ways that concrete is brought to bear on the world? What might be learned about concrete by understanding how social, political, and economic practices embed themselves in particular ways within the material? The recently published volume, *The Social Life of Concrete* (punctum books, 2025) considers these questions by developing conceptual insights from a range of globally situated case studies. Across its 40 chapters, the authors in the volume reveal concrete's local impacts, its global history, and its planetary reach. Read together, the book develops new insights into the materiality of infrastructures, modernization, democracy, settler colonialism, militarism, ecological transformation, and more. In this roundtable, the authors and editors of the book come together to explore the insights their work has developed and the questions the book has produced. We will debate our conceptual findings, explore their limits, and speculate about the material's future(s).

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Eli Elinoff, Victoria University of Wellington

Presenter(s): Lukas Ley, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Rachel Cypher, Jerome Whittington, New York University, Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Kali Rubaii, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

2709 Being "at Home": Constructing Belonging in Settled Worlds

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropological approaches have proven especially fruitful for understanding the ways in which home denotes more than a geographic site or physical structure. Home takes material and imaginative forms that are inhabited across multiple temporalities, or felt through daily routines and ties to family, culture, and community. Home appears as a locus of human kinship and multi-species relations, a microcosm of gendered labor divisions, and a form of affective or sensory experience. This panel moves toward more capacious definitions of "homemaking" and "placemaking" by exploring different processes of constructing and asserting a sense of belonging. It draws from our ongoing research in Africatown, Alabama; Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi; seabird nesting grounds on Kaua'i; the sertão of northeastern Brazil; and urban farmland in Seattle. We bring into conversation this range of sites to ask how communities inscribe themselves and their stories into particular landscapes, histories, and social worlds.

Placing focus on contexts of settler colonialism, racial inequality and exclusion, and structural violence, we consider how these conditions give rise to disparate—and often competing—spatial claims and constructions of home. As Ananya Roy (2017) describes, home takes form through practices of emplacement, or acts of occupation, habitation, and domesticity with the potential to challenge exploitative systems of property and precarious tenancy. In reflecting upon the broader political and ecological terrains that shape lived experiences of home, we look to Black and Indigenous communities' land reclamation, labor movements, environmental governance, cultural

resurgence, and heritage work to help us understand home as an expression of rootedness, relatedness, and resistance. How might these projects affirm belonging in ways that disrupt present structures of dispossession and disenfranchisement?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Amber Chong , Madison Aubey

Chair: Amber Chong , Madison Aubey

Presenter(s): Madison Aubey, Gabriel Silva Collins, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, Amber Chong, Yveline Saint Louis, Bethel S. Moges, University of California, Los Angeles

Discussant: Brienna Johnson-Morris, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Inherited Belonging: Cultural Heritage and Placemaking Counternarratives

Africatown, Alabama— a community founded by the captives of the last slave ship to reach US shores— is externally defined by its historical significance and cultural heritage. Tourists, documentarians, history buffs, and anthropologists alike flock to the community in hopes of meeting a descendant of those 110 captives, someone they might recognize from a Netflix or National Geographic documentary. These outsiders, myself included, arrive(d) in Africatown in search of some sort of 'Africanness' , an assumed heritage and identity ascribed historically and described by the likes of Zora Neale Hurston. Yet conversations with descendants and generational residents of Africatown reveal a much different story. One in which belonging hinges on things far removed from the confines of a ship hold, and memory focuses on traumas and triumphs far removed from slavery and emancipation. As an archaeologist, I approached the community in search of these traces of West African identity construction in the fabric of Africatown's modern identity, but as a Black feminist practitioner I was moved to adjust my research focus to better understand those things that arose through oral history and ethnographic observation, as most central to Africatown's identity construction both past and present. The inheritance of belonging, cultivated by a people cast off.

Presenter(s): Madison Aubey

Presentation(s): Seizing Home: Localizing MST and "Productivity" in the Brazilian Sertão

Over the past 40 years, Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, or MST) has become one of the world's largest land reform movements. Yet even as MST organizes land seizures involving hundreds of thousands of people, its nationwide project grows from countless small-scale agricultural encampments operating in highly local contexts. Specific encampments' local contexts encourage different understandings of "productivity," which is also a federal requirement for legalizing land seizures. I therefore examine MST encampments in northeastern Brazil's arid sertão: an ecologically distinct, rapidly desertifying, and perennially rebellious "backland" region that demands localized research. How do MST encampment residents in the sertão negotiate different conceptions of productivity—as understood through federal requirements, subsistence needs, and sociohistorical practices—while they attempt to legalize land

seizures? I examine the physical remains of these approaches to productivity, focusing on archaeobotanical traces from farming and the materiality of encampment homes. This research not only studies the material changes necessary in creating "successful" productivities for MST encampments, but also aims to better understand local ideas and practices of land productivity amongst those individuals who choose to seize land.

Presenter(s): Gabriel Silva Collins

“For Birds, Not You”: Multispecies Placemaking and Resistance to Settler Colonial Dispossession

The north shore of Kauaʻi is home to many of Hawaiʻi's endemic seabirds, including endangered or threatened species like the ʻaʻo (Newell's shearwater) and ʻuaʻu (Hawaiian petrel). With rising sea levels and other impacts of climate change jeopardizing major seabird colonies in the northwestern Hawaiian islands, the higher elevation cliffs along the north shore provide increasingly critical nesting grounds for species like the mōlī (Laysan albatross). Yet escalating rural gentrification in this region further threatens its seabird populations, as the construction of multi-million dollar oceanfront mansions continues to transform unique coastal ecosystems.

In this current wave of US settler colonial incursion, luxury real estate development encroaches upon vital seabird habitat while at the same time displacing Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) from their homes and communities. For many, remaining in the locale means navigating skyrocketing living costs and ever-eroding access to land, water, and resources. If the ongoing process of colonization induces experiences of dispossession among human and nonhuman residents alike, how might resistance, too, prove to be a multi-species affair? My ethnographic research at this site examines how encounters with seabirds figure into the notion of home as people mobilize to defend nesting grounds. In turn, I explore how interspecies relationships frame the struggle over who gets to call a place home.

Presenter(s): Amber Chong

The Soil is a Portal: Urban Agriculture as Insurgent Reclamation of Space and Power in Seattle

Across time and space, Black and Indigenous land relations encode intertwining narratives of ancestral memory, homemaking, and resistance to oppression. This project—woven through poetry, photographs, and collage—engages Black Feminist ecologies and Afrofuturist storytelling to trace how urban farmers in Seattle are tending to the soil as insurgent acts of placemaking and mutual aid. Here, farming is alchemy and a pathway towards rematriation; stewardship being a way to confront and disarm the enduring forces of settler-colonial displacement and erasure in the city. This work maps the mycelial networks created by local farmers and food sovereignty advocates, where the logics of land-and-water-as-capital are rejected. Within these spaces, people are creating new choreographies of care in response to state-sanctioned neglect of marginalized communities. The soil is indeed a portal; gateways to alternate "Seattles" where needs are met and surpassed. In these alternate universes land and waterways are stewarded collectively and the engine of capital accumulation made defunct. Through this project I seek to better understand how

urban farming in Seattle is simultaneously an act of ecological and communal repair and a proclamation of Black and Indigenous refusal to disappear.

Presenter(s): Yveline Saint Louis

Black and Native Feminisms toward Liberated Placemaking

Black and Native feminist literature, scholarship and activism attend to the ways communities manage structurally distinct formations based on their cosmologies and ontologies. Harris (1993) and Goeman (2009) explore how the concept of property connects race, gender, and land/space as similarly conceived objects of dis/possession. Black women, Black matriarchs and Black communities, in their agentic imaginations and performances of life beyond the limits of the white ideal, exemplify possibilities of sociality beyond the perversity of anti-Blackness. For Gilmore (2022), the normative concept of family remains contentious for Black freedom dreams; she instead locates potential in mutuality for "nonfatal power-difference couplings" (136). King (2018) finds cause for hope and radical, revolutionary Black relationality conceived beyond the narrow structure of Western family. In addition to feminist and ethno-sciences, Black and Indigenous spiritual formations bear transformative consequences on community formation. Black and Native feminisms prove science and knowledge, like space and time, are mutable; they can be employed toward injustice as well as toward our collective liberations. Here, I discuss the unboundedness and alterability of these feminisms. They show us that expanded realms of liberation will be gained in the present and future as they have been in the past: through communal interdependence.

Presenter(s): Bethel S. Moges

Discussion

1990 When the Past Collides with the Present: Historical Legacies, Cultural-Ecological Landscapes and the Spirit(s) of Resistance

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

When the past collides with the present, the immaterial shapes landscapes in tangible ways, and influences future aspirations. Colonialism, state formation, climate change, top-down development, land grabs, and deterritorialization and reterritorialization can impact livelihoods, coping strategies, rights, and ecological conditions, as well as future lives and incarnations. This panel explores the ways in which cultural-spiritual beliefs, norms and practices intersect with colonial and historical legacies and struggles over resources to become inscribed onto the landscape. Responses and expressions of power and knowledge concerning land and livelihood-making thus play out in the daily practices of human communities on registers both mundane and beyond the human. Papers in this panel explore the way the past haunts the present – how the ancestors, deities, spirits, and historical figures, legacies and policies in and across temporal and spatial contexts manifest in cultural practices, geographies, and relationalities. The panel

investigates, at the interface of development and indigenous knowledge, various modes of meaning-making, cultural-spiritual articulations, ontological frictions, contestations over and resistance to discourses, and representation. The spirit(s) of resistance take different forms, from the verbal to the non-verbal, the tangible to the intangible, from the human to the more than human, and the living to the non-living. Ethnographies from and across the Himalayas and Sub-Saharan Africa allow for the opening of theoretical space, dialogue, comparative cross-cultural analysis and reflections on assemblages of power and knowledge that go beyond borders (i.e. actors, institutions, forces, discourses, etc.), but that shape local cultural-ecological landscapes, as well as anthropological engagement. The spirit(s) of resistance becomes integral to understanding and representing the voices and perspectives of interlocutors in our ethnographic analysis, but also of the anthropologist in articulating responses, activism and forms of expression in relation to them – from pen to paper, thought to action, and academia to activism. Reflexivity opens space for contemplation of the struggles and dilemmas of the anthropologist as an intellectual, academic and practitioner in responding to events and crises, such as shifting political and economic landscapes, climate crises, and threats to freedom of expression and academia. Such issues are not only relevant during field work, writing and analysis, but have become urgent in recent months in representing the lives and struggles of differently positioned interlocutors in turbulent times and fractured spaces.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Ritu Verma, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Out-of-the-Box Research and Action

Chair: Ritu Verma, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Out-of-the-Box Research and Action; David Hecht - University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Nancy Levine, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Laura German, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Ritu Verma, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Out-of-the-Box Research and Action; David Hecht - University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lisa Gezon, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Remaking Spiritual Landscapes: Resettlement and Religious Expression among Tibetans in Northwestern China

Rural development, urbanization, and state environmental policies have changed the lives of Tibetan farmers and pastoralists in China in myriad ways. This paper examines how those changes have affected placemaking through spiritual engagements in both new and ancestral sacred spaces. Case studies examine efforts to create new religious institutions and practices in resettlement towns and sustain connections to important sites on ancestral lands. The first part of the paper describes spiritual practices being worked out in a farming community whose homes and monasteries were demolished during government-led programs of mechanized agriculture and reforestation in the name of environmental conservation. Against the backdrop of state interventions that have altered community-deity-land relationships, villagers have refashioned spiritual expression through new village temples and elaborate private shrine rooms in their rural

homes and urban high-rise apartments. The second part of the paper focuses on pastoralists who have abandoned a mobile herding lifestyle for town resettlement and modern occupations. This change also marked an end to the traditional mobile tent monasteries that had traveled to meet the needs of the laity—now replaced by imposing monastic buildings and temples in resettlement towns. Town dwellers also have adopted a new cosmopolitan aesthetic for home shrines, while maintaining ties to old territories and their unique spiritual landscapes.

Presenter(s): Nancy Levine

Co-author(s): Fnu Caihuajia

Normalizing the “Global Land Grab”: Theoretical Insights from the Politics of Knowledge and Ontology

In this talk, I draw on the politics of knowledge to explore the trajectory following the civil society outcry in 2008-09 over the "global land grab" to the consolidation of a set of international norms governing land rights by the mid-2010s. This transition was hailed as a great achievement in forging a consensus on the need to respect customary land rights, and indeed some good may have come from it. Yet I argue that this transition has also (1) shifted blame for tenure insecurity in significant ways, thereby deflecting attention from root causes, while (2) advancing and institutionalizing tenure constructs that are compatible with ongoing land loss and work to wipe other securities, relationalities and worlds off the map. I explore these dynamics globally with a focus on Africa, using discursive vignettes to locate (i) the dynamics relevant to each of three theoretical lenses (power/knowledge, ontological anthropology, coloniality) within dominant discourses; and (ii) the worlds brought into being by each set of practices. To heed Eve Tuck's call to "suspend damage" (Tuck 2009), I also locate other world-making projects and possibilities from both the pluriverse and spaces of epistemic privilege.

With post-truth politics ratcheting up to a fever pitch, there is need for concerted action to counter dominant discourses and their effects across fields of vision and practice. I conclude by drawing on my own methodological praxis as an initial scaffolding for such an endeavor.

Presenter(s): Laura German

The Spirit(s) of Resistance and Development Incarnations in Remote Cultural-Ecological Highland Landscapes

In remote pastoralist landscapes of northwest Bhutan, the past collides with the present in the realm of deities, spirits and reincarnations of past lives. From the benevolent to the ominous, their omnipresence manifests both ecologically protective and destructive powers requiring appeasement and supplication through rituals. However, other contesting forces are at play, and a complex, layered history of actors and forces resonates in the present. Powerful deities, spirits, historical figures, legacies, policies, reincarnations and cumulative karma shapes the local environment, and human inter-relations. Historical entanglements collide with contemporary forces – from the effects of state formation and crypto-colonialism, to development interventions

directed from the lowlands and international organizations, climate emissions generated from the Global North, and global capitalistic discourses of sedentarization and secularity. The paper investigates, at the interface of critical political-ecology and spiritual-ecology framings, modes of indigenous meaning-making, more-than-human articulations, ontological frictions, and resistance to dominant narratives, policies and representation. Reflexivity, subjectivity, fluctuating embodiment of vulnerability of the anthropologist and interlocutor, and comparative conclusions from fieldwork in Madagascar, elucidate ethnographic dilemmas of research and writing critical ethnography in contexts of academic control and narrative closure.

Presenter(s): Ritu Verma

Spirits of the Land: Cosmopolitical Resistance in Bhutan's More-Than-Human Landscapes

In the Eastern Himalayas, Vajrayāna Buddhism and Indigenous 'Bon' traditions are relationally interwoven within spiritual-ecological landscapes shaped by complex cosmopolitical ontologies. Territorial deities- yul lha (ཡུལ་ལྷ་); gzhi bdag (གཞི་བདག་); gnas bdag gzhi bdag (གནས་བདག་གཞི་བདག་)- wield tenurial power in trees, forests, cliffs, mountains, lakes, and springs, and their palaces (pho brang) are sites of enforced relational governance and moral geographies. We inquire how past and present collide in Bhutan's more-than-human landscapes, and how territorial deities resist and are sporadically subsumed by homogenizing logics of capitalist development and non-western conservation paradigms that can inadvertently overwrite local ontologies. Our effort foregrounds the spirit(s) of resistance not only via political or material agents, but also as cosmological- manifest in ritual practice, visionary cartographies, and spatial ontologies. Drawing on participatory mapping, oral histories, and iconographic traditions such as thang kha and ldebs ris, our research illuminates how communities articulate counter-geographies and reclaim ontological space for localized knowledge and non-human kin. Such cosmopolitical engagements offer critical reflections on conservation governance and anthropological responsibility, calling for reflexive scholarship attuned to the voices, worlds, and cosmologies that persist and resist at its highest peaks.

Presenter(s): David Hecht - University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology

5356 New Books Roundtable: Sex Work, Law, and Rights in India

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will bring into conversation two new books that examine the contested meanings and politics of sex work—as governed by law and NGOs, and redefined by rights movements—in contemporary India. Both Simanti Dasgupta's *Prophylactic Rights: Sex Work, HIV/AIDS, and Anti-Trafficking in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2024) and Vibhuti Ramachandran's *Immoral Traffic: An Ethnography of Law, NGOs, and the Governance of Prostitution in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2025) are ethnographies examining the laws, politics, and modes of intervention shaping the governance of sex work in India, and how sex workers navigate this terrain. The relationship

between sex workers and Indian state agencies, the role of a range of interventions from public health to anti-trafficking in shaping this contested field, and the new subjects that emerge within it resonate across both books. Despite these substantial overlaps, there are also significant departures in the methods, sites, interlocutors, and conceptual frameworks and contributions of both authors. For instance, Ramachandran's book is situated at the complex intersection of India's anti-prostitution law and global anti-trafficking campaigns, and how they impact both trafficked and voluntary sex workers in New Delhi and Mumbai. On the other hand, Dasgupta's book is about the lived experiences and labor rights activism of the sex workers' movement in Sonagachi, Kolkata, at the complex intersections of law and medicine, surveillance and subversion.

The roundtable will place these two books in conversation to discuss their overlaps, departures, and contributions to the study of law, sex work, the postcolonial Indian state, NGOs, and global regimes of aid and advocacy. The conversation will also reflect, more broadly, upon the books' collective and distinct contributions to the fields of law and society, gender and sexuality studies. The two authors will also comment on each others' books. Each panelist will bring their unique academic background and training, disciplinary location, theoretical repertoire and methodological expertise to the conversation.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Simanti Dasgupta, University of Dayton, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

Presenter(s): Vibhuti Ramachandran, University of California, Irvine, Simanti Dasgupta, University of Dayton, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, Debarati Sen, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Mona Bhan, Syracuse University, Department of Anthropology, Deepa Das Acevedo

Discussant: Sahana Ghosh, National University of Singapore

8339 (Un-)black-boxing AI Agencies: Ghostly and Ghosted Machines, Part 2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The collection of technologies routinely thrown into the "AI" kitchen sink has become as ubiquitous as the value-laden narratives about them. While contemporary computational systems present genuinely new techno-scientific, machinic affordances, many of their supposed novelties are anything but—nor are the narratives, values, or interpretations assigned to them by individuals, groups, and institutionalized personae across both expert-technical and nonexpert domains. This panel explores how regimes of value, narratives, and implicit-to-explicit understandings of personhood and/or agency, reflexively framed as belonging to prior social spacetimes, continue to haunt AI in the present, not despite, but because of diverse narratives asserting its radical novelty (Choi and Babcock 2024). We ask: what enfolded, immaterialized, or absented agencies trail

behind or snake through AI? How do epistemic and systemic violences-racism, sexism, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, ableism, and other intersectionally compounding oppressive structures (Wilf 2023; Seaver 2022; Semel 2021; Benjamin 2019; Noble 2018)-linger, become ghosted from, and interpenetrate with the functioning and uses of, as well as narratives about, AI? And how does the functioning of AI get rendered inscrutable in some contexts-made "invisible by its own success" (Latour and Woolgar 1979)-while in others, it is opened wide to explanations with varying degrees of "truth," "facticity," or legitimization? This panel contributes to ethnographic explorations of AI by synergistically bringing together grounded-theoretical approaches to technological (un-)black-boxing from scholars across fields and (sub)subfields of anthropology (with a particular focus on linguistic and semiotic anthropology; Wortham and Reyes 2015), along with diverse (inter)disciplinary approaches to techno-scientific and material agencies, from STS and HCI to interactional sociology, sociolinguistics, the history of technology, and beyond.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Joshua Babcock, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Beth Semel, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Beth Semel, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Edward Maclin, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Hilary Dick, Arcadia University, Wee Yang Soh

Discussant: Angela Reyes, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Possession and the Spirit of AI

In 2024, Memphis became the home to the world's largest Artificial Intelligence (AI) supercomputer, built by Elon Musk's xAI amidst ongoing local environmental controversies. Around the same time, the University of Memphis announced a new multidisciplinary minor titled "AI for All." As an anthropologist with interests in both environmental justice and critical pedagogy, I have followed these developments closely. This paper is an autoethnographic view of AI as something more than a simple tool. Within technocratic circles, AIs are often described as a value-neutral in essence, with any ethical challenges being a result of their use. In this paper I argue that AIs should be taken seriously as value-laden non-human actors. Building on Ivan Illich's (1973) ideas of tool logic and Miller's (2021) critique of the Value-Neutrality Thesis, I suggest that AIs act as beings of spirit: ghosts of predominantly Western, capitalist technologies with the capacity to possess people and organizations, leading to changes in thought and behavior. Looking at AIs from this perspective provides a way of naming and describing these entities within anthropological work, and raises questions about how we can protect ourselves from possession and what an exorcism of AI might involve.

Presenter(s): Edward Maclin

Calling Out the Spector: Black TikTok, Digital Fluidity and the Defiance of Algorithmic Whiteness

This paper explores Black fluidity on TikTok as a political refusal that disturbs white supremacy produced from the platform's algorithm. This form of artificial intelligence analyzes user behavior to

generate personalized For You pages (FYP). As such, it is a ghostly presence outlined through what does, and does not, appear on one's feed. We focus on content produced by Black TikTok, or Blacktok, users critically addressing acts of white possession that position Black people as property, concentrating on posts that call out TikTok's artificial intelligence (AI) itself. We unpack a central tension in TikTok's affordances. FYP require algorithmic uniformity, a process that makes feeds seem to organically align with a user's stances and desires. This process tends to center the cultural norms of whiteness, mirroring for Black users historical pressures to conform by "acting white." Yet, FYP also enable to creation of domains, such as Blacktok, in which users refute algorithmic whiteness. Thus, TikTok is a site of struggle between manufactured consensus and the emergence of radical resistance. Blacktok creators draw on the deep archive of Black revolutionary thought and action to counter the violent misrepresentation of Black humanity endemic to white supremacy with critical commentary that is also rooted in humor, play, and joy. Such Black fluidity not only defies algorithmic whiteness; it provides a window into the possibilities of political transformation.

Presenter(s): Hilary Dick

Human After All: AI, Idol Labor, and the Ghost Work of Virtual K-pop

As AI becomes a central imaginary in K-pop's future, virtual idols like SM Entertainment's Naevis and Pulse9's Eternity are promoted as post-human solutions to the risks of mortal, fallible stars. These figures claim to exceed human limits—yet their creation relies on remixing the faces and voices of past idols, layered onto human movements via motion capture. Fans are quick to notice this disjuncture: while "AI" is marketed as disembodied, flawless, and novel, its production is deeply rooted in invisible labor, aesthetic histories, and socio-technical patchwork. Drawing on ethnographic research in South Korea, this presentation explores how AI in K-pop is not just a technical shift but a technofuturist fantasy haunted by prior ideals of femininity, aspirational labor, and celebrity. I argue that the ghost work behind these virtual idols—modeling, choreography, affective engineering—reveals a fantasy of neoliberal self-actualization: a perfected being sculpted from collective human effort, yet forever unattainable by any single person. These idols invite us to question what "artificial" means when its very form is constituted by human traces, and how anxieties over authenticity, precarity, and idealized labor shape the aesthetics and moral claims of AI in pop culture.

Presenter(s): Wee Yang Soh

Discussion

2850 Histories Haunting Industrial Cultures

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the enchantment of industrial cultural production, examining how historical forces and spectral presences persist within spaces commonly framed as bastions of 'modern' and

'secular' rationality. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's (1935) insights into capitalism's dreamworlds and modern enchantment, contributors investigate how past relations of power, creative practice, and cultural knowledge haunt contemporary industrial cultures.

Through ethnographic studies across industries of archaeology, fishing, television, and fashion, papers examine how institutional structures and creative practices are shaped by histories and presences that their modernist self-presentation often disavows (Bear 2018; Bhattacharyya 2024; Klima 2019; Martin 2017; Parry 2015; Silvio 2019). While industries are positioned as forward-looking and innovation-driven (Irani 2019; Wilf 2019), our research reveals how colonial legacies, labor histories, and displaced cultural and religious traditions continue to manifest in present-day practices, aesthetics, and power relations.

Contributors explore various manifestations of these hauntings: indigenous creators navigating histories of appropriation while asserting contemporary agency; workers confronting the spectral presence of past labor regimes in current production systems; and institutions whose claimed rationality is undergirded by persistent mythologies and ritual practices. Together, these perspectives challenge simplified narratives of secular industrial modernity, revealing how enchantment and rationalization intertwine in contemporary cultural production.

Key questions include: How do historical patterns of extraction and appropriation continue to structure relationships between centers and margins of cultural production? In what ways do creators and workers mobilize historical knowledge to challenge dominant industrial narratives? How do past struggles materialize in contemporary working conditions and creative practices?

Drawing from fieldwork across multiple sites, papers examine how these spectral presences manifest in material practices, creative processes, and labor relations. In doing so, we contribute to broader and longer-standing anthropological discussions about materiality, temporality, power, and enchantment (e.g., Munn 1992; Myers 2002; Ong 2010; Scott 1998). By examining how the past haunts industrial cultural production, we gain new insight into the reproduction of power dynamics and emerging possibilities for transformation, expanding theoretical frameworks for analyzing cultural production in late capitalism.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Matthew Raj Webb, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Eliana Ritts, University of Rhode Island

Chair: Tejaswini Ganti, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sowparnika Balaswaminathan, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Calynn Dowler, Vanderbilt University, Eliana Ritts, University of Rhode Island, Matthew Raj Webb, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Tejaswini Ganti, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Enchanting Time: Archaeological Narratives and Past-Present Rivalries in India

In January 2025, M.K. Stalin, Chief Minister of the south Indian state of Tamilnadu, made a dramatic announcement befitting his cinema-industry lineage: the Iron Age, hitherto dated to the Fertile

Crescent, had its earliest beginnings "on Tamil soil." This temporal recalibration, crafted into a "news event" (Cody 2023), carries profound implications for contemporary Indian political discourse. Modern statist archaeology in India navigates between neoliberal rationalism and romantic patriotism, seeking to maintain scientific rigor while constructing narratives of an enchanted past. This tension is further complicated by India's current Hindu nationalist regime, which seeks to establish a direct correlation between territory and religion, such as in the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)—South Asia's oldest known state-level society— which needs to be Hindu, Sanskritic, and continuous with the Indo-Aryan identity claimed by contemporary (caste) Hindus. Stalin's announcement directly challenges this narrative by foregrounding southern archaeological sites that suggest a non-Hindu proto-Dravidian history, and potential links to the IVC itself. This paper examines how political conflicts unfold at the chronotopic intersection of archaeology and media—two rational, neoliberal industries that construct temporal narratives of world-ordering propensity. At this junction, neoliberal Hindutva and rationalist Dravidian past-presentisms compete to enchant India's ancient heritage.

Presenter(s): Sowparnika Balaswaminathan

Haunted Enclosures: Ghostly Presence in the Sundarbans' Aquaculture Industry

Capitalist transitions are often approached through reference to disenchantment. This paper develops an alternative account through a study of aquaculture in the Indian Sundarbans delta. My research with fishers shows that the creation of private, export-oriented fisheries in formerly common water bodies does not necessarily entail disenchantment from a more-than-human social world. Instead, I explore how these processes reorganize relationships between people, fish, and supernatural entities, including deities and ghosts. I argue that the creation of private property in water is a cosmologically rich process, and I demonstrate how—contrary to expectations—fishery owners have continued to maintain and negotiate relations with supernatural entities amid enclosure. I analyze these shifts through attention to fishing rituals, which did not simply reflect an age-old cosmology, but signaled important changes in relations between humans, nonhuman animals, and supernatural beings. Through these rituals, fish have become commodities to be exchanged between gods and humans rather than the sentient agents they were in the past, and certain supernatural entities have also transformed. Simultaneously, many have lost their previously intimate connections with the water commons. In this context, ghost stories (bhuter galpo) about "awakened" (jagroto) waters continued to circulate, haunting contemporary capitalist transitions and sustaining alternative visions of place and personhood.

Presenter(s): Calynn Dowler

Mediating Abundance: Confronting Specters of Scarcity in Indigenous Television Production

In January 2025, Taiwan's Chinese Nationalist Party proposed sweeping budget cuts across cultural sectors, including Taiwan Indigenous Television (TITV)—a public station by and for Taiwan's diverse Indigenous peoples. This mirrors similar state cuts to Indigenous media production budgets in Aotearoa, the US, and elsewhere. Cultural producers have long found creative ways to assert visual

sovereignty within settler systems (Raheja 2010). But contemporary populist politics and scarcity economics are placing even well-established Indigenous broadcasters at risk. Drawing on fieldwork with Indigenous media producers in Taiwan, I explore how producers at TITV respond to these precarities through what I call "media abundance." This paper is inspired by emergent studies of Indigenous economies of abundance in environmental, legal, and cartographic studies (Fujikane 2021, Kimmerer 2024). With an ethnographic focus on the daily practices of production at TITV, I show how, from children's shows to health programs, producers mediate abundance by forging relations of reciprocity and inclusivity, embedding production in extended kin relations with ancestors and future generations, lands and waters, and more-than-human persons. I argue that abundance activates an entwined politics of refusal and possibility: a refusal to let capitalist specters of scarcity define media production, and the production of Indigenous futures that flourish far beyond the limits of colonial imaginations.

Presenter(s): Eliana Ritts

Spectral Secularism: Paradoxes of Enchantment in Hindu Nationalist Aesthetic Production

This paper examines the tension between religious nationalism and secular modernity drawing on ethnographic research at a state-run fashion school in New Delhi. By analyzing how designers create clothing styles for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, I identify a fundamental contradiction: the more aggressively the BJP state attempts to purge secular-cosmopolitan references, the more designers must employ secular principles in their creative processes. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of 'dialectical images,' I theorize how designers strategically traverse competing value systems to arrange and 'enchant' ethnonationalist dress symbolism. While generating "Hindu supremacist" images (Baviskar 2023), their culture of production (Caldwell 2005; Ganti 2012) remains fundamentally structured by cosmopolitan training, global fashion sensibilities, and secular institutional histories. Thus, I suggest that the Hindu nationalist aesthetic project paradoxically depends on and reproduces elements of the secular frameworks it aims to displace; affirming not just the incompleteness of ideological projects, but the impossibility of achieving cultural purification. By analyzing how contemporary Indian designers traverse negotiations of style, politics, and career opportunities, this paper contributes to anthropological reconsiderations of secular/religious binaries, illuminating how competing temporalities materialize in aesthetic production under authoritarian rule.

Presenter(s): Matthew Raj Webb

Discussion

7196 Resurfacing Feminist Genealogies of Care: Illness and Haunted Critique

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the much-loved 1970s children's animated series, Scooby-Doo, there is frequently a moment in which one of the main characters removes a simple bedsheet to reveal that a ghost – haunting a pirate ship or a spooky mansion – was really Old Man Whittaker all along. Zinks! Gotcha! This iconic moment of revelation provides an unlikely but useful metaphor for understanding knowledge production in anthropology influenced by feminist accounts of political economy since Scooby-Doo started its run. In this panel, we are specifically interested in how care – as work, as relation, as emotion, as kinship webs – has been portrayed in studies of disability and illness and how feminist anthropology might better attend to its haunted critiques. While unveiling has its place, in this panel, we attempt to work with the step beyond the reveal. If we see care everywhere we turn in intersectional disability worlds, this entails intellectual and aesthetic work (itself a form of care) in which haunting is not the province of spectres and the unknowing, but of real people, in complicated, complicit relationships with one another. Meddling with the politics of care without any satisfying conclusion, this panel offers rich ethnographic examples (relationships to disabled relatives; labor and chronic illness; ancestral healing spaces; "functional disorders"; Sikh martial arts practices) to resurface how feminist political economy, and in particular Black feminist thought, not only illuminates relations that were there with us all along, but demands our acknowledgement of how things come to be hidden to begin with.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Emily Lim Rogers, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Chair: Megan Moodie

Presenter(s): Megan Moodie, Emily Lim Rogers, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Daisy Couture, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Ree Botts, University of California, San Francisco, Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine, damanjit singh

Presentation(s): The Ones Who Stayed and Fought: What does a feminist perspective on care add to histories of deinstitutionalization?

Several essays and books in recent years have generated wide public conversation of what Atlantic feature writer Jennifer Senior calls "the ones we sent away," referring to children with disabilities who were institutionalized, especially in the early post-WWII period. Based on feminist and queer critiques of biological relatedness and normate structures that exclude those with non-normative bodyminds – of which infamous "schools" are a very visceral example – these authors ask readers to unearth and embrace disabled kin. For disabled readers who may have kinship ties (genetic, care-based, regional, affinal) to ancestors who experienced the violence of institutionalization, these stories land quite differently. People with disabilities are concerned that these revisionist histories do the thing they are trying to combat: erase disabled voices. The "disappeared relative" becomes what Mitchell and Snyder call a "narrative prosthesis"; further, those individuals and families who historically performed the difficult work of resisting the push to institutionalization is erased in favor of a narrative that stresses the role of journalistic reportage in changing public attitudes about disability and care. In this paper, I consider how stories of expanded kinship might work differently if told from the perspective of "the ones who stayed and fought," including

contemporary disability activists who fight state-backed projects for medical and disability incarceration.

Presenter(s): Megan Moodie

Wages Against Sick Work: Chronic Illness and Economics of Exhaustion

Drawing from feminist critiques of reproductive labor and fieldwork with people with chronic fatigue syndrome (otherwise known as myalgic encephalomyelitis or ME/CFS) in the US, this paper presents a provocation: what if we recognized the labor of being ill, and paid for people to be sick, beyond the meagerness of the welfare state and the cultures of suspicion and shadow of malingering that surrounds it? I take lessons from Black feminist critiques of the welfare state (A. Davis 1981; D. Davis 2006), disability anthropology (Hartblay 2020; Durban 2022), disability studies (Kim 2024, Price 2015), and disabled activists (Hedva 2022; Piepza-Samarasinha 2018) to argue that for my interlocutors with ME/CFS, being sick is, itself, work. Faced with unrelenting symptoms of exhaustion, people with ME/CFS must work simply to sit upright; to fill out forms so that they can get disability insurance; to travel to doctors and ME/CFS specialists, some of whom may be halfway across the country. Just as Marxist feminists took wages for housework into wages against housework (Federici 1975), I show that to propose sickness as work is to resurface the iatrogenesis of the American healthcare system and welfare state themselves. Richer ethnographic descriptions of the complex and frequently-failing support systems surrounding an isolating chronic illness may well show feminist political economy has always been just under the surface of current debates around care.

Presenter(s): Emily Lim Rogers

On fluctuation and flickering – functional disorders, feminist epistemologies, and care

Functional disorders index the phenomenon in which someone is seriously ill – seizures, paralysis, complex pain, – and yet no pathophysiological cause can be found. Traditionally approached as psychic distress manifesting through the body, a contemporary language for hysteria, a multitude of explanations currently compete within Western biomedicine. These disorders evade and exceed clinical epistemologies and containment, causing unease wherever they appear as clinicians feel threatened and patients become rendered illegible and suspicious.

This presentation explores the reciprocal, murky attachments between illness, gender, knowledge, and the body. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork with patients with suspected functional disorders and clinicians in a Canadian neuropsychiatric clinic, I ask how functional disorders are refigured if we look to feminist theory rather than biomedicine. Drawing on theorists such as Mel Chen, Teresa Brennan, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, and Octavia Butler, I argue that a feminist reading of functional disorders opens a radically different figure of relation with the world – one defined by porosity, non-innocent spatial and temporal attachments, and refraction. Furthermore, I am all too familiar with the violent and diminishing effects of biomedicine's approach to these disorders; as such, in the second half of this presentation I also explore a feminist approach to care.

Presenter(s): Daisy Couture

Homegirl Hauntings: The Sacred Geographies of Ancestral Conjuring in Black Feminist Healing Arts Praxis

This presentation explores the material and metaphysical healing spaces of Black women who are engaged in ancestral, astral, and inner child healing. It is grounded in what I call Black Feminist Healing Arts – the sacred practice of using art and ritual to cultivate spiritual, ancestral, and somatic healing. I use the term "homegirl" to honor everyday Black women who unapologetically engage in hood cultures of healing through aesthetic and linguistic praxis. Additionally, I use the term "hood" to celebrate the communal locales where these homegirls go to heal. I also provide an analysis of the ghetto as sacred, and the sacred as ghetto. By mapping sanctity onto the ghetto and mapping the ghetto onto sanctity, I expand understandings of everyday space making by locating transcendence within the neglected underworlds of Black women's intimate and interior lives.

I place these communal geographies in conversation with the interior geographies of the psyche where spirit space and imaginaries meet across varying ruptures in time/ space continuums. In locating these multiple sites of refuge, I illuminate how these women's sense of their own divinity affirms a right to humanity amidst the dehumanization of interlocking oppressions. As such, I argue that one of the most liberatory models of healing might be found within the creative refusal of these homegirls, whose spatial imaginaries of care challenge disciplinary assumptions about what it means to be well.

Presenter(s): Ree Botts

Uses of the Stick

The experience of mass torture permeates the affective field that gatka (Sikh stick-fighting) constitutes in California. I take gatka in California as a lens for the study of collective identity formation in the wake of state violence. Despite the community's ethnic, caste, and linguistic diversity, the category "Sikh" retains gendered and racialized valence. As a tool of capture, racialization reduces the diversity of Sikh culture and practice to a martiality that is masculine and loyal at best, and pathologically violent and unintelligent at worst.

This reputation continues to frame Sikh conflict with the modern Indian state. In the chaos of anti Sikh genocide in India - and a decades long Sikh resistance - many Sikhs fled Punjab and settled across the globe. Gatka in California was born of this fugitivity, as Sikh sought new ways to continue the fight for self-determination in Punjab.

Abolitionist scholarship, Black feminist anthropology, and crip theory grounds my photoethnographic exploration of the significance of gatka as a mode of empowerment, healing, and political action that is simultaneously collective and embodied. I remain attentive to the way images have not just circulated but produced knowledge about racial difference. I try to create images and videos that disrupt the sedimentation of gendered and racial common sense about

Sikhs, and instead reflect the affective regimes of care and resilience that sustain this community and its movements.

Presenter(s): damanjit singh

4665 Ethnography as Hauntology Across the Borderlands and the Black Atlantic

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The in-between is a subject of investigation and speculation. The borderlands, the Black Atlantic – these unsettled territories and haunted waterways serve as metaphors for violent encounters, enslavement, and death, but also cultural convergence, mediation, creative survival, and transformation. The category of the in-between is itself a specter that offers an "ontological-like category that hovers between being and non-being, real and unreal, present and absent. Not quite ontological but hauntological" (Klima 2019, 19). In this sense, anthropologists stalk the spirit world for answers, for evidence of our ancestors, to know them, to document their stories, and to make them speak to us in a language we can understand. Experimental ethnography is a speculative practice of trying to make sense of experiences and events that are ineffably real, at once visceral, and beyond language. What responsibility do we have to these specters, these ancestors, these monstrous beings, besides waking them up, conjuring them into existence, and writing them into the real?

This roundtable brings together interdisciplinary Black Atlantic and US-Mexico Borderlands scholars to consider how ethnography, refashioned as a curative practice of anthropocura, might attend to events, spaces, or experiences that are ineffably real in that they escape traditional forms of empirical investigation or representation. Forged in the unruly, marginal, and fugitive folds between borderlands and Black Atlantic epistemologies, anthropocura traffics in contradiction, alternate realities, speculative imaginaries, time travel, and delirium. Its locuras (or theories) are inherently undisciplined. They emerge from methodologies cultivated in the fault lines of anthropology – Africana Studies, Critical Ethnic Studies, Feminist and Queer Studies and subjugated other/othered knowledge.

From the aftermath of the burning of a black church in Tennessee to migrant deaths and disappearances on the Texas-Mexico border to encounters/discounters with otherworldly beings in haunted thresholds, and the multivocal play of Black masking in New Orleans vis-à-vis the liminal spaces of Mardi Gras/Carnival, this roundtable explores methodological reimagining of ethnography not as mere observation or documentation, but as an engagement with the spectral, the unspoken, and what lingers -- the afterlives of trauma, silenced histories, and fugitive presences. At its heart is decolonial sanación, an anthropocura que cura.

Section: Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists

Organizer: Aimee Villarreal, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Todne Thomas

Presenter(s): Marc D. Perry, University of Texas at San Antonio, Dept of Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Mari Trevino, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Todne Thomas, Victoria Soto, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology, Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Aimee Villarreal, Texas State University, Department of Anthropology

2793 Narrating the Ghostly Temporalities of Korea

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"After you died, I could not hold a funeral,

And so my life became a funeral." From Human Acts (Han 2014)

In her 2024 Nobel Prize Lecture, Han Kang reflected on two leitmotif questions that thread through her body of work: "Can the past help the present? Can the dead save the living?" Inspired by these questions, this panel explores how ethnographic narratives illuminate-and bind together-the porous boundaries between life and death, as well as between past, present, and future in Korean history and culture. It asks: How do narratives serve as conduits for memory, transmitting the past across generations? How do pain and trauma become legible, indelible, and meaningful through the acts of writing and recitation? And in what ways do narratives reclaim and reveal names, voices, and dignity from the ruins of erasure, violence, and historical trauma?

Bringing together papers that engage these questions, this panel examines how narratives become sites of grappling and (re)imagining Korea's past and present, trauma and healing, and violence and dignity. Through ethnographic case studies-including the work of commemorating and inheriting lives within the Korean LGBTQ+ community (Im), the creative activities of North Korean migrants to reconstruct their painful memories to develop emotional resilience (Shin), a grassroots arts project grounded in narratives by and about the Post-Korean War Korean ginseng traveling vendor women (Lee), and creative care practices developed by young women with suicidality (Kwon)-the panel explores ghostly temporalities and the spectral presence of history in contemporary Korean life. Together, the panelists invite dialogue on how these haunting pasts and their imaginaries offer an ethnographic lens through which to analyze and make sense of Korea's present and future conditions and forms of life.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Hyemin Lee, Yale University

Chair: Hyemin Lee, Yale University

Presenter(s): Yookyeong Im, The University of Sheffield, Haeun Shin, Seoul National University, Hyemin Lee, Yale University, Jung Eun Kwon, University of Pittsburgh

Discussant: Nicholas Harkness, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Names: Remembering and Inheriting Lives in South Korean Queer Community

This paper aims to reveal the names of those who have left me too early in the Korean LGBTQ+ community. It is not a metanarrative. Instead, it is a mid-level narrative and an autoethnographic response to Han Kang's question: "Can the dead save the living?" Therefore, the narrator uses "they" and "we" interchangeably throughout the paper. The narrator-ethnographer also asks, "Can the living save the dead?"

In the South Korean queer community, the dead are not necessarily the past. The dead are and always have been the present. The dead are also our dear friends. Thus, death is never the past that we can lightheartedly pass, erase, and move on. Many people fear that those passings might not be sufficiently mourned and that death might be in their community's future as well. Many of us witnessed or experienced the porosity between life and death too frequently and early in our individual and collective life journeys. Therefore, the porosity is overtly recognized and recited in Korean queer community spaces. The paper illuminates how it leads some community members to anchor their political narratives to the concept of "existence" (chonjae). Chonjae encompasses various forms of life with dignity in their narratives about life and death. By revealing the names, this paper shows why and how death is not the past and proposes to reconsider progress-oriented ideologies of time in Korea from a queer ethnographic perspective.

Presenter(s): Yookyong Im

Reconstructing Painful Memories through Creative Activities: North Korean Migrant Artists in South Korea

This paper examines how North Korean migrants (hereafter NKM) process their painful memories and experiences of North Korea through creative activities while living in South Korea. Specifically, I focus on their feeling of longing for separated or lost loved ones as well as emotional debt and regret for leaving their home country behind. Based on the ethnographic research conducted with thirty-five NKM artists in South Korea between April 2021 and May 2022, this paper first addresses how NKM artists gain psychological distance from distressing memories by expressing them in artistic forms. Through these expressive forms, they (re)construct narratives of ineffable traumatic experiences, leading to their understanding of their lived experiences. Second, I examine how NKM artists' creative activities serve as an in-between space where they imagine reunification with their separate or lost families. These imaginary interactions allow them to navigate the feelings of sorrow and sorrowiness toward their loved ones. Ultimately, this study demonstrates how creative activities contribute to NKM artists' emotional resilience toward their past, present, and future by reconstructing their painful experiences and memories.

Presenter(s): Haeun Shin

My Mom's Scent: Qualia and Sensuous Temporalities in Narratives of Insam-Haengsang (Ginseng Traveling Vendor) Women

In Post-War Korea, insam haengsang—women who traveled between cities with a basket filled with insam (Korean ginseng)—distributed Korean ginseng from farm fields to market towns and metropolises. Despite their key role in connecting rural and urban economies, insam haengsang

women have been rendered invisible in dominant historical accounts of postwar Korea. This paper centers on a community-based grassroots art project in Geumsan, South Korea, that commemorates these women, along with collected narratives of those who worked as insam haengsang in the 1960s-80s. Following the grassroots art project's evolving storytelling practices—including a children's book, a stage play, and a song, it analyzes how the qualia of insam scent is not a mere sensorial trace but a historico-political device in community-based history-making practices. The paper examines how the qualia of insam scent enables a sensuous reconfiguration of temporality, bridging the gap between different timelines, genders, and generations in and across the narrated and narrating events. In so doing, it investigates how qualia and sensuous temporalities give form to feminist historical imaginaries, in which silenced and ignored subjects and their voices are refigured not only as remembered but also as re-lived.

Presenter(s): Hyemin Lee

Care Experts: (Self-)Care Practices Among Young Women with Suicidality in South Korea

This paper examines the creative and expansive (self-)care practices developed by young Korean women who have experienced suicidality. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork (2021-2022) with women in their twenties and thirties, I explore how they transform long-term suffering into innovative care strategies. Many trace the onset of their suicidality to their early teens, describing it as persistent and accumulating distress that has haunted them ever since. However, against this ghosted past, they have crafted practices to navigate the present, critique the past, and envision alternative futures. These include writing fantasy novels, forming "alternative families," volunteering, and engaging in activism that extends beyond the domain of mental health. I conceptualize these women as care experts—a term I coin to highlight their expertise in reimagining care through sustained self-reflection and critical engagement with enduring violence. Their practices blur the line between individual and collective care, expanding self-care beyond individualistic models and framing it as communal, transgressive, and political. By approaching care as both personal and political, these women challenge patriarchal environments, gendered norms, and a society that often fails to accommodate differences. Ultimately, I argue that their everyday care practices position them as potential agents of sociopolitical transformation, offering vital insights into the entanglement of ghosted temporalities.

Presenter(s): Jung Eun Kwon

Discussion

8593 Proposal Writing for the Wenner-Gren Foundation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

Join us for a conversation on how the Wenner-Gren Foundation is facing these difficult times. Funding for research is in short supply, but we remain committed to supporting anthropologists.

We'll offer an overview of our programs and some tips for applying for our research grants. There will be plenty of time for discussion.

3323 Michel-Rolph Trouillot in the World Economy: Peasants and Capital, Revisited

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, our late colleague, historical anthropologist, and Caribbean theorist par excellence, is venerated as an intellectual ancestor across our discipline. Where his writings on history and historicity, anthropology and the savage slot, the culture concept and its malcontents have earned him pride of place on introductory courses and core graduate curricula, the canonization of Trouillot has often neglected his earliest writings on Caribbean peasantries laboring at the so-called peripheries of a capitalist world system. With an eye toward the 2025 AAA Conference Theme, "Ghosts," this session considers how the uneven incorporation of Trouillot into an anthropological canon generates its own erasures and silences.

This roundtable takes the publication of a new edition of Trouillot's first English-language monograph, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (Hau Books, 2025), as an occasion to meditate on the development and legacy of Trouillot's earliest field research on banana cultivators in the Eastern Caribbean. Where the influence of *Peasants and Capital* endured in the decades since its initial release in 1988 with homages to its multiscalar analysis by anthropologists Deborah Thomas and Vanessa Agard-Jones, this legacy coincided with the retreat of Trouillot's monograph and studies on the Caribbean peasantries, more broadly, from anthropological view. The decimation of Caribbean banana economies in the aftermath of the "banana wars" waged by the World Trade Organization in the 1990s dealt a final blow to the peasant as a fixture of Caribbean ethnography. Convened in the historic banana port of New Orleans, this session returns to *Peasants and Capital* to forge an agenda for an anthropology of the 21st Century informed by Caribbean transformations and their resonances in archipelagic regions beyond the Atlantic.

In turn, this session considers what anthropology could have been (and may still yet become) if we embrace the model of historical anthropology modeled by *Peasants and Capital*. Anthropology, for Trouillot, embraced archival methods and multi-sited ethnography along the commodity chain of Dominican bananas. Extending this model to their research in the Caribbean, Africa, and Southeast Asia, participants in this roundtable will offer urgent revisions to anthropological theory and method at a moment of structural adjustment, climate disasters, and novel repertoires of workers' autonomy and autogestión at the so-called peripheries of the world economy.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Ryan Jobson, University of Chicago

Presenter(s): Deborah Thomas, University of Pennsylvania, Khadene Harris, Northwestern University, Alyssa Paredes, University of Michigan, Adriana Garriga-Lopez, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology, anselm kizza-besigye

Discussant: Alyssa A. L. James, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

3784 Population Aging and Its Discontents: Gendered & Gerontological Imaginations 'On the Make'

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Once presumed to be a problem limited to wealthy, welfare states, population aging has become the dominant global discourse used to raise alarms that rising numbers of "old" people are unsustainable for national market-economies and families (as "informal care systems"). Gendered presumptions add that female-identified people face a "double jeopardy" of sexism and ageism through maturity past adulthood. The state tasks itself as source of solutions, replacing imagined loss of interdependencies and agency. Despite academic research challenging claims that biology separates sociality into the dependent (as young, old, and female) from the productive (as adult, male), population aging in gerontological imagination has manifested through state level interventions, such as age-care policies and technologies, and responses from older adults. Through international networks and globalizing political-economies, how people experience age and gender collapses into a dominant narrative used to naturalize structured dependencies of inequality and social injustice. Thus, gendered and gerontological imaginations have been 'on the make.' Yet, reifications of identity, agency, and dependency require replication, which can invite resistance and re-imaginings. The papers on this panel explore reifications, resistance, and re-imaginings of aging at the levels of state intervention and research engagements with older adults. We find an active, innovating state as well as varying levels of agency and innovation among people stratified by age, gender, racialization, and class. For example, papers variably describe discontent over presumptions in population aging discourse of lost tradition and of gains through modernization. Attention to intersections of social class and migration experiences demonstrates how fears of aging as unsupported longevity, coupled with loss of intergenerational solidarities (and entanglements), contributes to socio-economic precarity and epistemic uncertainty. At the same time, extended longevity in the midst of affluence can pressure re-negotiations of gender, race, and heteronormativity. Contrary to "double jeopardy" myths, retirement and widowhood can provoke transformation more akin to adolescence than abandonment. These papers challenge and transcend the classic modernization ontology of "old" age as gendered dependency and naturalized discontent, while calling for more intersectional study of gerontological imaginations "on the make."

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Alexandra Crampton

Chair: Alexandra Crampton

Presenter(s): Yingru Chen, University of California, Davis, Alex Perullo, Annapurna Pandey, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Claudia Huang, California State University, Long Beach, Alexandra Crampton

Discussant: Annette Leibing, University of Montreal

Presentation(s): Technological Care and the Gendered Politics of Aging in China

In contemporary China, elderly care is shifting from family-based filial piety—historically carried by the unpaid labor of women—to a marketized, technology-driven commodity. Digital platforms, wearable sensors, and smart home systems promise "silver economy" growth, transforming older adults into both consumers and subjects of surveillance. This commodification of care unfolds with the imperative to "expand domestic economic demand." Care becomes a site of economic productivity, while "caring for the elderly" shifts from interpersonal presence to the management of potential risks, dependency, and uncertainty. In this shift, technological innovation—commonly framed as rational, masculine, and future-oriented—enters the domain of care as a technocratic solution to structural challenges. Yet, this technocratic infrastructure does not eliminate gendered labor; it redistributes and renders it invisible. The language of efficiency, scalability, and optimization often obscures the continued reliance on women's labor, now mediated through digital tools. Women continue to bear primary responsibility for coordinating care, now mediated through remote monitoring tools, scheduling applications, and affective labor via digital interfaces. Aging women thus find themselves caught between two worlds: the erosion of intimate, reciprocal caregiving, and the rise of a digitized, datafied future still marked by structural inequalities and invisible work.

Presenter(s): Yingru Chen

Memories of Respect, Stories of Neglect: Aging Among Older African Immigrants in the United States

This paper analyzes anxieties and desires among older Africans living in the US as they negotiate divergent approaches to health, knowledge, and family. Many who came to the US before the 1990s view older Africans as knowledge holders who support family and community. Through ontological imaginations of "tradition" and "gender," male elders are public leaders and cultural custodians, while female elders are respected for their wisdom in family matters, caregiving, and community cohesion. More recent immigrants, however, have experienced seeing older members of their communities in Africa isolated, marginalized, and in poor health. The frequent circulation of stories of older individuals asking younger generations for financial support for medicine, for instance, undermines the types of respect that were once anticipated. Those working in US health care see that many of their American patients rarely receive guests and, in other situations, suffer neglect and abuse in nursing homes or hospice care. Given the tenuous position of many members of the African immigrant community, the multiple views of aging often brings diverse anxieties including being a burden on their own families, encountering personal neglect in healthcare systems, and/or losing respect as knowledge holders as one ages. These anxieties often create a desire among African immigrants to return to their home countries and to a time where positive memories of being a respected elder once existed.

Presenter(s): Alex Perullo

Women Rewriting the Hindu Perspective on Aging in India

My 90-year-old mother lives in her ancestral home with two full-time helpers in Odisha. At 58, she lost her world when my father passed away. In the traditional Hindu system, a widow becomes rudderless and dependent on her sons. My mother has rewritten the normative model of aging and widowhood. She has learned to be independent, defying the normative expectations of old age and widowhood. Based on ethnographic research in Odisha, I examine older women's resilience and strategies for constructing selfhood in terms of choice of residence, lifestyle, and companionship given the absence of adult sons and the disintegration of joint families under the pressure of global capitalism. Along with the AAA 2025 annual meeting theme 'Ghosts,' I argue that in aging India, older women construct new ways of living in the capitalist society while sons are haunted by their inability to perform their dharma (duty) to care for their older parents. This paper will focus on the innovative older Hindu women across region, class and caste, rewriting the normative script on gender and aging. Through auto-ethnography, I incorporate insights I gained by taking care of my 90-year-old mother as her overseas daughter.

Presenter(s): Annapurna Pandey

Transforming the ageless self: Re-framing aging related identity crises in China

In western social science traditions, the pursuit and cultivation of a personal identity is generally understood to be the province of adolescents. Once people reach adulthood, it's assumed that personalities have stabilized into an "ageless self" (Kaufman 1986) that should be maintained throughout the life course and into which new experiences and insights can be integrated. While such a concept challenges population aging discourse, in which old age is simply a period of decline, casting radical departures from earlier versions of the self as "crises" can also lead older adults to fear the specter of age-related shifts in relationships, priorities, and desires. In this paper, based on research conducted on retirees' efforts to pursue new dreams and re-imagine their identities in urban China, I argue that conventional wisdom about the interaction between age and identity are in large part influenced by history and economics: in mainland China, it is older adults—not youths—who are afforded the space and understanding to experiment with different ideas and aesthetics. I contend that major developmental leaps are not possible in later life, and these leaps can improve gerontological imagination through deeper understandings of how people create meaning throughout the life course.

Presenter(s): Claudia Huang

Age, death, and disabilities as generative challenges to gendered dependency in an affluent retirement facility in the U.S.

Feminist gerontologists have long argued that much of what makes "old" age difficult is more about social constructs and less about time. And, despite an "aging enterprise" in the U.S., in which the state promises to assume the risks of old age decline and loss, growing "old" continues to bring fear and stigma. "Healthy" and "anti" aging public and private initiatives promote extending the productivity associated with adult maturity well past retirement ages of 65+. In this study, wealthy

retirees and spouses have selected a U.S. "life plan community," which promotes extended activity and provides care as needed. Yet, those who live into 85+ ages experience limits to life as a planned enterprise. Such limitations can become generative: Losses to bodies and minds, coupled with that of long-term spouses, creates crisis and opportunity to re-imagine gendered norms, compulsory heterosexuality, and racial privilege through the unlikely protagonist of unrelenting discontent. Extended longevity in this five-year field study (2020-2025), experienced by far more women than men, has invited innovation of mind and body-selves through acceptance of irrevocable loss.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Crampton

Discussion

5260 Ethnographic Reckonings with "Success" in Schools and Communities

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The anthropology of education has a long history of engaging critically with ideas about "success" and "failure" in schooling—documenting how the success of some is premised on the failure of others (Varenne and McDermott 1998), interrogating the conditions under which success is produced in elite contexts (Demerath 2009), pointing to students' resistance to the success/failure binary (Valdés 2001), confronting individual identities associated with academic success (McDermott 2004), demonstrating competence outside the norms for success (Gilmore 1985), showing that apparent success may mask enduring inequalities and hierarchies (Brown 2015), and troubling the equation of success with "schoolish exchange value" (Blum 2024)--to name just a few.

In this session, we present new ethnographic findings from a wide range of educational contexts, including out-of-school time nonprofit organizations, secondary schooling in the Solomon Islands, undergraduate research experiences in observational astronomy, and land-based teacher professional development, that productively problematize assumptions about how success is defined in education, who gets to decide those 'metrics', as well as who is eligible to succeed and on what terms.

Abbie Cohen's paper investigates how prevailing definitions and measurements of success shape the practices and processes of out-of-school time organizations—educational spaces that aim to distinguish themselves from traditional public school classrooms, yet increasingly adopt the very accountability structures they aim to resist. Her research, however, reveals that the pressure to demonstrate particular success measurements are driven not by state mandates, but by the influence and power of private philanthropic actors. Examining the secondary school experiences of students in Solomon Islands, Rachel Emerine Hicks identifies obstacles to the educational success of students while showing the family relationships that motivate students to do well in school despite these obstacles. Vanessa Anthony-Stevens and Philip Stevens present a vision of academic raiding as the appropriation of academic goods to rehistoricize and resituate knowledge

production in order to uphold Indigenous communities. Brendan O'Connor probes the conditions under which undergraduate researchers in astrophysics come to be regarded (and regard themselves) as qualified novices, or agents capable of becoming more knowledgeable, responsible, and useful within their research groups. More broadly, Peter Demerath explores how anthropology can help narrow the distance between what we know about how humans learn, and how Western schools have historically developed.

This year's conference theme of "Ghosts" offers an opportunity to look to the past—the impacts of normalized (but oftentimes limited and narrow) notions of success— and a gaze towards the future—where success might be more humanized, generative, and built from communities most impacted.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Brendan O'Connor, Arizona State University

Presenter(s): Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, University of Idaho, Abbie Cohen, Rachel Emerine Hicks, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Peter Demerath

Discussant: Amy Blizard Brown

Presentation(s): The art and science of academic raiding in higher education: Ethnographic observations from Indigenous education

In response to cultural chauvinistic pedagogy and knowledge-making within "Whitestream" culture education and pedagogy (Urrieta, 2004), this paper will explore the particulars of academic raiding, an on-going teaching and learning method utilized by Indigenous faculty and students, and applied in curricular programming designed around needs and desires of U.S. based Tribal Nations. Academic Raiding (Stevens & Anthony-Stevens, 2025), an Apache practice of engaging in intelligent and necessary action in appropriating goods—material, intellectual, and relational—to sustain their community's culture and way of life, is analyzed as a dynamic praxis transforming the conditions of place-less and de-historicized knowledge production. We draw from ethnographic observations in two examples of collaborative participatory research design within higher education collectives serving interdisciplinary STEM graduate students and a land-based teacher professional development programming to examine the delicate interface between the material conditions of settler-colonial institutions and the Indigenous imagination to dream beyond the confines of colonizing university. Examples of academic raiding build on centuries of relational and adaptive 'know-how' and provide hope within harmful institutional technologies to re-assemble place-based and epistemologically diverse lenses of knowledge production in formations that further the well-being of Indigenous communities, not the academy.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Anthony-Stevens

Co-author(s): Philip Stevens

Defining Success in Out-of-School Time Programming

This paper explores a growing educational site that supports public school students: youth-serving out-of-school time (OST) organizations. This paper asks: How do different organizational

stakeholders define success? Based on an ethnographic study in partnership with an OST program, this paper found that as some OST programs were designed to counteract the oppressive and racialized logics of traditional school, they started to be shaped, measured, and defined in similar ways. My qualitative analysis reveals how a multiracial group of stakeholders most intimately tied to the organization (staff, mentors, parents) define success collectively oriented towards systemic change, relationships, compassion, care, and fun, whereas more distant, yet powerful elite white stakeholders (funders, board members), define success at the individual level proven by quantifiable numbers. This paper illustrates how the data-driven and numbers-obsessed metrics imported into public education during the neoliberal turn have also begun to transform OST learning spaces. In OST spaces, importantly, the metrics are defined by unelected and oftentimes unaccountable private philanthropic stakeholders. This paper advances critical research on the way privatization, marketization, and datafication has exacerbated OST learning spaces through a racialized lens, and wrestles with what can be done to reimagine stories of success from those experiencing OST programming.

Presenter(s): Abbie Cohen

The intersecting obstacles to student success in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, students regularly emphasized that they must "skul gud" (do well in school) to give back to the families who supported their education. For these young people, doing well in school meant passing your exams and continuing your education as long as possible to find a well-paid job. For these young people, success in school was more than individualized advancement, it meant being able to give back financially to the family who invested in their schooling. However, the design of the education system in Solomon Islands made it difficult for students to succeed in school. In this paper, I describe what I call "The Cycle of Obstacles to Student Success" – obstacles such as exam-based education, overcrowding, and absenteeism that intersect, lowering the quality of education. The effects of these obstacles meant that students lacked readiness for school exams and career opportunities after schooling. When the obstacles limited the students' opportunities for educational success, students considered other ways that they could still contribute to their families financially. By sharing the educational journeys of youth in Solomon Islands, I consider what success means on an individual and community level and what drives students to "skul gud" amidst the obstacles they face.

Presenter(s): Rachel Emerine Hicks

The role of Anthropology in making schools more human

For over 200 years Western schools have been guided by a set of assumptions and practices that have had corrosive and delimiting effects on the lives and futures of millions of children worldwide. Anthropology, as the "study of ways of being human" (Helm, 2005, p. 6), offers perspectives that can correct many of these faulty beliefs about who we are and how we learn. In our research studies, we can center Anthropology's commitment to interrelatedness and context, and its understandings of people as social, emotional, curious, and adapted to learn, yet deeply affected

by visible and invisible flows of power. In our studies of schools and educational processes, we can bring to the surface and question beliefs and practices still guided by the long reach of individualistic psychology, external motivation, competitive and neoliberal individualisms, patriarchy, coloniality, and most importantly, norms of whiteness and Eurocentrism. We can ferret out the "rot" that persists from older and more exclusive models of schooling. We can use our research evidence and the tools of interpretive science to show how schools can ensure their students always see themselves in their curriculum and teachers, how they can help their students locate hope, and how they can develop more expansive communities and solidarities that can counter new radical individualisms. In this way we can contribute to the enduring project of making schools, in anthropological terms, more human.

Presenter(s): Peter Demerath

Discussion

3002 (The George Stocking Jr. Symposium) The New Negro @ 100: Anthropology and The Anthology That Catapulted a Movement

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In 1925 Alain Locke published the "The New Negro," which brought together artists and social scientists of the emerging Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro movement. Zora Neale Hurston, Arthur Fauset, and Melville Herskovits all made contributions. Elsie Clews Parsons, The Hampton Folklore Society, and the "Journal of American Folk-Lore" were routinely cited, and Franz Boas and American Anthropology heavily influenced each. For the first time, anthropology was used to celebrate, explore, and describe African American culture as distinctive, specific, beautiful, and rooted to an African past. These papers directly or indirectly interrogate how anthropology was positioned as an academic discipline in the 1920s as a liberating discipline that showcased, celebrated, and interrogated Black culture and folklore -- pioneering the anthropology of diasporic cultures and performances today.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Lee D Baker, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Chair: Kamela Heyward-Rotimi, Knowledge Exchange Research Group (K.E.R.G.)

Presenter(s): Lee D Baker, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Riché Barnes, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Kimberly Simmons, University of South Carolina, Kamela Heyward-Rotimi, Knowledge Exchange Research Group (K.E.R.G.), Jason Vasser-Elong, Alexis Holloway, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Discussant: Tracie Canada, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Presentation(s): Beyond B'rer Rabbit: Arthur Fauset and Scientific Folklore

Arthur Huff Fauset wrote "American Negro Folk Literature" as his chapter in Alain Locke's anthology. He argued that Folklore must be collected and analyzed systematically and scientifically, not left to the literary amateur. Beyond critiquing amateurs, he specifically challenges Joel Chandler Harris who "assumes to interpret Negro character instead of simply telling his stories. The result is a composite picture of the ante-bellum Negro that fits exactly into the conception of the type of Negro which so many white people would like to think once existed." This paper will explore Fauset's contribution to the volume as well as his critique of "entertaining" interpretations of Negro Folklore, and his collection of stories from "Cugo" [sic.] Lewis," who becomes Zora Neale Hurston's informant in "Baracoon."

Presenter(s): Lee D Baker

Zora Neale Hurston's Interpretation of New Negro Womanhood

As the editor of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, Alain Locke shaped the themes that would undergird Black cosmopolitanism and Black modernism, and he wrote the script for what became known as the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's vision for the emergence of the New Negro meant the birth of a new set of ideas. One of those was that African American life had moved away from aggressive emulation of White American values toward the search for an alternative, healthy, more self-accepting value system.

Only six out of thirty-five authors in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* were women. While only seventeen percent of the content, the inclusion of Black women in this volume was an important testament to Locke's commitment to Black women's position within new imaginings of the race. One, Zora Neale Hurston, is probably the most well-known of those women and one of two anthropologists.

. I argue that while we hear a great deal about Hurston's work with Boas as important to her development as a folklorist, ethnographer, and author, being published in *The New Negro*, and mentored by Alain Locke who also had a patron relationship with Charlotte Osgood Mason and introduced Hurston and Hughes to "the Godmother" also plays an important role that has not been fully explored. Centering Zora Neale Hurston's biography and her reoccurring themes on Black love, male-female relationships, and gender norms across class, this paper interrogates Hurston's "New Black womanhood."

Presenter(s): Riché Barnes

Anthropology and the Harlem Renaissance: The New Negro and Zora Neale Hurston's "Spunk"

Zora Neale Hurston's short story "Spunk" represents a significant contribution to Alain Locke's landmark anthology, *The New Negro* (1925), which helped define the Harlem Renaissance. What makes Hurston's work particularly distinctive is how she infused her literary output with her anthropological training and field research.

Through a close reading of "Spunk," with African American culture in mind, this paper highlights specific ethnographic approaches - linguistic preservation, participant-observer perspective, and

documentation of folk epistemologies - that transformed rural Black cultural expression from object of study to subject of artistic and cultural legitimacy. It can be argued that Hurston's fiction established an early model of merging insider cultural knowledge with rigorous anthropological approaches. A complete understanding of The New Negro's century-long impact compels us to acknowledge Hurston's groundbreaking methodological contributions demonstrating how her fiction, enhanced by anthropological approaches, helped create the intellectual framework that supported the cultural, political, and artistic ambitions of the Harlem Renaissance.

Presenter(s): Kimberly Simmons

Records of Existence: Arturo Schomburg Documenting Black Diasporic Cultures

Alain Locke presented the historic critical record of diasporic cultures, "The New Negro," as a corrective to early 20th century narratives of Black lives—in so doing, shifted the discourse on Black cultures. The New Negro also marks larger discussions around Black representation in the historical record and scholarship of the twentieth century. Archivist, curator, writer, and historian Arturo Schomburg contributed a chapter addressing his dedication to collecting and curating artifacts and studies from anthropology and other disciplines to document a historically accurate record of Black people. Schomburg's work signals the significant movement of, but not limited to, Black scholars, activists, archivists, writers, and poets of that period who challenged exclusionary knowledge production practices by preserving documentation/evidence of the diaspora to prevent the erasure of representative Black and Latinx experiences in the historical record and archives. In this paper, I explore Schomburg's foundational role in developing diasporic archival practice and Black knowledge production. Also considered are critical understandings of Black knowledge production represented in fields of study such as mid-20th-century Black Liberation Anthropology, and how questions about knowledge construction are being brought forward today in ethnographic and living archives of Black communities. His archives became the basis for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Presenter(s): Kamela Heyward-Rotimi

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry is an essay that examines a new interpretation of The New Negro Movement. Coined by philosopher Alain Locke in the early 20th century to characterize African American Life and Culture, I argue that the poetry of contemporary African American poets is a continuum of this cultural phenomena. In this essay, I will illustrate how the New Negro Movement has survived through cotemporary poetry, evidenced in the poetry of several writers.

In his day, Locke was most interested in how African American writers addressed issues of race consciousness, activism, and leadership and I will examine these same themes. From a contemporary, socio-cultural lens, my essay will illustrate how African American poets use their voices in a political climate not dissimilar from the writers of the New Negro Movement, beginning in 1925. I created a course, Rhyme & Reason: African American Poets in Dialogue with Notions of

Slavery, Identity and Existence, and in it, I teach about the significance of the New Negro Movement and its relevance in our current social – political landscape.

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry will not only provide readers with how contemporary poetry mirrors similar issues of the New Negro Movement, but will also provide classroom activities and tools to be used while having difficult conversations. In effect, meeting people where there are, at the intersection of difference.

Presenter(s): Jason Vasser-Elong

Sounding the New Negro: Music, Respectability, and Black Intellectual Praxis

Creative expression and innovation were central to Alain Locke's paradigm of the "New Negro." He recognized the political potential of music-making practices, framing this new mode of intellectual contribution as a pathway to African Americans' "spiritual emancipation." Yet Locke's analysis reproduced sonic hierarchies, ambivalently demoting Black artistic forms like jazz and blues in favor of the concertized Negro spiritual. Through this performance of sonic respectability politics, he overlooked the ways that vernacular Black music functioned both as cultural memory and as rich ethnographic material. This paper traces the productive tensions between Harlem Renaissance figures—Locke, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Zora Neale Hurston—whose writings and performances variously theorized Black musical forms as sites of knowledge production. I analyze how these intellectuals navigated issues of legibility, class, and cultural authenticity, and how their engagements with music prefigure Black anthropological thought. In doing so, I argue that Black musical praxis served not only as creative expression, but as an intellectual method for theorizing race, community, and the politics of representation.

Presenter(s): Alexis Holloway

Discussion

2815 Interrogating photography's in/visibilities: A roundtable on Photography, Power, and the Politics of Visibility in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Moving away from a singular focus on the politics of representation, contemporary anthropological engagements with photography consider how photographic images and practices can actively engage with what cannot be seen, what remains invisible, or what has been rendered absent. This inquiry is particularly timely, as contemporary visualities are haunted not only by enduring specters of the past but also by new "ghosts" in political and technological realms. These include the simultaneous rise of generative AI and fascist political regimes globally, as well as emerging procedures associated with operational images and nonhuman photography. These new specters challenge traditional notions of visibility, representation, and reality, making it crucial to question the politics of the invisible in understanding emerging technologies.

This roundtable takes seriously the relationship between photography and forms of knowledge production by critically engaging with photography's indexical and evidentiary qualities. It seeks to explore how photography - as media, medium, and practice - can make visible what cannot be seen. In this sense, it examines alternative visual practices that challenge conventional ways of seeing. We explore how photography can expose social tensions and challenge dominant narratives, evoking spectral presences, unsettling fixed meanings, and inspiring new ways of knowing that maintain the tensions enabled by the photographic image. This performative aspect positions photography as an active agent in cultural and political dialogue.

By engaging with artistic collaborations, archival interventions, and experimental ethnography, this roundtable emphasizes the aesthetic, sensory, and narrative strategies that bring absences into view. It examines alternative visual practices that challenge conventional ways of seeing, broadening ethnographic practices and enhancing the understanding of non-conventional visual research in anthropology.

Drawing on specific case studies - such as forensic photography in post-violence contexts, analog practices that use plant chemistries to explore histories of toxicity, migrant visualities through photography and jewelry-making, specters of thermic inequalities through thermal photography, photographic traces in conflict and counterinsurgency contexts, and "agitating images" in Indigenous and Soviet contexts-this roundtable invites reflection on the transformative potential of photography to resist visibility, evoke the unspoken, and open new spaces for imagining the invisible.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Camilo Leon-Quijano, National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)

Presenter(s): Alexander Fattal, University of California, San Diego Library, Alice Cazenave, Lee Douglas, Craig Campbell, University of Texas, Austin, Department of Anthropology, Liz Hingley, University of Southampton

Discussant: Karen Strassler, CUNY, Queens College, Department of Anthropology

3347 The Enchanted Politics of Ghosts, Spirits, and the Dead

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts, spirits, and the dead are often used as metaphors for social critique. Anthropological approaches that take ghosts seriously have provided an important intervention in our understanding of human experience, but have fallen short because of the primacy of a secular political frame in anthropological imagination. This has hindered a more radical version of this departure. We propose that these other-than-human entities cannot be reduced to the politics of the living. In this panel we ask-how might an enchanted world inform a disenchanted anthropological approach to politics?

Anthropology sees itself as the most reflexive social science, and yet those expectations of ethnographic reflexivity are largely limited to a secular humanist politics. Despite these expectations of ethnographic reflexivity, anthropologists resist the interrogation of their own cosmological positionality. Our papers collectively reframe these questions to include enchanted worlds in a more expansive imagination of what the political entails for the anthropologist and their interlocutors.

These papers are rooted in the region and communities of Southeast Asia, where ghosts, spirits, ancestors, and nonliving beings have always been interconnected with the living. Southeast Asian ontologies, cosmologies, and epistemologies articulate complex interplays between humans and these other-than-human entities. They intervene in an unjust human world, offering up power to resist and challenge systems of abuse such as sexual assault and marginalization. Spirit interventions in human ordeals suggest that it is not so much the dead to be feared but humans themselves. Humans also capture the potentiality of utilizing the ghostly or the dead's speech patterns to subvert the moral expectations of the humanly world they live within. Those who are stateless draw on their memories of ancient kingdoms and their future deaths as a reminder that life is only granted through the dead, and that the living is the soon-to-be dead. In a stateless ontology of the dead, nation-states and their borders do not hold a monopoly on sovereignty, and political struggle continues in the afterlife. As life is only possible through the dead, ultimate sovereignty too is only granted by ghosts, the dead, and ancestors.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Mai See Thao , Jacob Hickman, Brigham Young University

Chair: Mai See Thao

Presenter(s): Nathan Badenoch, Hjorleifur Jonsson, Arizona State University, Jacob Hickman, Brigham Young University, Mai See Thao

Discussant: Judith Pine, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Abnormal Speech and the Morality of Wild Spirits

The performance of "abnormal speech" animates the moral landscape of Human-Other interactions. In this presentation, I analyze the morphological marking of speech to frame human encounters with wild spirits in upland Laos. First, I present a story called "Person and Nya Wai Become Friends", told by a speaker of Ksingmul, an Austroasiatic language spoken near the Lao-Vietnam border. The story tells of a competition of trickery between a human and a wild spirit. In the telling of this story, the narrator marks the words of the spirit with a br- prefix that marks the "abnormal speech" of a non-human. To further unpack this semiotics of abnormality, I then discuss the expressive marking of morally ambiguous situations in Bit, a language related to Ksingmul. Bit storytellers mark narrative with a kr- prefix that animates the implications of ritual transgression. Another prefix br- is used to evoke feelings of disgust in the depiction of human-spirit conflict. Such linguistic performances are indexical of how power structures are negotiated, constructed and subverted in the depiction of sociality in a multi-animate landscape.

Presenter(s): Nathan Badenoch

Weretigers are a girl's best friend

Across Southeast Asia, weretigers are said to be invasive spirits who enter a human host from where they can attack their victims. My focus is on a twist on this idea of a threatening spirit, where being possessed by the tiger spirit instead offers security against a dangerous world. Three films from Thailand during 1963-1976 concern a girl/woman who unwittingly hosted a tiger spirit. Whenever she was threatened with sexual assault the tiger would take over and kill her attackers, after which the young woman would regain consciousness. The spirit was a protector of its host and did not present any danger except to those wanting to harm her. The three versions of the drama combine horror, fun, reflexivity and social commentary. In the first two versions, the tiger spirit gets the woman safely toward a promising future by age 20. However, she is killed at the end of the latest film, where loss, harm, and grief seem inevitable.

Presenter(s): Hjorleifur Jonsson

Cosmo-politics, Ancestral Personhood, and Broadening the Frame for Political Action and Critique

The everyday rituals that saturate Hmong life are pervaded with political critique and political action. However, the anthropological tendency to reduce religion to politics—and specifically to the immanent, secular humanist political imagination that dominates our discipline—misses the point entirely. Rather, we need a broader cosmo-political frame to understand the cosmologically expansive political projects in which my Hmong interlocutors are playing out their lives. In this paper, I unpack ethnographic experience and ritual actions that delineate Hmong political projects that transgress the immanent frame imagined by the secular humanism that underwrites anthropological political economic theory. The broader frame of Hmong cosmopolitics includes ancestors, ambient spirits, an expansive life course that precedes human birth and extends beyond the parting of the three souls at death, and a spiritual domain in which the ancient oppression from the Chinese empire continues as a political and military threat in the afterlife. I unpack a range of ritual and healing practices to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this cosmopolitical project, including shamanic healing (ua neeb), funeral rites (Txiv Xaiv, Zaj Qeej Ntaus Suav) and grave construction, ancestral rituals (Npua Rooj), and even the Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome (SUNDS) epidemic as a cosmopolitical protest.

Presenter(s): Jacob Hickman

Becoming the Dead: Hmong, Type 2 Diabetes, and Sovereignty

The cure for type 2 diabetes and the true return for Hmong Americans is "the Hmong shovel and the dirt." In diabetes groups, adult daycare, and interviews, older Hmong Americans with type 2 diabetes articulate themselves becoming the dead as both cure and return. Having left Laos after the America's Secret War, older Hmong Americans experience diabetes alongside their life in the US. In diabetes management, life is fostered through continuous monitoring of biological measures such as blood glucose, weight, blood pressure, diet, and exercise. However, older Hmong Americans find this chronic model unsatisfying, especially, as refugees who must live out life in the empire where they experience ongoing economic precarity, social isolation, and the undoing of

marital and familial relations. Drawing on scholarship on the dead, haunting, and critical refugee studies, this presentation argues that the refugee's future death is paradigmatic, revealing the chronic workings of US imperial violence in the empire. As well, the refugee's return is not a return to a place that is lost but to the refugee's own eternal sovereign power. Thus, older Hmong Americans' relationship to becoming the dead are how they are able and empowered to reimagine life as otherwise.

Presenter(s): Mai See Thao

Discussion

3372 Haunted Bodies, Healing Worlds: Ethics, Invisibility, and Moral Labor in East Asia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how invisible forces-spiritual, affective, chemical, technological, and ethical-become entangled with the textures of everyday life in East Asia. The papers examine how people grapple with phenomena that cannot be easily seen or measured yet are acutely felt: moral uncertainty, ambient harm, spectral memory, and embodied distress. These forces linger in moments of transition-between life and death, illness and recovery, labor and automation, ecology and ritual-where boundaries between presence and absence are porous, and where ethical life is negotiated amid partial knowledge and indeterminate affect.

Rather than treating the invisible as a mere metaphor or mystery, this panel interrogates how it becomes materially and morally consequential. Invisible agents-whether toxins, ghosts, AI systems, or affective residues-generate demands for care, responsibility, and interpretation. They exert pressure on both the body and the conscience, reshaping how agency is imagined, suffering endured, and repair enacted. In this sense, the invisible is not simply something that escapes perception, but a force that is unequally distributed, misrecognized, or disavowed-by institutions, by scientific frameworks, and at times even by those who suffer its effects.

Anthropological accounts from across the region illustrate how such forces become socially and morally legible. In Taiwan, the uneasy silence of a donated body raises questions about familial agency and the ethics of posthumous care; in engagements with the environment, religious practices involving "eco-tea" articulate cosmological responses to ecological harm, while in another case, the invisible threat of pesticides looms large in the questionable metaphor of the ghost. In South Korea, AI-driven call center systems generate new forms of moral distress among female workers engaged in increasingly disembodied forms of labor. In Japan, recovery from eating disorders emerges as a moral and affective practice shaped by the enduring force of embodied trauma.

These papers examine how unseen forces become palpable in the bodies, practices, and moral worlds of those who must live with them. They raise critical questions about visibility, agency, and ethics: How do people make sense of suffering that eludes conventional diagnosis? What forms of care emerge when institutional frameworks fail to respond adequately? And what does it mean to act ethically when the sources of harm are obscured, intangible, or actively denied? In making the invisible legible, this panel calls for a deeper anthropological engagement with the subtle yet powerful forces that shape everyday life in contemporary East Asia.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Shao-hua Liu, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Kwanwook Kim

Chair: Joseph Bosco, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): C Julia Huang, National Tsing Hua University, Shao-hua Liu, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Joseph Bosco, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Kwanwook Kim, Momoko Katayama

Discussant: Shu-Min Huang, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica

Presentation(s): The Invisible Moral Career of a Dead Body: Familism, Emotions, and Ethics in Bodily Donations in Taiwan

Dead bodies are inherently social, in spite, and by virtue, of their embodied silence in liminality. In Taiwan, traditional Chinese funerals designate detailed ritual procedures for handling the remains of life. Bodily donations – either for organ transplants or medical education – run counter with the existing itineraries for the dead bodies. The liminality of the dead body perpetuates since, in Taiwan, the bereaved have the de facto final decision on bodily donations – with or without the donor's living written decision. This family's agency has led to differential results: an over-supplied whole-body donation for medical education and, as in most countries with an opt-in policy, a high discrepancy between diseased organ transplants and the number of people on the waiting list. My preliminary ethnography shows that the key lies in emotional ethics: Would the dead body suffer in the procedures and the afterlife? Is the suffering a good or bad death? What would the dead body become after the donation? In this paper, I will discuss the family's agency in expanding the capacity for changing the course of a lived life through a medical procedure on the dead body.

Presenter(s): C Julia Huang

Healing the Seen and Unseen: Nature-Based Shennong Myth and Ritual in Taipei

In the post-COVID era, environmental perception has gained renewed significance—not only as a mode of ecological awareness but also as a means of healing. The case of the Shennong belief practiced at Qingyun Temple in the mountains of Taipei exemplifies the green transformation of a traditional religious tradition. In response to escalating environmental degradation and the concurrent rise in disasters and diseases, followers of the temple have reconfigured their practices through the framework of divine revelation. This transformation is enacted through new discursive and embodied forms—for example, the ritual preparation of eco-tea, believed to carry sacred efficacy and serve as a therapeutic agent for healing humans, ecosystems, and wandering ghosts.

This paper examines the symbolic and ontological entanglements among environmental perception, religious reform, and spiritual healing, using Qingyun Temple as a case study. By attending to the worldview, moral practices, and reformative efforts embedded in this tradition, the study illustrates how cultural and ethical imaginaries inform modes of care for both the self and the environment.

Presenter(s): Shao-hua Liu

The Invisible Threat of Pesticides: Ghostly Metaphors and Toxic Uncertainties in Taiwan

The metaphor of ghosts is commonly used to describe the danger of pesticides, for example in saying that consumers are haunted by pesticide risk. In some cases, the metaphor is apt and helps us describe the sense of foreboding among farmers and consumers. Like ghosts, pesticide toxins are invisible and can be dangerous. But the metaphor can be misleading because not all pesticides are equally toxic or toxic to humans, and the metaphor makes us think in binary terms (present vs absent), while with toxins, the dosage is critical to understanding the danger. Toxicologists are quick to dismiss the dangers of pesticides, if they are used correctly, and thus dismiss pesticide risk much like skeptics and materialists reject ghosts. And yet misuse of pesticides and excessive exposure to them is demonstrably dangerous. Does the ghost metaphor help us see and understand pesticides better, or is it more like an intellectual parlor game of anthropologists, detached from the reality of farmers and consumers? This paper examines how Taiwanese farmers and consumers deal with the uncertainty and invisible threat of pesticides, questioning recent anthropological use of the ghostly metaphor.

Presenter(s): Joseph Bosco

Breathless Labors under AI: Spectral Work and Techno-Moral Sickness in South Korea

In South Korea's AI-driven call center industry, labor has become spectral. For female agents, ghosts appear as hostile voices from past calls—memories that linger as residues of exhaustion and shame. They must speak warmly while remaining voiceless about their own pain, performing emotional labor as disembodied presences—present yet invisible. With the arrival of AI, this condition has worsened. Agents were first tasked with training AI meant to replace them, and now apologize for its failures. While AI lacks the "human touch," it creates new affective burdens: workers absorb customer anger while their own distress goes unseen. Rather than easing precarity, AI deepens it—eroding job security and accelerating workloads under algorithmic control. What is commodified now is not emotion but "goodness": moral endurance expected of those who must endure injustice with grace. I call this techno-moral sickness—embodied suffering produced by the intersection of ethics and automation. Call centers act as affective sewers, where social anxieties are dumped onto precarious workers. In Korea, breathlessness is more than overwork—it is a ghostly affect moving through labor, illness, and life.

Presenter(s): Kwanwook Kim

Loosening the Grip: Tracing “recovery” from Eating Disorders in Japan

In the throes of eating disorders—when food becomes intolerable or when bingeing sets in—it is as though an invisible, relentless force has taken hold. Are there any ways to break free from this force? If so, how?

Anthropologists have long depicted the haunting experience of eating disorders by attending to embodied practices and cultural logics that shape them. The experience is marked by a persistent entrapment in food and flesh, with past trauma echoing into the present, rendering mere existence unbearable. Yet, as survivors' accounts suggest, eating disorders can come to an end. What remains underexplored are the practices through which "recovery" is enacted.

In Japan, social scientific analyses of eating disorders have expanded since the 1980s, often adopting feminist or cultural lenses. By the late 2000s, however, social scientists began to acknowledge that "social determinants" were insufficient to address eating disorders. This prompted patients to value their own notion of "recovery" as a personal journey, distinct from the standardized biomedical model that focuses on symptom reduction. Yet, for patients on the brink of death, whose bodies are giving way, do these alone offer pathways to "recovery"?

To explore how "recovery" from eating disorders unfolds in practice, this paper draws on fieldwork in clinical settings and self-help groups in Japan. Ethnographic observations can trace how the invisible force of eating disorders loosens its grip—and why it matters

Presenter(s): Momoko Katayama

Discussion

7727 Spectral Subjects: Conjuring Spirited Anthropologies

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Spectral preoccupations are essential to human culture, and our propensity to cast them in material form is an impulse we can't resist. Anthropologists have long been drawn to reflect upon the materialities of the ineffable. The spectral subjects conjured by our ancestors reflect our relational subjectivities and phantasmic imaginings of human relevance. In ongoing reciprocities with sacred and spirited landscapes, we struggle to manage the indeterminacies of nature, climate, environment and multispecies kin. Ethnographers have long been the witnesses of uncanny agency, ghostly beings, objects, places and anticipatory sensibilities. In trying to make sense of spectral subjects, we have conjured spirited anthropologies. What monsters lurk in our ineffable entanglements? What shadowy presences weave through our visions of the past, present and future? As we summon the words, data, images, and energies that give body and fuel to cultural imagination, how do we ourselves enchant the world? This roundtable is a séance of intrepid mediums who invoke spectral subjects to consider the hauntings given shape through our disciplinary practice. We seek to explore personifications of the marketplace and spectral divinations of stock trading; ghosts that track in the mud of industrialization, environmental restoration, and contamination in the Midwest; large language models as necromantic

technologies haunted by the voices of non-consenting human subjects who provide training data; the phantasms of fossil fuels and dreams of renewable energy that power European imaginaries of the Anthropocene; the fate of earth-dwelling Klu and the afterlife of Tibetan ceremonial scarves; and the incantations of singing duets with ancestors in the hopes of language revitalization. New Orleans is a spirited place of memories, its real and fictional landscapes thronged with embodiments of the fantastic, from ghosts and vampires to Bacchus, Orpheus and Endymion. What better place to confabulate and contemplate the new, spirited Anthropologies we might bring into being?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Bernard Perley, University of British Columbia, Tracey Heatherington, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Daniel Souleles, Copenhagen Business School, Alexandra Frankel, York University, Department of Anthropology, Huatse Gyal, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Tracey Heatherington, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Graham Jones, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Bernard Perley, University of British Columbia

Discussant: Aide Esu

7174 Debris of Futurity: Unfinished Makings of Our Pasts and Futures

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Visions of the future are never only about what lies ahead, they are also shaped by what is left behind. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1942), Walter Benjamin famously describes the angel of history as propelled into the future with their back turned toward the debris of the past, accumulating in a storm called progress. This panel invites papers that sit within that storm and ask: What does it mean to have a future? Drawing inspiration from the anthropology of futurity and historicity, we seek contributions that interrogate the costs, consequences, and configurations of "having" a future. How is the future imagined, constructed, or contested? What is left behind or rendered obsolete in the name of progress? What losses are folded into futures that appear inevitable, and what remains, resists, or emerges in their wake?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Skylar Kaat , Esther Tinhoy Fan

Chair: Skylar Kaat , Esther Tinhoy Fan

Presenter(s): Skylar Kaat, Britta Ingebretson, Fordham University, Nick Bartlett, Barnard College, Amina Tawasil, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Esther Tinhoy Fan

Presentation(s): Echoes of a Language: Mongolian language survival in China

On a scorching hot afternoon, in a community center in Inner Mongolia, China, twelve elderly people come together to learn Classical Mongolian. It was the language of their parents and grandparents, but one that they never had the chance to learn due to over seventy years of state-led

assimilationist agenda promoting Mandarin Chinese (Curdt-Christiansen and Gao 2021). One might imagine that they strive towards fluency or hope their dedication ignites a broader revitalization for future generations. However, I found that learning Mongolian in their case has shifted in meaning from mastery of the language to its use in performance (Bauman 1993) and as a performative act (Austin 1962). The elderlies focus their daily meetings on cultivating the feel of speaking Mongolian, through repeating basic phrases and singing Mongolian songs to tourists, without understanding most of the Mongolian they utter. What happens when an endangered language itself is not actively spoken yet otherwise lives on? In what forms beyond simple restoration to daily conversational use can language survival manifest? This project examines the future of a language by foregrounding survival, rather than revitalization, looking into the intersection between minority people's performative, symbolic engagements and the state's paradoxical stance.

Presenter(s): Skylar Kaat

Back to the future: nostalgia and futurity in rural China

Svetlana Boym writes that nostalgia is not about the longing for an imagined past, but a different imagined present. In this paper, I explore what happens if we think about this longing as the desire for a different future to an imagined past. In many ways, rural Chinese already live in the future imagined by Chinese leaders at the beginning of the Reform and Opening movement in the early 1980s. China is now a global superpower and a manufacturing powerhouse with the world's second largest economy. Large-scale urbanization projects have turned hundreds of millions of peasants into urbanites. My paper explores how, despite a shared sense of national progress, rural Chinese grapple with the ambivalence of living in a previously desired future that has drastically increased the temporal rhythms of daily life and that has stigmatized rurality as a sign of "backwardness." As rural Chinese become part of a new urban working class and lose their ability to control their own time, it is ownership of time, rather than material wealth, that becomes the focus of nostalgia and an object of desire.

Presenter(s): Britta Ingebretson

Producing Futurity through the Here and Now: Group Speech in the People's Republic

This paper explores notions of futurity that emerge from encounters in Group Relations Conferences. First pioneered in post-WWII Britain before expanding to over twenty countries, GRCs in China today claim to offer paying participants the opportunity to explore the unconscious group dynamics that undergird everyday institutional life. In ritualized group events designed to evoke raw, phantasy-laden, often confrontational speech, everything from experiences of geopolitical tensions to intimate daydreams come to be spoken and made available for attendees to connect, critique, and reflect upon in group encounters. Drawing on Daniel Stern's phenomenological exploration of the "here and now" temporality of the psychoanalytic clinical encounter, this paper offers an interpretation of how conference staff and participants rely on a particular, shared experience of

the present to produce new notions of individual and collective futurity in these China-based conferences.

Presenter(s): Nick Bartlett

“They Can’t Come Back to Fix It”: The Posthumous Reverence for East Coast Graffiti Writers

I look at futurity in the context of death among east coast graffiti writers. I ask, what can we learn about futurity through the lens of mortality among NYC graffiti writers? Answers here are based in four years of ethnographic work with graffiti writers in New York City, urban New Jersey and Philadelphia. One emergent theme is the phenomenon of writers caring for the written names of dead writers that have been defaced, because, as they say, "Dead writers can't come back to fix it." This reverence offers connections to Anna Tsing's (2015) examination of survival in capitalist ruins. The care might be what Tsing calls the "arts of noticing," or the attentive practices that create meaning within erasure. While Tsing explores how matsutake foragers forge meaning in post-industrial forests, I analyze how graffiti communities preserve memory in urban spaces considered liminal, what graffiti writers call "cutty"; abandoned buildings or non-functioning train tunnels. I show how cleaning dead writers' graffiti names indexes a value system. It forms what Tsing calls an assemblage, a meaningful constellation of practices, materials, and relationships that create memory work within precarious conditions. These create continuity between the past and future of communities denied historical recognition beyond the label of pathology. The community's protection of these writings demonstrates how value and significance persist in spaces of erasure and impermanence; thus, futurity.

Presenter(s): Amina Tawasil

Water as way, water as labour: Fluidity and futuring among Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver

"We are people in a borrowed city on borrowed time." This paper explores futurity through intergenerational narratives of Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver, focusing on how they learn to and practice "be water" in navigating uncertain futures. Bruce Lee's "Be water, my friend" exhorts one to be formless, shapeless, and fluid, emerging in Hong Kong spheres as shared instruction, encouragement, and reflection. With the city as economic and ideological port, I examine migration as context where Hong Kong people use water as way to face barriers and borders, highlighting challenges to "flow" and resulting debris. How do Hong Kong people in Vancouver learn about and use "water" as way– of culturing and futuring– to make and articulate their lives? How do they respond to barriers they encounter? When is 'water' labour?

I find that love and family are important motivators for Hong Kong people migrating to Vancouver, where parents ai (endure) as one way to adapt and secure their children's future of tan (relax, enjoy). They face struggles to flow in everyday life, education, work, and relationships, evoking Biehl and Locke's (2017) anthropology of becoming and emphasis on human plasticity and constraints in making unfinished worlds. As water's mutability and diversity invites various interpretations (Helmreich, 2011), this paper shows how Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver use water as way of futuring and considers the labour and costs of making with their pasts.

Presenter(s): Esther Tinhoy Fan

4148 Inhabiting Conditions of Violence: Seeing Anew through Cultural Horizons

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What are the stakes of describing how one lives through deleterious conditions and structural violence? How might ethnographers see anew the difficult and creative work which sustains a life with others? This panel takes up these themes, among others, as some of the horizons of the discipline embodied in the SCA's 2024 Cultural Horizons prize-winning articles by David C. Thompson and Tarini Bedi. Thompson's article engages with key concepts in Black and Trans Studies to reckon with his interlocutors' movements "across rather than against a set of tensions shaped by slavery and incarceration" (2023, 52). Situating evasion within a broader genealogy of negotiating landscapes of captivity, Thompson's ethnography reverberates with echoes of the long history of Black fugitivity and focuses on how his interlocutors live with captivity, shifting what punishment "could and could not take" from them (49). Bedi's article introduces the concept of "sensate ecologies" to capture the often overlooked sensory and ecological dimensions of labor as drivers navigate through the ecological onslaught, or gadbad, of urban driving. By centering the perspective of urban drivers within a polluted ecology, Bedi urges us to pay attention to the different orientations, particularly the ethical and pragmatic ones, towards compromised ecologies.

The panel considers both articles' innovations to ask, concretely: how do these horizons take shape in the panelists' ethnographic projects? How do the descriptions and methods developed in these articles find resonance in our own work? Nomaan Hasan traces how a neighborhood dispute in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh activates competing claims to belonging. By shifting attention from the content of historical claims to the mode through which the past is inhabited, his paper offers a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing the politics of temporal form. Wan Yin Kimberly Fung's paper considers the afterlife of Japan's first major industrial pollution in the Ashio-Watarase River region, attending to the regenerative practices which embody in-betweenness: not an exit from toxicity but an inhabitation of ambivalence. Austin Bryan reflects upon the figure of the peer educator in Uganda's HIV response, specifically tracing how, through the labor of peer educators, a political and ethical horizon emerges where the work of care is inseparable from the struggle to survive. Marios Falaris' paper traces how unemployed young men tarry with the lethal everyday of militarization in Indian-occupied Kashmir, ultimately describing how young men invest the everyday with pleasure, fantasy and possibility. Engaging with the "cultural horizons" in Thompson and Bedi's articles, this panel thus takes up a range of methods for detecting the effects of violence, not only as spectral presences, but as intimately bound up with our interlocutors' efforts at making a life livable.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Marios Falaris, John Hopkins University

Chair: Marios Falaris, John Hopkins University

Presenter(s): Nomaan Hasan, Wan Yin Kimberly Fung, Austin Bryan, Northwest University, Marios Falaris, John Hopkins University

Discussant: Tarini Bedi

Presentation(s): The Politics of Temporal Form: An Ethnography of a Neighborhood Dispute in India

While scholars have long described how the past is mobilized for political legitimacy, this paper argues that the normative force of such claims derives not only from historical content but from the temporal forms through which the past is apprehended. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, I examine how a neighborhood dispute that erupts into Hindu nationalist violence activates competing claims to belonging. Majoritarian discourse leverages a temporal form predominant in both political and academic discourse, which is governed by the norm of priority wherein legitimacy is secured through chronological precedence. In contrast, residents articulate an alternative temporal imagination in response to the violence enacted in the name of priority. To characterize this, I develop the analytic of density—a temporal form grounded not in origin but in the sedimentation of shared life and continuous entwinement. By shifting attention from the content of historical claims to the mode through which the past is inhabited, this paper offers a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing the politics of temporal form. In doing so, it furthers reflection on the chronopolitics of anthropological theory, illuminating how its temporal forms capacitate and constrain relational possibilities.

Presenter(s): Nomaan Hasan

What Cannot Be Unearthed: Edges of Recovery and Surfaces of Action

This paper engages with the century-and-a-half afterlife of Japan's first major industrial pollution in the Ashio-Watarase River region. Over time, sedimentation has caused mining residues to settle into the river's chemical infrastructures (Murphy 2013), from dams to riverbeds. The surfaces above these heavy-metal layers have been declared restored: sites of agriculture, livelihood, and wilderness. These surfaces bracket the violence of past dispossession and buried threats while also bearing uncertain leakage of toxins through rainfall, seismic shifts, and decaying infrastructure. They are part of the region's public secret (Taussig 1999), yet what cannot be unearthed is not an erasure of harm but surfaces that communities have acted upon and reshaped into edges of possibility. I ask: what kinds of ethnographic attention allow us to stay with instability, not to redeem it, but to trace how different futures emerge in late industrialism (Fortun 2014; Ahmann & Kenner 2020)? For instance, reeds grown in the wetland, which is also a reservoir built through eviction and layered with toxic residues, are harvested and returned as compost to Ashio's mountains, reversing the flow of pollution. These regenerative practices do not resolve the tension between Ashio and downstream areas affected by the mining legacy and corporate impunity, but render the sedimented surfaces actionable. They embody in-betweenness: not an exit from toxicity but an inhabitation of ambivalence.

Presenter(s): Wan Yin Kimberly Fung

The Peer: Community Health Workers and the Underclass of Global Health

This paper explores the figure of the "peer educator", locally called "peers", in Uganda's HIV response as both an agent of care and an embodiment of global structural abandonment. Recruited from the very communities targeted by donor interventions, such as LGBTQ+ Ugandans, sex workers, and people living with HIV, peer educators are positioned as the face of "community-led" and "community-owned" global health. Yet beneath this framing lies a deeply extractive labor regime. Peers perform counseling, contact tracing, and adherence monitoring, often without contracts, protections, or recognition. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with peer educators in Jinja, Uganda and NGO directors and donor agencies in Kampala who debate and broker their stipends, this paper traces how peers become symbols of empowerment, nodes of containment, and extensions of a global health system that relies on their proximity to risk but denies them structural stability. Peers are praised for their resilience even as they navigate burnout, community mistrust, state surveillance, and arrest. Situating this analysis within a broader critique of racial capitalism and humanitarian governance, the paper argues that containment in what I described as "global medical apartheid logic" is not only spatial or epidemiological but deeply labor-based. In tracing their labor, this paper reflects on what kind of political and ethical horizon emerges when the work of care is inseparable from the struggle to survive.

Presenter(s): Austin Bryan

Inhabiting Suspicion and Fantasy: Masculinity and the Everyday in Indian-Occupied Kashmir

This paper starts by considering how Kashmiri masculinity is shadowed by the figure of the militant, and thus young men in Kashmir must contend with an everyday suffused with suspicion. I track how state-led development initiatives, intended to curb high unemployment in Kashmir, reproduce these lethal suspicions for young men. Any number of mundane activities they engage in, which had previously been unremarkable, may suddenly come under suspicion through shifting surveillance mechanisms. I then describe how young men navigate such a militarized everyday, and come to make it livable for themselves. Specifically, through their investments in ephemeral forms of masculine intimacy—on the road, watching the match, at the shop ledge—young men re-worked their sense of the everyday as an everyday that was pleasurable, fantastical, and in which they could sense possibility. These possibilities were not necessarily tied to a clear future, but rather, their significance was registered through the ways that they altered the very texture of the everyday, where young men could more readily detect a kind of hope in the present moment.

Presenter(s): Marios Falaris

Discussion

2509 Viability: Love, death, and animal afterlives

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In 2008, Donna Haraway reminded us that it is a "misstep to pretend to live outside killing". For to do so, she suggested, would be to forget "the ecologies of all mortal beings, who live in and through the use of one another's bodies" (2008: 79). In one sense, of course, this is a truism. To the extent that human beings need to sustain themselves, how could we ever avoid violating other lives altogether? For Haraway, though, this simple intuition served as an invitation to think about the ethical, political, and material processes by which certain living beings become violable and even killable in certain times and places. And by which others do not. Indeed, for Haraway, the problem is to learn to live responsibly "within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing"

From early accounts of sacrifice to contemporary studies of leisure hunting, animal experimentation, and industrial meat production, deaths of animals sit uneasily on us and require elaborate reasoning and calculation to negotiate the weight of their death. As Govindrajana (2018) has described, this burden may be shouldered through daily acts of care that deepen the cost of the sacrifice, making the life of the animal grievable. Indeed, it is grievability that Cary Wolfe (2019), drawing on Judith Butler (2004), identifies as a vital way to make animal deaths count where vulnerability is not simply a recognition of fragility, but involves a becoming vulnerable together (Despret 2016). This contextualizes, indeed nuances the politics of bearing witness pioneered by animal rights organizations that seek to counter the 'deanimalization' of the animal (Vialles 2005; Lockwood 2018). Thus, whilst we may indeed always live at the cost of another's life, such inevitability does not mean that death ceases to matter (Singh & Dave 2015). Such deaths may indeed continue to haunt us, and the questions remain as to what it might look, feel, and taste like to live and work off others with openness to the ongoing (in)calculability of the associated such ethical dilemmas.

The panel invites papers that tend ethnographically to ways in which, the places in which, and the moods through which animal killing transpires – the inevitabilities, vulnerabilities, and violences of deaths and their afterlives. In thinking with killing and loving animals and the awkward flourishings of multispecies ecologies (Chao 2021; Ginn, Beisel, & Barua 2014), we examine the everyday ethics that emerge when certain species meet and vitally move towards what comes after the entanglement of companion species and what a multi-species anthropology of indifference might involve (Giraud 2019; Dave 2024).

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Matti Weisdorf, Eimear Mc Loughlin, Aarhus University

Chair: Eimear Mc Loughlin, Aarhus University

Presenter(s): Kyrstin Mallon Andrews, Syracuse University, Matti Weisdorf, Tomas Cole, Stockholm University, Eimear Mc Loughlin, Aarhus University

Discussant: John Hartigan, University of Texas at Austin, Juno Parrenas, Cornell University

Presentation(s): Death of a Manatee: The Forensics of Ecotourism in the Dominican Republic

It was tourism – the darling of the Ministry of Environment – that killed the manatee – the other darling of the Ministry of Environment. In the hotly contested, warming waters of the northern coast of the Dominican Republic, manatees graze on the seagrass along the shallow coastline, their

backs barely submerged in the water. Once a quiet fishing town, one coastal outpost has experienced a boom in (eco)tourism in the last decade, where attention to the marine environment has played a central role in drawing visitors to this place. Increases in boat and jet ski traffic pose dangers to the region's longstanding diver fishermen, but also to the charismatic fauna – such as the manatee – that are cited as one of the ecological treasures of the region. This paper explores the obscured and contested accidental killing of one manatee, which occurred at the crosscurrents of state relations with the nation's seascapes. Tourism, marine conservation, and the institutional entanglements between them posed problems for reckoning with the manatee's death in what I term the forensics of ecotourism. This paper examines narratives of charismatic species and inconvenient evidence of a killing to explore how conservation's optics of love can obscure environmental crimes in the name of ecotourism.

Presenter(s): Kyrstin Mallon Andrews

Killing them softly: ethics and apologies in lethal biologist practices

This presentation focuses on the kinds of human-animal relations that emerge from various forms of violent enterprises within biology practice, both inside and outside laboratories. Over the course of long-term fieldwork among biodiversity-oriented biologists, I witnessed and participated in lethal encounters with everything from beetles to sharks. Again and again. And I remain puzzled about how interlocutors reacted to and went about all this death-dealing. How is it that a group of self-professed lovers of life comes to exercise or subscribe to all this suffering? The talk exhibits how biologists, as they do so, try on various mitigating or legitimizing logics, such as de-animalization and sacrifice, but also that such frameworks fail to assuage fully the ethics involved in these lethal encounters. Indeed, the presentation shows how the ethical potential of ants and hagfish, sea squirts and frogs, despite clear asymmetries in terms of power and autonomy, is not so easily domesticated. It is argued, ultimately, that violence executed by biologists is realized in an ethically ambiguous yet deeply engaged mode of apology whereby perpetrators accede to the complexity of entangled multispecies relationships and take on responsibility for their actions in order to nurture the care-full potentials of responsivity.

Presenter(s): Matti Weisdorf

Everyday Eradication: Conundrums of Killing, Combating Mosquito-borne Dis-ease, and Building a 'City in Nature' in Singapore

The day-to-day labour of eradicating mosquitos is commonly presented as apolitical and morally irreproachable. Indeed, it's hard to take issue with efforts that potentially save hundreds of thousands of lives worldwide each year. In Singapore, dramatically transforming the landscape, through smothering mangroves in concrete and saturating the city in insecticides, this island nation was official declared malaria free in the 1980s. Likewise, the daily work (known as vector control or 'housekeeping') to keep the jungle at bay and destroying all bodies of stagnant water that may harbour mosquito larvae, has kept the transmission of diseases low compared to neighbouring states. In the process, however, vector control has perpetuated large-scale habitat destruction, and

the extinction of untold numbers of native species: trapping this island nation in seemingly endless cycles of habitat destruction, extinction, and disease outbreaks. This conundrum becomes particularly apparent in the Singaporean Government's ongoing efforts to transform this island nation into a 'City in Nature', restoring its ecosystems and bolstering its biodiversity. In this paper I focus on ordinary places around Singapore, examining the ambiguous affects and effects of eradication, and explore local attempts to overcome them.

Presenter(s): Tomas Cole

'I don't like it, but I have to do it': Existential apologies, affective injustice, and the everyday ethics of killing in industrial pig farming

27,000 piglets die prematurely every day on Danish pig farms, a result of the industrialization of porcine bodies being pushed to their limits within an intensive system, and Aleksandra apologizes as she kills one more. A pig with a bad leg cannot stand, so must be shot, and Daniel apologizes for the act. 'My best friend', the six-month-old '24', is being sent to slaughter, and Andreas offers no apology for the death that is to come. What are these apologies doing? Are they simply speech acts? Are they attempts to save face, in the Goffman sense, in a social situation where everyday acts may be exposed to scrutiny? Or might killing the Other in the presence of another operate as an existential prompt that provokes an apology (or not) revealing an existential equivocation as well as an irresolvable 'affective injustice'? I have my doubts and so did they.

This presentation considers how industrial agriculture imposes profoundly difficult normative conflicts on marginalized individuals forcing them into doing things they don't want to but feel they must. Through this perspective, the apology is anaesthetized by the inevitability and necessity of killing itself and is symptomatic of unrecognized injustice rather than a gesture towards forgiveness.

Presenter(s): Eimear Mc Loughlin

Discussion

Discussion

5649 Diagrams in anthropology: haunting the canon? Exploring critiques and possibilities of diagrammatic work.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Diagrams appeared in some of the earliest works of anthropology and are still frequently used across the discipline today. This persistence alone warrants attention, especially since certain diagrammatic forms have remained largely unchanged over many decades. Given this longevity, studying diagrams is a way to engage with the disciplinary history of anthropology itself, as in the recent book "Burning Diagrams in Anthropology" (punctum 2024). While other visual components

of anthropological work – especially photography, cartography, and film – have been subject to significant critical scrutiny, diagrams have received far less reflexive attention. What are the ethical, political, or epistemological implications of these gaps? What have been – and what might be – the roles that diagrams perform in anthropological work, e.g. the diagram as method, as representational technique, as conceptual tool? This Roundtable conversation will explore how practitioners across diverse fields enliven, enact, extend, and inhabit diagrammatic work – pointing towards potential futures for (re)visualizing relational, conceptual, and social worlds.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Tristan Partridge, University of California, Santa Barbara, Nick Seaver, Tufts University

Presenter(s): Allison Holt, Natan Diacon-Furtado, Nick Seaver, Tufts University, Tristan Partridge, University of California, Santa Barbara

Discussant: Tristan Partridge, University of California, Santa Barbara

7003 Smoke Signals: Fire, Air, and Atmospheres of Pollution

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the anthropology of air through the lens of smoke-its production, perception, and politicization. As wildfires, waste incineration, and domestic practices release visible and invisible pollutants, smoke emerges as a physical and symbolic entity that influences sensory environments and regulatory systems. From the fire-affected wildland-urban borders of Colorado and the Pacific Northwest to the ritualistic and recreational use of incense and wood burners in London, presenters explore how smoke is understood, contested, and managed. In Northern Thailand, the seasonal agricultural burning creates haze that is addressed through local traditions, spirits, and mobile apps, while in Bulgaria, racialized blame for smoke production highlights the political use of air quality data. Across these locations, smoke signals intersect with regulatory frameworks, environmental risk, and moral evaluation. Presenters trace how people interact with smoke as it moves into, through, and out of homes-as a danger, a tradition, or a means of livelihood-amid disputed evidence and uneven responsibility. Papers explore how bodies act as sensors, how wildland fire managers, restoration industries and government entities define contamination, and how air becomes a platform for discussing racial, economic, and environmental justice. By viewing smoke as a symbolic and affective medium, this panel positions the anthropology of atmospheric pollution as a crucial area for theorizing environmental justice and the perceptual politics of environmental degradation in a smoke-filled world.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Jessica Barnes, University of South Carolina, Mary Mostafanezhad, University of Hawaii, Manoa

Chair: Kerry Ryan Chance

Presenter(s): Jessica Barnes, University of South Carolina, Mary Mostafanezhad, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Elana Resnick, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of

Anthropology, Kathryn Goldfarb, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology,
Arielle Milkman, Colorado State University

Discussant: Nicholas Shapiro, University of California, Los Angeles

Presentation(s): Cultures of Combustion: Wood Burners, Incense, and Air Pollution in London

This paper contrasts two forms of domestic combustion in London: wood burners and incense. Drawing on a year's ethnographic research in the UK, I explore the political and cultural dimensions of these burning practices that both produce particulate matter, a major air pollutant concern. Wood burners, used primarily for ambience rather than heating, are relatively common in middle and upper class households, and are the focus of air quality activists' ire for the particulate matter they release outdoors. Incense, typically heated over burning coals and used to scent the home, is common in North and East African communities in London, and the focus of public health experts' concern for the particulate matter it releases indoors. Looking at these two practices together offers an insight into cultures of combustion and the affective and material atmospheres produced through burning in the home. I examine the role that smells – perceived by some to be pleasurable and by others to be toxic – play in both the continuance of these practices and opposition to them. I consider the contrasting interpretations of these practices as polluting and harmful versus cleansing and comforting and what this means for experts' efforts to intervene. Through this analysis, I highlight the varied political alliances, toxic entanglements, and social worlds generated in and through domestic smoke.

Presenter(s): Jessica Barnes

Smoke Signals: Semiotic Ecologies and Fire Politics in Northern Thailand

This presentation explores Chiang Mai's seasonal haze crisis through a semiotic and phenomenological lens, drawing on an ethnographic analysis of smoke and fire conceptualizations. Instead of framing air quality solely through scientific data, I contend that smoke and fire are intricately woven into the cosmologies, livelihoods, and power dynamics of Northern Thailand. From official bans and mobile apps to traditional proverbs and forest spirits, I reveal how local categories mediate experiences of smoke and its contaminating properties. Terms such as ching pao (early burning), fay arom (emotional fires), and kleng pao (slandorous fires) encode competing narratives about ecological knowledge, authority, and control. Grounded in STS, political ecology, and phenomenological anthropology, this work traces how haze becomes a contested atmospheric condition—measurable through PM2.5 monitors, sensed through smell and sight, and interpreted through deeply situated cultural frameworks. In doing so, it highlights the ontological entanglement of breathing, environment, and governance. This paper reveals that Chiang Mai's smoky season is not merely a public health issue but a political and semiotic landscape where notions of pollution, purification, and propriety are continually redefined.

Presenter(s): Mary Mostafanezhad

Smoke, Pollution, and the Racial Politics of Evidence-Making in Urban Bulgaria

Sofia, Bulgaria is among the top 25 most polluted cities in the world according to the Air Quality Index (AQI). In 2023, the city's average PM2.5 levels were 2.6 times higher than the WHO's annual air quality guideline. Within Sofia, Romani communities—one of the country's largest and most marginalized minority groups—experience disproportionately polluted air and related health issues. Yet, instead of addressing systemic sources such as industrial production and car emissions, populist narratives blame Romani neighborhoods for the city's poor air quality. Rather than acknowledging the impact of urban air pollution on Romani communities, political campaigns falsely attribute the city's degraded air quality to the everyday practices of Roma residents, particularly the burning of waste for heat. This presentation analyzes how evidence of air pollution is made, contested, and racialized in Bulgaria. I argue that smoke is not only a material index of polluted air but also a tool through which political actors weaponize air-quality data for right-wing agendas.

Presenter(s): Elana Resnick

“My daughter is my canary”: Smoke Contamination, Sensory Expertise, and the Ambiguous Semiotics of Toxicity

Air seems immaterial, until it isn't. The increasing prevalence of wildland-urban interface fires, like the 2021 Boulder County Marshall Fire, has prompted new ways of knowing the air, including how chemical products of fire transform homes and bodies into ambiguous repositories of toxicity. This presentation draws on an emergent archive, the Louisville Historical Museum's Marshall Fire Story Project, as well as textual analysis of new smoke restoration guidelines and interviews with policy makers and people affected by smoke contamination. Individual bodies are not understood as equally reliable witnesses to contamination: the most sensitive are the "canaries" whose physical manifestations index invisible capacities for harm. The effects of smoke contamination are knowable though diverse bodily symptoms and chemical analysis, where these epistemes produce zones of uncertainty for residents and scientists alike, even as they offer opportunities for industry expansion by restoration and insurance companies. Here, we focus on the semiotics of toxicity within contested fields of expertise: how restoration guidelines regiment interpretations of the qualia of smoke contamination, which linger as ghostly traces; how people's bodies act as variously attuned sensors for contamination; and the affective ways toxicity might be understood, through the embodied experience of inhabiting a space and the anticipatory logics of public health or biomedical frameworks of future health risk.

Presenter(s): Kathryn Goldfarb

Co-author(s): Seamus Klingsporn

How Smoke Travels

This paper discusses how wildfire smoke travels as a concept, from the birth of the measurement techniques used to determine the amount of PM2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter) in the air to the feeling of being in a forest as the air fills up with the smell and soupiness of chainsaws whirring, fir trees coming down and biomass burning. Based on fieldwork in the U.S.

Pacific Northwest, including work as a wildland firefighter on suppression and prescribed fire assignments, and interviews with fire managers, wildland firefighters, and scientists, this paper articulates three critical questions for wildfire smoke, asking what the measurement of smoke hides and reveals, how and why regulatory frameworks create different levels of pollution that are deemed acceptable for different people, and what fire managers want to know about wildfire smoke. Analyzing how regulators engage with thresholds for wildfire smoke (Liboiron 2021), who counts as an appropriate group for the state to protect from smoke and why (Nelson 2015), and how fire managers work to weave trust with the public through publishing air pollution numbers (Porter 1995), the result of this analysis offers ways to think about wildfire smoke that are relational, blending qualitative and quantitative data, including ethnographic experience (Roberts 2021). It also offers ways to understand how current regulatory and social frameworks produce high levels of exposure for frontline workers.

Presenter(s): Arielle Milkman

Discussion

3335 Sovereign Futures: Uneven Geographies of Postcolonial Financial Regimes

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists have long traced how postcolonial states have served as sites of economic exploitation, experimentation, and speculation (Appel 2019; Chalfin 2010; Elyachar 2005; Ferguson 1990; Rabie 2021). This panel explores these concerns through regimes of finance in Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean where postcolonial states and international financial actors are reorganizing sovereign debt and jurisdiction to generate new forms of value and extraction. Specifically, this panel examines tax havens, bond markets, and special economic zones, which host a range of financial activities, from tax avoidance and wage evasion to debt-swaps and speculation on emerging markets.

Tax havens emerged with the post-WWII reorganization of economic relations between empires and former colonies (Ogle 2017). Yet monetary practices central to offshore finance can be traced back to extractive economies at the turn of the 19th century when multinational companies with mining operations in South Africa were legally ruled to have corporate residence in London. These colonial-era financial practices were predecessors of today's tax havens, which continue to shield mining companies from taxation and deprive African states of revenue.

While special economic zones have proliferated worldwide since the 1980s, in recent years they have mutated in ways that pose new challenges to state sovereignty. As tech entrepreneurs in crypto and biotech exit the U.S. and Europe in search of "friendlier" jurisdictions, a growing number of countries are scrambling to host them by pursuing a path of radical deregulation. Honduras has

paved the way, launching the first semi-autonomous zone on the Caribbean island of Roatán, where foreign companies can design their own laws and self-govern.

Emerging bond markets and debt swaps are instruments issued by countries to finance their development or in the case of Lebanon reduce its sovereign debt. Emerging markets have become sites of power struggles between China and Western lending institutions as China claims the title of the world's largest investor in emerging markets. Simultaneously, new forms of racial capitalism in the Chinese century use the surplus produced by African labour and resources through a development-underdevelopment dialectic characterizing Sino-Africa relations (Huang 2024).

The regimes of finance explored in this panel raise new legal and ethical questions regarding corporate rights and sovereignty. What rights and obligations do foreign investors and host states have to each other? How do international regimes enforce these obligations? How do indebted states assert agency in the face of fiscal discipline? The study of these places and their legal-financial configurations begs for a rethinking of postcolonial statehood and racial capitalism against the backdrop of a global backlash against democracy and escalating Sino-U.S. rivalries over geopolitical influence in emerging market countries.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Jessica Slattery , Simon Rakei, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jessica Slattery

Presenter(s): Jessica Slattery, Simon Rakei, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, Asprey Liu, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Bailey Miller, Columbia University

Discussant: Gustav Kalm , Mingwei Huang, Dartmouth College

Presentation(s): Regulating the Future: Legal Experimentation in Honduran Semi-Autonomous Special Economic Zones

In 2013, government officials in Honduras created a new type of special economic zone that allowed foreign and domestic companies to self-govern within a designated area. They hoped the zones would attract new types of foreign direct investment and high-tech industries to propel Honduras beyond the maquiladora (duty-free factory) sector where it had been floundering since the 1980s. Based on ethnographic research, this paper examines Próspera, Honduras's (and the world's) first semi-autonomous zone, which broke ground in 2019 on the island of Roatán. Started by a group of U.S. investors, Próspera explicitly aims to transform Roatán into a "Hong Kong of the Caribbean" for Web3 technology, cryptofinance, and biotech. They position Próspera as a sandbox for piloting the governing structures, laws, and regulations for these emergent industries. As entrepreneurs and venture capitalists increasingly turn their attention towards decentralized financial and legal technologies, how do they understand the sovereignty and the state? What are the stakes of their experiments beyond Honduras as libertarian technologists in the U.S. seek to remake governance from within? Through examining the activities and ideologies of the investors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs building Próspera, this paper traces the intellectual genealogies informing their designs, as well as how their visions and ideals come into confrontation with the social, environmental, and infrastructural realities of Honduras.

Presenter(s): Jessica Slattery

Ordering International Taxation Through Wage Evasion: South African Mining and the Advent of Offshore Finance

Regimes of extraction in Southern Africa have often been located within the circuits of migrant labour economies with little regard for the global flows of capital they are embedded in. Similarly, global histories of financialisation in the late 19th century seldom connect the extractive regimes of mining in Southern Africa with the advent of specialised financial practices that came to characterise offshore financial centres and modern tax havens. In this paper, I use a case deliberated between the British Exchequer and De Beers Consolidated Mines in 1901 to locate wage evasion as an analytic concept that was anticipated in a seminal decision of corporate residence in international taxation. De Beers was registered in the Cape Colony in 1888 with head offices in Kimberley where it ran operations. The company also had an office in London chaired by Cecil Rhodes and a board of directors. The ruling that "real control" of the company was executed from London anticipated contemporary uses of modern tax havens. For South African trade union officials, shop stewards, and civil society activists, the use of offshore financial centres is wage evasion because the base for paying living wages to workers is eroded. By tracing the colonial era regime of monetary and exchange controls, I locate the advent of Southern African mining with the modern formation of offshore finance.

Presenter(s): Simon Rakei

Moral Economies of Obligation and Power: Debt, Transparency, and the Struggle for Mozambique

The imposition of conditionalities and liabilities on sovereign governments in exchange for multilateral or private debt financing raises major questions in the political economy of indebted states. The anthropological literature on "moral economies" offers a rich lens for analyzing how notions of improvement, responsibility, and "good" governance animate and justify programs of fiscal discipline. This paper takes up the case of Mozambique's oscillating relationships with IMF and Chinese state creditors after the 2016 "tuna bond scandal," when \$2.2 billion of undisclosed government guarantees to private European banks came to light, leading to the withdrawal of IMF support. Examining Euro-American investor discourses on the debacle, drawn from public reports and data collected during fieldwork with an investor group in 2022, I show how transparency and disclosure conditions associated with the IMF and Western capital markets are contrasted with "hidden" liabilities attached to Chinese lending through the Belt and Road Initiative. The analysis reveals how normative assumptions in liberal governmentality disavow and displace the exercise of power onto the Chinese other while negating the material benefits and terms that make Chinese credit attractive. I conclude that moral discourses must be read in tandem with political economy to understand the agency of developing countries navigating competing regimes of imperial investment and control.

Presenter(s): Asprey Liu

Building a Future by Trading the Past?: Debt-Swaps and Reconstruction in Lebanon

Since Lebanon's sovereign debt prompted an economic collapse in 2019, the country has been beset by compounding problems. Questions of recovery have a new urgency, however, after nearly 14 months of warfare, which has caused over \$14 billion in damages and left tens of thousands homeless. Now, Lebanon's new government has promised that reconstruction is a top priority, but it is unclear where the financing for such an undertaking will come from. However, a novel form of financial instruments, known as debt-swaps, has been offered by international stakeholders as a solution. Debt-swaps, or bilateral agreements where creditors buy-back sovereign debt in exchange for commitments to environmental protection, were first piloted in Central and South America for conservation. These early successes have prompted the IMF and other stakeholders to explore applying debt-swaps to sectors beyond climate mitigation, including infrastructure development. In the context of Lebanon's financial history, shaped by colonial ties with France and regional relationships with Gulf-based banks, what are the political consequences of debt-swaps in post-conflict environments? Through ethnographic research with development bankers and NGOs in Beirut, I will show the novel forms of transnational obligation that debt-swaps are weaving into processes of reconstruction.

Presenter(s): Bailey Miller

Discussion

8161 Immaterial Entanglements and Spectral Presences in Agrarian Transformations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Whereas the research on agrarian transformations has largely focused on material shifts in rural livelihoods, agrarian societies invoke immaterial agents and spectral presences when making sense of the precarities of change. This panel explores how the immaterial dimensions of agrarian transformations are entangled with shifting global markets and state forces. We examine how absences in the agrarian landscape are felt alongside what is materially present, be it the current absence of past entities like mangrove forests, maize fields, or a holy blessing, or the unrealized futures evoked by an abandoned power plant or a state intervention. We attend to these past losses and future uncertainties as specters that haunt each of our field sites and animate our interlocutors' responses to change.

This panel asks: What can we learn from the immaterial entanglements of agrarian transformation? By examining the spectral presences of agrarian life, we aim to reveal the more-than-material (and indeed more-than-human and more-than-secular) relations through which marginalized agrarian communities respond to the precarities of change:

In northern Mexico, metaphors of the monstrous serpent Sinowi reveal how Rarámuri and Mestizo communities navigate a national program that seeks to redefine rural life while striving to sustain their own life projects. In Eastern India, the half-constructed site of a thermal powerplant – a sign of

a future replete with employment opportunities and social mobility – never came to fruition due to the changing energy transition policies and left the community haunted by the ghosts of a future that now seems out of reach. In Chanthaburi, Thailand, the creation of a state-sponsored ecotourism site has successfully showcased sustainable shrimp farming but has also transformed the surrounding shrimp farms into living museums, where traces of past livelihoods linger and farmers navigate the uneasy shift from independent cultivators to curated participants in a state-managed vision of rural sustainability. In Morocco where a blight devastating heritage cactus varieties has forced peasants to reconsider the role of remote and unseen forces as agents of agrarian change. In the Cuchumatán highlands of Guatemala, Mam Mayan smugglers ascend sacred mountaintops with their clients to intercede for the precarious migration journey to the US, with the outcome of smuggler-mediated migration determining whether Mam households choose to continue cultivating maize fields or transition their fields to wood lots. Drawing on ethnographic research, this panel highlights how spectral absence and immaterial forces not only shape the agrarian landscapes but also offer critical insights into how rural communities imagine the uncertainties of transformation.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Brianna Porter, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Nikita Das

Chair: Christian Espinosa Schatz, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Elias Plata Espino, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Brianna Porter, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Nikita Das, Lloyd Farley, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Christian Espinosa Schatz, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Jaume Franquesa, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Return of Sinowi: Ghosts of rural decline and post-neoliberal futures in the Sierra Tarahumara of Mexico

In 2015, the inauguration of a road in Norogachi—part of broader state efforts to integrate the Sierra Tarahumara of northern Mexico into neoliberal frameworks—sparked alarm among the Indigenous Rarámuri, especially elders who warned of the return of Sinowi, a mythical serpent said to devour children. In 2019, Sowing Life, a self-proclaimed anti-neoliberal program aimed at transforming rural life by addressing poverty and environmental degradation, provoked a similarly uneasy response. If these initiatives reflect opposing visions of state intervention in the Sierra Tarahumara, why did they elicit such comparable reactions? This article argues that these responses are best understood by examining how institutional interventions reshape not only the material landscape, but also the collective interpretations of the past and future embedded in Rarámuri and Mestizo life projects. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research in the Sierra Tarahumara, the article explores local responses to the specters of agrarian transformation as state initiatives attempt to reimagine rural futures.

Presenter(s): Elias Plata Espino

Becoming a Living Museum: Thai State Curated Sustainability and the Constrained Futures of Shrimp Farmers

The shrimp farming boom in Thailand during the late 20th century led to the widespread clear-cutting of mangrove forests to make way for aquaculture. In response, the Thai state established the Kung Kraben Bay Development Study Center in 1981 as part of the Royal Development Project, reimagining the area as a site of environmental restoration and community-based economic activity. This paper explores the immaterial dimensions of agrarian transformation in Chanthaburi, where state-led ecotourism and environmental policy have reshaped shrimp farming into a curated model of sustainability. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, the paper examines how shrimp farmers are positioned within narratives of human-nature harmony, staged for touristic consumption and global recognition. While upheld as sustainable examples, the farmers exist as a "living museum" — bound by regulatory constraints that prevent intensification and obstruct the futures they imagine for themselves. Beneath the bay lies the spectral memory of mangrove forests once destroyed for shrimp ponds. This paper examines how these haunted landscapes reveal how state narratives and environmental ideals can simultaneously preserve ecosystems and foreclose rural futures.

Presenter(s): Brianna Porter

Living in the shadows: Reconciling development dreams with the energy transition goals in rural Eastern India

In rural agrarian India, socioeconomic transformations have long been driven by historical aspirations for development through secure job opportunities. However, these visions of progress now appear disrupted by the arrival of energy transition policies, as the Indian state tries to straddle its goals of development and climate crises mitigation. This shift has led rural folks to reimagine their future. Drawing from ethnographic research in rural Eastern India, this paper highlights how the coproduction of development and energy transition has led many to find new ways to get by without abandoning their dreams of social mobility. The village of Srikhanda was to host a thermal powerplant, which sparked hopes of progress. But the project never came to fruition due to evolving thermal power phasedown policies, leaving the community in a state of uncertainty. Haunted by the loss of a promised future, many migrated to cities in search of waged labor, while others turned to the precarious livelihood of driving totos—popular three-wheeler electric vehicles providing local taxi-services. Although the villagers rarely spoke of the powerplant directly, their visions of the future and everyday practices remained shaped by the imagined futures the incomplete project evoked. Living in the shadows of the now-abandoned site, the community continues to grapple with the ghosts of a future that seems increasingly out of reach, even as debates around energy transition and development persist.

Presenter(s): Nikita Das

Geographies of the Blessed and Dispossessed: Moroccan cacti-culture and the unseen

Moroccans once regarded the Province of Sidi Ifni in Southwest Morocco as the Kingdom's Cactus Capital. While the intensive scaling of prickly pear cactus fruit production was a relatively recent result of the 2008 Green Morocco Plan, residents regarded the region's unique suitability for cactus fruit production as a product of divine favor. While the coastal humidity and the purported richness of the soil were both blessings contributing to this region's rare distinction, the cactus was a uniquely holy gift, one brought from overseas. Yet, in 2017, this gift was revoked by the arrival of a novel pest known as cochineal, which in four years has completely transformed the Moroccan landscape – leaving emptied villages and reducing the once iconic cactus hedges that lined the countryside to wilting heaps. This precipitous loss in the region's sole source of rural livelihood has forced agriculturalists to consider the many possible unseen forces at play in reversing their fortunes, be it the will of God or the working of elite conspirators and spirits. Looking toward the future, they ask, will the new cactus varieties bred in government labs possess the same divine exuberance as heritage varieties? Based on 12 months of ethnographic research, Lloyd's paper seeks insight into how shifting local understandings of environmental processes, which exceed secular notions of material causality, respond to perturbations and condition possible environmental futures in Morocco.

Presenter(s): Lloyd Farley

Smugglers, Swidden, and Sacred Mountains: Mam Mayan coyotes as more-than-human mediators

For the Mam Mayans of Guatemala's Cuchumatán highlands, seasonal migration to coffee plantations has, in recent decades, been superseded by transnational migration to the United States. To make the perilous journey across Mexico, Mam Mayans rely on local smugglers, called coyotes. This paper explores the relationship between smuggling and transformations in the landscape of the Cuchumatán highlands, in which maize fields have been increasingly transitioned to alder and pine wood lots. My research shows that the current dominance of wood lots in the swidden cycle is an agroecological response to the high-stakes gamble of smuggler-mediated migration in which coyotes must navigate the ever-changing illicit networks of police, gang, and cartel checkpoints across Mexico. To handle the risks of migration, coyotes and their clients ascend sacred mountains to intercede for the outcome of their future journey. Coyotes, then, mirror the historic role of shamans in Cuchumatán ecology, mediating the relationship between esoteric forces outside the remit of everyday life, be they cartels or malevolent spirits, and their effect on local livelihoods and the swidden cycle. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in San Juan Atitán and its diaspora, this paper examines how coyotes, in mediating the uncertain futures of Mayan migrants, also mediate the relations between maize fields, wood lots, mountain spirits, and God.

Presenter(s): Christian Espinosa Schatz

Discussion

8700 A NAPA Professional Development Workshop: How to Facilitate Workshops that Drive Innovation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Workshop

Innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum - it's sparked by diverse perspectives, shaped by cultural context, and often achieved through structured collaboration. This workshop teaches anthropologists and like-minded practitioners how to design and lead innovation workshops using human-centered design and participatory methods. Participants will learn practical facilitation tools and techniques that help diverse groups think creatively and collaboratively, whether the goal is to design a new product, reimagine a service, or develop an organizational strategy. We'll explore methods for generating ideas, aligning stakeholders, and moving from insight to action. The final activity will be a mini-workshop simulation to build confidence through hands-on practice. Whether you're in UX, organizational design, or simply curious about facilitation methods, this session equips you to lead more impactful workshops grounded in anthropological insight and inclusive design. No prior experience needed, just bring your curiosity and a willingness to co-create.

8699 NAPA/AAA Careers Expo

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:00 AM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Special Event

Curious about careers in Professional, Practicing, and Applied Anthropology (PPA)? Join the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) for the 21st Annual Careers Expo. Meet with Career Guides from across our discipline and across industries for lively conversations about how anthropological training positively impacts the public and private sectors. Learn from established professionals and get your questions answered about best practices for putting anthropological skills to work. Networking is encouraged, so get ready to practice your elevator pitches with a friendly audience. Students, academic and applied mentors, and career changers welcome!

8663 The Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

The Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) was founded in 1979. Our members come from countries across the globe and professions at the center of anthropology and well beyond. CAR facilitates networking through social media, listserv, our biannual newsletter, membership directory, and special events at the American Anthropological Association annual meetings as well as meetings of the Society for Medical Anthropology and the Society for Applied Anthropology.

8660 Anthropological Responses to Health Emergencies (ARHE)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Special Event

Anthropological Responses to Health Emergencies (ARHE) is a Special Interest Group of the Society for Medical Anthropology. The purpose of the group is to network among members to be able to rapidly respond to developing public health issues and emergencies.

8613 Society for Economic Anthropology Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Special Event

Society for Economic Anthropology Business Meeting: All are welcome! Join us for the latest news, updates, announcements, and celebrations of recent awards!

8772 Association for Africanist Anthropology - Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Meeting for the Executive Board of the Association for Africanist Anthropology

8665 The Dying and Bereavement Interest Group

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Special Event

The Dying and Bereavement Interest Group has developed in response to the growing body of anthropological research and interest in this area of study. The scholars in this group see as its function the following: organize interest group meetings as the Annual AAA meetings organize and submit panels and other presentations at AAA and other professional association meetings networking, mentoring and collaboration to support research and publication communication (notices of conferences, workshops, grants, etc.) publicize anthropologists' work on dying and bereavement to members of the public, the media, and scholars and practitioners from other disciplines connect to other committees that share the same research interests

8668 Health Professions Education (HPE)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Special Event

Our mission is: "To support anthropologists in making a positive and lasting impact on medical and health professions education by creating an organizational space that nurtures healthy

professional identity, promoting lifelong career advancement, and serve as a representative voice for anthropology among the health professions and the public."

9083 Anthropological Theory Journal Editorial Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Crescent (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Informational / networking meeting for the Anthropological Theory Journal Board.

8664 The Disability Research Interest Group (DRIG)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Disability Research Interest Group (DRIG) is a network of scholars, educators, activists, and practitioners invested in building ties between people who contribute to disability anthropology. As a special interest group (SIG) of the Society for Medical Anthropology, we foster disability research in and across all fields of anthropology. The DRIG understands disability anthropology to be research that seeks to theorize disability by documenting and analyzing the diversity of everyday life experiences of people with disabilities across space, time, and social and cultural context. We situate the medicalization of disability as a sociocultural phenomenon with political

8640 Society for Psychological Anthropology (SPA) Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

This event is open only to current board members of the SPA.

8839 Society for Visual Anthropology Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Society for Visual Anthropology Board Meeting

8765 Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA) Mentoring Program Luncheon

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

The SLA Mentoring Program partners scholars at different stages of their careers who are interested in mentoring or finding a mentor, and to facilitate their mentoring relationship. This luncheon event

offers a chance for new mentors and mentees to meet in person, exchange ideas and reflections on mentorship, and for established mentor-mentee pairs to share their experiences. We also welcome anyone interested in becoming or finding a mentor. Pre-registration is required.

8667 Research on U.S. Health and Healthcare (RUSH)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Research on U.S. Health and Healthcare (RUSH) is a Special Interest Group of the Society for Medical Anthropology. RUSH invites and encourages scholars from around the world to critically investigate U.S. health policy and practice. RUSH provides a space for anthropologists to engage with the urgent and growing national dialogue on health and healthcare disparities and a platform to interface with health authorities and policymakers.

8745 Beyond the Academy: Mentoring for Impact, Innovation, Career Success and Policy Engagement

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Poydras (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

As global challenges grow more complex, the relevance of anthropological insights beyond academic settings becomes ever more urgent. This mentoring session, co-hosted by the Association for the Anthropology of Policy (ASAP) and the Association for Africanist Anthropology (AfAA), supports PhD students in exploring pathways to apply their training in diverse policy, advocacy, consulting, cultural, academic and research contexts. With an emphasis on navigating careers within and beyond the academy, the session focuses on open dialogue on strategic skill-building that will enhance success in transitioning from graduate school, institutional navigation, and personal values and building relevant networks and portfolio.

8814 A&E Graduate Student Mentoring Workshop -Day 2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/21/2025 1:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Students will submit either: a dissertation proposal, dissertation chapter, or journal article for consideration. Students selected to participate in the workshop will receive feedback from an A&E member mentor and receive comments on their work before the AAA conference.

The second session will consist of group discussion focused on navigating the academic and non-academic job markets, with insights from environmental anthropologists who have recently been on the job market.

8653 ASA Annual Luncheon and Meeting- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

As in years past, ASA members will gather from noon to 2 pm on Friday, November 21, at the nearby Red Fish Grill restaurant for a delicious lunch of regional cuisine, announcements, and lively conversation with colleagues. The luncheon is a section membership benefit open to ASA dues paying members. Each member is entitled to bring one guest for \$40 per guest

8619 The Committee on the Anthropology of Science, Technology, and Computing (CASTAC) Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Business meeting for members of this group.

2549 Anthropology of/and Universalism(s)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropology has a complicated relationship with universalism and universalising language. As a discipline devoted to the study of cultural diversity, the claim that something is a "human universal" is often met with skepticism, if not accusations of ethnocentrism or the whitewashing of meaningful difference. Within the AAA, discussions of ostensibly universal values have led to debates, uneasy truces, and unsatisfying fudges, with the fissure between rights-based universalism and ethnographically-informed relativism never quite fused.

Yet anthropology is also a universalist field. Whether framed in terms of psychic unity or the moral equivalence of vastly different ways of being, ethnographers have long recognised the universal dignity of being human. Moreover, we are often confronted with the universalism(s) of those with whom we work, whether in relation to salvation, globalisation, or the inevitability of certain economic forms.

What is or should be contemporary anthropology's relationship to universalism, whether we encounter it as ethnographic data-that is, in the words and ideas of our interlocutors-or as a philosophical lens through which to interpret these words and ideas? Is universalism best understood in terms of inclusion or as the erasure of difference? How should anthropology-as the scientific study both of what we share and of what distinguishes us from one another-interrogate the universalism(s) we find in the field?

Our roundtable participants approach these questions from a range of perspectives, as ethnographers of religion, philosophy, economics, colonialism (and decolonisation), and the universe itself:

Dr Jon Bialecki is an anthropologist of technology, transhumanism, and US religion. His recent work explores the "universalisms" of both Mormonism and transhumanism.

Dr David Jeevendrampillai is an anthropologist of Outer Space whose research examines the curation, narration, and use of Earth Imagery from the International Space Station. He is interested in the anthropology of the future, technology, and the cosmos.

Dr Miranda Sheild Johansson is an anthropologist of tax. Her research with taxpayers in Bolivia, the UK, and Sweden explores how fiscal systems perpetuate financial logics which are universal and inescapable, yet differently lived within.

Dr Méadhbh Mclvor is an anthropologist of law and religion. Having previously conducted research with a community that draws firm boundaries between "in" and "out," her more recent work explores theologies of inclusivity among US Unitarian Universalists.

Professor Soumhya Venkatesan is an ethnographer of religion and philosophy in India and the UK. Her most recent book is a critical exploration of decolonisation in, of, and by anthropology-a project she frames as a provisional universalism.

Together, our roundtable will explore universalism, relativism, and the contingent, bringing contemporary concerns to bear on a longstanding debate.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Meadhbh Mclvor , Jon Bialecki, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Soumhya Venkatesan , David Jeevendrampillai , Meadhbh Mclvor , Miranda Sheild Johansson, University College London

Discussant: Jon Bialecki, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

7848 Spectral Thinking: Fetishism, Taboo, and the Ends of Structuralism

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel investigates the problem of the spectral and its relationship to the anthropological objects of the fetish and the taboo. We understand the spectral as the "nonmaterial" (Durkheim 2014) element of social life that gives way to a "necromancy" (Marx 1992) between persons and the objective world. In this sense of the spectral, we examine how objects produce an excess that motivates the desires stoked by fetishism and the social relations that are enabled by the prohibitions of taboo. As William Pietz argues, the fetish is not only a subject of anthropological theory, but emerged through the very encounters enabled by ethnological studies: "The fetish, then,

not only originated from but remains specific to the problematic of social value of material objects as revealed in situations formed by the encounter of radically heterogeneous social systems" (Pietz 2022). Because both fetishism and taboo suggest a kind of spectral matter through which communal value is generated, this panel seeks to critically investigate such matter in relation to political economy and the circulation of specters that it makes possible: the logics of racial subjectivity in the colony, the enigmatic ways that war seeps into the lifeworlds of its subjects, and the redoubling of colonial logics in articulations of decolonial futurity. How do we analytically locate this spectral matter through ethnography, the historical archive, or in political discourses? And what are the conditions that make the specters of fetishism and taboo intelligible as a social reality for its subjects? Do they persist in a purely psychic and symbolic register, no longer supported by the explicit force of law, or does it maintain a structural purchase after formal independence or what Saidiya Hartman calls the (non)-event of emancipation (Hartman 1997)? If so, how, by what means, and with what symbolic or material accompaniments? This panel takes this ensemble of questions as our direct terrain and we turn critical attention to the ways in which the concepts of the fetish and the taboo might make visible the terms of racial order that precede and follow the law of exogamy, reproduction, exchange (Levi-Strauss 1969) and their correspondent political forms (Clastres 1988).

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Mohamad Jarada, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology, Chloé Samala Faux

Chair: Mohamad Jarada, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Patrick Teed, Mohamad Jarada, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology, Chloé Samala Faux

Discussant: Chloé Samala Faux, Patrick Teed

Presentation(s): Heredity, Guilt, Sacrifice

This paper provides a critical interrogation of how feminist science studies and social reproduction feminisms approach epigenetics as a conceptual intervention into kinship. While some feminist science scholars argue that innovations in epigenetic science risk intensifying reproductive constraint, the social reproduction feminisms pose that epigenetics unmoors nuclear heterosexuality, providing fertile ground for rethinking kin toward liberatory ends. Despite this difference, both positions treat kinship as an object to preserve and ultimately protect, with epigenetics evaluated insofar as it contributes to this project. In the paper, I argue that this desire for preservation is structured by a gendered antiblackness haunting its political purchase. Through a reading of *Corregidora*, I argue that because antiblackness is not the denial or withdrawal of kin, but an expression of its total conceptual impossibility, what a Black reproductive politics demands is unflinching antagonism to kin as structural form, a reproductive negativity conceptually generates itself from the unthinkable space of antagonism to reproduction-qua-itself.

Presenter(s): Patrick Teed

The Pig and its Other: A Phenomenology of Enmity

This paper explores the use of the pig as a sign of enmity and terror against Islamic communal life. As a generalized practice, the use of the pig as a weapon that desecrates Islamic holy sites occurs throughout the globe: in India, Germany, South Korea, and in numerous other polities. In many cases, the head of the pig composes the most nefarious weapon used by civilians, shattering mosque windows and glass doors. In other cases, bacon, rotten pork meat, ears, and dead carcasses are left outside mosques and, at times of physical intrusion, thrown inside their places of veneration. And yet in other cases, the pig is determined as a symbol, with hats and shirts that display bacon or other parts of the pig with the ascription "Muslim kryptonite." The pig's availability as a sign of enmity and terror provides an analytical opportunity to critically interrogate its significative and coercive force: why the pig's body? The paper addresses these questions through an ethnographic study of two specific incidents in the United States and draws on the relationship between food taboo, social community, and political force. As such, the paper theoretically explores how a sense and meaning is given to the pig precisely because the aggressor is often unknown and thus absent from the scene. I thus examines how Islamic communities in the aftermath of events of desecration trace this ghostly absence through the aid of law enforcement, political discourses, and intercommunal relations.

Presenter(s): Mohamad Jarada

Rape culture; or, anti-blackness and the problem of lived experience

A (re)turn to the discourse of sexual violence during apartheid in South Africa turns out to be a (re)turn to the structural contradiction that organizes classical anthropology, and leads to a consideration of the structural contradictions that organize nationalist discourse in the "postcolony" that remains a settler colony. The ethnographic gesture, an inheritance from Kant, which shuttles between the particular –"lived experience"–to a transcendental principle is in pursuit of a mediating third term: culture. In keeping with this ethnographic gesture, I interrogate the concept of "rape culture" as a figuration of the limit of the anthropological axiom that culture is premised on the legitimation of some forms of violent access to women and the foreclosure of others via the incest taboo, that unlocatable process and fantasized moment of rupture from nature that culture was "born." While rape confuses this boundary, I argue that opposing rape through recourse to the rights of women is coextensive with the system that permits both the legalization and the confusion of the law of violence against black women in capitalist colonial modernity. In the idiom of the ethnographic, the paper weaves together intimate and public discourses around sexual violence in contemporary South Africa, scenes of coming-of-age under apartheid, and Fanon's elaboration of the psychosexual arrangement of colonial society.

Presenter(s): Chloé Samala Faux

Discussion

Discussion

312 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Volha Verbilovich, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Samantha Lilly, Weiting Yu, Zahir Uddin Ahmed, University at Buffalo, NY, Kaitlan Bui, Jennifer Heung, Saint Mary's College of California, Anthropology Department, Noah Dennison, Ankush Bhuyan

Presenter(s): Volha Verbilovich, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Samantha Lilly, Weiting Yu, Zahir Uddin Ahmed, University at Buffalo, NY, Kaitlan Bui, Jennifer Heung, Saint Mary's College of California, Anthropology Department, Noah Dennison, Ankush Bhuyan

Presentation(s): "Like a tree without roots": Belarusian women's communities of care and resistance in exile

My multimodal and multisited ethnographic project grows from collaboration with older women from Belarus who were forced to flee their homeland after the 2020 anti-authoritarian uprising and co-create survival strategies in exile in Poland. Drawing on the ethnography of women's and disability movements in postsocialism (Hement, 2007; Kolářová, 2015; Phillips, 2010; Vazyanau, 2023) and anthropology of care and transnational migration studies (Francisco-Menchavez, 2018; Baldassar et al., 2020; Arnold, 2024), this presentation narrates insights from the long-term ethnography of digital and urban community spaces and participatory activities, such as online protest communities and street rallies ethnography, and art-based collaborative workshops. Attending to everyday forms of providing for others (Arnold & Aulino, 2021), the author offers to reflect on how aging and disability shape and reshape relational care infrastructures co-created by women in the past experiences of resistance to structural and authoritarian violence and stretched over borders and in time to cope with present challenges of forced migration. In the first part, the presentation briefly introduces the concept of care infrastructures derived from the interdisciplinary literature and ethnographic data. In the second part, the author shares visuals and brief ethnographic vignette to show how care infrastructures are enacted by women to sustain disrupted relationships across borders and rediscover community roots in exile.

Presenter(s): Volha Verbilovich

Artificial Intelligence as a Mass Medium

This manuscript proposes a conceptualization of generative artificial intelligence (AI) as a mass medium. In 1996, Morris and Ogan introduced a framework for understanding the internet itself as a mass medium, expanding our understanding of what a mass media is. This manuscript seeks to do the same for AI. First I explore the similarities and differences between AI and the internet, arguing that AI not only mediates and is mediated, but also produces new and novel media. Then, using a multidisciplinary theoretical scoping review of literature across media studies, science and

technology studies, and anthropology, the manuscript at-hand asks: What and when does AI mediate, and what and when does it not? And how might AI mediation (re)configure human subjectivities? These questions, and their provisional answers, open new pathways for media, digital, and virtual anthropology-expanding its analytic commitments and methodological horizons in the face of rapidly evolving media technologies.

Presenter(s): Samantha Lilly

Domesticating Chinggis Khan: Political Belonging and Historical Engagement of Mongolians with the Statue of Chinggis Khan

This paper explores the ways in which contemporary Mongolian people engage with the statue of Chinggis Khan in Sukhbaatar Square, Ulaanbaatar, which is at the political center of modern Mongolia. It has been argued that the statue embodies efforts of the modern state to appropriate Chinggis Khan in constructing national identity (Myadar 2017). And yet, there are certain ways of engaging with the statue among Mongolians that go beyond the political and ideological project at the level of the state. In everyday life, many Mongolians have chosen to take their wedding pictures at the square with the statue of Chinggis Khan in the background, which echoes the practice of placing portraits of Chinggis Khan in prominent places in family homes. The ubiquity of Chinggis Khan in everyday life traverses the boundary between public and domestic spheres and challenges this well-established dichotomy. It also speaks to an engagement and entanglement with history at the level of individuals that complicates the notion of the political. How do such practices of engaging with monumental forms relate to the efforts of situating the modern state in history, and those of fostering a sense of belonging? My project will gather information about the statue of Chinggis Khan and trace prominent forms of engaging with it both with and without overtly political underpinnings. Ultimately, I want to revisit the complicated relationship between modern states and premodern ones from the perspectives of historicity and political belonging.

Presenter(s): Weiting Yu

Getting Lost, Navigation and Spatial Precarity: The case of Bangladeshi women in Buffalo, NY

--Dr. Zahir Ahmed, And Fatema Bashir

Abstract

This paper builds upon ethnographic study on our ongoing research on Bangladeshi Diaspora in Buffalo, NY. This is gendered aspect of migration. We will be talking two interrelated concepts: the displacement from Bangladesh and NYC where they first settled and moved into Buffalo and second involves abandonment (single mother/ divorcee) and both throw light on the ways in which gender, space and emplacement work together to produce particular vulnerabilities. In the first, women are considered as dependents of the male migrants and thus being subordinate playing traditional patriarchal values and norms. In the second, women are being placed in inferior region in Buffalo to survive. Sometimes they have husbands, living in NYC and some are abandoned and displaced from their marriages when their husbands divorce/separate them.

The context is a rapidly changing urban environment in Buffalo in which the livelihood cost and housing are surprisingly cheaper compared to other areas in the US. Owning a housing and an unskilled job have led to a cityscape that is never possible in other areas. This environment, and the socio-cultural relations that are constitutive of it, have helped to create the conditions in which certain women survive and others get lost, leading to highly gendered forms of displacement. This neglect of women migrants means that if we only focus on what is visible, some forms of displacement are likely to be overlooked. Indeed, attention to the experience of getting divorce and being abandoned can help foreground questions of gender, class, age and migration status in the analysis of migration/ in-migration.

In this paper, we will argue that attention to lost, abandoned and missing Bangladeshi marginalized women migrants brings new perspectives for the anthropological study of displacement. Arising from dislocated, the journeys they take are largely hidden from the research gaze. As our material shows, being lost and/or abandoned is, in cities such as Buffalo, commonplace if one is female, and, as we discovered during our fieldwork, the fallout is part of

the everyday case load of the government or charities in Buffalo that offer various supports. Breaking 'purdah' (veils) the women's entry into labour market embrace the creative potential of the ghostly and the spectral. The metaphoric 'ghosts' take many forms. They appear in social and work sites like Amazon. Through gossips, they express useful metaphors against the patriarchic power, or hold individual finances that lurk in the shadows of daily life. They can be found in the impacts of using money in their own ways, whether it be of households or epistemologies. They manifest in the forms of disagreement and contestation, through which self-reliant is mediated, masks of all-too-real suffering. They challenge long-discredited patriarchy that fuel religious extremism.

Presenter(s): Zahir Uddin Ahmed

Co-author(s): Fatema Bashar

Ghosting the Family Home: Ethnographic Reflections on Heritage, Ruin, and My Family's Return to Vietnam

This paper is an ethnographic account of my "entrance" into my family's home, after seven years of having orally interviewed about it and two years of (re-)relocating in our motherland, Vietnam, from which we were cast as refugees during the Vietnam War. I trace not only the material conditions of our abandoned home-now rumored to be haunted by my great grandmother's ghost-but also its affective resonances. How has this space been made sacred? What is the line between access and trespass in a "haunted home"? And how has the figure of my great grandmother's ghost brought particular meaning to this otherwise meaningless patch of land?

Ultimately, I am interested in "ghost" not merely as a passive, mysterious object but as a creative act of the diaspora-as a verb. How do diasporic families, especially those who experienced traumatic dispossession of their homes, "ghost" the remnants of their lost pasts? What does "return" look like in this context? I understand the term "ghost," then, as an intentional community ritual which seeks to protect a (material) connection to displaced pasts/places/people, and to offer

emotional (affective) reprieve from histories of death. In the case of my family's abandoned home, my entrance itself was long-awaited because it required the coordinated efforts and emotional willingnesses of multiple actors: my grandfather, who bore the right to memory and who the neighbors indeed remembered; my mother's cousin Dì Trang, who possessed the local knowledge and connections to book us a bus into the deep forest; my oldest aunt Dì Hai, who could easily traverse between Vietnamese and English and who was the last of any generation to remember this family past; and finally, my mother, without whom I would have no connection to this "strange meeting place between that which we memorialize[d] and that which we discard[ed]," as Kevin Lewis O'Neill writes.

This year marks 50 years since the Fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. In 2017, Viet Thanh Nguyen wrote that "for most Americans and the world, 'Vietnam' means the 'Vietnam War,' and the Vietnam War means the American war, with novels written by American men about American soldiers." Since then, Vietnamese scholars, writers, and artists of the diaspora have continued to reclaim our history. My paper contributes to this archive of decolonial remembrance. As an ethnographic account, it further seeks to center oral tradition, family narrative, and ordinary encounters as meaningful ways we might study and think about (contested) history.

Presenter(s): Kaitlan Bui

Great Expectations: Global Chinatowns, Cultural Transformation and China's Soft Power

China's desire for a stronger presence on the global stage has turned Chinatowns into sites of emerging global city-building that ultimately reflects and promotes a shifting geopolitical framework that prioritizes China's interests. Instead of a cosmopolitan identity in global spaces, China's nationalist approach in international politics indicates the state's efforts in recalibrating notions of Chinese identity. What is especially compelling is how these cultural efforts are extending to Chinese identities beyond its borders. This phenomenon of "calling" overseas Chinese back to the motherland, I argue, has a correlation to China's utilization of "soft power" to gain influence and cultural salience on the global stage. Having overseas Chinese, and celebrities in particular, manifest their loyalty to a specific nationality can translate into a form of soft power through their ability to provide positive attraction to Chinese culture abroad. Ironically, cultivating more soft power to be deployed beyond China's borders comes in the form of "hard power" towards overseas Chinese. This interplay of local, national, and global forces on contemporary Chinese identity is investigated through ethnographic research conducted in several Chinatowns located in San Francisco, London, and Vancouver.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Heung

Specters of Coal: Haunted Cultural Landscapes in West Virginian Mining Towns

Appalachia has long occupied a curious dualism within the American imaginary. Both core and periphery, colony and colonizer, structurally dependent and ruggedly individual, it embodies the myriad contradictions at the heart of American exceptionalism, industry, and development. Beyond the blurry geographic and cultural boundaries of the region, increased extensification in modern

mining practices through the use of Mountaintop Removal (MTR) has created an ego crisis for many of its residents who are no longer able to maintain place-based identity while participating in or supporting the industry that has come to define them. Such uncanny manifestations of self, culture, and place are ripe for performative interpretation – "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" (Derrida 2012, 63) – wherein traces of labor struggle, relationship to landscape, and embodied social-ecological devastation simultaneously define and disrupt Appalachian identity and belonging. This culmination of repressed past, troubled present, and uncertain futures defies traditional phenomenological inquiry and instead requires conceptions of meaning and belonging within a cultural landscape haunted by the many ghosts left behind by extractive industry. Thus, the histories and identities within Appalachian coal country, long-neglected in the anthropological canon, represent a compelling case study for an hauntological ethnography.

Situated in the rolling hills of southern West Virginia, two small municipalities provide localized examples of the complex political-economic history of Appalachian coal country as well as the entangled histories of labor struggle, extractive industry, and environmental change throughout the region more broadly. Building on theories of cultural landscape through the lens of Derrida's hauntology, I explore themes of solastalgia, meaning, and memory by examining spectral traces of mountaineer mythopraxis in this analysis of pre-dissertation fieldwork.

Presenter(s): Noah Dennison

Staging Cinema in Assam: Ethnographic Encounters with Regional Film Production and Infrastructure

This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Assam, from late 2023, to examine how 'regional cinema' is produced, distributed, and exhibited in the contemporary moment. Focusing on two films, *My Three Sisters* (in Bodo language) and *Local Kung Fu 3* (in Assamese language), both released in 2024 and directed by Kenny Basumatary – I explore how filmmaking practices in Assam reflect and shape an emergent cinematic infrastructure rooted in local networks of labor, kinship, and aspiration. Through these case studies, I trace the development of a regional film industry in flux – one that both contextualizes and challenges dominant narratives of Indian cinema, which are often centered on Mumbai or other larger regional hubs.

My fieldwork involved sustained presence on the sets of both films at various stages of their production. I observed the collaborative and often improvised processes through which films are made under significant financial and institutional constraints. In these settings, filmmaking becomes a form of relational labor, mobilizing not only professional actors and technicians but also family members, friends, and community networks. The production of *My Three Sisters*, a drama centered on Bodo-speaking characters, and *Local Kung Fu 3*, a comedy-action sequel, offered distinct yet overlapping insights into how filmmakers in Assam navigate creative ambitions amid logistical precarity and uneven access to resources.

By following the full life cycle of these films – from conception and shooting through post-production, publicity, and exhibition – I argue that they are not isolated cultural artifacts but active nodes in a dynamic media ecology centered in Guwahati. The city serves as a key hub for regional cinematic activity, hosting production houses, editing suites, digital distribution platforms, and cinemas. Yet much of this infrastructure remains informal, affective, and improvisational: rented apartments become makeshift studios; fan-driven digital networks handle publicity and circulation; and personal relationships with cinema owners facilitate limited theatrical releases.

This presentation uses *My Three Sisters* and *Local Kung Fu 3* as ethnographic and conceptual anchors to map the contours of Assam's regional cinema infrastructure. In doing so, I argue that regional film cultures in India must be understood not only through their linguistic or aesthetic features but also through the material and infrastructural conditions that enable their creation. Attending to the everyday practices, spatial arrangements, and economic logic of filmmaking in Assam contributes to broader anthropological discussions on media infrastructures, regional cultural production, and the political economy of cinema in South Asia.

Presenter(s): Ankush Bhuyan

533 Association for Queer Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Sascha Ilin , Amirah Fadhlina , Ariadna Tenorio , Deirdre Clyde, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Kexuan Liu

Presenter(s): Sascha Ilin, Amirah Fadhlina, Ariadna Tenorio, Deirdre Clyde, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Kexuan Liu

Presentation(s): Clashing for the Future: How Queer Prefigurative Politics in Idaho Navigate Increasing Hostility

Prefigurative groups that build alternative institutions for future use hope to help their members navigate hostile political environments by preventing, avoiding, confronting, or seeking conflict. However, we do not know if those methods are effective and if groups retain community members using these methods. I explore the practices of a queer prefigurative group in Idaho, with the following questions: First, how does the group navigate physical, structural, and psychological violence in order to support the local trans community? Second, how does the trans community decide between the prefigurative group and a liberal, policy-oriented organization for support in various adverse life situations? Using in-depth interview and participant observational data, I will outline relationships between mechanisms of navigation, support for affiliates, and decision-making processes to illuminate how affiliates choose organizations for support or resources in different adverse life situations or for different needs (financial, health, housing etc.). Understanding the relationship between community conflict resolution and individual decision-making helps bring forward conflict solutions for social movements in hostile political

environments that attract marginalized individuals that would otherwise have little resources for support.

Presenter(s): Sascha Ilin

Ghosted Categories, Lingering Figures: Gender Continuities Among Waria and Transpuan in Indonesia

Anthropologists have long examined local manifestations of queer identities in Southeast Asia (Jackson 2000; Sinnott 2004; Boellstorff 2005; Peletz 2009), highlighting the diverse ways that cultural traditions and gender categories promote fluidity in the region. This paper presents findings from my broader dissertation project on how queer and gender nonconforming communities use embodied and discursive strategies to assert legitimacy in Indonesia. Over the past decade in Yogyakarta, south-central Java, there have been significant social and linguistic shifts in how trans-femininity is expressed. The term waria (a longstanding term associated with transwomen, combining the words "men" and "women" in Bahasa Indonesia) has become particularly contested across generations as queer communities challenge its historical and linguistic roots. Drawing on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork, including collaboration with waria communities from a trans-led Islamic school, I trace shifting attitudes toward the term waria and the increased promotion of inclusive, globally oriented terms like transpuan (transwomen) in urban and middle-class queer spaces. Rather than creating two divergent streams, I argue that the relationship between waria and transpuan is one of fractured continuity. While waria may function as a ghosted category, a residue of the past and a becoming of historical artifact, it continues to hold lingering significance. Waria is not simply replaced by transpuan but is folded into its very emergence. The DNA of waria (i.e., its histories, aesthetics, bodily habits, and moral discourses) remains embedded in the evolving landscape of trans categories in Indonesia. This paper considers how naming practices become contested sites where legitimacy is negotiated with broader political implications: who gets recognized and who is seen as socially legitimate. In this context, haunting is not only metaphorical but methodological, illustrating the temporal entanglements and archival traces that animate contemporary queer worldmaking in Indonesia.

Presenter(s): Amirah Fadhlina

Spectral Presences and Embodied Absences: Cotita de la Encarnación and Magistrate Baena

This flash presentation brings into dialogue two gender-transgressive figures from Mexican history: Cotita de la Encarnación, who appears in colonial legal archives, and Magistrate Jesús Ociel Baena, the country's first non-binary magistrate, whose death in 2023 sparked national outrage and mourning.

Though centuries apart, both figures haunt Mexico's cultural imagination. Cotita emerges in fragments-trial records, descriptions, silences-reminding us that gender nonconformity existed long before the language we use to describe it today. Baena, on the other hand, left behind a visible legacy of activism and defiant presence, now echoed in street memorials, digital tributes, and legal debates.

I explore these figures as spectral presences that challenge dominant narratives of gender and nationhood. I propose a framework of transgenerational haunting—a way to trace how queer and non-binary lives persist across time, often as ghosts who refuse to disappear. These hauntings not only reveal systemic violence, but also open space for memory, resistance, and political imagination.

Presenter(s): Ariadna Tenorio

The [i]Otaku[/i], the [i]Otokoyaku[/i], and the Ghost of Oscar Wilde: Echoes of the Victorian Queer in 21st Century American Anime Fandom

During Japan's intense modernization period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, themes of Western individualism as sophisticated and aspirational yet decadent and perverse were exemplified in the figure of Oscar Wilde, an object of (mutual) fascination for Japan, whose work had an influence on literature, theater, and social change. Industrialist Kobayashi Ichizō was able to subdue and domesticate the tropes of same-sex love and gender rebellion that soon emerged in young women's culture when he founded the all-female Takarazuka Revue, a performing arts academy for girls, in 1913. However, the respectability of these performances also gave female masculinity and same-sex desire, previously the subject of moral panics, the ability to hide in plain sight. The Takarazuka Revue, and particularly the [i]otokoyaku[/i] (female actors who play the male roles), have remained popular into the 21st century and have had a significant influence on the way male characters are drawn in manga, or Japanese comic books (particularly those marketed to girls and young women), which are frequently the source material for the anime (animated cartoons from Japan) that enjoys global popularity.

In my ethnographic research among anime otaku (as the Japanese call nerdy superfans) in the United States, conducted between 2011 and 2024, I have observed the emergence of an elegant androgyny that remixes elements of masculinity and femininity in highly idiosyncratic ways, in which visual echoes of the [i]otokoyaku[/i] are apparent, exhibited by persons identifying with a range of genders. This is coupled with what I call a "queer ethos" within the fandom overall, which naturalizes gender fluidity and lionizes LGBTQ+ identities as both exemplars and symbols of brave and authentic selfhood. Thus, ostensibly "straight" and "cis-gendered" members of this fandom subculture not only support non-normative genders and sexualities in others, but playfully cultivate elements of these qualities within themselves, and view their own normativity as "coincidental." This disregard for bounded identity categories, in contrast to older iterations of queer identity in America, moves my interlocutors beyond the notion of an "LGBTQ community" and a set of "allies," and creates a vital structure of support. Although many of my subjects grew up in an era of political gains for these marginalized identities, they themselves point directly to the semiotics and literary tropes they see in Japanese media as inspiration for their own freedom of self-expression and the acceptance of same-sex love within their cohort. Although most of them are not aware of its source, I posit that there is also a frisson of familiarity in the echoes of Japan's fetishization of Euro-American queerness. In this presentation, I will tease out the threads of these similarities and point out the differences that give us cause for hope in dark times.

Presenter(s): Deirdre Clyde

Trans-Haunting: The Spectral Politics of Transness and Mis/translation in Xiaodi

This paper juxtaposes scenes from the documentary Xiaodi with ethnographic scenes from the Q&A session following Xiaodi's public screening in Seattle. I use trans-haunting to articulate the way that both transness and (mis)translation can be intimated through spectral tropes of haunting, ghostliness, and exorcism.

In the first section of this paper, I analyze several scenes from the Sinophone trans documentary Xiaodi. I argue that spectral tropes of haunting can function simultaneously as a site of cisnormative violence of containment and a means through which trans subjects can articulate the complex and elusive experiences of gender dysphoria and an alternative trans temporality. I examine how the spectral tropes of haunting and exorcism are used in conjunction with spatial tropes of containment/escape and inside/outside to justify transphobic violence, where ironically, exorcism is articulated as a form of cure and containment is articulated as a form of care. Yet, these same spectral tropes of ghostliness, haunting, and exorcism sometimes also inadvertently speak to trans folk's own felt relationship to gender-the way that trans life is often felt as being haunted by genders otherwise, and the experience of having a spectral relationship to one's body and temporality.

In the second section, I turn to moments of mis/translation during the screening Q&A as a site of trans-haunting, attending to them ethnographically. Drawing on tropes of spectrality and spatiality again, I argue that mis/translation can also be understood as a form of exorcism and containment. In doing so, I reframe mis/translation not as a failure of authenticity or fidelity, but as a space in which ghosts-things that remain invisible, silenced, or absent-demand the attention and care of listeners, summoning us to question where translatorial ghosts haunt and how ghosts are hosted, cared for, or exorcised by translators, listeners, and others. Attending to the ghostly dimension of mis/translation, I propose, can also illuminate the spectral aspect that constitutes our own practices of voicing and listening.

Presenter(s): Kexuan Liu

7373 Eerie Overlaps in Food Sovereignty and Nationalism: Part One

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM through 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Food justice, food sovereignty, food security, and efforts to ensure access to good food are generally understood as positive goals, but when people with commitments to ethnonationalist ideologies or advocacy for punitive criminal justice efforts can be under the same umbrella as emancipatory, racial justice, and anti-colonial efforts, then the umbrella concepts deserve greater scrutiny and examination. This panel explores the various ways causes drawing from opposed political viewpoints can fall under the same food politics, and how we as anthropologists should respond to that reality.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Ryan Adams, Lycoming College, Anthropology Department

Chair: Ryan Adams, Lycoming College, Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Ryan Adams, Lycoming College, Anthropology Department, Mandy Muise, Vanderbilt University, Elizabeth Onyango, University of Alberta, Liliana Rocío León

Presentation(s): Reclaiming Our Food: Food Sovereignty in Anti-Colonial Context

This paper examines the rhetoric related to food sovereignty among Puerto Rican activists trying to decolonize their food system. Puerto Rico imports nearly all the food consumed on the island. The food system enriches companies based in the colonizing mainland and impoverishes and endangers Puerto Ricans due to the predominance of fast food and unhealthy processed food. Puerto Ricans are justifiably angry at this arrangement and fighting to establish and rekindle native food sourcing on the island, in particular through agroecological approaches and various alternative food networks. Meanwhile, back in the colonizing mainland of America, anti-foreigner and ethnonationalist rhetoric is becoming disturbingly common. Rhetoric among mainland Americans that opposes globalized multicultural ideals and calls for putting America first in our food system has some overlap with rhetoric among Puerto Ricans working to free themselves from a food system conditioned by their unequal political conditions. That some phrases might sound similar, is of course best understood by recognizing that the phrases are coming out of the mouths of the colonizer in one instance and the colonized in another, but the comparison nonetheless leads to some interesting tensions that this paper explores.

Presenter(s): Ryan Adams

Spectral Foodscapes: Food Sovereignty and Community Markets in Nashville, Tennessee

This paper explores two community markets located in Nashville, Tennessee, that emerged as alternatives to increasingly gentrified farmers' markets. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork, archival research, interviews, and oral histories, this project interrogates the ways that urban agriculture, community gardening practices, and local markets are indicative of collective agency and community resistances to food apartheid. Drawing upon Black Geographies (McKittrick 2006; McKittrick and Woods 2007), Black Food Geographies (Jones 2019; Reese 2019), as well as what Gamez and Monreal (2025) call the "palimpsest" of racialized geographies, this project explores the specters of violence that remain embedded in racialized landscapes as they are relived and revived across time and space, reproduced within the food we eat and through the individuals with whom we collaborate.

Presenter(s): Mandy Muise

Criminalization of food and geographies of engagement in community-led initiatives for food secure ethno-cultural communities in Canada

Although food insecurity in Canada is a racialized inequity issue that disproportionately affects marginalized populations, existing food security interventions and policies do not reflect the cultural food needs of the at risk communities. Additionally, the engagement of the racialized

populations in designing and implementing such policies and interventions is an under explored topic in Canada. Yet, the formulation and designing policies and interventions for food security require community-engaged research that concretely identifies cultural values and practices of the disadvantaged populations. Furthermore, such initiatives must go beyond addressing hunger to also combat systemic factors associated with intergenerational poverty, discrimination, and criminalization of food. In this paper presentation, I discuss the shifting definition of food at and across borders and the geographies of engagement of immigrants in community-led and government initiatives for food secure ethno-cultural communities in Canada. The presentation highlights the temporal, place, and systemic factors that influence such definitions and the participation of immigrants in the decision-making processes on food security initiatives. The findings are not only relevant in the formulation of policies and interventions to address the cultural food needs and the social integration of newcomers but also for Canada's current and future sustainable economic and social growth.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Onyango

Food Justice Strategies of Latino Migrants in Bloomington, Indiana

Bloomington is a hub for local food movements in Indiana and the Midwest, and there are currently several diverse ones. However, these movements continue to focus on white cultural norms, ignoring Latinx food preferences and practices. Given this lack of representation in mainstream food movements, what alternative strategies do Latinx migrants employ to access foods that meet not only their nutritional but also their cultural needs? Food justice involves not only access to healthy food but also a critique of the racial, economic, and political systems shaping that access; it promotes culturally appropriate, sustainable diets for all. This paper has the potential to highlight how specific elements of local food discourse in the United States can foster exclusion and racial injustice and how Latino migrants navigate them.

Presenter(s): Liliana Rocío León

528 Anthropology and Environment Society Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Brinnan Schill , Nilver Tovar, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Jocelyn Bell , Niki Xenia Alygizou , Travis Fink, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Carmen Ilizarbe , Bevin Hardy

Presenter(s): Brinnan Schill, Nilver Tovar, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Jocelyn Bell, Niki Xenia Alygizou, Travis Fink, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Carmen Ilizarbe, Caela O'Connell, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Coral, Care, and Climate Change: More-than-Human Entanglements and Ecopolitical Hauntings in Grenville Bay, Grenada

This paper explores how coral restoration in Grenville Bay, Grenada, reveals reciprocal, more-than-human entanglements shaped by climate instability, postcolonial legacies, and everyday practices of care. Based on twelve weeks of collaborative ethnographic research, I examine how local fishers and marine biologists engage in intimate acts of tending and repair-- from toothbrushing coral fragments to seagrass surveys-- as a way of surviving environmental precarity and navigating shared more-than-human futures.

These entangled ecologies are shaped not only by everyday acts of care, but also by the hauntings of repeated colonial intervention, extractive development, and ecological crisis. Grenville Bay's coral gardens are embedded in a landscape marked by multispecies loss: sea turtle nesting sites have disappeared, mangroves have been uprooted by storms, and community beaches are eroding away. An unprecedented heatwave recently devastated much of the coral nursery, leaving the majority of nursery-grown coral fragments bleached or dead. Yet rather than retreat, practitioners responded with adaptation and experimentation: building shade structures, modifying planting techniques, and recovering viable fragments to begin again.

Through these practices, coral emerges not merely as a conservation target, but as kin, collaborator, and archive--an entity entangled with the lives, memories, and futures of the human communities who tend it. The process of restoration is not linear, but cyclical, marked by grief, hope, improvisation, and care. Drawing on co-creative methods of photography and underwater video footage, I reflect on how sensory and embodied ethnography can help make visible the everyday labor and quiet resilience of more-than-human survival.

This presentation argues for an anthropology-and geography-of climate care that centers relational ethics, reciprocal vulnerability, and emergent ecological imaginaries. Grenville Bay offers a case of postcolonial reworlding, where people and coral resist the erasures of climate instability by staying with the trouble-- together. In a haunted but still-living coastal world, coral restoration becomes a radical act of care and co-survival.

Presenter(s): Brinnan Schill

Exploring Sea-Level Rise and Flooding in Miami-Dade: A Cartographic and Environmental Anthropology Analysis

Sea-level rise (SLR) has accelerated in recent decades, posing serious threats to coastal communities, ecosystems, and economic stability. Miami-Dade County, the most densely populated and rapidly urbanizing coastal area in Florida, is facing increasing risks due to its geographical exposure, hydrological vulnerabilities, and entrenched socio-environmental inequalities. While existing research extensively examines the climatic drivers of SLR, there remains a crucial gap in understanding the anthropogenic, infrastructural, and policy-driven factors that worsen susceptibility to recurrent flooding. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating historical cartographic analysis, geospatial data, environmental justice frameworks, and

field observations to investigate the intersection of urban expansion, hydrological modifications, and resilience planning. Findings show that adaptation measures - such as road elevation and flood-resilient construction - disproportionately redirect floodwaters into marginalized neighborhoods. Furthermore, the widespread loss of natural flood buffers, including wetlands, has significantly diminished the region's ability to absorb storm surges and tidal inundation, further heightening flood risks in vulnerable areas. This research underscores the inadequacies of current resilience planning, which often overlooks socio-economic disparities and reinforces climate adaptation inequities. The study emphasizes the urgent need for interdisciplinary and justice-oriented SLR assessments and adaptation strategies that contextualize vulnerability within historical land-use decisions and human-environment interactions. Achieving genuine climate resilience requires a paradigm shift in policy that integrates social, environmental, and infrastructural resilience to ensure equitable protection for all communities. Without such an approach, adaptations will perpetuate environmental injustice, widen socio-economic divides, and leave the most vulnerable populations to bear the brunt of an escalating climate crisis.

Keywords: Sea-level rise; Environmental Anthropology; Geographic Information Systems; Miami-Dade; Climate Resilience.

Highlights

1. Historical land-use decisions and socio-economic disparities exacerbate Miami-Dade County's vulnerability to SLR, disproportionately exposing low-income and marginalized communities to recurrent flooding.
2. Resilience measures often benefit specific areas and individuals, resulting in adverse outcomes for lower-income neighborhoods, worsening existing vulnerabilities.
3. Current climate resilience policies fail to address systemic inequities, underscoring the urgent need for interdisciplinary, community-centered solutions that integrate environmental, sociocultural, and economic considerations.
4. The destruction of wetlands and other natural flood buffers has significantly reduced Miami-Dade's ability to mitigate storm surges and tidal flooding, increasing long-term risks.

Presenter(s): Nilver Tovar

Ghosts of Green Colonialism

The Sami Parliament President, Ailo Keskitalo, described the decimation of Indigenous land from wind farms as an act of green colonialism. These colonial policies exacerbated the loss of land from climate change (Normann 2020). Scholars began to utilise this term to conceptualise states placing the burden of the Green Transition and climate change onto Indigenous peoples, causing further marginalisation of groups across the globe. However, green colonialism did not arise alongside green new deals (GNDs). Indigenous groups have protested the construction of green, hydroelectric dams since the 1970s (Fearnside 2006). One of the most significant protests comes from Norway's Sami people. The Sami people protested the construction of the Alta Dam for nearly

a decade, occupying the proposed site from the late 1970s and into the 1980s. In constructing a dam, reindeer herding patterns used for generations would come to an end (Lehtola 2006; Lightfoot 2016). The Sami people are not alone in their experience of green colonisation. Throughout this piece, the experiences of green colonialism from across the globe will be examined to display a sustained effort by states to impose the energy needs of the majority onto Indigenous peoples. The research profiled will largely focus on the construction of hydroelectric dams and wind farms from the 1970s to present day. By creating an understanding of how green infrastructure is used to marginalise and force assimilation upon Indigenous peoples, one can make recommendations on how to build a sustainable future inclusive of all people.

Presenter(s): Jocelyn Bell

Landscapes of Care: Among The Ruins of Resilience and Climate Transition in the Aegean Archipelago

Across the hillsides of the Aegean Archipelago, the dry-stone terraces known as kserolithia stretch like the wrinkles of time. Built by hand over generations, they once sustained fragile ecologies, agricultural life, and seasonal uncertainty. Today, many lie in partial ruin, dislodged by time, tourism, shifting land use, and infrastructure transition. As the Greek state and EU usher in renewable energy transitions, including wind farms and energy infrastructure on these same hillsides, kserolithia structures re-emerge in public discourse as contested spaces where ecological, political, and vernacular knowledge systems collide.

This flash talk reflects on kserolithia as more than ruins or heritage remains. They are forms of endurance that challenge linear stories of resilience and decay. As climate infrastructures rise over the landscapes of kserolithia, their embedded meaning and materiality resist the narrative of progress through quiet forms of resilience – through encounters of care. They mark a different temporality and form of engagement – one where humans and non-humans act as co-agents in sustaining life.

This presentation asks us to reflect: How do we deal with the notion of ruin in times of transition? How can we trace resilience in landscapes of ruins and memory? How do we attend to what remains as a site of engagement with resilience and ecological life?

Presenter(s): Niki Xenia Alygizou

Perspectives on Conservation and Extraction in the Shiwiar Territory of the Ecuadorian Amazon

This paper will explore Shiwiar perspectives on conservation and environmental issues related to extractive activities in their territory. The Shiwiar are a Chicham-speaking Amazonian indigenous group primarily living in Ecuador. They are characterized as an "emergent" ethnic group, having developed as a distinct ethnic identity in the 1970s. The Shiwiar territory is one of the few indigenous territories in the Ecuadorian Amazon without road access. Recently, balsa extraction has increased in the Shiwiar territory. Based on fieldwork carried out in 2021, 2022, and 2025. I will outline ongoing Shiwiar participation in conservation programs and recent work with NGOs who are

providing economic support and infrastructure in Shiwiar communities. I will discuss Shiwiar attitudes towards conservation and their participation in extractive activities such as temporary work in petroleum, mining, palm oil, timber, and balsa industries.

Presenter(s): Travis Fink

Specters of Dispossession and Extraction: Remnants of the Hacienda Regime and Shadows of Large-scale Mining in the Peruvian Andes

Dispossession and labor extraction, but also resistance and reaction to them, have a long and diverse history in Peru, going back to colonial times and continuing throughout the republic. In the Peruvian Andes, the Hacienda regime instituted by the Spanish monarchy in the XVI century formally came to an end in the 1960's, but in some places like the Apurimac region it took until the 1980's to become real. Nowadays, the specters of gamonales or hacendados, the former owners of large land holdings expropriated to the Incas and its descendants, continue hunting peasant communities in ongoing conflicts about territorial ownership, but also reappear in the institutional and socioeconomic relationships that favor large-scale mining projects advocated by the Peruvian state in detriment of the rights of indigenous peoples. In the aforementioned region of Apurimac, the specters of the gamonales are joined by the opaque presence of transnational corporations that have taken over the same territories previously controlled by the haciendas, reshaping landscapes, economies and social expectations in rural towns and populations coexisting with them.

This presentation, based on ethnographic research conducted in the province of Cotabambas in the Apurimac region, analyzes the representations of peasant men and women from two rural communities affected –albeit in different ways- both by the Hacienda regime and by the open-pit mining project Las Bambas in the Peruvian Andes. The examination of their different trajectories and by changes in the scenery produced by the extractive mining project reveals complex and dissimilar forms of social and economic engagement, as well as diverse understandings of development and of modernization.

Presenter(s): Carmen Ilizarbe

The Village is Stable: Understanding Risk Perception in a Barrier Island

Climate change is altering coastal landscapes rapidly by increasing the frequency and intensity of climate-related events. The increasing threat and impacts of climate change and disasters have sparked subfields of environmental anthropology-climate change anthropology and disaster anthropology-to investigate the increasing complexity of human-environment interactions. Some of the most adversely affected by climate change and disasters are small island communities because of their unique geographical and socio-economic characteristics. The isolation of these communities further complicates their ability to respond to and recover from disasters or weather-related events, as they often lack the infrastructure and resources necessary for effective disaster management and adaptation strategies. Ocracoke-a barrier island off the coast of North Carolina, USA-has been subject to environmental disturbance caused by previous disasters and climate

change impacts. The interplay between climate change and human systems is dynamic and non-linear, highlighting the need for targeted and culturally sensitive adaptation strategies. This ethnographic research study uses a community-engaged approach to understand risk perception and community identified risks in Ocracoke. Specifically, interviews and participatory risk mapping were conducted to assess differences in perceptions and impacts to community-identified risks, directly or indirectly related to climate change or disasters. Overall, this research identifies the most severe and common risks that need to be addressed in the community. The results from this study demonstrate the normalization of risk, as more risks were named in interviews than in the risk mapping data. Additionally, the findings indicated a significant variation in risks identified by participants, indicating the need for more cultural context in disaster and climate change preparedness and adaptation strategies. Emphasizing community perspectives can enhance adaptation strategies, specifically by providing insights to current perceptions and impacts of community-identified risks.

Presenter(s): Caela O'Connell

Co-author(s): Bevin Hardy

516 Society for the Anthropology of Europe Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Terje Toomistu, University of Tartu, Zsofia Bacsadi , Neringa Klumbyte, Miami University, Department of Anthropology, Jelena Kupsjak , Léo Manach , Nathan Buckley, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Terje Toomistu, University of Tartu, Zsofia Bacsadi, Neringa Klumbyte, Miami University, Department of Anthropology, Jelena Kupsjak, Léo Manach, Nathan Buckley, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Comfort Migrants or State Traitors? The Emotional Politics of Leaving Among Young Estonian Migrants

Since the European Union's enlargement in 2004, labor and educational migration has surged among young adult Estonians, particularly those of the so-called Y-generation, now mostly in their late 20s and 30s. Having grown up in a borderless Europe, these individuals often migrate in ways that are temporary, cyclical, and open-ended (Cairns 2021), a pattern described as "liquid migration" (Engbersen and Snel 2013).

However, public discourse in Estonia around migration has evolved amid social anxieties, leading to depictions of those who have left as "traitors to the nation"-individuals who benefit from higher salaries and better welfare systems abroad while abandoning their small and sparsely populated homeland. After politician Tõnis Lukas introduced the term "comfort migrants" in 2014, it gained traction as a social stereotype describing people who move abroad primarily for a more

comfortable lifestyle or improved economic prospects. According to this discourse, such migration is seen as driven by convenience rather than hardship, persecution, or war.

This paper examines how young Estonians living abroad negotiate these stigmatizing narratives of "comfort migrants" and "state traitors" in relation to their sense of national belonging. It draws on anthropological analysis of 50 oral interviews and open-ended responses from a large-scale online survey of over 2,000 participants—all of whom participated in the post-accession wave of emigration from Estonia.

While my research participants generally maintain a strong identification as Estonian, they do not view this identity as dependent on physical presence in Estonia; hence, their mobile lifestyles are not perceived as threatening to their national identity. Through the lens of "affective nationalism" (Militz and Schurr 2016), I argue that their sense of belonging is marked by "affective contradictions" (Toomistu, Annist, Murakas 2024), amplified by the stigmatizing discourses of "comfort migrants" and "state traitors." The ethnography of young Estonians abroad thus offers insights into the complex entanglements of global mobility, national identity, and populist nationalism, challenging the moral binaries that shape East-to-West migration narratives in the post-EU-enlargement era.

Presenter(s): Terje Toomistu

Haunted by Disease and Profit – Morality, Fear, and Traumatic Memory in the Policymaking around Plasma Donation in the EU

Land, livestock, natural resources are subject to careful regulation in the EU. They are considered 'strategic resources', economically important raw materials subject to a higher risk of supply interruption that pose concern for self-sufficiency. While human bodily resources are crucial raw materials for medicine, they have not been approached with the same attention. One such resource is blood plasma – a valuable raw material of pharmaceutical manufacturing – whose provisioning is envisioned through different models in the EU. Similar to the commercialized US system, some EU member states offer monetary compensation to plasma donors, while most others do not. This contrast was highlighted as the old Blood Directive (2002) regulating plasma donation entered a revision process. Lobbying around the new SoHO (substances of human origin) regulation revived buried discussions about gift-giving and commodification in relation to blood donation. Should the market or the public sector be responsible for sourcing plasma and life-saving medicines derived from it? Is it eventually a gift and/or a commodity?

This policymaking process mobilized diverse actors with different stakes in the outcome which can potentially reshape – or contrarily – solidify the supply chains of plasma which provide treatment for hundreds of thousands of patients in the EU. These include medical experts, representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and non-profit national blood centers and patient organizations. Policymaking is often imagined as a technical and amoral procedure; however, this ethnographic study reveals the way it gets saturated with affects, morality and ghosts of the past and various Others.

The debates around the SoHO revision were haunted by the dependence on the US (where the bulk of raw plasma for EU medicine production is imported from), envisioned as the dark mirror image of the EU where a market regime in plasma procurement (relying on paid donors) rules, and has the potential to "infect" the Union as well. The fear might not be unfounded: 'studying through' this process of policy-making, and 'the webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses' that power creates (Shore and Wright 1997) revealed how 'market' and 'non-market' spheres are not easy to separate. Non-profit blood centers and for-profit pharma companies are intimately connected through the supply chain. Gift and commodity haunt each other. The policy revision process was further haunted by the collective historical trauma of the mass infection of people living with hemophilia by plasma-derived medicines in the 1980s in several EU member states. The (often unresolved) memory of blood-borne infections like hepatitis C and HIV still strike terror in policymakers and experts in the plasma field alike. This rearranges how risky donors are (re)imagined, how patients should be protected and cared for, and the nexus between these two end points of the plasma supply chain.

Presenter(s): Zsafia Bacsadi

Historical Predicament and Sovereignty after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine. The Baltic Case.

While Russia's war against Ukraine has been analyzed in terms of colonialism and imperialism, I suggest interrogating forms of sovereignty to understand discrepant geopolitical ideologies of statehood and violence in the region. I explore the way statehood has been conceived, authority deployed, violence explained, and dissension counteracted since 2014 in the Baltic states (my primary focus is on Lithuania) and Russia. Russia projects its legitimacy as a great power, represented internationally until the war of 2022 and historically as an empire and the winner of WWII; while the Baltic states legitimate their right to statehood by underscoring their illegal occupation during WWII by the USSR. I argue that Russia enacts supra-sovereignty, while the Baltic countries engage radical sovereignty to deter Russia and counteract a future of temporal and limited statehood that was their historical predicament in the 20th century. Based on my ethnographic research in rural and urban communities in Lithuania, I claim that there is certain relativity how people imagine sovereignty, but it is not reducible to language (as in Russia's protection of Russian speakers), nor even ethnicity (as in Russia's discourse that there are many Russians in Ukraine, Latvia, etc.), or nationhood. While people recognized temporalities and limits of sovereignties, none of them wanted borders to move again.

Presenter(s): Neringa Klumbyte

The (Infra)Politics of PTSD in Post-Conflict Croatia

For years, I avoided writing about PTSD. Despite its ghostly omnipresence in my doctoral research on mental health policies in Croatia, the topic felt too close, too heavy, too politically charged. It was easier to leave drafts unfinished than to confront the weight of a clinical category, political discourse and a deeply personal reckoning. It was only through therapy-first individual, then group- that I found a way to articulate the unspeakable. This process, however, did not bring closure;

rather, it underscored the layered silences surrounding PTSD in post-conflict Croatia, where trauma is both hyper-visible and invisible.

This paper examines PTSD not as a medical diagnosis but as an (infra)political phenomenon, shaped by the unspoken burdens of those who grew up in the shadow of war. Drawing from autoethnographic reflection, I explore how trauma is processed within intimate spaces, such as therapy, while remaining unspeakable in public discourse. The dominant narrative in Croatia situates PTSD within the figure of the war veteran, leaving civilian trauma, intergenerational suffering, and experiences like my own-of secondary PTSD-largely invisible. Through the lens of James C. Scott's concept of infrapolitics, I interrogate these hidden transcripts of trauma and the cultural constraints that dictate when and how suffering can be acknowledged.

Engaging with the work of Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, and Peter Locke, this paper critiques the depoliticization of PTSD in biomedical frameworks and reveals how it is embedded in structural violence, generational silence, and socio-political transition. Speaking about PTSD-my own and that of others-remains fraught with hesitation and risk. Yet, breaking these silences, even in partial and imperfect ways, is necessary to move beyond the confines of the diagnostic label and towards a deeper understanding of trauma as a lived, collective, and political experience.

Presenter(s): Jelena Kupsjak

Unwelcome Ghosts. Dewhitening the Memories of the Anti-AIDS Movement in Mainland France.

The invisibilisation of the participation of poor, non-white people in the Anti-AIDS movement has been analysed particularly in the United States (Schulman 2012; Royles 2020). This proposal takes the French universalist colourblind context as a case study to analyse how memories of the Anti-AIDS movement are haunted by the ghosts of immigrants. This proposal is based on the observation that cinematic, visual and literary representations of the 'plague years', their deaths and forms of activism are part of a whitening of AIDS memory in France. The aim is to document how conflicting non-white memories of AIDS are transmitted from one generation of AIDS activists to another.

This proposal is part of the 'hauntological turn' in anthropology (Keck 2024), which seeks to understand how the living live with their ghosts and what social, symbolic and political uses are made of these ghosts (Gordon 1997; Delaplace 2024). In the field of HIV/AIDS, a large body of literature has documented living with HIV or the consequences of the virus in affected communities in terms of militancy, solidarity, mourning rituals, etc. However, little work has been done on the long-term experiences of the survivors of this brutal epidemic and on the place occupied by the ghosts of those who have died of AIDS.

Drawing on association archives and interviews with non-white AIDS activists in France, the research aims to see how current AIDS activists and LGBTQI+ activists inherit the non-white specters of AIDS. While AIDS deaths were not part of the collective memory during the so-called plague years, the fight against AIDS (Chantraine 2021) has been patrimonialised by institutions over the last decade. Place des combattantes du sida inaugurated in Paris on 1 December 2021,

Promenade Cleews Vellay; the memory of AIDS is gradually being incorporated into cities and cultural productions, such as successful exhibitions and films. The white ghosts of AIDS are beginning to be eligible for public mourning (Butler 2004), collectively mourned and commemorated with plaques in museums and urban spaces. Instead, absent from these public commemorations, the immigrant spectres of AIDS continue to remind us of the repressed and unresolved social violence (Gordon 1997) experienced by immigrant AIDS victims.

Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious Life. The Power of Mourning and Violence*, Verso.

Chantraine, R. (2021). *La mémoire en morceaux. Une ethnographie de la patrimonialisation des minorités LGBTQI et de la lutte contre le sida*. Thèse d'anthropologie sociale sous la direction de Véronique Moulinié soutenue à l'EHESS le 23 novembre 2021.

Delaplace, G. (2024). *La voix des fantômes. Quand débordent les morts,,* Seuil.

Gordon, A. (1997). *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, University of Minnesota Press.

Keck, F. (2024). « Le tournant hantologique de l'anthropologie », *Les temps qui restent*, no. 3.

Royles, D. (2020). *To Make the Wounded Whole: The African America*.

Presenter(s): Léo Manach

“Something’s cooking”: Piecing together the geopolitical present through plane/ship-spotting from Gibraltar

This flash presentation focuses on an aspect of my doctoral research exploring how the event of Brexit shapes the cultural politics of Gibraltar. Despite its electorate voting 96% in favor of remaining in the European Union during the United Kingdom's 2016 EU membership referendum, Gibraltar - a British Overseas Territory - finds itself subject to ongoing treaty negotiations between the UK and the EU which aim to open the land-border with neighboring Spain - an EU member state which also maintains a disputed sovereignty claim over Gibraltar. In this presentation, I consider how everyday activities of Gibraltarians demonstrate ways of responding to the present conjuncture of contested sovereignties and of converging borders. Drawing upon the recreational activity of ship and plane-spotting carried out by maritime and aviation enthusiasts residing in Gibraltar, as well as the dissemination of videos and photographic evidence of sightings across social media, I posit that ship and plane-spotting as a recreational activity can be understood as a mode of everyday bordering and political-self-determination within the context of Gibraltar where the territorial waters and airspace of Gibraltar are contested by Spain. By focusing on how maritime and aviation enthusiasts patrol Gibraltar's maritime borders and airspace, I argue that ship and plane-spotting is a way in which Gibraltarians, as a non-sovereign people, participate in the geopolitical present that is driven by sovereign states.

Presenter(s): Nathan Buckley

5413 Technocratic Imaginaries and the Politics of Labor's Visibility

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores how different forms of labor-technical, affective, and infrastructural-are made visible, obscured, and weaponized within technocratic and political regimes. Highlighting newly published books in conversation with works-in-progress, the discussion attends to the power dynamics that determine whose and what labor is acknowledged, esteemed, or rendered invisible and to whom the value of such labor accumulates.

Some participants focus on marginalized, racialized, and gendered labor that is strategically obscured. Others explore how material infrastructures, data practices, and the operations of big tech are either rendered invisible or, at times, hypervisible in ways that shape both workplace hierarchies and the contemporary political landscape. The roundtable also examines how different people and communities navigate the socio-political landscapes shaped by infrastructural and technological developments. These broader shifts can sometimes normalize surveillance or, at other times, be harnessed in the pursuit of fame.

Together, presenters invite reflection on how we come to recognize labor as labor, under what conditions and what regimes of visibility, and what labor can do within the technocratic imaginaries that narrate the structuring of our material, social, and political worlds.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Elana Resnick, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ilana Gershon, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Christien Tompkins, Roderic Crooks, University of California, Irvine, Luis Felipe R. Murillo, University of Notre Dame, Dwaipayan Banerjee, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Elana Resnick, University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Anthropology, Gehad Abaza, University of California, Santa Barbara

Discussant: Lilly Irani, University of California, San Diego

4896 Part 2: Queer Demography: Thinking Sexuality, Gender, and Kinship in an era of Population “Decline”

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Over the past two decades there have been mounting transnational demographic transformations related to low fertility rates, decreasing marriages, and greater economic interdependence with immediate kin. In the afterlife of neoliberalism and austerity, the lines among wage labor, welfare, and kinship are being redrawn (Martin, Wig, and Yanagisako 2021) and new politics of dependence, personhood, and survival are emerging. This panel asks after the place of sexuality, gender, kinship,

and normativity amidst the socio-economic changes wrought by demographic "declines." How do pronatalist state policies and other "demographic anxieties" (De Zordo, Marre, and Smietana 2022) affect queer and trans reproductive politics and family formations? What new forms of subjecthood, survival and kinship emerge as individuals negotiate newfound economic and social dependencies? What do demographic changes mean for hegemonic notions of "straight time" (Wool 2021; Boellstorff 2007) which stipulate economic independence as a pre-condition for a heteronormative life? What subjects become "queered" (Weiss 2022) under these conditions, beyond queer and trans populations? How do age, race, legal status, disability, and other dynamics intersect these processes?

Our panelists collectively seek to address these and related questions through ethnographic research situated in diverse cultural and social milieux. Part 1 of this panel explores relationships between demographic shifts and reproductive politics, critically examining the ways changing reproductive hopes, imaginaries, and foreclosures shape individual, collective, and national horizons of futurity. Part 2 of this panel relatedly focuses on demographic change and transformations of intimacy and kinship, especially those which complicate discreet identity categories and conjugal relationships. Beyond a focus on "queer" as a marker of just non-normative desires and subjectivities, our panelists collectively explore "queer" relations and connections that exceed fixed domains and normative frameworks- in the process opening new epistemological, relational, and theoretical vistas into demographic change.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Alex Wolff, Brown University

Chair: Alex Wolff, Brown University

Presenter(s): Suma Ikeuchi, University of California, Santa Barbara, Alex Nelson, University of Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology, Pierre Minn, Université de Montréal, Sophie Kenyon, Connor Babbit, Southern Oregon University

Discussant: Casey James Miller, Muhlenberg College

Presentation(s): Fugitive Kinships: Wayward Lives and Queer Bonds of Filipina Migrants in Japan

Japan, the nation-state with the oldest population in the world, has long relied on the labor power of foreign migrants while officially disavowing their presence by insisting that the country has no "immigration policy." In reality, many immigrants have settled there over the last several decades by resorting to kinships to citizens, including the Filipinos—of whom roughly 70% are women. Many initially arrived on the temporary "entertainer" visas and subsequently settled by marrying Japanese men and/or bearing Filipino Japanese offspring. The hinging of mobility on family ties, however, has yielded a messy by-product: fugitive kinships—bonds formed outside the juridical definitions of family, typically without legitimate documents or state sanction, that sustain their vitality not by open defiance of the exclusionary rules but by quiet maneuver of the system in place. By tracing the transnational history of Japan and the Philippines that seeps out of the ethnographic portraits of Filipina migrants, this paper elucidates two manifestations of fugitive kinship: transacted marriages between Japanese men and Filipina women, and queer kinships formed in gay, lesbian, and asexual

relationships. By elaborating on queer relations that evade the state's gaze, the paper analyzes how the duality of fugitive kinship—that is, the bifurcation between public acceptance and private subversion—gives the state more leeway for two-faced engagement with those on the margins of citizenship.

Presenter(s): Suma Ikeuchi

Love, Gangnam Style: What Gendered Constructions of Romantic Love Reveal about Marriage and Fertility Decline in South Korea

South Korea's economic transformation in the 20th century has been as miraculous as its declining fertility rate is potentially catastrophic. Korea's political leaders and populace's default explanation for why their fertility is the lowest in the world is the rising cost of living and of raising children. In this paper, based on over two years of ethnographic fieldwork in South Korea accompanied by interviews with 75 individuals and 250 survey responses, I argue that transformations in expectations of romantic relationships and gender relations are key factors shaping Korea's declining marriage and fertility rate. In particular, I analyze Koreans' conceptions of romantic love and courtship narratives to illustrate how expectations of marriage have become more companionate and individualized and how the rapid transformation of gender relations in Korea has created points of gendered friction for couples. One specific source of gendered friction is women's concerns about expectations of sacrifice and gendered reciprocity, which particularly come to a head as romantic relationships transform into kinship relationships through marriage. Relative to men, hegemonic norms of gendered reciprocity pose a greater threat to emerging individualized constructions of self among middle class young women. These hurdles to reconciling aspirations for independence, self-actualization, and class reproduction contribute to delayed or forgone marriage and, by extension, fertility.

Presenter(s): Alex Nelson

Queering Voluntary Childlessness and Emerging Masculinities Among Young Heterosexual Men in Québec

As in many parts of North America, fertility decline in 20th-century Québec was swift and dramatic. Among French-Canadians, high fertility was associated with French linguistic and cultural survival in a context of Anglophone political and economic dominance. Current fertility rates in Québec are well below replacement levels, and a growing number of young people in the province are explicitly stating their intentions to eschew biological reproduction altogether. Approaching voluntary childlessness with and through debates around queer (non)-reproduction and masculinities sheds light on how young heterosexual men imagine and foreclose their individual and collective futures. Based on ethnographic research among young, cis-gender, heterosexual French-Canadian men in Québec, I examine how voluntary childlessness does and does not "queer" masculinity, kinship and nationalism. While my informants and those who describe them often invoke climate change and the individual choice to not transmit life on an uninhabitable planet as their primary motive of voluntary childlessness, other factors shape these men's non-reproductive imaginings. These

include fears of perpetuating toxic masculinity and domestic violence, anxieties about the looming spectres of economic duress and privatized childrearing, and desires to contribute to more equitable gender relations.

Presenter(s): Pierre Minn

Crafting Queer Kin Through Sterilization

At a moment when pronatalist perspectives hope to address declining fertility rates through heteronormative reproduction, why are an increasing number of people seeking sterilization? What does sterilization offer as a means of not just foreclosing reproduction, but also creating other kinds of community and connection? In this paper I build on the work of scholars who show that kinship definitions are transformed through studies of sexual and reproductive choice (Westin, 1991), assisted reproductive technologies (Strathern, 1992), disability (Rapp & Ginsburg, 2011), and non-heteronormative Indigenous relations (TallBear, 2018) to ask what kinds of kinship emerge through contraception. How might undergoing sterilization at this moment in U.S. history enable individuals to creatively reproduce desired forms of relatedness and belonging? Through ethnographic research in Chicago foregrounding the perspectives of those seeking sterilization, I posit that individuals make reproductive decisions not just to satisfy personal preferences to stop having children but also to bring about the collective queer futures they envision – as part of a world-building strategy that affects not only their reproductive capacity but also their community and kin relations, thereby extending the understanding of queer kinship and demography to include acts of deliberate nonreproduction via sterilization.

Presenter(s): Sophie Kenyon

Roommates or Romance? Polyamorous Potential for Achieving Financial and Kinship Aspirations

Through growing engagement on social media, polyamorous Americans offer positive representations of their nuclear family alternative while providing emotional and logistical support for those looking to create a polyamorous household. Meanwhile, mainstream humor related to polyamory has shifted. Rather than mocking polyamorous people, the jokes are increasingly economic in nature, with quips about how multiple romantic partners are needed to afford housing. Together, these media shifts present a picture of a changing public opinion as everyday financial and domestic labor needs become more difficult to fulfill. In an era of decline for the nuclear family, polyamory is gaining acceptance in the U.S. as a legitimate family structure with financial advantages.

This paper expands on our 2024 digital ethnographic study of online polyamorous communities, in which we analyzed how polyamory offers new opportunities for participation in social reproductive processes during a time of increasing economic instability. We explore tensions between financial strain and the societal emphasis on romantic relationships as the foundation of home-building. For individuals seeking to establish their own households, roommates can feel like an "immature" stop-gap option – even for those who already have romantic partners or children. Through queering

approaches to cohabitation, we show how polyamorous households offer a strategy of family formation for Americans under continuous economic crisis.

Presenter(s): Connor Babbit

Co-author(s): Katherine Fox

Discussion

2731 Ghostly Grounds: Semiotic Erasures and Haunted Meaning

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Haunting" is a process characterized by the variably apparent and sometimes inescapable presence of what is not there. We are interested in what hauntings are happening during semiosis, and how tracing semiotic ghosts-indexical relations that influence meaning-making, but are often overlooked, whether accidentally or on purpose-can help acknowledge the ongoing impacts of these sign relations. Irvine and Gal (2000) theorize "erasure" as a process in which elements that contradict a given language ideological framework are invisibilized. Extending this concept beyond language ideologies, we understand semiotic ghosts as the enduring presuppositional force (Silverstein 2003) of what was erased, which is unequally available for potential citation and transformation. Papers in our panel engage with semiotic ghosts in a variety of contexts: Tekin looks at how a fungus is made legible as an Indigenous food or "ancestor" through the multisensory summoning of its erased indexical relations; focusing on an Afro-Caribbean neighborhood in Puerto Rico, Castro Font analyzes how spectral traces of its past and present materialize through the sensorial sphere; Motobayashi analyzes the haunting of a post-national speakerhood in the formation of a cosmopolitan language policy in Japan; Khoshsirar traces strategic acts of indexical erasure as a "ghostly infrastructure" in the teaching of a Persian mystical text; and Heffernan highlights the use of entextualization in an experimental musical work to creatively interrogate hauntings in processes of interpretation in trans voice therapy.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Doğa Tekin, University of California, Los Angeles, Dani Heffernan, University of California, Los Angeles

Chair: Doğa Tekin, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): Doğa Tekin, University of California, Los Angeles, Sara Castro, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Kyoko Motobayashi, University of Tokyo, Zia Khoshsirar, University of California, Los Angeles, Dani Heffernan, University of California, Los Angeles

Presentation(s): Phonetic Summoning: Making Huitlacoche's Indigenous Relations Legible Through Multisensory Naming Practices

Huitlacoche is a contested fungus that has long coexisted with corn; it's an ancestral food for some Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala, a "traditional food" in Mexico, a smut pathogen for U.S.

agricultural institutions, and "corn truffle" for U.S. restaurateurs. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with diasporic Indigenous organizers in San Diego who lead cooking demonstrations sharing the "Indigenous story" of huitlacoche, this paper examines how these organizers summon its suppressed Indigenous relations through the conscientious voicing of the Nahuatl phonemes in its name. Organizers frame huitlacoche's limited availability in the U.S. as a result of its "demonization" within industrial agriculture, claiming that both its pathologization and commodification are cases of "Indigenous erasure," as renaming the fungus as smut or truffle obscures the semiotic possibilities of its Nahuatl name. At the intersection of this context and the multisensory elements of these demonstrations—where participants smell, view, touch, and taste the fungus—emerge qualic possibilities that summon the semiotic ghosts of its Indigenous relations. Through these events, sonic qualities of "huitlacoche" or "cuitlacoche" become familiar to participants alongside the fungus' sensorial qualities, suggesting that renaming it "corn truffle" is not necessary to make it palatable, but instead ghostifies the semiotic relations that make it legible as an Indigenous material and/or "ancestor."

Presenter(s): Doğa Tekin

Aquí Vive Gente y el Derecho a Permanecer: Language, Materiality, and Collective Tenure in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico's financialization of the economy in the 21st century has worsened the material living conditions of everyday life and is a driving force of the concerning steady decline of the local population since 2015. These political economic effects are magnified in Santurce, an Afro-Puerto Rican and Dominican working-class neighborhood in San Juan, turned magnet for tourists and real estate speculative investors. Using a semiotic and linguistic anthropological lens, this paper engages with "semiotic ghosts" to analyze the ways in which Santurce's past and present—anchored in Caribbean blackness and aurality—are simultaneously erased yet often taken up for citation through the sensorial sphere. Historically, Santurce has been a key site of cultural production as well as a target of political economic experimentation. This paper focuses on Calle Loíza and Calle Cerra, San Juan's designated Cultural and Gastronomic Center and Arts District respectively. More broadly, I draw from ethnographic fieldwork to discuss the linguistic and aesthetic practices that Santurce's organized communities employ as strategies to enact permanencia (permanence) and forge alternative politics to shift their material living conditions.

Presenter(s): Sara Castro

A Semiotic Ghost in the Promotion of International Japanese: Antithesization of the National and the Cosmopolitan in Language

This paper reports on a discourse analysis of Japan's language policy, called the JF standard, which is a pedagogical guideline for international promotion of the Japanese language. Focusing on the JF 2007 report that has documented the series of exploratory discussion on the foundational vision and principles of the JF standard, the analysis has been conducted from the perspective of the metapragmatics of language policy processes and examined the representation of the language to

be promoted internationally and of its international speaker population. This paper pays particular attention to the process in which the concept of *kokugo*, a Japanese term that literally translates as national language, is cited as an antithesis in creating the image of cosmopolitan Japanese. The antithesization of *kokugo* as the national language, which contributes to legitimizing a form of cosmopolitan ideology of language in the document, includes processes of re-appropriation and erasure of certain indexical relationships of *kokugo* that haunt the discourses surrounding 'cosmopolitan language.' The 'ghostly' aspects of antithesization will be unpacked in this paper, specifically how the rhetoric that cites *kokugo* as a traditional and modern language ideology and as something the new and cosmopolitan language use is 'not confined to,' contributes to the framing of the language and speakers in the policy discourse of international language promotion.

Presenter(s): Kyoko Motobayashi

"We Do Not Believe This": Indexical Shadows and the Ghostly Labor of Secular Reading in Persian Mystical Pedagogy

This paper examines how an online instructor's systematic omissions and disavowals of religious content in teaching 'Attār's *Manteq al-Teyr* (The Conference of the Birds) in Iranian mystical circles in Los Angeles reveal the ghostly labor of secular reading—where ideology operates most powerfully when obscured. Through analysis of strategic elisions (e.g., skipping prologues on divine unity) and explicit negations (e.g., rejecting the Prophet Muhammad's *mi' rāj* [ascension]), I argue that these pedagogical acts stage indexical erasure, wherein religious significations are simultaneously invoked and disavowed to construct a secular-critical framework. The instructor's interventions—such as reframing the piety of the Duck (a key avian character in 'Attār's allegory) as clerical hypocrisy while suppressing its Sufi connotations—exemplify indexical denial (Barrett & Hall, 2024), where the disavowal of alternate meanings sustains ideological labor. Drawing on literature of semiotic processes (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Silverstein, 2003), I demonstrate how this pedagogy depends on ghostly infrastructures: the omitted prologues, the negated *mi' rāj*, and the Duck's unspoken Sufi resonances persist as structuring absences, their erasure enabling the coherence of secular critique. The paper ultimately reveals a central paradox: ideological efficacy hinges on spectrality—the mechanisms of meaning-making must remain perceptible only through the traces of what they disappear.

Presenter(s): Zia Khoshsirat

Entextualization and Reconfiguring Participant Frameworks: Analysis of a Multimedia Artistic Work on Trans Voices

This paper explores how an experimental music piece creatively deploys entextualization and reconfigures participant frameworks to interrogate processes of semiotic interpretation in trans voice therapy. Situating my analysis within broader ethnographic research on English-language trans voice therapy in North America, I argue that composer Sarah Hennies' hour-long multimedia work, "Contralto" (2017), underscores the inescapable referentiality that haunts utterances removed from their context of origin and taken up as ostensibly contextless vocal exercises used to

assess sonic qualities. Devising an immersive encounter with transfeminine voices through sound and video, the piece brings attention to the interactional elements of voice modification, implicating the audience as witnesses and addressees in such practices. Shifts in musical style and intensity of the string and percussion accompaniment in the piece occur alongside shifts in interactional dynamics as speakers animate multiple voices, forging a polyvocality that obfuscates clarity of authorship and address. In highlighting multiple layers of entextualization—from imagined everyday women's language, to pedagogical text, to artistic performance—"Contralto" enables the (re)emergence of erased semiotic relations (legible to some more than others) that comprise ideals of gendered linguistic practice and embodiment.

Presenter(s): Dani Heffernan

3991 The Way That Leads Among the Lost: A Conversation With Angela Garcia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Angela Garcia's newest book, *The Way That Leads Among the Lost: Life, Death, and Hope in Mexico City's Anexos* (published in 2024 by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux), takes us into the worlds of anexos, informal addiction clinics in Mexico. As controversial as they are widespread, anexos are infamous for applying disciplinary tactics and violence to treat addiction, often against participants' will. Through searing portraits, Garcia introduces us to some of the numerous Mexican mothers who commit their children to the anexos. This paradox – of a mother's love expressed through and as violence – unveils the multiple forms of injury that the urban poor in Mexico are enmeshed in and the impossible decisions they face. Garcia shows us that they often see anexos as spaces of safety from the narco war, fueled by government neglect and US policies. Through patient and caring ethnography, Garcia unearths gestures of beauty and care exchanged daily by participants in anexos who weave a community built upon shared experiences of suffering.

This book is a daring work, both personally and intellectually. As Garcia exposes herself to the anexos and their therapy treatments, she practices an ethnographic discipline that forms the sensory grammar at the base of this project. One of the most stunning dimensions of the book is that it is part-memoir. Garcia unveils her own family story about addiction, family abandonment, and mother-daughter relationships in stream-of-consciousness fragments that create a precise and elegant counterpoint with the ethnographic text. The author relies on precisely chosen details and references to perform the work of analysis.

In this roundtable, participants are invited to consider the resonances that this book might have with their own regions of thought in relation to questions of ethnographic writing, violence, borders, war, and motherhood.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Yana Stainova

Presenter(s): Denielle Elliott, York University, P. Sean Brotherton, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Roberts, University of Michigan, Joao Biehl, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Lisa Stevenson, McGill University, Robert Desjarlais, Sarah Lawrence College, Yana Stainova

Discussant: Angela Garcia, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

3659 Collections Lessons: Teaching and Learning through Collections (Part 1)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will share successes from recent experiments with collections-based learning, while reflecting critically on the pedagogical, logistical, and ethical challenges involved in bringing an "object-based" or "collections-based" focus to teaching and learning. Our discussion will be positioned alongside current efforts to decolonize anthropology museums and collections.

Object-Based Learning approaches, often grounded in multisensorial and experiential learning pedagogies, have been proposed as encouraging active learning in formal education settings (Chatterjee and Hannan 2015, Adams 2015, Kukhareva et al. 2020). Logistically, teaching and learning with collections often presents special challenges as it requires either bringing a group of learners into a museum or bringing its collections to the learners. Ethically, this approach can be problematic where it reinforces learners' authority to analyze and interpret other communities' cultural belongings, privileging the colonial gaze over the stories and voices of makers and owners of the items exposed to study (Schultz 2019, Hodge 2018).

In this two-part roundtable, we discuss collecting and curating as learning strategies that cross boundaries between museum, classroom, and community. Presenters in this session have worked with objects and collections as part of their classroom teaching in diverse areas including art (Vunidilo), archaeology (Fernstrom), and Indigenous curation (Pauliot). Several of us have created spaces for learning alongside contemporary artists and community members, for example by embedding a team of Indigenous Australian artists in an undergraduate museum studies seminar (Thorner), or by working with undergraduate anthropology students and Indigenous designers to acquire new works for a university museum (Thrift).

These and other experiences invite us to ask: What criteria and best practices can we put forward for effective, pedagogically sound, and ethical teaching and learning through anthropology collections? How can we ensure that Object-Based Learning is properly grounded in the broader perspectives and methods of anthropology as a discipline, including sensory anthropology and "engaged" approaches? And how can we ensure that our collections-based teaching and learning, in museums or in the community, contributes to decolonizing anthropological museums and education?

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Eric Thrift, University of Winnipeg

Presenter(s): Eric Thrift, University of Winnipeg, Sabra Thorner, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Molli Pauliot, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Tarisi Vunidilo, California State University, Los Angeles, Katharine Fernstrom, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice

Discussant: Deborah Johnson-Simon, Christina Hodge, Brown University, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology

7210 'Deplorable' Anthropology: Trump, MAGA and Anthropology's New Repugnant Cultural Other

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together ethnographic studies that explore the affective, religious, and communicative contours of contemporary conservative and right-wing mobilizations in the United States and beyond. From far-right Christian separatism to vaccine skepticism, from the adoption of insults as markers of political identity to a dialogic understanding of Trumpism, these papers examine how mistrust, identity, and perceived catastrophe produce novel modes of political engagement. Taken together, the panel interrogates how participants in Trumpist and adjacent movements navigate contradictions-between governance and ungovernability, liberty and authoritarianism, belonging and alienation-through embodied practices, transnational imaginaries, and rearticulations of truth and legitimacy.

Riccardi-Swartz explores how far-right Christians in the American South envision becoming "ungovernable" through transnational alliances with post-Soviet Russia, framing democracy as a catastrophic threat to white Christian civilization. Richlin examines the medical freedom movement in Maine, showing how Covid-era vaccine skepticism has fueled new political alliances between former leftists and far-right actors, rooted in a broader sense of institutional betrayal. Hinton revisits his earlier work on white power and genocide to assess the heightened threats posed by Trump's second presidency, as MAGA rhetoric increasingly embraces soft authoritarianism and violent extremism. Zandstra analyzes how Trump supporters and other global right-wing movements repurpose derogatory labels into political identity, a phenomenon she terms "contestatory identity positioning," which complicates efforts to challenge their narratives. Finally, Thompson offers a dialogic approach to understanding Trumpism, focusing on how certain political beliefs "make sense" to supporters when viewed through the lens of polarized media ecologies and as a dialogic product.

Together, these papers provide grounded insights into how the affective, religious, and communicative dynamics animate contemporary far-right and conservative imaginaries and help to shape right-wing and conservative political subjectivities. In the process, these papers also

highlight two ideologies that sustain highly consequential political sodalities in liberal democracies today (illiberal though they might seem), namely, race and religion. These studies aim not only to analyze but also to understand the inner logics of these movements, raising critical questions about the future of democracy, social cohesion, and political discourse in an increasingly polarized world.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Greg Thompson, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Greg Thompson, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alex Hinton, Rutgers University, Anita Zandstra, Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Northeastern University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Johanna Richlin, University of Maine, Greg Thompson, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Jacob Hickman, Brigham Young University

Presentation(s): It Can Happen Here 2.0: White Power, MAGA, and the Rising Threat of Violence in the U.S.

Drawing on ethnographic research on U.S. political culture and Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement, this paper examines the logics of the MAGA movement, how its future-oriented messaging is rhetorically packaged and driven, and how the movement poses a variety of threats to democracy and stability in the U.S., ranging from soft authoritarianism and white power extremisms to violence against groups like undocumented immigrants and the transgender community -- both of whom are reviled and demonized in MAGA rhetoric. In doing so, the paper reconsiders the author's book, *It Can Happen Here: White Power and the Rising Threat of Genocide in the US* (NYU Press, 2021), which was centered on Trump's first term. There are important continuities between Trump 1.0 and Trump 2.0, but the threat is now greater and following a very clear plan to erode traditional checks and balances, expand executive power, and undertake related initiatives detailed in documents like "Project 2025."

Presenter(s): Alex Hinton

Proud Deplorables, Vile Vermin, and Local Foreigners: Contestatory identity positioning in Trumpian politics and around the world

During the 2016 presidential campaign, a notable element of the pro-Trump movement was his supporters' defiant coopting of opponents' negative characterizations of them—what I call contestatory identity positioning. This paper shows how the MAGA movement has turned disapproving rhetoric about Trump and his followers into a badge of pride, helping to fuel Trump's electoral victories in 2016 and 2024 and confounding expectations that Trump would soon disappear from the political scene. I consider contestatory identity positioning in a broader geopolitical context, pointing to analogous cases from 20th-century British politics and more recent examples from Catalonia and lowlands Bolivia. I ask what social and political conditions may favor the adoption of contestatory identity positioning and why discourse constructing such a position has been notoriously difficult to counter. Finally, I consider to what degree this kind of

identity work continues to characterize the MAGA movement, with examples from the Biden years and the 2024 electoral campaign.

Presenter(s): Anita Zandstra

“Become Ungovernable:” Covert Tactics, Racism, and Catastrophe

Considering racialized theo-political ideas espoused by far-right Christians in the American South, this paper looks at their paradoxical need for social-moral securitization through nationalist policies and government policing in relationship to their anti-democratic desires to become ungovernable as citizens of heaven. Exploring the notion of an imperiled Christian civilization at the hands of "deep state" elites, this paper shows how far-right Christian anxieties over the "catastrophe" of democracy apocalyptically lead to covert sociopolitical tactics aimed at liberating the far-right self from the assumed system of Western liberal oppression. In tracing this out, I look at how post-Soviet Russia becomes a salvific geo-political possibility for those fleeing ideological cartographies of assumed white Christian marginalization in the United States. Utilizing ethnographic data and media analysis, I show how transnational, digital flows of religiosity and racism are co-constituted in the illiberal dramaturgy of white panic and mythos of ungovernability that draws together actors from the American South and Putin's Russia into a global imaginary of anti-democratic political possibilities for disaffected people.

Presenter(s): Sarah Riccardi-Swartz

The Politicization of Mistrust: The Rise of Medical Freedom Activism in the wake of Covid-19

Drawing on ethnographic research based in Maine from 2024-5, this paper considers the culmination of contemporary institutional and medical distrust in the wake of Covid-19: the rise of the medical freedom movement and its subsequent convergence with Trumpism. Based on ethnographic data from community meetings, retreats, interviews, and congressional hearings, I analyze the politicization of post-Covid-19 vaccine skepticism and the broader medical freedom agenda such sentiment informs. Furthermore, I consider how vaccine suspicions index broader currents of pervasive distrust, paranoia, dread, and betrayal that help contextualize the return and resurgence of Trumpism. The paper details how groups with formerly left-leaning memberships rationalized alliances with varied far-right, anti-government, Christian nationalist, and anti-LGBTQ organizations including Moms for Liberty and Gays against Groomers.

In keeping with trends across the U.S., the question of vaccination remains deeply politicized in Maine. In 2019, Maine eliminated non-medical exemptions from school vaccination requirements by legislative action and referendum. In subsequent legislative sessions, state medical freedom organizations have introduced bills intended to reinstate such exemptions and eliminate vaccine mandates for healthcare workers. To date, these efforts have mostly failed, but activists feel renewed optimism given Trump's elevation of RFK Jr. and other outspoken vaccine skeptics to positions of n

Presenter(s): Johanna Richlin

“Make it Make Sense”: Understanding Trumpism as Dialogic Relation or Trumpism in Interaction

In this paper, I seek to understand Trumpism in dialogical terms, not as a sui generis political movement created ex nihilo but rather as a response to a conversation – a political movement birthed by a particular political and media ecological milieu. The task undertaken here is to understand how Trump "makes sense" to approximately half of the American electorate. This involves "taking seriously" the perspective of mainstream Trump voters/supporters. Here I consider politically polarizing events of dialogue and their uptake and circulation in media (social and otherwise), including: (unsupported) claims, circulated by no Vice President J. D. Vance, that Haitians are eating their neighbors' pets in Ohio; the Trump administration's claim that DEI was responsible for the FAA's failure to stop a plane from crashing into a helicopter; and an older but instructive example involving Trump's press secretary's failure to say that Trump disavows White Supremacy. The aim of this research is to do what anthropologists have long been good at doing, namely, offer an understanding of a people's behavior that does not reduce them to mere social scientific explanans but which instead understands the logic of that behavior in terms recognizable to them. Far from being an endorsement of these positions, as Harding (1991) noted, this approach can enable new means of political engagement.

Presenter(s): Greg Thompson

Discussion

4050 Articulating Race and Capital: Building Anthropologies of Racial Capitalism

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Loïc Wacquant has challenged scholars of racial capitalism to demonstrate, rather than assume, how race and capital are articulated in specific contexts. Following Stuart Hall - and separating a little from Wacquant - this panel session will collectively argue that such articulations are historically contingent. That is, how race and capital come together to legitimise specific modes of expropriation, exploitation and accumulation is connected to the way in which political projects and ideological formations dominate at a specific time - for example in producing and cheapening 'racialised' populations whose labour is super exploited and whose resources are expropriated.

This panel will undertake ethnographic and historical interrogations of the relationship of race to capitalism (and vice-versa). We are particularly interested in how articulations of race and capital are actively produced, reconfigured, and contested in concrete social formations. Political projects and ideological formations seek to shape this articulation - papers in this panel pay attention to the material ways in which power plays out to forcefully create conditions of possibility for racialised forms of exploitation. Conversely, papers will also focus on the political struggles against this - pointing to counter-movements and forces.

Papers in this session engage with these questions through a variety of perspectives and questions, including but not limited to:

- Historical and contemporary entanglements: How do specific articulations of race and capital connect (or fail to connect) past formations-such as colonial economies-with present-day social, economic and racial structures?
- Beyond the Global North: How do race and capital articulate in contexts that are underrepresented in current scholarship? What does this reveal about the global variations of capitalism itself?
- Capitalism as a dynamic social formation: How does examining the articulation of race and capital help us understand capitalism's ethical, political, and cultural dimensions, beyond its economic logic?
- Social reproduction and race/capital articulations: How does the way race and capital articulate hinder some social reproduction projects and facilitate others? What are the modes of subjectivation that specific race/capital articulations seek to bring about?
- Theories of value: How do particular articulations of race and capital shape or challenge anthropological understandings of value?

Presenters engage these questions by drawing on anthropological and historical methods to offer grounded and processual accounts of the articulation of race and capital. By focusing on specific cases, we aim to deepen the conversation around racial capitalism, challenging static or deterministic interpretations and opening space for more nuanced, relational, and conjunctural approaches.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Prem Kumar Rajaram, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Tilde Siglev, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Chair: Prem Kumar Rajaram, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Tilde Siglev, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Presenter(s): Luisa Steur, University of Amsterdam, Ali Bhagat, Simon Fraser University, Tilde Siglev, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Prem Kumar Rajaram, Central European University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Discussant: Sara Swerdlyk, University of Toronto

Presentation(s): The re-emergence of “real” racism in Cuba: An anthropological analysis of the articulation of race and capital in contemporary Centro Havana

Socialist Cuba is usually seen as a vanguard in the fight against the imperialism of capital and race. Scholarship on the combined workings of capital and race within contemporary Cuba is therefore scarce. The hegemony of finance capital in the neoliberal era, however, has been transforming

social relations in Cuba too. I will argue that current debates on the increasing "racial inequalities" and "institutional racism" of Cuba's "Special Period" do not take seriously enough the articulation of capital and race because they build on a poststructuralist consensus in race theory, emanating from the US, where race is seen as ultimately an ideological force and political economy as merely the setting within which this force is asserted and resisted. Instead, this paper builds on theories of race as a material force that is co-constitutive of labor exploitation and value regimes under capitalism: "real" (as opposed to formal) racism. By ethnographically analyzing the way social relations are changing in the neighborhood of Centro Havana under pressure of global capital, I will demonstrate that current conditions for an increased racialized exploitation of vulnerable groups in the neighborhood are being produced not by race itself but by the articulation of capital and race.

Presenter(s): Luisa Steur

Border Infrastructures under Racial Capitalism: Detention, Deportation, and Abandonment in South Africa

This paper explores the concept of border infrastructures under racial capitalism with specific focus on the practices of detention, deportation, and abandonment. Focusing on South Africa, a paradoxical case where a progressive constitution coexists with systemic xenophobia, I aim to understand the ways in which xenophobic impulses of border security and migration management are used to enact violence on so-called undesirable migrants. I do this by developing the concept of border infrastructures—the interconnected practices that facilitate detention, deportation, and organised state-abandonment at the level of the street and city. The paper situates South Africa's border regime within global racial capitalism, linking its exclusionary tactics to US and European anti-migrant populism. In so doing, I argue that border infrastructures—material (detention centers, policing) and immaterial (legal limbo, xenophobic rhetoric)—operate as tools of racialized social control. These infrastructures at once maintain South Africa's demand for cheap racialized labour while also placating nationalist demands based on exclusion. Ultimately, this paper underscores the structural contradictions of migration governance where state criminalize migrants while depending on their labour—a now global phenomena of migration governance.

Presenter(s): Ali Bhagat

Conservation politics and racial politics in the Louisiana fisheries

In the past decades, federal and state-level legislatures in the United States have introduced restrictions on commercial shark fishing to combat the practice of shark finning and illicit trade in shark fins.

While welcomed by conservation organizations and animal rights activists, for commercial fishermen in coastal Louisiana, who rely on the trade in sharks and who operate in an industry pressured by a globalized seafood trade, these restrictions, however, have contributed to a deepening of existing processes of dispossession and expropriation—and have fomented racial antagonisms within the fisheries.

This paper explores how conservation politics and the moving grounds of fishery legislation on commercial shark fishing becomes a terrain for the unfolding of racial politics in coastal Louisiana. In doing so, the paper traces the changing contours of racialized social relations among seafood traders and commercial fishermen to analyze how fishermen make sense of the conditions of possibility under which they work—and how they articulate their grievances along racial registers.

Finally, by drawing comparison to how articulations of race and capital in this context historically have materialized in a coalescence of conservation politics and "race talk", the paper considers how ideas of nature and ideas of race can "work together" (Moore et al. 2003) to legitimize political projects of exclusion.

Presenter(s): Tilde Siglev

Articulating race and capital: producing cheapened labour in the colonial plantation and contemporary borders

In 1916, on a tea plantation in northeast India, 'tribal' Oraon workers made trouble. They attacked managers, damaged property, called on a 'devil' named Logo to destroy the British, and beseeched Kaiser Wilhelm to help them. Their aim, stated afterwards at a tribunal, was to establish an Oraon Raj. The Oraon had been displaced from their land by capital encroachment. Ethnographers had cast them as 'tribal' and thus displace-able. Many were then pressed into plantation labour where they were called 'jungli', people of the jungle, cheap and with strong super exploitable bodies.

Categorised as 'tribal' and then 'jungli', Oraons were first displaced and then immobilised. Oraon worlds were reduced: they became coolie labourers whose labour propped up a system that marginalised them. The uprisings in plantations can be read as attempts to widen narrowed worlds. When capital and race articulate, subjects are created; subjects who are culturally denigrated, disembedded from social worlds and immobilised to produce cheapened labour. I will study the relations and ideologies that articulated race and capital to reproduce such cheapened subjects in colonial times before studying how race and capital are articulated in the contemporary conjuncture to produce cheapened and super exploitable 'migrant labourers'. What might this tell us about the durability of colonial capitalism?

Presenter(s): Prem Kumar Rajaram

Discussion

315 Society for Psychological Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Mienke van der Brug , Grace Fredrick , Aneel Brar, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Kartikeya Saboo, Wichita State University, Department of

Anthropology, MAGNA MOHAPATRA, University of Wisconsin-Madison, East Asian Languages and Literature, Annalise Mangone , Antonio Paciello

Presenter(s): Mienke van der Brug, Grace Fredrick, Kartikeya Saboo, Wichita State University, Department of Anthropology, MAGNA MOHAPATRA, University of Wisconsin-Madison, East Asian Languages and Literature, Annalise Mangone, Antonio Paciello

Presentation(s): Dreaming about deceased parents: the role of dreams in childhood grief in northern Namibia

The death of a parent is considered to be one of the most stressful events in the lives of children. In sub-Saharan Africa, many children experience the death of a parent before the age of 18, as adult mortality in this region is one of the highest in the world. Namibia is a typical example of this. In this country, the HIV epidemic has contributed to a high number of orphans.

The documented experiences of grief among African children is limited. More generally there is a dearth of ethnographic and in-depth accounts of the grieving experience of children. However, understanding the way African children experience loss and grief is important. It contributes to our theoretical understanding of childhood bereavement, and offers insight for bereavement care. Attention for children's own perspectives is in line with the anthropology of childhood which seeks to document children's perspectives on, and participation in the social world.

The question as to how cultural models shape grief as a response to death is hereby essential. One of the themes addressed in ethnographic studies on grief, are connections between the living and the dead. The thinking that spirits of the dead stay in meaningful contact with the living takes place in many cultural settings. Dreams about the deceased are sometimes interpreted as contact with the dead. Demmer (2007) similarly observed that in South Africa symbolic ties with the deceased were sustained through dreams.

This study describes how dreams of deceased parents are part of the way Ovambo children in northern Namibia experience and deal with the death of their parents. In this ethnographic study, eleven orphaned children, their caregivers and other informants took part.

Dreams about their deceased parents were often part of the children's responses to bereavement. Children dreamt about interactions with the deceased parent, about the deceased being present in their room, or about images of the parent's dead body. On the whole, such dreams were perceived as unpleasant and frightening. An important explanation for such dreams was that children were not able to forget their parent as dreams would actually be 'thoughts' about the parents. In other cases, they were perceived as real dreams or they would be related to witchcraft. A common remedy against children's dreams was to drink sand from the grave of the deceased parent. Other remedies included taking the child to the hospital, or to the traditional healer, and praying. Possibly, this practices aim to discontinue the connection with the dead.

Dreams about the deceased parents somewhat seem to interfere with Ovambo notions of dealing with childhood grief, such as the restricted duration of expressing grief and the emphasis on forgetting. For children, dreams might appear to be a way to express their sadness after the

permitted duration, and several of them were comforted by their caregiver after talking about their dreams.

Presenter(s): Mienke van der Brug

Holding Back, Reaching Out: Defensive Individualism and Connection Seeking in Ghost Ridden Communities

In post-industrial Milwaukee, where racialized disinvestment, deindustrialization, and segregation have long shaped the urban landscape, the ghosts of institutional failure linger in the everyday decisions of struggling parents. Drawing on five years of longitudinal, mixed-method, person-centered study of parenting program engagement in some of the city's most disadvantaged zip codes, areas with disproportionately high Child Protective Services (CPS) report rates, this paper examines how Loewe's (2018) and Smiths' (2007) model of defensive individualism operates as both a protective strategy and an engagement deterrent.

Within zipcodes marked by entrenched poverty and the hollowing of public services, and the policing of Black family life, parents take on defensive individualism, a protective posture that prioritizes dignity, autonomy, and the refusal of judgment. This posture, while adaptive, can also hinder participation in parenting programs, which are often perceived as punitive or patronizing. Yet even as they guard against harm, many parents express a deep longing for community, connection, and support that is trustworthy, nonjudgmental, and affirming. What emerges is not simply rejection, but a complex negotiation: a selective openness shaped by the memory of past institutional betrayals and the desire for care that does not compromise self-worth.

This paper explores how immaterial forces like stigma, distrust, surveillance, the fear of being judged, or misunderstood, and the memory of past negative institutional entanglements become material in the parenting landscape, echoing the afterlives of punitive welfare policies, carceral entanglements that continue to haunt Milwaukee's urban poor.

Using qualitative methods, we describe how the ghosts of institutional harms are ever-present even in how disenfranchised parents search for support. This work calls on anthropology to reckon with these ghostly influences, to interrogate the structures that create them, and to rethink how we engage with communities in ways that respect survival strategies without reinforcing the conditions that necessitate them.

Presenter(s): Grace Fredrick

Co-author(s): Paul Florsheim, Joyli Kamau

Therapeutic Hauntings: Conspiracy Theory as Shamanic Narrative

A case of infant mortality in a public hospital in Newark, NJ led to forms of emotional distress for the father. Curiously, the cause of death was unclear to him, but did not require further elaboration or explanation. Allied with a conspiracy theorist on the street, this young father resolved his experience through a narrative of malevolent power, regaining his power of signification and sense

of control, while reinforcing an explanation of marginalization and dispossession common among young Black men in this neighborhood: the powers that be are behind the curtain, whose visible face is the exploitation of Black folk.

The experience of public health, and the narrativization of experience on the street both stem from a position of marginality. I argue that conspiracy narrativizing serves a shamanic function, providing agency, therapeutic control, and a sense of control to those haunted by the history of race in the U.S. and disoriented by the gyrations of political-economic volatility in racialized capitalism.

Presenter(s): Kartikeya Saboo

Tracing Traumas through Jokes: Affective Economy of Indian Tragicomedy

How do we grapple with traumas after the event? How through the narrative storytelling form of comedy, do we find a sense of *communitas* (Victor and Edith Turner) among strangers coming together in tiny comedy clubs in the gullies (bylanes) of Delhi, India? The Indian stand-up scene has bloomed in the last decade with comedians from caste, religion and gender minorities taking up the space to talk about their histories and present. It is no longer merely laughing at them through stereotypical jokes by elite upper caste comedians but laughing with them as a form of solidarity and empathetic thinking (Bennett 2005). The feelings come to the surface of our bodies through their incongruity in the form of comedy and its qualified emotional responses of shared laughter, claps, hoots and sometimes even silence, vandalism, violence and verbal abuse. Comedy in India has become a serious business with comedians imprisoned, abused, harassed, and comedy spaces vandalised for jokes that express how they feel about living with authoritarian neoliberalism. Majoritarian Hindutva mobs are not only lynching minorities in small towns and villages (Hansen, Chatterji and Jaffrelot 2019) but also becoming visible and volatile in urban "pop" culture spaces. With the rise in caste, religion and gender based violence against comedians and citizens (along with increasing inequality, unemployment), there is also a rise in joking about this form of living by those vulnerable. Another feature of Indian authoritarianism involves the regulation and censorship of not just jokes but also news media, with prominent journalists quitting national news channels due to increased control of what news should be broadcast. Political comedy spaces, both online and offline, have become forms of critical journalism and thereby creative resistance against the assault on democracy in these times.

So, how do the minoritarian feelings that reverberate from generational and systemic Othering permeate the bodies of the citizen-publics of the majoritarian Indian state through the entangled event-space of comedy? How do the boundaries of our caste-religion-gender stamped bodies collide within and through shared storytelling as a form of counter-public making? How does the intersubjective potential of political communication occur through the comic narrations of trauma, grief, anxiety and fear of the comedian and through the empathetic listening of those who come to watch the comedy shows? and how in doing so, the 'minor feelings' of Dalit and Muslim bodies 'demand recognition of and distance flinch' (Hong 2020) from their everyday experiences of discrimination, marginalisation, assault to their body and sovereignty? This paper traces the comic affect through ethnography of Indian comedy clubs in New Delhi, India, and by interviewing 6

comedians and their audiences about the front and back stage experiences of performing stand-up comedy as a form of vitality enduring the despair of everydayness

Presenter(s): MAGNA MOHAPATRA

Who Are We Writing For? Haunting the Narratives of Personhood through Obituary Analysis

How do our memories of the dead perform ongoing moral work?

Death has long been a focus of anthropological theorizing. Preparatory rituals like those described in Desjarlais' *Sensory Biographies* (2003) are meant to help the dying individual enter the afterlife unburdened. Commemorative practices like those described by Bloch (1971) and Rosaldo (1984) serve the needs of the living, allowing them to process and move beyond the loss they have experienced by providing pathways to social (re)integration of the mourning self into normal modes of being.

This flash presentation explores the practice of obituary writing as a death ritual and challenges these normative understandings of preparatory and memorial practices as central to the work of grief. Instead, this presentation asks: what sort of work does obituary writing perform on behalf of the dead themselves, who are neither as settled as dead nor as separate from the living as normative scientific and biomedical notions of death would suggest?

Drawing on theories of moral personhood and the construction of the self from theorists such as Michael Lambek (2013) and Tanya Luhrmann (2020), this presentation examines obituaries from Pittsburgh, PA from the late 20th century and the 2010s. Changing patterns of commemoration, as demonstrated through the language and rhetoric of these public affirmations of morality across time, illustrate the entanglements of the needs of the living and the recuperation of the deceased, placing the project of self-making not only in life but also in the time after death. Through an exploration of the practice of obituaries, this paper asks: how does the creation of certain forms of memory about the dead place moral weight on and enact moral transformations of the deceased?

Presenter(s): Annalise Mangone

"That Thing". Emotions, anger and post-colonial shadows in an Italian-Bangladeshi family in Italy

The article is a reflection on a research activity carried out, in parallel with a socio-educational assistance work, within the domestic walls of an Italian-Bangladeshi family in Italy. The research aimed to go beyond the individualizing contribution of neuropsychiatric diagnostics, trying to highlight the cultural, social and political origins of the restlessness of the eldest son of the family - to whom the social services have diagnosed various behavioral disorders - in relation to the conflict inherent in the transnational habitus, which is the result of the encounter/clash between the Bangladeshi habitus and the Western habitus (Zeitlyn 2010), both present within the family unit and generating, in their conflict, a crisis in the horizon of meaning of each of the parties involved (De Martino 2019).

This intervention aims to highlight the post-colonial, political nature of this conflict, expressed by the young boy in evanescent terms, which make it a truly phantasmal presence (Gordon 2022). The anger and shame experienced by the young boy are also fueled by a deep disagreement with some typical traits of his parents' habitus, which are expressed in an emotional absence of the father, and in a strong, often physical, maternal normativity, which he defines as "that thing", testifying to his unspeakable, shadowy and phantasmal nature, as well as to the ways in which his parents interact with the Western habitus, always straddling the line between repulsion and the desire for lactation (Fanon 1952) and the gender rules that lie behind it. This complexity, which takes the form of emotional turmoil occupying the young man's mind, is justified by the same young man as the result of the endemic violence to which Bangladesh, its history and its present are accustomed. Based on his reflections, our intervention aims to reconstruct the phantasmal nature of the links between intergenerational conflict and the post-colonial nature of the suffering that stirs up the clash between generations.

De Martino, Ernesto, 2019, *La fine del mondo. Contributo all'analisi delle apocalissi culturali*. Torino, Einaudi.

Fanon, F. (1952) *Peu noire, masques blancs*. Paris, Seuil.

Gordon, Avery, 2022, *Cosa di fantasmi. Hunting e immaginazione sociologica*. Bologna, Deriveapprodi.

Zeitlyn, Benjamin, 2010, *Growing up Glocal in London and Sylhet*. Anthropology PhD Thesis, University of Sussex.

Presenter(s): Antonio Paciello

3883 The Spirit of Care: Notions of Health, Healing, and the Afterlives of Care

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In healthcare, care is often categorized as a technical or practical action, with caregiving primarily falling under the responsibility of family and friends. Most physicians rarely engage in caregiving, leaving emotional and practical tasks to nurses, social workers, and personal support networks. As a result, caregiving is frequently associated with lower-status professions and stigmatization. Within the medical field, care and caregiving become divided between professional duty and personal obligation. However, care extends beyond the immediate moment of illness; it lingers in memory, shaping how societies and individuals reconstruct experiences surrounding the world of health. While scholars have distinguished between emotional support and physical actions, care encompasses more than just gestures or words offered at the moment.

This panel examines care as both a socially and historically embedded practice, questioning and redefining its boundaries. It explores how disease, death, mental health, and healing are

remembered, narrated, and embodied in everyday life. Drawing on theories of memory, medical anthropology, and care, this panel investigates how individuals and institutions reshape their understandings of care throughout the entire journey of illness. How do individuals reconcile with their bodies and identities after injury or sickness? How does care shape the experience of mental health, illness, disease, and death? By tracing the intersections of caregiving, institutional responsibility, and personal adaptation, this panel reveals how care functions not only as an individual moral act but also as a broader social and political process. Ultimately, our presentations explore how the afterlife of care and acts of caregiving are remembered, performed, and reimagined across time and space.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Shani Tra, University of California, Riverside

Chair: Hanum Atikasari

Presenter(s): Shani Tra, University of California, Riverside, Hanum Atikasari, Anu Ahmed, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology, Melina Economou, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Merav Shohet, Boston University

Presentation(s): Echoes of a Pandemic: Memory, Care, and Crisis in Vietnam

The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly shaped daily life, particularly in Go Vap District, Ho Chi Minh City, where it not only disrupted routines but also overwhelmed the healthcare system. This presentation explores the challenges of researching and conducting ethnographic work on a global pandemic after the fact. What does it mean to care during and after a pandemic? How do people reconstruct and reiterate their memories of care? Drawing on interviews with frontline and healthcare workers in southern Vietnam, I argue that care is deeply intertwined with collective memory, as past crises, shifting political economies, and evolving medical knowledge shape contemporary understandings of health and well-being. Through these informants' recollections of their experiences during the pandemic, they reveal how they define care and how those definitions continue to resonate today. Engaging with theorists such as Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Connerton, I examine how individual memories are shaped by historical events and broader social and political contexts.

Presenter(s): Shani Tra

Muted Regret: Caring for the Afterlife in an Indonesian Family

How do family members cope with the loss of loved ones who pass away far away from home, especially when dying at home and surrounded by family is considered to be an element of a 'good death' and a necessity for a 'good afterlife'? This question becomes increasingly pressing in the context of Indonesian's Universal Health Care system, which facilitates access to advanced cancer treatments far away from home – also for those at the end of life. In this paper, I draw on the case of Rika, a 32 year old woman who travelled across the Indonesian archipelago to get cancer treatment in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, but passed away in a Jakartan hospital after five months, after

which her father had to return her body home. Inspired by Douglas Hollan's (2020) work on ecological haunting, I show how the family members allow themselves to be haunted by the spirit of the deceased. This haunting helps them to endure the (muted) regret surrounding the tragic death of their daughter. I explore the multifaceted meaning and ethical significance of continuously uttering to have 'no regret' when dealing with a tragic loss. Uttering 'no regret' serves not only as a performative act that fulfills social and cultural expectations of politeness and confirms that they chose the 'best possible' biomedical options, but also helps to narratively index a 'good afterlife' for the deceased.

Presenter(s): Hanum Atikasari

Psychopharmaceutical entanglements

Maldives has been undergoing rapid social transformations since the country's democratization in 2008. A decade later yielded the Maldives' psy turn when, starting at the end of 2018, the incoming President prioritized mental health care as the focus of his modernization project. This talk explores how "the biotechnical embrace" (Delvecchio Good 2007) of psychopharmaceuticals is lived in the Greater Male' Region of the Maldives. Drawing on person-centered narratives, I limn how the institutionalization of psychopharmaceuticals in the contemporary moment reconfigures what counts as illness and care in the present as well as in the proximate and distant past. Attending these entangled temporalities in individuals' narratives illuminates how psychopharmaceutical technologies provide "ethical affordances" (Keane 2015) through which interlocutors posit themselves and others as moral persons.

Presenter(s): Anu Ahmed

Forming Caring Bonds: Volunteer/Client Relationships in a Canadian Hospice

For the weeks, months, or years in which people have received a terminal prognosis but have not yet reached acute stages of death, thousands of people in Ontario, Canada continue to navigate living in a new context: while they are dying. Through 24 months of ethnographic research at hospice palliative care organizations, I found that clients of hospice often lived vibrant and social lives while dying, contrary to the biomedical idea that dying, like death, represents a discrete physiological event. My research shifts from a focus on hospital and biomedical-based practices of dying to the home: intimate places in which clients open their doors to hospice volunteers who fill a unique social and spiritual role in the crucial moments of living while dying. Through volunteer services at hospices, clients and volunteers form meaningful and intimate relationships with each other, seeking to understand what it means to continue living while dying, thinking through the spiritual and religious implications of dying, and even what it means to have a 'good

death'. Volunteers and clients meet with the mutual understanding that the client will die – rather than hinder their connection, this face opens a unique opportunity for human connection based on values of respect, dignity, and grace during the dying and living process.

Presenter(s): Melina Economou

Discussion

1882 Between Relativism and Reproach: Exploring Value Judgments about Good Human Lives within Theologically Engaged Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable advances the pioneering work of Theologically Engaged Anthropology and will address a critical question: how can anthropologists responsibly navigate the extremes of relativism and unreflexive judgmentalism to support good human lives?

Anthropology has historically embraced relativism, but some critiques argue that it fosters "moral recusal" (Cook 1999). A shift toward universalized narratives of human suffering has led to a 'judgmental turn' (Robbins 2023), where anthropologists apply ethical and political commitments in ways that often lack explicit criteria. This shift can lead to moral condemnation of cultural practices without sufficient engagement with their internal logic. Conversely, critiques of relativism have sought to rehabilitate aspects of cultural interpretation without abandoning moral reasoning altogether (Geertz 1984). This panel builds on theologically engaged anthropology's transformative framework by encouraging anthropologists and theologians to work together to produce robust frameworks for defining and assessing good human lives across cultures.

The roundtable will examine how theology and anthropology intersect in evaluating moral and cultural norms. Through comparative analysis of theological and anthropological approaches, we explore how different traditions define good human lives and where common ground or conflicts arise.

A key consideration is how theological frameworks offer structured ethical criteria, while anthropology provides empirical insights into how those values manifest in practice. This dynamic is crucial in assessing both heterodox and orthodox religious formations (Coakley 2018). Theologically Engaged Anthropology has largely focused on epistemology and description; this roundtable shifts the focus to normative discussions, addressing the challenges of defining and promoting good human lives amid global moral pluralism.

Goals

This roundtable gathers senior and emerging anthropologists to:

1. Develop criteria for defining good human lives across diverse cultures.
2. Equip anthropologists to navigate between relativism and moral judgment with greater reflexivity.

3. Encourage anthropologists to dialogue with theologians to refine ethical and cultural analysis.

By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, this discussion will help anthropologists refine their ethical stances while maintaining rigorous cultural analysis, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced and responsible anthropology.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Derrick Lemons, University of Georgia, Hannah Howard, University of Georgia

Presenter(s): Khaled Furani, Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Derrick Lemons, University of Georgia, Hannah Howard, University of Georgia, Salwa Tareen, Boston University, Ayala Fader, Fordham University

7554 Exposures and Their Bodies: Part One, Institutional Violence, Planetary Damage, and Embodied Resistance

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Studies of exposure have brought attention to the fragile and entangled relations of bodies and environments. From toxic chemicals to changing climates, exposure challenges notions of bodies and selves as separable from the worlds in which they work, play, eat, and breathe. This panel builds on conversations on exposure from feminist studies of science and technology and environmental anthropology. These studies have drawn attention to how experiences of exposure are not simple facts but are rather caught up in epistemic struggles that materialize the impacts of exposure on some bodies and not others. They demonstrate ways exposure makes, even as it degrades, bodies and selves, inscribing local and global hierarchies of race, gender, and class in corporeal forms and capacities.

In the first part, we consider how environmental exposures leave indelible marks on bodies, serving as ghostly reminders of past injustices that continue to haunt present lives. We focus on bodies as sites of harm, labor, and contested thresholds. Papers in this session trace how bodily experiences of exposure are politicized, measured, denied, or transformed through scientific infrastructures, legal recognition, and embodied testimony. Presenters examine these issues across a range of contexts. In Japan, the discharge of nuclear wastewater renders uneven damage as epistemic uncertainties shape the violence of radioactive exposure on bodies and oceans. In the anthracite mines of Germany, deafening sound is translated into scientific diagrams that simultaneously render exposure knowable and enable its debilitating effects on workers' worlds. Indian construction workers frame exposures as capacitating bodies and selves, even as such capacitations lock them into ecologically damaging forms of work. In the Sundarbans-Bangladesh, indigenous men and women register rising salinity levels as bodily exposures to everything from brackish water encountered in aquaculture to the heat and toil of brick kiln labor as a viable source of livelihood on desiccated land. In the Republic of Nauru, the aftermath of extractive industries

haunt contemporary migration regimes, entangling offshore containment policies with toxic exposures.

Across these settings, the papers chart how exposures are rendered through talk, diagrams, reports and models, in ways that shape the uneven transformations of bodies and worlds. Attending to issues of bodily breakdown, adaptation, and resistance, we ask:

- How do institutional, scientific, or bureaucratic mechanisms define and delimit bodily capacities for exposure?
- In what ways do embodied experiences exceed official logics of harm and risk?
- How does exposure shape futures of health, labor, mobility, or survival?
- How do exposures leave traces that haunt present bodies-through chronic illness, inherited vulnerability, or contested memory?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Adam Sargent, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology, Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University

Chair: Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University

Presenter(s): Julia Morris, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Adam Sargent, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology, Nan Kim, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Remeen Firoz, Cynthia Browne, Max Planck Institute for History of Science

Discussant: Stefanie Graeter

Presentation(s): Toxic Entanglements: Asylum and Extractivisms in the Republic of Nauru

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the outsourcing of asylum processing and resettlement from Global North to South. Many of these containment practices retrace the fault lines of colonial extractive regimes riddled with toxic harms. This article draws on long-term ethnographic research conducted in the Republic of Nauru located in the equatorial Pacific. I consider how Nauru's past phosphate industry gives shape to the emergence of contemporary toxicities related to Australia's outsourced asylum regime. In focusing on the relational production of extractive sectors, I advance the notion of 'toxic entanglement' to help account for the neocolonial, racist and gendered nature of bordering processes. I think against the grain of dominant humanitarian portrayals, drawing attention to asylum as a toxic extractive industry. In the pursuit of profit, racialized migrants are exposed to detention, demeaning legal procedures, everyday abuse and objectification that wreaks havoc on their bodies. I contend that the policy of outsourcing asylum also routinely concentrates toxic harms in Black and Brown communities. There is a relationship between the land and Black life that is disproportionately targeted for toxic mineral and migrant industries, and subject to risks of poisoning, police violence, dispossession, and poverty. Locating the solidarities that develop between migrant and Indigenous communities, I ask what forms of resistance emerge in spaces of toxic entanglement?

Presenter(s): Julia Morris

Breathing Dust: Making and Breaking Worker Bodies in the Indian Construction Industry

When I introduced my research on the Indian construction industry to middle-class acquaintances, I received similar responses. They would begin by criticizing the inhuman working conditions in the industry, expressing compassion for construction workers before affirming that they could never do such work. Such narratives drew attention to the dangerous exposures of construction work, from the hot sun to the crushing weight of bricks or suffocating dust. While these sentiments came from genuine concern, my focus here is on how such statements pointed toward a tension between the production and differentiation of construction worker bodies; ones that could work among debilitating exposures. Worker narratives seemed to support this image, for example, stone masons spoke of and oriented to the exposures of their trade, especially stone dust kicked up by saws during cutting. Repeated exposure and acts of repair capacitated worker bodies, generating trade-specific habits (adat) from the ability to breathe dusty air or handle stone slabs. Such capacitations grounded locally valued worker bodies and selves, yet they also marked construction worker bodies as separate from middle-class ones and consigned them to debilitating forms of work. Such tensions lie at the heart of the ambiguous capacitations brought on by exposure. Taking seriously the ways construction worker bodies are made by exposures even as they are bound to the ecological degradations of capital-intensive urbanization.

Presenter(s): Adam Sargent

Spectral Data, Fragile Bodies: Haunted Temporalities of Nuclear-Disaster Wastewater

The ongoing release of "treated" radioactive wastewater from Fukushima Daiichi into the Pacific Ocean comprises a form of open-ended exposure where both presence and absence haunt monitoring regimes and affected bodies. This paper examines how the ocean-discharge plan by Japan's TEPCO was shaped by "spectral data"—information simultaneously present yet incomplete, cited yet inaccessible, authoritative yet contested. Drawing on expert-panel assessments, this paper revisits an influential IAEA 2023 compliance report—which effectively green-lighted TEPCO's ocean-dumping plan. Independent scientific evaluations reveal a disconnect with TEPCO's assertions of safety, highlighting vast data inadequacies. Given measurements were taken for select isotopes while sampling only a fraction of storage tanks, the resulting gaps in knowledge render critical radionuclides as ghostly presences in regulatory discourse.

This paper regards such lapses in data practices not as passive gaps but rather as active forces, producing lacunae that function as strategic unknowns. Such selective monitoring predicated on data-glitching yields exposures that can be simultaneously affirmed and denied, producing new bodily vulnerabilities that haunt human and more-than-human worlds. Spectral data practices thereby reinforce colonial patterns of exposure where certain bodies become sites of environmental damage at once endemic and transboundary, inscribed through physical exposures and epistemic violence.

Presenter(s): Nan Kim

Fiery Bodies, Salty Souls: corporeal experiences of Munda indigenous community from Kalinchi, Sundarban-Bangladesh

Climate change-induced disasters like cyclones, storm surges, and sea level rise are leading to salinity intrusion in Kalinchi, a village in the peripheries of Sundarban-Bangladesh. Salinization in the soil and water adversely impact livelihoods such as agriculture and migration patterns of indigenous groups like the Munda, where men become transient brick kiln workers. This radical form of adaptation renders their bodies vulnerable, as they are exposed to noxious fumes and extreme heat spewed from brick kilns. As one kiln worker said, "While we make bricks for the rich, our poor bodies burn like inferno". Others suffer from asthma, impaired vision and malnourishment.

Salinity intrusion transforms exposures for Munda women as well. Burdened with familial responsibilities and income generation while their husbands are away, many turn to seasonal labor in brackish aquaculture farms. This direct exposure to salt results in multiple illnesses related to salt exposures, such as skin lesions, hair loss and gynecological complications. As one worker noted, "because we breathe salty air and drink salt water – it penetrates our body and eventually reaches our souls". Here, salt emerges as a powerful element with the capacity to permeate the boundaries between the inside and outside, the body and the soul. I argue that such exposures illuminate how processes of climate change and damage result in embodied expressions and corrode the very existence of Munda community.

Presenter(s): Remeen Firoz

Knowing Noise Underground: The role of proxies and the work of analogy in making mining noise an environmental thing

The miner's ear, as Rosalind Morris (2008) notes, must be attuned to sounds of danger in (his) working environment, yet through this very exposure, his faculty of hearing becomes progressively diminished, exposing him to even greater risk of injury. This paper takes up the problem of the (gendered) miner's ear as it emerged in Germany's anthracite mines following the codification of 'hardness of hearing' as a legally recognized type of occupational illness in the 1960s. I explore how scientists and engineers deployed experimental models to test the effects of the noise reverberating across the subterranean space on miners' bodies. These models transduced noise into de-sonified diagrams, which enabled noise exposure to be quantified and threshold values of acceptable exposure to be drawn. In other words, these knowledge infrastructures were key to making noise known as an "environmental thing" that produced deadening effects on the sensitivities of the inner ear. I use this history to foreground the role of proxies and media devices that "stand-in" for the human and how the cultural work of analogy involved in this reduction shapes the regulatory imaginations and technologies of protection that allow noise exposure to persist. I conclude by considering the world-making and world-breaking aspects of exposure by attending to how it alters miners' acoustemologies towards ones that involve sensing through bone conduction, cochlea implants, and/or the ear's own acoustic emissions.

Presenter(s): Cynthia Browne

Discussion

7375 In Memory of Development: Orienting Ethnographies of Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition Infrastructure in Anthropology (Part 2 of 2)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Climate change is indisputably a pressing and urgent crisis requiring both political and material planning to achieve meaningful mitigation. Large scale engineering and infrastructural projects have emerged as a predominant strategy by which national and regional economies anticipate the looming dangers of climate change. Proponents of such major construction endeavors argue that they will bring benefits far beyond their technical functions of supplying renewable energy, storing captured carbon or holding back ocean water. Inclusive prosperity, economic justice, and societal beneficence are just a few of the key moral discourses for justifying massive public expenditures in new technological and environmental infrastructure across the globe.

In light of the urgency of climate change adaptation strategies, a growing body of anthropological scholarship has rightly set about examining the societal and ecological impacts of these immense investments in climate mitigation (Boyer 2019; Cross and Neumark 2021; Vaughn 2017). This panel responds to emerging patterns across this literature finding injustice, expropriation and exploitation in green transition projects (Argenti and Knight 2015; Schwartz 2024). Consequently, we open a dialogue about the barbed complexities of responding to climate change at an adequate scale without these urgencies eclipsing either a necessary skepticism of industrial interests or the multidimensional costs of adaptive intervention.

Disquietingly, visions of a just green transition resemble the promises of society-wide improvement in conditions of human life promised by the development agendas of the latter half of 20th century (Li 2007; Duncan 2004; Scott 1998). Beyond promises, the political economy of green technology iterates on colonial patterns wherein technologies developed for the global north are transposed to former colonies, extracting profit from global south national funds and natural resources. Nevertheless, the 21st century's climate adaptation and energy transition infrastructure projects, as they evoke re-emergent dreams of technologically facilitated affluence, rarely confront or incorporate social knowledge of development's prior failures: environmental destruction, expulsion of indigenous people, forcible embedding in capitalist exploitation, elite empowerment, and dependency economics.

To begin unpacking the scholarly dilemmas of green transition agendas, this panel seeks to explore how the planning imperatives and expansive, pro-social promises of climate change mitigation are balanced against social and theoretical knowledge of expected limits. We will consider how

anthropological scholarship and ethnographic commitment can engage constructively with the challenges of adapting to climate change without erasing or obscuring its discontents.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Asmus Rungby , Mallory James

Chair: Asmus Rungby

Presenter(s): Aderayo Sanusi, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Lav Kanoi, Yale University, Mallory James, Sandy Smith-Nonini, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley, Jamie Cross, University of Edinburgh

Presentation(s): Energizing Inclusion in Solar Infrastructures: Artisanal Palm Oil and Electricity Struggles in Rural Nigeria

Off-grid solar power as an "adverse infrastructure of inclusion" (Cross and Neumark 2021: 1) has yet to significantly expand electricity access in East Africa. Similar patterns unfolded in Nigeria as agrarian communities interacted with mini-grid energy markets since the early 2000s. In 2019, the World Bank and African Development Bank launched the Nigeria Electrification Project to increase electricity access in rural areas with solar infrastructure, and designated Nigeria's Rural Electrification Agency (REA) as an implementing institution. My paper examines a recent energy transition and agricultural development initiative of REA. The project introduced solar-powered machinery and a minigrid extension to a community of oil palm millers in southern Nigeria whose small businesses sustain community food access. Even though the artisanal food producers already lived near a solar mini-grid before the project, they used diesel-powered machinery to process palm fruit from their wild plantations. Drawing from ethnographic research conducted between 2022 and 2023, I examine how my interlocutors navigated a racialized international development complex (Pierre 2020) as Black peoples of varied positionalities in Nigeria's food system. I am particularly attentive to elite Nigerians' strategies for 'energizing inclusion,' community responses to their technocratic solutions, and the structural conditions that ultimately constrained the impact of project activities.

Presenter(s): Aderayo Sanusi

Re-building City and Society: Towards New (and Old) Visions of Water in India's Thirsty Capital City

Beyond the development dreams of the 20th century, climate change adaptation can also turn to the past (by way of traditional knowledge systems and traditional ecological practices) to construct visions and inspire action for a more sustainable future. With respect to a growing urban water crisis in urban India, this paper will draw upon extensive fieldwork in Delhi to show how various actors in India's thirsty capital city seek to achieve environmental-urban resilience and inspire climate-related citizen action and participation by reinvigorating social traditions previously denigrated and left by the wayside during 20th c. modernization. By using decentralized traditional water management practices (albeit in a slightly changed manner), state and civil society actors seek to catalyze people's participation in water infrastructure development and maintenance

towards creating a more climate-friendly and socially-just city. Counterpointing Nehru's (in)famous comparison to dams as the "temples of modern India", such work often takes up small-scale infrastructure interventions at the neighborhood-level rather than large-scale infrastructure projects at an inter-state level. In this respect, such work seeks to revive waterbodies as well as community practice around them, with foundations in longstanding eco-cultural traditions rather than in any perceived or projected break from them.

Presenter(s): Lav Kanoi

Completing Technology with Stories: Attaching Socioeconomic Value to Australian Carbon Management

Under the shadow of economic interdependence between commodity export industries and the state, Australia's contribution to climate and energy futures is partially articulated through technology development. Through intensive investments between 2005 and 2015, Australia has supported institutions conveying arguments that carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology can manage the carbon dioxide of carbon-based fuel sources. Invoked as an industrial technology and thereby entangled with high-modernist visions of landscape transformation, conceptual visions of CCS as energy transition and climate mitigation infrastructure recur over time in government, media, and scientific representations, but with different forms. Drawing on ethnographic research with CCS practitioners and analysis of academic and journalist presentations from 2000 and 2017 regarding the ways in which CCS technology has been imagined to "attach" to pre-existing or yet-to-emerge energy and climate infrastructures, I contribute to tracing how imagined relationships between past, present, and future infrastructures are socially stabilized, and at times, selectively forgotten (Koch 2019). A cross-temporal perspective on the different socioeconomic values set into relationship with Australian CCS technology contributes to accounting for its ghostly persistence.

Presenter(s): Mallory James

Recurring Greek Energy Crises and the Un-Natural Ghost of Gas Futures

This paper expands on 2018-2019 research in Athens and Thessaloniki on energy austerity and resistance during the euro debt crisis—a haunted time when financial austerity enabled "performative" leverage (Shor and Raudon 2018) for reform of Greece's public energy system. Obscure, market-centric rules nudged aside issues of affordability, favoring visions of an efficient green future, albeit based on foreign capital—reinforcing Greece's legacy as "a porous state" (Smith-Nonini 2020). In 2022, Russian gas cuts spawned an EU-wide crisis, shifting rhetorics of sustainability to energy security. Yet, in 2023 prices stabilized. Greece's investor-owned solar build-out met a remarkable 57% of electric demand. But from mid-2024 Greece fell back into crisis, with doubling electric rates, prompting official appeals to Brussels.

This paper unravels this emergency, resurrecting ghosts of Cold War development pasts and the specter of "engineered vulnerability" (Vaughn 2022). It involves Balkan electricity exports to Ukraine, creating new energy demand in Greece; a bevy of gas plant owners who figured out how to profit from both gas and solar while passing costs to ratepayers; and American lobbyists selling

dreams of a regional Greek gas hub for pricey US LNG. Ironically, despite digesting huge EU subsidies, the hub faces low demand due to cheaper "origin swap" gas ostensibly from a Turkey/Azerbaijan pipeline, but originating in Russia.

Presenter(s): Sandy Smith-Nonini

Discussion

8624 Wiley Editor Lunch

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

A lunch for all the editors of journals and Wiley.

8617 Critical Urban Anthropology Association -- Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Special Event

Annual Business Meeting of the Critical Urban Anthropology Association.

2926 Writing Into Ordinary Ghosts: Papers Honoring the Work of Kathleen Stewart

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ordinary life is animated by what we might call ghosts: unresolved and half-realized memories, troubled atmospheres, afterlives of histories still seeking justice. Such ghostly impacts reveal how people imagine, embody, feel and refuse intergenerational power structures, in ways that may be lateral or emergent to explicit political engagement. Rather than fix ghostly activity in the realm of supernatural experience, this panel blurs the uncanny and the mundane by exploring the work of Kathleen Stewart. Stewart's profound influence has created possibilities for writing an anthropology of the ordinary including spirits, forces, charges, half-remembered fantasies, atmospheres, intensities, and gusts of old stories that let us enter the often inchoate affective registers of everyday life and its social meanings. Our papers trace the ordinary hauntings of methane, frackquakes, darkness and wind in the Permian Basin in affects sensed as ghosts; explore 'the creep', or the spooky way that houses tend to shift on their foundations in the former secret atomic city of Oak Ridge; trace elemental forms and processes, from clouds to helium and the collembola that carries the bacteria responsible for the scent of geosmin; track two modes of "ghosting," both in its radical absencing and its radical presencing -- to explore the social worlds of contemporary conspiracy theory in the US; and follow the reverberations created when even ordinary species go extinct, in this case a dusky little sparrow, who spent its last days at the Walt Disney World Resort in

Florida. Drawing inspiration from 35 years of Stewart's experimental poetics and theoretical innovations in anthropology's understanding of worlding, affect and narrative, this panel explores various ways to write with the ghosts that live in the ordinary.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Susan Lepselter , erica david

Chair: William Mazzarella, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Megan Gette, University of Oslo, Joseph Russo, University of Texas at Austin, Lindsey Freeman, Simon Fraser University, Laura Ogden, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology, Marina Peterson, University of Texas at Austin

Discussant: Cymene Howe, Rice University

Presentation(s): Unfortunately, when you live out here, all you see is the details

This paper examines emergent sensory registers in an energy sacrifice zone in the American West. It considers the terms and technologies of perceptibility for geophysical and atmospheric processes as repetitions and refrains of experience. Through an ethnographic conceit of returning to the same site every day for one month, a sensory-technical assemblage forms around the ordinariness of wind as infrasonic illness or shadow-flicker produced by turbines, air pollution and gas emissions monitoring, dust storms, butterfly migration or listening with fracking and water dowsing. The fiction of sameness exposes how atmospheric diffusions and their barely-felt sensations de- and re-form subjects through durational complexity. Experimental writing works against tendencies to arrange situations into analytical coherence, instead attuning to an elemental poetics and politics of imperceptibility

Presenter(s): Megan Gette

Ghosting as Presence and Absence

Exploring conversations and hangouts with two modern American conspiracists, this paper thinks about ghosting, conspiracy, and security at scales that I learned about from talking with Katie Stewart over the years in houses and offices and cars. Jerry is a QAnon Redditor whose entire family ghosted him - they stopped speaking to him abruptly after he climbed out of his third or fourth rabbit-hole to peek at the world and nobody was there one Thanksgiving. His dad left when he was a boy - and women ghost him regularly on the apps. His is a world populated by absence. And Martina is a JFK jr cultist who moved around motels in Dallas-Fort Worth for a few years, showing up every morning at Dealey Plaza to pray. She sees the spirit of both JFK and JFK jr and his girlfriend floating around there sometimes, and she also sees their faces in the faces of other people. Hers is a world haunted by hidden things presencing all the time - she's attuning into the uncanny and sticking there. The ghosts are real. These are worlds that deal in the radical presence/absence of the ideas of the ghost but turn that into a big shared myth-practice with others, not just a psychological condition one suffers through. So the scales are: the ghosts of the self's world, the ghosts of myth-practice (culture's hauntings), and the geopolitical ghosts of security and sense and meaning.

Presenter(s): Joseph Russo

The Creep

In Tennessee we call it the creep, the spooky way that houses tend to shift on their foundations. At my mother's house in the former secret atomic city of Oak Ridge, the way the walls are beginning to separate is alarming. The house was my grandparents', then my mom's, and is now squatted in by my brother. Although it still technically belongs to our mother, she mostly lives with her boyfriend the next town over. My brother moved in there temporarily when he was in a bad way and never left. The house is one of the original prefabs built at the beginning of the town in 1943, a Cemesto B, the second smallest of the so-called alphabets. The architects of the town from Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill didn't really know or care if the community would last past the War. The whole endeavor was thought to be temporary, an experiment. But long after the atomic bombs were dropped, things give off the impression of being intact, both the town and the houses, because bombs turned into more bombs and people just stayed on thinking atomic thoughts while living nuclear lives. Still, nothing lasts forever.

Presenter(s): Lindsey Freeman

Remembering the Dusky Seaside Sparrow

In 1987, the same year the American rock band R.E.M. proclaimed that it was "the end of the world as we know it," the dusky seaside sparrow (*Ammodramus maritimus nigrescens*) quietly went extinct. 'Duskies,' as they were fondly known, lived in the marshes of southern Florida's 'space coast,' chasing insects in the reedy cordgrass. The last bird, a male named Orange Band, spent its final years at Walt Disney World's resort. In this paper, Laura Ogden traces the affective reverberations created when even ordinary species go extinct. In doing so, she offers a model for understanding extinction as a constitutive and ongoing thread in the memory project that is evolution. This paper is based on ethnographic and archival research for Ogden's experimental "The Book of Birds: A Memoir of Extinction."

Presenter(s): Laura Ogden

Clouds cloud

"Clouds cloud" is an opening into the concept work of elemental forms and processes, writing with clouds, helium, lightning and the collembola that carries the bacteria responsible for the scent of geosmin. Clouds put pressure on thought. Which might be experience, but also might be something more distributed, more expansive, or more abstract. Or "thought" as a modern episteme, classificatory, enumerative, "objective." Not necessarily structuring, but holding certain things stable: subject/object relations, empiricism, the presumed certainty of perception. Clouds cloud these, and offer other epistemologies or ways of knowing that blur, fog, disperse, phase shift from the cold hardness of ice crystals to vapor that first obscures bodies and other more or less solid things before drifting away, becoming air newly damp, weighty with humidity. The collembola, colloquially known as the springtail, resists taxonomic schema. It also likes to jump, flipping wildly in the air and landing on its feet almost every time, its movement stabilized by a drop of water held on its abdomen. There is no obvious external motivation for this movement, suggesting it is done

simply for fun. These short pieces are drawn from or inspired by teaching with Katie, with themes like Elemental, Sensitizing Theory, or Object Lessons, seminars that sprawled across things and their unsettled or unsettling qualities, ways of moving and making worlds, their feltness resonating, bending, becoming.

Presenter(s): Marina Peterson

Discussion

3441 Specters of Authoritarian Anti/Environmentalisms - Part I

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel seeks to take stock of the global wave of authoritarian politics that has gathered strength over the last two decades with the intensification of neoliberal capitalism, the waging of the wars on terror and drugs, the rise of digital surveillance, the regressive redistribution of wealth, and accelerating resource extraction amidst growing greenhouse gas emissions. This has spurred some sociopolitical forces to embrace different modes of authoritarianism predicated on corporate freedoms, ultra-nationalism, the militarized defense of borders, theocratic patriotism, the enlisting of self-defense as a legal shield to justify the use of violence (both for individuals and countries), and the unleashing of state and non-state forces of repression to secure domestic resources, ensure the sovereignty of national natures, and to stake out geopolitical claims on foreign resources.

Some far-right regimes have condemned climate activism, sustainability, and environmental justice as propaganda pushed by partisan zealots. The rise of anti-environmentalism has become a point of commonality across some authoritarian movements as they seek to undermine socio-environmental rights, roll back environmental regulations and laws, and destroy the expertise of public agencies dedicated to environmental and climate science. In the process, some protected areas are subject to de-gazettement, downsizing, or fragmentation. Biodiversity protections are weakened. Meanwhile, fossil fuels industries can continue with business as usual despite the push for global decarbonization and the pivot toward green capitalism. Fears of stranded assets can be attenuated, at least for a time.

Anti-environmentalist political agendas, however, run into the realities of constitutional orders, entrenched capitalist markets, and sociopolitical forces aligned with environmental protection, modes of care, and advocacy. The need to build political coalitions in government means that anti-environmentalist agendas might be understood alongside new forms of authoritarian environmentalisms that emerge in practice. These may draw upon the legacies of colonialist environmentalisms or advance neoliberal environmentalisms in unexpected directions. These efforts might apply hyper-nationalist politics to conceptions of protected nature through attempts to evict actors, groups, and communities perceived as enemy forces 'polluting' to national lands. Or they might attempt to strip away biodiversity protections while enlisting pro-environmentalist

language to justify these measures. Environmental NGOs might become willing collaborators with these state agencies and corporate partners. These currents of authoritarian environmentalisms can further harness or even spur 'late fascist' environmentalisms.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Marcos Mendoza, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Marcos Mendoza, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Marcos Mendoza, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Jamie Haverkamp, Bates College, Jéssica Malinalli Coyotecatl-Contreras, University of California, Santa Cruz, Carter Hunt, Pennsylvania State University, Joshua Mayer, University of Connecticut, Nora Sylvander, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Piergiorgio Di Giminiani

Presentation(s): Eco-Authoritarianism in Patagonia: Liberated Capital and the Defense of Sovereign National Natures

The election of President Javier Milei has generated significant concern among environmentalists in Argentina. The Milei administration has sought to roll back protections for forests and glaciers, disband the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and slash the budget for scientific research. However, the administration has encountered congressional opposition and has been forced to work with coalition parties that have commitments to conservation, protected areas, and environmental law. The result of this alliance between far-right and center-right parties for environmental policy can be seen in the attempt underway to transform the National Parks Administration (APN) and national parks. This paper focuses on the political, economic, and legal measures undertaken by the APN directorate in Andean Patagonia. The discussion focuses on two key measures: 1) deregulation of the tourism industry by targeting the professional tour guiding sector and eliminating the concessionary system in order to 'free' capital; and 2) the move to defend national nature by evicting Indigenous activists who have occupied lands inside parks and branding them as terrorists. I argue that this demonstration of spectacular 'eco-authority'—as an iteration of the far-right theater state—presents itself as ushering in the 'new' or the 'revolutionary,' when in fact it is closely tied to the legacies of settler colonialism and neoliberalism as they pertain to conservation in Patagonia.

Presenter(s): Marcos Mendoza

Nationalism, Nature and Knowledge: Throughlines of Eco-Fascism

Closer attention to the linkages between nation-building, nationalism, and nature is needed in this contemporary moment of rising global authoritarianism and profound planetary ecological transformation. Most often reflected in climate and environmental literatures are the ways in which far-right authoritarian regimes promulgate environmental destruction. Yet while contemporary far-right regimes demonstrate anti-environmental politics, it is also historically evident that environmentalism and fascism are not always at odds but can be mutually enabling. In this paper, I trace the affinities between Germany's Third Reich and the Austrian-German traditions of alpinism

and glacier science during the 1930's–40's, which coalesced around foundational myths of territory, unity and protectionism. Furthermore, this work illuminates how these logics connect to imperialism and colonialism and continue to bear influence in dominant climate imaginaries today. However far afield these histories of Nazi Germany and futuring climate projects may appear, I argue that they are deeply interconnected, and by attending to the past we are in fact care-taking the coming future. Noticing the entanglement of Nazism and environmentalism offers cautionary signposts for rising authoritarian environmentalism and eco-fascism in the age of climate disasters, while centering the role that science and expertise play in this formulation.

Presenter(s): Jamie Haverkamp

A 'Sovereign Energy Transition': Specters of Nation and Coloniality in Mexico

When Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) became Mexico's president in 2018, peasants in Morelos celebrated. They supported his campaign on the conviction that AMLO would end the imposition of an energy megaproject initiated a decade before against their territory. However, by 2020, the newly created National Guard forcibly dispersed the peasants' protests and stood watch as the companies finished the infrastructure as part of the Mexican "Sovereign Energy Transition," and protestors were called "leftist radicals." Therefore, I ask: What lies in the distance between the hope of a new regime in Mexico (echoed worldwide) and the continued experience of violence against peasant and Indigenous communities? In this presentation, I argue that the reemergence of a nationalist 'energy transition' is in itself a violent socioenvironmental regime that reorganizes the human-nature nexus not only in Mexico but across the world. Through a framework of feminist political ecology and anticolonial science and technology studies, I analyze the emergence of a hegemonic discourse based on the specters of the Nation and colonial visions of the landscape and people. For this historically informed and participatory research, I carried out participant observation at in-person and online events surrounding the imposition of the energy megaproject to understand the material and discursive elements that constitute such a frame of reference and the exclusions it entails.

Presenter(s): Jéssica Malinalli Coyotecatl-Contreras

Raising the Specter of Conflict in Spite of Consensus: The Exercise of Authority in the Galápagos Islands

Known as an Edenic setting for endemic species where ecological processes are brought into sharp relief, the Galápagos Islands have a lesser-known post-Colombian human past littered with geopolitical maneuvering and capitalist interventions. Eras characterized by whaling wars, plantation agriculture, military installations, and market-driven marine resource exploitation have given way to nature-based tourism in the decades following the creation of the Galápagos National Park in 1959. Though the park protects 97% of the terrestrial area of the archipelago, the remaining 3% has undergone dramatic transformation since this Ecuadorian province became uniquely governed by a "special law" created in 1998. Galápagos is now a cultural milieu for approximately 35,000 residents and a destination for 300,000 domestic and international tourists annually. This

presentation shares ongoing ethnographic research in Galápagos, including several consensus analyses and participatory workshops related to tourism and socio-environmental governance. It will highlight how the revolving door of leadership fails to leverage a high degree of consensus among the local population regarding policies and agendas most linked to social and environmental wellbeing while also leaving the door open to neoliberal and deregulatory agendas seeking further economic exploitation of the islands.

Presenter(s): Carter Hunt

Ransoming Protected Areas, Sacrificing Black and Indigenous Territories: The Pursuit of Climate Finance in Authoritarian Nicaragua

A specter is haunting Black and Indigenous peoples in Nicaragua—the specter of climate finance. For more than a decade, the authoritarian Ortega-Murillo regime has pursued financing for its National Deforestation Avoidance Strategy (ENDE-REDD+), which would support silvopastoral systems around protected areas and Black and Indigenous peoples' territories. In those same territories, dozens of Black and Indigenous people have been killed and thousands forcibly displaced as mestizo settlers have colonized their lands, largely for cattle ranching and gold mining. Black and Indigenous peoples' organizations have noted that ENDE-REDD+ will inject capital into the settler ranching industry, which will surely support further colonization. This paper, based on my activist research alongside Rama and Kriol communities, analyzes the Ortega-Murillo regime's environmental policy in Black and Indigenous territories amid the pressures of financial capitalism and U.S. imperialism. I argue that the regime's approach is based less on a coherent environmental politics and more on a set of strategic considerations: 1) The greater the deforestation, the stronger the case for climate financing; and 2) until financing is obtained, political and economic stability are best maintained by supporting the settlers colonizing Black and Indigenous peoples' lands and producing beef and gold for export.

Presenter(s): Joshua Mayer

Sovereign Nature, Sacrificed Rights: Extractivism as Environmental Authoritarianism in Nicaragua

This paper focuses on the dynamics of environmental authoritarianism (EA) in Nicaragua, analyzing how state-led extractivism (e.g., mining, agroindustry) operates under the legitimizing banner of "national sovereignty" and "development." Nicaragua's case is distinct from overtly anti-environmentalist regimes, as the state discursively emphasizes environmental conservation and indigenous territorial rights. However, I suggest that this rhetoric operates as a discursive strategy that subsumes these elements under the dominant logics of extractivist capitalism and state-defined national development. This approach, deeply rooted in Western modernity, frames resource extraction as essential for national progress and sovereignty. Yet, this framing masks environmental degradation and the systematic marginalization of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' ontologies, territorial claims, and ways of life. This "covert" EA manifests in territorial conflicts that are not only disputes over land use but also over understandings of territory/environment/development, alongside the suppression of environmental-social

movements and the forced closure of numerous environmental NGOs. These actions can be understood as EA, as they impose a singular, state-mandated vision of national interest, obscuring alternative human-nature relationships and implicitly excluding indigenous communities, as the state aims to secure natural resources.

Presenter(s): Nora Sylvander

Discussion

8413 Spectral Legacies:

The Ghostly Presence of Segregated Pasts in Contemporary Louisiana

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This interdisciplinary panel explores how, in the past and present, obscured or unacknowledged forces linked to racial hierarchy fetter nominally universalist, race-blind, or egalitarian efforts to address social needs in the state. Racial difference unfolds in interpretive work and emergent contingencies, through which it can be reproduced but also contested and re-cast. But in Louisiana, race is also deeply embedded in long-standing arrangements - settlement and land use patterns, entwined ecological and social infrastructures, cultural politics and social mores, judicial and carceral practices, narrative tropes in public discourse, and more - that haunt the now like ghosts. Often operating systemically and thus silently or partially concealed, the force of race recurs and disturbs ongoing attempts to surmount, ignore, or evade it. Panelists highlight two kinds of moments. The first involves historical episodes when discriminatory practices were inaugurated, producing effects whose impact perdures. The second focuses on more recent episodes when individuals or groups recognize these spectral legacies, as they name them, discern their disquieting impacts, and attempt to address them. Together, these presentations illustrate how the power of racial hierarchy is rendered spectral, pushed to the margins of the state's body politic yet troubling it through the unresolved dilemmas race creates.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Marc David , Theo Hilton, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Marc David

Presenter(s): Christine L. Halling, University of New Orleans, Marc David, Marc David, Marc David

Discussant: Shana Walton

Presentation(s): Death's Inevitability Haunted by Ghosts of the Past: Legal Realities, Practical Legacies, and Disaster Chaos in Underprivileged Cemeteries in Coastal

Though death is a universal human experience, marginalization endured by communities of color and the poor has created unique challenges to these universal experiences in Louisiana. This presentation examines the modern regulatory scheme of cemetery management at the state level to identify conflicts with traditional mourning customs and burial practices that continue to this

day. These regulatory inconsistencies are then overlaid onto past and current disaster impacts and interactions with federal disaster recovery to marginalized communities' cemeteries in coastal Louisiana. Past experience of the authors in responding to varied communities impacted during disasters combined with state and federal response practices highlight the complexities that are experienced by these underserved communities through the existing regulatory structure. When a structure that assumes the orderly operation of deathscapes has arisen out of majority (White) experiences in the United States the response to these climate impacts and the complications encountered when those structures intersect with both traditional cultural practices and structural inequality highlights the need for flexibility. Ultimately, these intersections create additional challenges for marginalized communities that make disaster recovery more complex than for more affluent majority populations.

Presenter(s): Christine L. Halling

Co-author(s): Ryan Seidemann

A Tale of Two Basins Revisited: Comparing the politics of race, class, and sacrifice across Atchafalaya and Lower Mississippi River communities

While Louisiana's coastal wetlands are slowly being lost to the sea, this terrain of ghostly loss is also punctuated by newly emerging infrastructural and ecological formations—including river deltas and land created from dredged sediment. However, people of color and economically disadvantaged communities fear that they are being sacrificed for the stability of entrenched interests. This paper presents a qualitative comparative case study of politics across the lower reaches of two rivers in coastal Louisiana, each associated with divergent futures: the Atchafalaya River, which is building land as it empties into the Gulf, and the Lower Mississippi River, which is rapidly losing it. I compare the logics of coastal restoration and flood protection at these two sites, each with deep histories of racialized settlement and dispossession. I analyze how natural resource users, conservationists, political elites, and private interests formed unsteady alliances to advance certain management projects—and how different coastal communities organized in opposition. Tracing management decisions and community activism at important conjunctures across these sites offers insight into the current adaptation dilemmas faced by Indigenous, Black, Cajun, Southeast Asian, and other disadvantaged communities in Louisiana, as the politics of race, class, and sacrifice permeate rapidly changing environments and evolving social and political dynamics.

Presenter(s): Marc David

Immunity as Inheritance: Yellow Fever, Racial Injustice, and the Making of a Segregated City

Archival materials from the Historic New Orleans Collection and the New Orleans City Archives were analyzed to assess the impact of recurrent yellow fever outbreaks in the 18th and 19th centuries on the development and modern geography of New Orleans. Archival data were used to provide time-specific epidemiological, social, and cultural context to the municipal planning and construction timeline. These narratives provide a holistic lens to examine yellow fever's influence on municipal decision-making during this period. Findings agree with the accepted historical

narrative but reveal more nuanced, community-specific impacts, particularly the cultural knowledge and resilience practices developed in response to recurring loss and devastation resulting from outbreaks. New cultural norms and reinforcement of existing social hierarchies were legitimized through pseudo-science by the upper class. These narratives rationalized racial and class-based segregation under the guise of public health. Social, epidemiological, and cultural contexts applied to the city's development timeline show that while yellow fever did catalyze public health reforms, it also served as a tool to codify existing social inequalities. This study contributes to anthropological understandings of disease as not only a biological hazard but also as a social force that can be weaponized through misinformation and existing power imbalances to perpetuate systems of structural inequity.

Presenter(s): Marc David

Forgetting Big Things in a Cursed Town:

The Transposition of Racial Narratives in Louisiana's Public Historical Sphere

By promoting the diverse voices of Louisiana citizens, cultural policies of the late twentieth century promised a more tolerant public culture. Authorities in Louisiana's public historical sphere discerned a history of congenial race relations in the region, whose representation, they argued, would promote racial harmony in the post-segregation era. I explore how these efforts unfolded vis-à-vis Blacks and white ethnic Cajuns, whose past has been the focus of intensive history-making efforts. Through systemic processes that produced the existing regime of historical representation, a remarkable transposition unfolded. On the one hand, this complex centers the historical suffering of Cajuns, highlighting their expulsion from colonial Acadia (now Nova Scotia) and subsequent denigration in Louisiana, followed by their successful integration into the U.S. as a kind of model white ethnic group. The historical representation of Blacks, on the other hand, elides the brutality of slavery and Jim Crow. With notable exceptions, it offers historical narratives of upward mobility and cultural creativity, but not of injustices endured nor of substantive contributions to the body politic. Some have recognized this as a problem, identifying deleterious effects on the cohesion such efforts were intended to foster. In this presentation, I consider their assessments of this ostensibly egalitarian project, featuring the problematic yet largely forgotten outcomes they name as its legacy.

Presenter(s): Marc David

Discussion

3238 Security Labour: Working towards (In)Security

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Although numerous studies on security show how security is shaped by questions of labour, having to do with such issues as working hours, working conditions, and relationships with colleagues, the

analytical lens of labour has not been systematically applied to the field of security. In this roundtable, we centralize the experiences of security workers as prime conduits through which to view not only the inner workings of security regimes, but also the effects these regimes have on the people who labour within them. This is relevant considering the exponential growth and diversification of security infrastructures and security-related tasks. Furthermore, in addition to the growth and expansion of the uniformed and formalised security workers within clearly recognized career paths, we also see workers in numerous (non-security) fields who are compelled to engage in practices that aim, in covert/overt ways, to achieve "security". We thus aim to better understand the efforts and practices of labour that are traditionally and commonly associated with security, such as guarding, patrolling, and access control, and the various tasks that are not defined as security, but also centre around security practices, often even pervading seemingly non-security occupations like service work. In this roundtable session, we bring together experts from different ethnographic practices to discuss the opportunities of a research agenda that analyses security as labour. By gathering speakers who have done extensive research in both 'classical' security fields and those that have been 'coopted' into doing security work, we will discuss how ideas and experiences of security and insecurity pervade different spheres of labour and the impact this has for both the individuals working in these industries, as well as the (re)production of global capital circuits of power.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Tessa Diphooorn , Erella Grassiani

Presenter(s): Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam, Taveeshi Singh, Hamilton College, Jessica Katzenstein, Arizona State University, Sareeta Amrute, The New School, Beatrice Jauregui, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Negar Razavi, Princeton University, Edward Schwarzschild

Discussant: Setha Low, CUNY, Graduate Center, Sahana Ghosh, National University of Singapore

7586 Global Indigeneity in Practice: The Specter of Sovereignty, Settler Colonialism, and Ethnonationalism

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

With the growth of scholarship on Indigeneity, its complexities, and its implications, there is much to be explored in relation to sovereignty- and transnationalism-based sociopolitical movements on a global scale. Traditionally, these movements have been informed by historical contexts where settler colonialism forms the foundation of indigeneity-based political discourses. In recent decades, however, these frameworks have expanded to include sociopolitical contexts beyond European settler colonialism and are globally transregional. Scholars have begun to use Indigeneity as an emerging lens for understanding a broader swath of ethnic minorities, including Assyrians (Donabed & Tower 2018), Kurds (Demir 2021), Tibetans (Yeh 2007), and ethnic minorities in Taiwan (Sugimoto 2019) and Cameroon (Pelican 2009) among many others.

Indigeneity has been a productive-if sometimes complicated-framing because of the concept's capacity to support political movements and foster solidarity. This panel explores the expansion of the Indigeneity framework and the political effects of its application in several relevant sociopolitical contexts. Haunted by colonial legacies, ethnonationalist projects, recognition politics, and the priorities of global institutions, the theorization of Global Indigeneities prompts engagement with applied ethical research practices and scholarly positionality in relation to a foundational understanding of multilayered histories and contemporary power struggles.

Section: Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

Organizer: Faraz Saberi, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Faraz Saberi, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ting-Yu Chou, Mayuri Patankar, Eveline Washul, Indiana University, Bloomington, Faraz Saberi, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Christopher Sheklian, Mississippi State University

Presentation(s): Whose Languages: Navigating Indigeneity and National Identity in Taiwan

Language holds a center position in the establishment of identities. On the islands of Taiwan, complicated historical developments and immigration have created a diverse language landscape, with Mandarin Chinese serving as the lingua franca, a result of forced assignment from past authorities. To counter China's "Pan Chinese" discourse and the claim of "same language, same race," revitalizing and presenting native languages became a crucial strategy of solidifying a Taiwanese identity and distancing oneself from the Chinese framework. Since the more commonly spoken Taiwanese and Hakka are still under the scope of Sinitic languages, far distant indigenous Austronesian languages and cultures are thus often pushed to the forefront of debate. Long stigmatized and now entangled into the nation-making discourse, the indigenous people of Taiwan skillfully navigate the language landscape not only by living back their mother tongues, but also by adopting new usage and interpretation of the Chinese language on both written and verbal modalities. This paper investigates the ways in which indigenous people construct their agencies through active language practices, and how indigenous sovereignty and identities are negotiated as they participate in a Taiwanese identity, but not falling into service of it.

Presenter(s): Ting-Yu Chou

Reconfiguring Sovereignty: Gond Religion and the Constitutional Mobilisation of Indigenous Identity in Postcolonial India

The Gonds, numbering roughly twelve million, are classified as a "Scheduled Tribe" under the Indian Constitution—a designation that accords them special rights and protections. In south-central India, urban Gond intellectuals have, since the 1980s, actively reshaped their cultural community by institutionalising an indigenous religion known as Gondi Dharam (literally, "The Religion of the Gonds"). The leaders have persistently campaigned for the recognition of Gondi Dharam as a "Tribal Religion" under the Indian Constitution. They present this religion as an alternative form of

sovereignty that challenges the prevailing liberal norms and aims to counteract entrenched legal exclusion in the postcolonial Indian nation-state.

For this presentation, I read selected writings by the Gond leaders, along with their Gondi Dharam-related petitions to the Indian state and legal organisations. Using these primary texts, I analyse how Gond intellectuals mobilise indigeneity as a productive and contested framework, supporting claims for Gond sovereign recognition. Drawing on this Gond case, I illustrate how the formation of an "indigenous religion" unfolds as a means for securing rights, while simultaneously challenging and reshaping existing legal structures. This process, which involves embedding indigenous principles within the framework of the Indian Constitution, contributes to the understanding of broader initiatives of indigenous reconstitution and constitution-making.

Presenter(s): Mayuri Patankar

Emergent Forms of Indigenous Belonging in Authoritarian Settler States

In recent years, more scholarly attention is being given to approaching the study of Tibet's modern history and contemporary experiences under China as a form of settler colonialism. While there are compelling parallels with European settler colonialism, this paper explores some of the divergences in the context of modern China that have implications for Tibetan responses to colonial domination. Based on fieldwork in urban and rural Tibetan communities in China, this paper explores Tibetan experiences of placemaking and belonging amid China's intense urbanizing and assimilatory pressures. A recurring theme in fieldwork is the experience of urbanization as inextricably tied to loss and ethnic transformation. Yet this experience ties Tibetans together in a refusal to disappear as minority citizens within a multiethnic state. Tibetans, whether in China or exile, have historically not "taken up" the position of Indigeneity. But more recently, differently positioned Tibetans in exile have, at various moments, refused, considered, or tentatively aligned with the category of Indigenous and global Indigenous movements. While the question of Indigenous uptake remains for Tibetans themselves to determine, this paper engages with the literature on co-recognition that takes place internally within Indigenous communities. In doing so, I explore how Tibetans invoke affective, Buddhist moral, and other fine-grained categories, such as place, in recognizing each other.

Presenter(s): Eveline Washul

Transnationalism & Kurdish Ethnonationalism: Navigating Shared Territory, Recognition & Coexistence in Northern West Asia

Kurds, Assyrians, Yezidis, Armenians, and several other ethnic groups claim, share, and collectively steward a continuum of overlapping traditional territories in northern West Asia. All of these identities are transnational and reflect the contemporary implications of colonial boundaries drawn in the 20th century that do not acknowledge Indigenous traditional territories. With intimate reference to Global Indigeneity discourse, this paper explores how several ethnic groups are navigating the complexities of land custodianship and stewardship, issues of recognition of Indigeneity, and the multi-layered sociopolitical nuances of shared, overlapping territories in what

is now eastern Syria and Türkiye, western Iran, and northern Iraq. With a primary geographic focus on northern Iraq, and an examination of the implications of Kurdish ethnonationalism on both Kurdish tribes and neighboring ethnic groups, I investigate the question of how these groups negotiate or make legible the concept of shared 'territory' and Indigeneity among themselves and between each other. How globalized discourses of Indigeneity, as well as the ways in which this issue is politicized both externally and among these groups interpersonally, guide these relations is also relevant to how these groups continue to conceptualize their identities and connection to land in the contemporary 'post-colonial' sphere.

Presenter(s): Faraz Saberi

Discussion

1897 Gesture: Citations, resuscitations, and excitations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What is borne, born, or reborn in a gesture? What do gestures carry and what do they create? And what emerges when we attend to the potentialities of gestures across contexts? Gesture has long been a focus for anthropologists studying face-to-face interaction and performance. Linguistic anthropologists, in particular, have developed granular analyses of how embodied significations entwine with speech, frames of participation, and variously-drawn contexts. However, with several notable exceptions (e.g., Lempert 2018; Hall et al. 2016; Streeck 2009), gestures' mediality has hovered in the background of these engagements (haunting them, we might say, in the spirit of this year's AAA theme). Not only do embodied gestures mediate thought, feeling, and memory, but they are also liable to be reproduced and displaced (Streeck 2021) across places, times, and modalities. Writers like Walter Benjamin (2013), Judith Butler (2017), and Giorgio Agamben (1992) have proposed that "citable" gestures can leverage distinct performative and ethical force. Taking a cue from these provocations, this panel seeks to thematize gestures' performativity vis-à-vis their susceptibility to citation, resuscitation, and excitation across modalities, materialities, and spatio-temporal gaps, even as it leaves room for gestures that circulate widely in mediated contexts and yet do not become "quotable" (Kendon 1992). Papers explore the arc of mediatized gestures from "biocommunicability" to "incommunicability" (Briggs), the politics prefigured by digital mediations of a Sikh "exuberant gestural repertoire" (Hothi), the power of experimental-theatrical gestures to "associatively translate" experiences of migration (Giordano), and the performative force of activist-artists' resuscitations and re-materializations of an incendiary salute (Taylor-Neu).

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Robyn Taylor-Neu, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Robyn Taylor-Neu, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Robyn Taylor-Neu, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Charles Briggs, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Randeep Hothi, Cristiana Giordano

Discussant: Michael Lempert, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): Elon's Arm: Notes on the Reanimation of Gesture

In early February 2025, Berlin police launched an inquiry into a video that had exploded on social media the week prior. The video, shared by two activist groups, showed another video projected at monumental proportions against the highway-facing wall of the Tesla gigafactory in Berlin's southern outskirts. After first questioning the veracity of the footage, Berlin police condemned the art-action as a violation of Germany's strict ban on Nazi-associated iconography. The grounds? The projection included a clip of Elon Musk's salute during the US presidential inauguration and appended the word "HEIL" to the factory's "TESLA" lettering. This situation—both the reanimation of a gesture and its uptake—raises critical questions about the political and performative force of "citable" gestures. I frame this paper around three such reanimations of Elon's arm. Drawing on documentation and media uptake of art-actions by groups in Europe and the UK, I explore how these actors have sought to redefine the context of Musk's inauguration day gesture and (re)situate it within a larger constellation of emblematic neonazi body movements. My discussion draws on linguistic-anthropological theorizations of gesture, animation, and creative indexicality while also engaging critical theory conversations around "quotable" gesture. From this ground, I argue that these art-actions constitute critical gestural interventions that recast urban and media spaces as the stage of a Brechtian "epic theater."

Presenter(s): Robyn Taylor-Neu

Making the Biocommunicable Body Politic: The Rise and Fall of Fauci's COVID-19 Gestures

Logically, the more gestures circulate and the greater their impact, the more they become citable and quotable. This paper presents an antithetical case. In March-April 2020, Anthony Fauci was omnipresent in White House Coronavirus Task Force daily briefings. He used a recurrent set of gestures that represented 1) "peaks" in numbers of infections, 2) control and mitigation measures, and 3) stable interdiscursive relations between his successive public statements. Other presenters did not devise comparable gestural repertoires. Even as the referential content of Fauci's statements was scrutinized and debated, his gestures were seldom cited or quoted.

Fauci's gestures turned fragmentary, uncertain statistical projections and mitigation measures into seemingly objective, comprehensible objects. His diminutive male, white, professional body became a privileged site for instructing and comforting the U.S. body politic amidst uncertain viral futures. Gestures made COVID-19 seem biocommunicable, able to be transformed into biomedical knowledge and conveyed to lay publics. Questioning official discourse or contributing knowledge branded laypersons as incommunicable, as unable/unwilling to assimilate "the science." When new findings revealed the precarious basis of Fauci's initial guidance, massive space opened for questioning biocommunicability generally. Worse than a "flip-flopper," the right cast Fauci as incommunicable, as a symbol of biomedical arrogance and authoritarianism.

Presenter(s): Charles Briggs

Gesturing Affirmation: Lessons of Prefigurative Sociality in the Farmers' Protest Movement of 2020

On November 19, 2021, a global protest movement prevailed over India's then newly proposed agricultural market reforms. For sixteen months (Aug 2020 - Nov 2021), the "farmers movement" mobilized hundreds of thousands in marches, rallies, occupations, and long-term encampments from Punjab to Delhi. This talk offers an ethnographically grounded investigation into the movement's distinct sociality. An analysis of Sikh social sensibilities reveals key interactional routines enervating the sprawling encampments at the center of the movement. In the Sikh tradition, affective exuberance, or "cardi kala", is a sign of sovereignty, particularly in the initiation, organization, and performance of face-to-face contact. Diasporic mass media offers a key archive to investigate the distinctive exuberance of the farmers movement, offering an opportunity to further probe the distinct affordances of digital archives, the very character of the ethnographic enterprise under the conditions of the coronavirus, and the complex semiotic pathways through which social movements proliferate. At stake in these exuberant gestural repertoires is a prefigurative politics, which cites collective life that is both yet-to-come and yet potentiates the encounter in the here-and-now.

Presenter(s): Randeep Hothi

"Can I steal your shade?": On Fieldwork, Minor Gestures, and Associative Translations

[i]Affect Theater[/i], a practice of research and writing theatrical essays which I developed with theater maker Greg Pierotti, emerges at the thresholds of anthropological practices, theater devising, and affect theories. Unlike traditional theater that works with an already written text, devising is a collaborative process where a company draws simultaneously from non-theatrical source material (interviews, fieldnotes, archival documents, etc.) and the elements of the stage (prop, gesture, costume, light, sound, etc.) to write a score. I reflect on gesture as one of the elements of the stage that we engage to "get caught again" (Favret-Saada) in the affective intensities of our empirical material. Gestures also populate fieldwork as empirical moments. How does a gesture encountered during research get woven into fieldnotes? How is it translated into a performance episode to make visible what can only be felt? Are gestures always the performance of a move, or rather the reverberation of the unsaid and unthought in a line of fieldnotes which opens new layers of associative translation? I draw from fieldwork at ports of entry in Sicily where people rescued while crossing the Mediterranean arrive on mercantile ships. Being exposed to the sun during the crossing and at arrival have offered me and those I encountered at the ports moments to experience "shade" as a commodity which was later translated into a theater episode and a gesture which occasioned new analytics of borders.

Presenter(s): Cristiana Giordano

Discussion

5630 The Ghost of Whiteness Studies Future

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The first months of the second Trump administration were marked by a dizzying range of developments, from racial shifts in support apparent in the 2024 presidential election, to disruptions of neoliberal trade regimes, to overt administration support for white South Africans, to sustained attacks on higher education and DEI efforts. This moment has also highlighted a pronounced shift in Americans' perceptions of higher education, including a broad public alienation from the ideological and discursive lenses through which disciplines like Anthropology theorize and describe both contemporary realities and possible political futures.

As South African anthropologist and activist Mamphela Ramphele pointed out in her 2008 book, *Laying Ghosts to Rest*, the rituals used to exorcise the stubborn and lingering ghosts of racism in her context have proven insufficient, and some ghosts are poised to "continue to haunt our future" (Ramphele 2008:10).

Whiteness studies is positioned in a particularly interesting—or precarious—way in this new reality. The overwhelming thrust of scholarship in this body of work has been towards critical descriptions and diagnoses of the harms that whiteness as a racial order has worked in the world. Ramphele calls this the work of naming ghosts, noting that "effective transformation is predicated on acknowledgement of each ghost by calling it by name" (10). This necessary project remains a non-negotiable epistemological-ethical stance for many scholars—perhaps even more so given the developments of the last several months.

However, in a moment of populist cultural politics and rage at elites and elite institutions, pure critique seems insufficient. In addition to the necessity of theorizing and naming harms, we would seem to need new ways of envisioning, describing, and pursuing political futures. What insights might whiteness studies offer into the ways humans exorcise—or coexist among—the lingering ghosts of societal harm? In this roundtable we seek to consider imaginative possibilities for the future of whiteness studies and racial politics more broadly.

In this context, we ask: what might be the shape of a whiteness studies yet-to-come? How do we engage in a political terrain where categories and affiliations are in radical flux? What are the possibilities for coalitional politics that engage the poor and working-class people across racial lines while remaining attentive to the perils of white supremacy? Are such projects unimaginable or anathema to whiteness studies as currently construed? What are our obligations to broader audiences and public impact in times of resurgent neopopulisms? What theoretical approaches to process, becoming, or shifting possibilities might offer new directions in whiteness studies today? How do we articulate a vision of what is to be done that still remains attentive to the perils and ongoing harms of racial and colonial histories?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Christine Jeske, Wheaton College, David Flood, University of Virginia

Presenter(s): Judith Williams, Furman University, Department of Anthropology, Lauren Miller, Texas Tech University, David Flood, University of Virginia, Christine Jeske, Wheaton College

Discussant: Christine Jeske, Wheaton College

5579 Playing With Space: Collaborative Place and Space Making for Social Justice

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The Dutch historian of play Johan Huizinga's proposition that human culture emerges from games and play (Huizinga 1939/1971) continues to gain traction amongst anthropologists and scholars. Meanwhile design theorists Ken Friedman and Erik Stolterman have more recently asserted that design is a practice that pre-dates the human altogether (Friedman and Stolterman, 2015). This oral presentation session unites five distinct ethnographic practices in conversation around the utilization of community rooted design and games as social change agents. Edward Ruppap (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Research Assistant, Playful Community Development in Arbor Hill) sets the tone for the session through an investigation into the utilization of Participatory Action Research and the ways in which play has continued to assist in the development of social action in the Arbor Hill neighborhood of Albany, New York. Brandon Juan Surtain (Tulane University School of Architecture, Assistant Director of Community Engagement, Albert and Tina Small Center for Collaborative Design) grounds the presentation in the conference's host city of New Orleans, exploring how we rectify the loss of the built environment that fostered New Orleans's Black culture through case studies, community narratives, and possible design interventions. Odin Goldman (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute)'s game design practice considers the ghosts of Appalachia as both a metaphor and a method. Exploring ghosts as cultural memory, trauma, resistance and kin uncovers a means of retracing the identities of people who have long been pathologized and often erased by a dominant culture of stereotyping. Natan Diacon-Furtado's (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, internationally award-winning collaborative artist and designer) presentation engages Brazilian "gambiarra" improvisatory repair culture and globally southern practices of "bricolage." Examples from their own research-creation practice encourage and empower us all to engage in the liberatory re-use of space and meaning. Revealing, re-framing and laying claim to the built environment outside and within ourselves. Our final presenter, Jayden Montalvo, explores how board games, such as Vagrantsong by Wryd Games, and their players form a material and experiential site where human and more-than-human agents combine to form a larger spectral ecology. Revealing the role of nonhuman-agents as reflective surfaces for players' confrontations and imaginations with their social identities and projections of other players. Across these five presentations the authors explore the tools, myths and rituals that collaboratively make and remake space while embracing the spirit of social justice, civil rights, and decoloniality.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Edward Ruppap, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Natan Diacon-Furtado

Chair: Natan Diacon-Furtado

Presenter(s): Edward Ruppar, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Brandon Surtain, Tulane University, Odin Goldman, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Natan Diacon-Furtado, Jayden Montalvo, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Discussant: Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Presentation(s): Playful Spaces in Disadvantaged Communities: Play and Social Action in Arbor Hill

The authors have investigated the ways in which play has assisted in the development of social action in the Arbor Hill neighborhood of Albany, New York. Arbor Hill is a disadvantaged community where people have been historically discriminated against, disinvested in, and poverty stricken. Our research spans the University Albany's archives on The Brothers civil rights group from the mid to late 20th century and the past and present locations in Arbor Hill where people play together. This research is on-going but details the prevalence of play in social justice and civil rights action in Arbor Hill and how the presence of playful space, and barriers to it, has been influential to the wellbeing of the neighborhood. Present findings include playful discussions of issues through the Albany Liberator and the centrality of recreation to its authors who wrote about playgrounds, parks, and athletic facilities alongside the political turmoil and civil rights protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s. After situating our research project historically in Arbor Hill we have reached out to local stakeholders, particularly at the Underground Railroad Education Center in Arbor Hill, to utilize Participatory Action Research methods in involving the local community in designing playful community building methods.

Presenter(s): Edward Ruppar

Co-author(s): Nicholas Mizer

Rectifying the Physical Disappearance of the Built Environment that Fostered New Orleans' Black Culture

How do we rectify the loss of the built environment that fostered New Orleans's Black culture? This presentation will examine historical patterns of erasure, the cultural cost of redevelopment, and the present-day impacts of disconnection from place. Case studies, community narratives, and possible design interventions will aid in uncovering the spatial typologies and social infrastructures that made Black cultural expression possible and what is lost when those disappear.

Shaped by centuries of resilience, creativity, and community, New Orleans's Black culture has always been intimately tied to its built environment. From shotgun homes and corner stores to second-line routes and social aid halls, physical spaces have played a defining role in nurturing Black life and culture. Yet, systemic disinvestment, urban renewal, and post-Katrina redevelopment have eroded these environments, displaced communities and severed the spatial fabric that once sustained cultural continuity.

This work seeks to help inform strategies that prioritize cultural preservation through equitable development, participatory design, affordable housing, and heritage-based planning. We'll look at emerging models that combine cultural memory with future-oriented design, and question who holds the power to define, preserve, and rebuild.

In a city that celebrates, honors and talks with its dead, where are the monuments to the black people and places integral to the culture and ethos of New Orleans?

Presenter(s): Brandon Surtain

Hauntologies of the Holler – Using TTRPG's as a Framework to Reclaim Marginalized, Appalachian Identity

In the hills and hollers of Appalachia, ghosts are cultural memory, trauma, resistance and kin. Through an analysis of an "alternate Appalachia," as it has been shaped by games such as *Old Gods of Appalachia*, a gothic horror exploring the realms of natural horror influenced by the land's ecological history, and *Scarlett Hollow*, a visual novel about interpersonal relationships in a tight-knit community of a declining mining town, it is possible to see the ways story shapes community. The author's own *Nothing Worth Dying For* is a play-by-mail game influenced by the history of Tabletop Roleplaying Games (TTRPGs) that weaves together themes of gender, chronic pain and rural estrangement into the mythic and material landscapes of Appalachia. Here, linear time unravels and bodies are not fixed but shifting, entangled with land and story. Players witness characters navigating these themes, communicating across uncertain gaps in time and space. Through this slow, analog format, *Nothing Worth Dying For* troubles normative rhythms of play, offering instead a durational, fragmented narrative practice that honors slowness, absence, and the messy labor of connection. By considering the ghost as both a metaphor and a method, this presentation will uncover a means of retracing the identities of people who have long been pathologized and often erased by a dominant culture of stereotyping.

Presenter(s): Odin Goldman

Improvised Tools / Improvised Play - Ancestral Projectors and the Liberatory Re-use of Space

"Ancestral projectors" from the author's own research-creation practice "assemble the [technologically] improbable" (Montagner and Lopes, 2022) to recuperate (Jiménez Oviedo, 2022) spiritual and ancestral technologies and practices of our pasts. Engaging Brazilian "gambiarra" (Lagnado, 2007 and Montagner and Lopes, 2022) improvisatory repair culture and globally southern practices of "bricolage" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962) and "epistemological pluralism" (Turkle and Papert, 1992) the author collaborates within communities of all cultures, abilities and means to recover and project othered imaginations. As stated by the activist healer and writer adrienne maree brown, "[w]e are living in the ancestral imagination of others, with their longing for safety and abundance, a longing that didn't include us, or included us as enemy, fright, other." (maree brown, 2017) Utilizing light and sound to project the possible futures already present in our pasts, "ancestral projectors" are assistive technologies that aid in re-linking sensed knowledge that has been violently un-linked from each of us. Examples discussed utilize accessible and open-source folk hardware and

software interfaces to aid in the liberatory reuse of over-cultural public space for collaboration with our more-than-human communities and laying claim to the spaces and meanings around us.

Presenter(s): Natan Diacon-Furtado

Vagrantsong: Liminal Spaces For Wandering Subjects and Spectral Ecologies

Vagrantsong by Wryd Games is an anthropologically potent liminal space: It is a cooperative tabletop game where players imagine themselves encountering southern spirits aboard a haunted train. The game designers work with potentially problematic language of "haint," "vagrant," and "hobo" to position players into a Southern mythos exploring poverty and spirituality. Players train hop as "vagrants", which are coded as romantic wanderers or the hobo. However, this life of wandering, rather than being brought to a halt, sees players and their characters thrust into moments of reflection on their activity by the weird positionality of players, vagrants, haints, spirits, and events on a ghost train—which acts as a game board and setting for the narrative. Vagrantsong enfold players into a site of transformation, uncertainty, and spiritual entanglement, with the setting of the spirit train, narrative, players, and game mechanics. Drawing on Chloé Germaine's microethology and descriptive phenomenology (2025), this paper explores how board games and their players form a material and experiential site where human and more-than-human agents—miniatures, the hobo code or other game rules, and spirits—combine to form a larger spectral ecology. Revealing the role of nonhuman-agents such as the haints, who are not merely spectral antagonists, but reflective surfaces for players' confrontations and imaginations with their social identities and projections of other players.

Presenter(s): Jayden Montalvo

Discussion

2646 Body-Place Attunements: Sensitivity Beyond the Self

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Where does the (self-)body end, and where does the environment start? In this roundtable, we dwell in the body's porosity, as a place that testifies against containability or demarcation. Invisible chemical exposures permeate our food and water (Liboiron 2021). Skin absorbs toxins and radioactive waves. Our very breath we share with people in the same room. Then, there are also presences that haunt us in their liveliness – intergenerational trauma in families, bureaucratic structures, the animals we try to exterminate (Todd 2014), the mold that insidiously cover the walls. We experience these hauntings through our bodies' visceral reactions to them – pain, rashes, blood, pleasure and excretions. The dead also linger within us and our worlds in numerous ways - as food, smells, rituals, and even through screens and videos (Beliso-De Jesus 2015). Ephemeral exposures permeate life and contaminate it. The presence of trauma is only knowable through our bodies, and yet the act of sensing engraves the other upon us. In such ways, we are entangled in

messy multiplicity, and we must employ numerous multisensorial forms of attunement to engage with them.

We therefore ask: 1) When are moments when invisible, illegible conglomerates of haunting become visible and palpable? What are the bodily symptoms or happenings and how do we attune to them? 2) How can we navigate and negotiate bodily knowledge and haunting that not only manifest in our interlocutors, but also through our multisensorial attunements to/with them? 3) How do our interlocutors and fieldwork haunt us, even after we "leave the field"? 4) How do we navigate the double-bind of our sensitivity, as it grants us understanding and attunement, but also challenges us with vulnerability?

In this round-table, we reflect on ethnographic examples of unseen exposures, and the methodological improvisations that are needed to find attunement to them, to make them known. If conspiring is the act of breathing together – sharing in conditions and in action – then aspiring is the act of daring to claim and make space, to reimagine and transform air through ethics of care and of being (Sharpe 2016). We aspire to inquire on the boundaries of institutional hauntings (family, vocation, housing, culture); intercorporeal or bodily hauntings (family, skin, pain, food, exposure); and porosity as the imperfect boundary separating the two. We encourage our participants to share short ethnographic or narrative excerpts, and then to reflect on the methodological quandaries of studying imperfect sensorial capacities and shifting bodily boundaries unknowable and otherwise.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Bri Matusovsky , Ajung Ryoo

Presenter(s): Ajung Ryoo , Bri Matusovsky , Sheyda Aboii, University of California, San Francisco, Alexa Kurmanov , Halle Young , Rebecca Newmark, University of California, San Francisco, Yesmar Oyarzun, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Aalyia Sadruddin, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology

3742 Inquiries into enoughness in business, finance, and extractives

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Degrowth is a sociopolitical movement that encourages the limitation of endless extraction, production, and consumption (Hickel 2020, 2021). It has been strengthening its position as a viable solution to big environmental and societal challenges that await our communities, such as climate change, deforestation, and social inequalities (Nicoson 2021; Creutzburg 2022; Whyte 2023). Despite its strengths and allure for creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable society, degrowth remains a niche stance with only a handful of jurisdictions embracing its methods and requirements (Savini and Bossuyt 2022; Kallis 2023; Parrique 2023). In fact, institutions and sectors with the most power to meaningfully alter societal workings for the better (e.g., finance, policymaking), vehemently oppose any mention of degrowth thinking it a career suicide or a kamikaze mission.

Reluctance of our most powerful industries and institutions to give degrowth a chance opens up the questions about enoughness (Sachs 2008; Edlinger et al. 2021; Hromek and Porras 2023): What is enough and when is enough? How can we say enough? At what point do these powerful institutions and actors deem their gains, or harms generated, enough and decide to shift course of action, or fail to do so? Today's discussions about climate change and other environmental and social issues are more than anything about being able to deem a certain degree of gains and harms enough, and changing behavior and policy. Yet, oftentimes, even when they claim to pursue a more sustainable world, these institutions fail at considering and applying the concept of an enough into their activities involving extraction and accumulation.

By bringing together scholars of business and finance, extractives, and public policy, this panel seeks to explore the trials at claiming an enough, and the subsequent failures or successes. All of these sectors in their own ways are fundamental to disseminating a mainstream disposition favoring enough and redirect our socioeconomic systems towards more sustainable and equitable extraction, production, and consumption relations. In investigating how they enact and employ a framework of enough, the panel not only demonstrates some of the biggest roadblocks but also endeavors to outline what an otherwise would look like (Cooper 2014; Tibaldeo 2019; Blanco-Fernandez 2024).

Besides inviting dialogue between anthropologies of business and finance, extraction, and policy and indigenous knowledge (Adamson and Klinger 2008), this panel also aims to reach back to our anthropological predecessors for further insight. By opposing the imagining of production and consumption as linked to the insatiable desires of individuals and instead placing them back in social processes and cultural meaning worlds (Mauss 1925; Boas 1966; Douglas and Isherwood 1979) and by emphasizing that our ideas of affluence and abundance are products of our sociocultural contexts (Sahlins 1972).

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: H. Nazli Azergun, University of Virginia

Chair: Ira Bashkow, University of Virginia, Department of Anthropology, Matt Schneider, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): H. Nazli Azergun, University of Virginia, Hugo Gaggiotti, Canay Ozden-Schilling, National University of Singapore, Diana Ayeh, Jerry Jacka, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Elizabeth Ferry, Brandeis University, Samuel Weeks

Presentation(s): Commensuration: Sustainable finance response to the problem of growth

Sustainable finance institutions claim to address our environmental and social problems, such as climate change, deforestation, or social inequalities. In theory, their capacity to channel funding towards sustainable companies and investments allows them to enact a care for the environment and the society, which involves deeming certain gains and harms enough. However, as representatives who are obligated to ensure profits for their clients, they cannot opt out of incessant extraction and accumulation. Oftentimes, their sustainability sensitivities end up yielding

to a sustainable finance ethics that tries to care for the environment and the society without giving up on its profitability onus.

This sustainable finance ethics predominantly relies on the commensuration of investment outcomes even when they seem incommensurable. In studying the investment practice of a sustainable asset manager in Norway, particularly around the Norwegian government's attempt to start commercial deep-sea mining and the ongoing worker strike against the electric carmaker Tesla in Sweden, I aim to show: How can an industry, which can practically never say 'enough,' contribute to the well-being of our planet and communities, as it claims to do so? How is this commensuration logic, which replaces the ability to say enough, enacted and embraced in the daily practice of sustainable finance institutions? What impossibility of sustainable finance does this commensuration logic conceal?

Presenter(s): H. Nazli Azergun

Reimagining Leadership of Degrowth: Reframing Scarcity and Enough

Traditional business leadership paradigms often reinforce the mantra of "more with less", equating success with expansion and productivity and confusing efficiency and effectiveness. The degrowth movement challenges this growth-centric ideology, arguing that perpetual economic expansion on a finite planet is unsustainable and will inevitably lead to crisis (Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017). Despite this, the notion of degrowth remains anathema to many business leaders (Roulet & Bothello, 2020).

This paper explores how leadership can redefine growth by embracing the concept of 'enough' – a threshold beyond which accumulation becomes counterproductive – shifting the focus to longer term effectiveness. It examines how leaders shape the boundaries of sufficiency: What constitutes 'enough' for employees, communities, and organizations? How does organisational culture influence these limits? And power dynamics influence decisions?

By exploring the tension between the necessity of increasing profit to sustain a business and the risks of falling into the more and bigger traps of extractive capitalism we seek to contribute to an alternative vision of leadership that prioritizes ethical responsibility and ecological balance over relentless expansion. Rather than framing scarcity as a deficit, this paper argues for an abundance mindset (Freebairn-Smith, 2023), reimagining degrowth leadership recognizing sufficiency, redistribution, and creative use of existing resources.

Presenter(s): Hugo Gaggiotti

Co-author(s): Carol Jarvis, Selen Kars

Congestion Conversations: Efficiency and Politics in an Eastern Mediterranean Port City

Maritime movement has been essential to current moment of capitalism, marked by the optimization of supply chains. Seaports continue to scale up tremendously, however, blockages, delays, and congestion persist and even multiply, complicating accounts of private capital unleashing an increasingly frictionless world. Based on research with logistics professionals in

Mersin, Turkey (host to a privatized port operated by Singaporean state-held corporation PSA), I show how port advocates explain the recent growth in the port's trade volume as efficiency seems to increase under privatization. And yet, all around Mersin, talk about congestion in cargo movement will not stop. As parties disagree over whether congestion is a humanmade problem fixable by efficiency measures, or a near-inevitable reality of maritime trade beyond anyone's immediate control, congestion becomes the terrain of politics—an exercise in designating objects of public governance. Through congestion conversations, many reflect on how wealth from maritime trade should flow, and which frictions stand against more prosperity and a more equitable distribution. In a port city, growth may manifest as an apolitical theme that all parties favor for the purposes of wealth creation. The physical frictions in the supply chain, on the other hand, cause political rifts to appear. Congestion is the terrain where the fault lines of diverse political imaginations appear across the various publics of supply-chain capitalism.

Presenter(s): Canay Ozden-Schilling

Lithium demand as fiction? Approaching the relationship between 'the imaginary' and 'the real'

Lithium has emerged as a central element in global political, economic and cultural imaginaries of energy transitions, promising both environmental sustainability and economic growth. In Europe, the discourse around the need to onshore lithium value chains continues to shape political agendas, even as its real dimensions remain elusive due to economic speculation and shifting demands in battery materials. By

studying lithium from historical, cultural and political perspectives, this paper explores the relationship between the discursive and the real with an emphasis on how the concept of enoughness is framed within these orders. While historic and contemporary imaginaries point to lithium as a more-than-ever needed prophylactic-curative material (e.g. against psychological disorders and for combatting climate change), lithium projects 'in the making' reveal contradictions and power dynamics that remain hidden in dominant discourse. Ethnographic research on a planned lithium project in the German Ore Mountains highlights how the imaginary shapes socio-ecological relations, even if it may never become real. Enoughness in this context is either understood as a shift away from fossil fuels and geopolitical dependency, or as an ethical-political stance against endlessly expanding energy and economic systems. We thereby situate lithium onshoring as a pillar of symbolic/real orders of energy transitions and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about techno-centric solutionism.

Presenter(s): Diana Ayeh

Co-author(s): Carmen Perez del Pulgar, Henriette Rutjes

How much mining is enough? Lessons from resource extraction and its impacts on people and place

The twin crises of planetary climate change and global financial swings have resulted in an unprecedented level of mineral resource extraction. On the one hand, mineral extraction is

promoted as a way to move towards a "green" transition as humanity seeks a low-carbon energy future dependent upon electrification and battery storage instead of fossil fuels. On the other, the vicissitudes of the global economic system impel people to invest in gold which provides the logic for more exploration and extraction of a resource which we already have in great abundance (i.e., more than enough for industrial purposes). Both of these movements foster a particular mode of being, "extractivism," which has become a global organizing concept for societies in the 21st century. Various scholars, including myself, have highlighted extractivism as a particularly violent and subjugating form of life. In this presentation, I reflect on 30 years of studying resource extraction and its impacts on people and place. Given these experiences, anthropologists are well-positioned to comment on the question of how much mining is enough. Can we really mine our way to sustainability and what are the implications of pursuing such an objective?

Presenter(s): Jerry Jacka

Discussion

3250 Imagining Disabled Anthropologists: Haunting Ableism in the Field

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable celebrates the publication of the book, *The Disabled Anthropologist* (2025). The title, while it could be understood as essentializing, has value in asserting and affirming our presence and calling for desired transformations (Moodie 2025). This publication is the first of its kind and incorporates a spectrum of academic positionings (from graduate students to senior anthropologists), embodiments, and perspectives. The chapter contributors share their ingenious and creative methods and strategies for engaging in their work and underscore ways in which their diverse bodyminds have contributed to insights about what constitutes the field, ethical considerations about engagement with field interlocutors, and how they have envisioned and enacted their scholarly endeavors. Through the deployment of their own imaginations, authors and roundtable participants hope to excite the imaginations of others, demonstrating that the doing of anthropology doesn't require "intrepidity" (Black 2025). The book and the roundtable haunt the ableism that continues to pervade our field by establishing that disabled anthropologists, however unacknowledged, have been here all along, like ghosts, challenging and unsettling the received knowledge and practices of the canon. In so doing, we hope to enjoin our anthropological compatriots to envisage and shape a more inclusive, more flexible, and less audacious discipline, a goal that will be more easily achieved if others recognize our wisdom and let us guide them. All the contributors use autoethnography to impart their experiences and astuteness, mostly through narrative but also via poetry and photography. They explore how the mythos of anthropological fieldwork initially informed their understanding of how to conduct fieldwork, and then their discovery of alternative and appropriate methodologies, such as the design of an ethnographic methods class built on the principle of collective access. Many contributors address the significance of mutual care, bonding, and/or mutual aid between the anthropologists and their

interlocutors in making fieldwork possible and yielding fruitful insights, according themselves and their interlocutors "value." Others evaluate how "pain time" can fundamentally disrupt ethnographic processes and academic responsibilities, rendering hyperproductivity unachievable and undesirable. Roundtable participants will discuss their initial impetus for involvement in the book project; how their essays play a part in haunting ableism in the field (both in terms of identifying obstacles posed and realizations made); how the act of reflection and composition deepened or altered their views on this haunting; how they best think the specter and manifestations of ableism can be eradicated in this disciplinary context; and, finally, examine what genuine "recognition" looks like.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Anna Jaysane-Darr, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work, Sumi Colligan, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work

Presenter(s): Valerie Black, University of California, San Francisco, Erin Durban, University of Minnesota, Kim Fernandes, University of Pennsylvania, Krisjon Olson, Amanda Votta, Brown University

Discussant: Megan Moodie, Alana Ackerman

1232 Real Ghosts?! Not Metaphors, Not Hauntology, Not Derrida

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

In anthropology, ghosts are often understood as cultural symbols, historical residues, or figures of social haunting. Yet, for many, ghosts are also social actors-inhabitants of lifeworlds, interlocutors, and kin. This panel explores what it means to move beyond representing ghosts as metaphors and instead take them seriously as part of the social realities we study and inhabit.

Anthropologists have long walked a fine line between respecting their interlocutors' beliefs in spirits and maintaining analytical distance. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* offers a classic example of this epistemic move, where he first appears to "believe" he has seen a ghostly light, only to later assure the reader that it must have been a lantern. More recent work, such as Jon Bialecki's engagement with Bruno Latour, has called for taking spirits as social actors-without necessarily breaching the wall of methodological atheism. This panel asks: What if we do breach that wall? What happens when anthropologists, too, can see ghosts?

Bringing together scholars who not only study spirits and ghosts but also share lifeworlds with them, this panel examines how such relationships reshape ethnographic writing. It considers the forms of storytelling, voice, and methodology that emerge when spirits are not just objects of analysis but co-authors of our worlds.

Papers in this panel engage with ethnographic, theoretical, and experimental approaches to these questions, addressing topics such as:

- Ethnographies of ghosts and spirits as social actors
- Writing beyond methodological atheism
- The presence of spirits in fieldwork, analysis, and writing
- Mediumship, possession, and cohabitation with spirits
- Anthropologists' own experiences of being haunted
- Non-human kinship and multispecies hauntings
- Experimental ethnographic writing engaging with the spectral

This panel aims to foster a conversation about the limits of anthropological knowledge and the possibilities of ethnographic writing when ghosts are taken as real, not just as symbols but as presences that shape our fields, our texts, and our lives.

Organizer: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Chair: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Presenter(s): Maryam Abbasi, Alexander Fernandez, Florida International University, Connie Jones, Eric Hoenes del Pinal, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Stephan Palmié, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Tanya Luhmann, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Beyond the Visible: Jinn, Dreams, and Spiritual Encounters in contemporary Iran

In contemporary Iran, jinn—referred to as *az ma behtaroon*: از ما بهتران (literally "better than us")—are believed to possess extraordinary abilities: they can travel across time and space, perceive what humans cannot, and access knowledge beyond human reach. These beings sometimes intervene in human lives, acting as protectors or as intermediaries between the human and non-human realms. They communicate through messages, offer glimpses of the future, and enable individuals to see things that are otherwise hidden. These interactions often occur through vivid dreams, whether by night or day. While some may regard these beliefs as remnants of folklore, for many Iranians, jinn remain an integral part of daily life and are felt or seen in various forms—whether as humans, smoke shape creatures or animals. During my ethnographic fieldwork, my interlocutors shared personal stories of encounters with jinn in different contexts and manifestations and the results of these encounters which varied from illnesses to activating their third eyes. In this talk, I dive into the relevance of jinn beliefs in contemporary Iran and the way these encounters with jinn are perceived by individuals from different genders, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds.

Presenter(s): Maryam Abbasi

Of Blithe Spirits: Narratives of Rebellion, Violence, and Cosmic Memory in Haitian Vodou

Spirit mounting/possession in Haitian Vodou offers a profound connection to the violent history of the Haitian Revolution. Violence here is not about destruction but refers to the voluntary surrender that Vodouisant/practitioners experience to make space for the lwa/deities to spiritfuse. The body as conduit becomes the subject and object of sacred action, submitting to the lwa like a horse yielding to its rider. This study draws from my engagement with the lwa while they inhabited

Vodouisant, showing how the lwa are not distant, detached deities but living forces who take full control of both body and soul. In this context, the violence involved is redemptive—reshaping cultural, historical, and metaphysical realities. Through mounting, practitioners transform—cognitively and spiritually—as they shift from passive submission to active participants in this transdimensional evolution. This journey blurs the boundaries between human and divine, as the lwa mold and guide them. My interviews with the lwa during rituals at an hounfor/Vodou temple in Little Haiti, Miami, emphasize the centrality of mounting. Moving away from Eurocentric notions of possession, I approach mounting as sacred, reciprocal, and cohabitative. Mystically tied to the Haitian Revolution, conjuring and embodying the dead serve as links between spirituality, insurrection, and ritual resilience, offering a nuanced perspective on violence, endurance, and the broader implications of rebellion.

Presenter(s): Alexander Fernandez

Haunted Minds, Haunted Homes: A Spiritualist Perspective on Lingering Spirits and Psychological Vulnerability

Spiritualism was sparked by two young girls and a noisy spirit unsettling the status quo. Emerging at a time when revivalist movements were sweeping America, Spiritualism offered an alternative rooted in human potential. Whilst traditional religious authorities controlled scriptural knowledge, spirits could speak to anyone. But how do Spiritualists make sense of spirits and their continued existence in the 21st century? Based on fieldwork amongst a Spiritualist community in north London, this paper explores hauntings from a Spiritualist perspective by drawing on the experience of a family being disturbed by a spirit. Far from a Derridean 'absence' or a Freudian 'concealment', the affective presence of the spirit demands action by attaching itself to a family member due to a perceived lack of mental robustness. This is interesting because Spiritualists work hard to actively break down the boundaries of the mind to engage in mediumship. This is illustrated through an unsettling autoethnographic encounter with a spirit shortly after the author began mediumship training, requiring the implementation of resilient mental boundaries. This paper therefore demonstrates the necessity of control over 'mind' for Spiritualists to prevent spirits – as individuals with agendas of their own – from causing harm. For Spiritualists, hauntings present an interlinking of psychological and otherworldly domains, reflecting a broader metaphysical ordering of reality they experience.

Presenter(s): Connie Jones

On Gaining Informed Consent from a Mountain Spirit

Modern anthropological ethics are founded on the idea that human subjects of our research have a right to be informed that the ethnographer wishes to conduct research about, with, and among them, that said research will be carried out only with their consent, and that they thus have a right to agree or decline to participate. As more scholars have become interested in and started practicing what has variously been called a multi-species or post-human anthropology, though, might it be reasonable to ask who (or what) else we should seek informed consent from? If we are

to take seriously the idea that the subjects of our studies are not just human beings, but also the other-than-human beings with whom we share the world, and if we wish to understand those beings as imbued with some of the same qualities of agency and cognition as humans, should we not address them before beginning our research? Wanting to respect the sovereignty that my Q'eqchi'-Maya human interlocutors afford mountain deities known as Tzuultaq'as, in 2024 I did just this. Through a series of ceremonies officiated by a Maya ritual specialist, I explained to the spirits the nature of my work, asked for permission to conduct it, sought their counsel for how to do it effectively, and ultimately offered them thanks for allowing me to do so. This paper asks what consequences conceptualizing other-than-human beings as real social actors and agentive stakeholders to whom we owe certain rights has for anthropology.

Presenter(s): Eric Hoenes del Pinal

Wittgenstein among the Santeros

Proceeding from a perspective guided by Wittgenstein's "second philosophy", this essay aims to probe the limits of the ethnographic endeavor vis a vis worlds unthinkable in terms of the ethnographer's own "hinge propositions" around which doubt can turn, but which cannot themselves be allowed to fall into doubt. To do so I revisit a set of ethnographic data from my first fieldwork among practitioners of Afro-Cuban ritual traditions in Miami where I was repeatedly told that the spirit of a dead slave named Tomás was watching over me. I had originally used the "idea of Tomás" as an analytic device to establish my own implication in a violent Atlantic modernity whose (however unwitting) heir I, like all "moderns", am. Here, however, I explore how a Wittgensteinian approach may help us overcome a facile representationalism, give the dead – Tomás, no less than Wittgenstein – a place in the scaffolding of our mind, engage them as metapersons, and so perpetuate their presence in our worlds or forms of life.

Presenter(s): Stephan Palmié

Discussion

4093 Council on Anthropology and Reproduction Advocacy: Reproductive and Environmental Justice in New Orleans and Beyond

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) is holding a special advocacy roundtable to address the complex interfaces of reproductive justice and environmental justice. In this context, the conference theme of "ghosts" resonates powerfully, calling attention to the generational hauntings of environmental contamination that often remain unseen yet manifest in reproductive outcomes. Our meeting in New Orleans--situated in a region both vulnerable to storms and hurricanes and infamous for industrial pollution--offers a critical opportunity to examine how

pregnancies, births, losses, and maternal/infant health bear witness to the slow violence of environmental racism.

At the core of Reproductive Justice is the belief that all people have the right to have children, the right to not have children, and the right to nurture children in safe and healthy environments—principles that are inherently interconnected. Louisiana has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the U.S., which itself has some of the worst outcomes among wealthy industrialized nations. Communities of color bear this burden disproportionately, experiencing the compounding effects of environmental racism, obstetric violence, and economic extraction across generations. In New Orleans, researchers and advocates at the forefront of reproductive and environmental justice movements are working to confront the multiple intersecting catastrophes of climate crisis, environmental degradation, and systematic assaults on reproductive rights and care.

Drawing on CAR's long history of anthropological engagement with reproductive politics and justice, this roundtable brings together local scholars and advocates working at these vital intersections to explore:

- How have reproductive justice and environmental justice emerged as interrelated movements in New Orleans and beyond? What intersections have anthropologists illuminated, and what work remains in making visible the carcinogenic processes and pollutants of structural violence?
- What role has academic research—or lack thereof—played in supporting or silencing these co-arising justice movements? What successful partnerships between researchers and advocates can serve as models, and what uncharted avenues exist for future collaboration?
- What specific lessons can we learn from New Orleans advocates and activists who have shaped these frameworks and movements locally while contributing to national and global discourses?
- In the face of accelerating climate disaster, what are the most pressing challenges to reproductive freedoms, particularly the right to raise children in safe and sustainable environments? How can anthropologists better support communities confronting the lived effects of environmental racism and climate crisis?

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Sallie Han, SUNY, College at Oneonta, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Elisabeth Bolaza, California Institute of Integral Studies, Megan Cogburn, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Rubin, Ohio University, Emaline Reyes, Kimberly Terrell, Tulane University, Taeshaun Walters

Discussant: Sallie Han, SUNY, College at Oneonta, Department of Anthropology

1966 The Living Dead, the Living Landscape, and Other Nonhuman Agents in the Maya World (Part I)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What a western framework often labels as ghosts, apparitions, spirits, and specters inhabit the world with us, but they are called different names by different cultural groups. As such, how these groups relate to them also varies from western imaginings. In the Maya world, which spans across the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador, these entities still permeate through an imposed reality that stems from the colonial era. Starting in the 16th century, Indigenous groups of Maya descent were subjected to destabilizing colonizing forces in order to assimilate them to a Christianized way of viewing the world. Often, colonizers labeled these nonhuman agents as demons that needed to be purged from Indigenous minds, bodies, and souls. In Maní, Yucatán, Mexico on July 12, 1562, Friar Diego de Landa commissioned an auto da fe, in which "thousands of sculpted deity images and associated ritual paraphernalia," such as hieroglyphic codices, were burned (Christensen 2016, 22).

Yet, neither fire nor time could destroy these nonhuman agents, as they still inhabit the world—for instance, as features in the landscape. In this interdisciplinary session—split into three parts—we examine the myriad of nonhuman agents who populate the Maya world and regularly engage with human communities, as ancestors, deities, earth spirits, guardian angels, and other powerful beings. Using perspectives rooted in all four anthropological subfields and related disciplines, participants will examine how the Maya conceive(d) of, engage(d) with, and depend(ed) upon these beings in the past and present. Part 1 will focus on the living dead. Particularly, how the Maya interacted with their real and imagined ancestors, from regular ritual offerings to incorporating the dead into the foundations of houses and other structures. Part 2 will focus on the living landscape, from guardian spirits of specific domains to how statues were treated as living humans. Part 3 will focus on a wide range of other beings who populate the Maya landscape, from living mountains to the spirits of unborn children.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Brent Woodfill, Winthrop University

Chair: Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Presenter(s): Rachel Horowitz, Washington State University, Mark Lentz, Mariana de los Ángeles Siliézar Martínez, Francisco Estrada Belli

Discussant: Annabeth Headrick

Presentation(s): Ancestors and Arenal: The Role of Ancestors in the Foundation of the Preclassic Maya Center of Arenal

Past and present Maya communities engage with ancestors and nonhuman beings in many contexts. The presence of ancestors is often important for the foundation of Maya communities, and archaeologically, we can see that relationship between communities and ancestors through ritual deposits. In this paper, we use evidence from the Preclassic center of Arenal, Belize to discuss the role of ancestors in the founding of the site and its continued occupation. The residents of Arenal interred their ancestors within the site center and revisited those ancestors, taking and

leaving materials associated with them. The deposition of a large concentration of stone and shell objects in the same areas as these ancestors illustrates the importance of animate, nonhuman beings in these activities. Additional ritual offerings of other animate materials, like jade, illustrates the importance of these objects and practices at Arenal. We will discuss the role of ancestors and nonhuman beings, illustrating that these individuals were important for establishing the community itself, as well as for the continued operation of the community of Arenal through time. Members of the Arenal community maintained a dialogue with ancestors through time through ancestor veneration practices.

Presenter(s): Rachel Horowitz

Co-author(s): M. Kathryn Brown, Carolyn Freiwald

Missing Mothers and Venerated Ancestors: Genealogical Depictions and Omissions by Maya and Mestizo Interpreters in Sixteenth-Century Yucatan

During the sixteenth century, ancestry figured prominently in the selection of translators of Spanish rule in Maya lands. The cohort of these *lenguas* included Spaniards, mestizos, and Mayas. A fortunate few parlayed political connections and literacy and fluency in Yucatec Maya, Spanish, and often other languages into securing the most prestigious translation post in the province, interpreter general. Descent influenced the selection of these intermediaries, though strategies differed between Maya and mestizo contenders. A stark difference emerged between the genealogical emphases of the best-known Maya translator, Gaspar Antonio Chi, and the three primary mestizo translators. In his family tree, Gaspar Antonio included his own mother, Ix Kauual, and highlighted his maternal line, the Xiu dynasty. By contrast, three mestizo interpreters general emphasized their conquistador fathers' service to the crown, omitting their indigenous mothers in their appeals for confirmation interpreters general.

Genealogical claims bolstered petitions for positions in Spain's administration of its American territories. Legitimacy, *limpieza de sangre*, and noble ancestry factored into one's contention for office. Most studies of ancestry's influence on a candidate's case for employment have focused on Spanish-descent bureaucrats. This paper instead contrasts the divergent strategies translators of full or partial Maya descent used in terms of recognizing or obscuring their maternal ancestors.

Presenter(s): Mark Lentz

Living with the Dead: Ancestral Houses as Monuments of Remembrance and Continuity

Mortuary space anchors the materiality of the living to the immateriality of the dead. Such spaces foster remembrance through the curation, transformation, or regeneration of skeletal remains to reinforce social rights, responsibilities, and meaning across generations. Following from the construction of the social house by Gillespie and Levi-Strauss, this paper explores how burial among the ancient Maya varied across space, time, and social identities. Mortuary spaces are complex where some remains became ancestors, others are separated or isolated for internment elsewhere, some are monuments to the territorial relationships, and others are physically or

socially marginalized. While physical houses may have mimicked meaningful cosmic and human forms, imbuing the space with souls and social memory, the corporeal remains allow us to explore the unworldly component of mortuary space. Whether occupied or not, these spaces hold social and/or political power and provide the framework to understand social relationships within ancient Maya spaces from a bioarchaeological analysis of human skeletal remains.

Presenter(s): Mariana de los Ángeles Siliézar Martínez

Co-author(s): Katherine Miller Wolf

A Preclassic monumental sculpture from Holmul and current Maya beliefs on life and death

In this paper, I will describe a well-preserved monumental sculpture of the "Old God" from the ancient lowland maya city reflecting on its value as one of the clearest examples of continuity of ancient beliefs into the present. The sculpture, dating to 400 BCE, is so far the earliest securely dated example of the new medium of monumental sculpture in stone and stucco that would become the hallmark of ancient Maya monumental art from the Late Preclassic period onwards. Today, one of the most revered religious ritual figures among the contemporary highland Maya is that of Maximon, also known as Rilaj Mam, "great grandfather". The meaning and origin of this Maya "saint" are often contested. Today, this ancestral figure is sought after as a provider of abundance, wealth and success in many Guatemalan indigenous communities, as well as being a medicine god, and protector of childbirth. Perhaps the latter function is what is celebrated in the Holmul sculpture from 2400 years ago.

Presenter(s): Francisco Estrada Belli

Discussion

8256 "Interrogating the Intersections of Red and Black Ghosts in the Americas: New Directions in Studying African-Native America"

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What can an interrogation of the ethnographic study of African-Native American lives in the Americas reveal about problems and prospects for future research? To explore this question, this round table brings into conversation anthropological, historical, and sociological perspectives on new directions in the study of the African and Native American interactions, African cultural change in Native America, Native Americans with African ancestry, the anthropological origins of this research, how scholars across disciplines have understood the experiences of African-Native Americans, and emerging paradigms that further understanding of their lives in the Americas. The timely nature of this round table is supported by a recent publication on the topic that is a direct precipitate of the panelists' interrogation of past research and filling of explanatory gaps in the literature with new research.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Robert Keith Collins, San Francisco State University

Presenter(s): Robert Keith Collins, San Francisco State University, Angela Gonzales , Gabrielle Tayac , Judy Kertesz

Discussant: Angela Gonzales

3322 Haunting presences and absences: Ghosts in contemporary institutional contexts - panel 1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Death does not always bring closure. In many cultural, clinical, and personal contexts, the dead linger as memories, as spirits, as unresolved trauma, or as institutional absences. Death can also awaken haunting recollections of past (traumatic) events or revive forgotten relationships. Hence, this panel explores the theme of Ghosts through the lens of medical anthropology, focusing on how individuals, families, communities, and healthcare systems engage with the spectres of death and dying.

Within Western medicine, ghosts, as well as other supernatural mysteries and unquantifiable experiences, have been largely displaced by objectivity and evidence-based frameworks. Yet despite this clinical omission, ghosts remain omnipresent (e.g., Langford 2013; Hume 2018). They manifest in the quiet hauntings of healthcare workers, the persistent presence of ancestors in patient narratives, the gaps left by institutional neglect, and the emotional and spiritual residue of suffering and dying. Medical practices may even be built on or around the very ghosts they were supposed to supersede (e.g., van der Geest 2005; Langford 2016).

Organized by the Death and Bereavement Special Interest Group of the Society for Medical Anthropology, this panel invites contributions that consider how death and dying are entangled with haunting absences and aching attendances and how the dead are remembered, embodied, erased, or summoned in medical, communal, and personal spaces.

The paper of this panel will examine literal and metaphorical ghosts across diverse settings, and that illuminate the ways in which presence persists, despite medicine's best attempts to render absence final. More specifically, this panel will address what does it mean to be haunted by a death poorly handled, or silenced, or by a grief that defies linear resolution? How do medical practitioners navigate the unseen yet palpable presence of the dead?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Louise Chartrand, University of Manitoba, Maija Butters, University of Helsinki

Chair: Maija Butters, University of Helsinki

Presenter(s): Emery Eaves, Northern Arizona University, Department of Anthropology, Andrea Lambell, Sasha Kramer, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Louise Chartrand, University of Manitoba, Lea Soliman

Presentation(s): Scared conventional: How ghosts in psychiatric continuing medical education might hinder care for the living

3. Psychiatric practitioners treat various, often nebulous mental health problems with a range of psychotropic drugs. In today's climate, physicians prescribing drugs such as SSRIs and Barbiturates, with media and political lives beyond the clinical sphere, face considerable scrutiny. Psychiatric physicians complete Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs each year toward improvement and maintenance of clinical performance (Ameen, 2016). In CME focused on malpractice in Psychiatry, stories of deceased patients, whose deaths are attributed to the failure of the physician, are described in detail as cautionary tales, encouraging physicians to be circumspect in their prescribing. Legal theorists and physicians have suggested that medicine practiced to avoid litigation, rather to improve the patient's health, can encourage "defensive medicine" that leads to unproductive and expensive care (Sage et al 2020). In this paper, I consider how the ghosts of deceased patients linger in medical education, summoned to inspire fear and discourage innovation among providers whose patients may already threaten self-harm on a regular basis. Based on participant observation, conversations with providers, and review of CME course data, I question how stories of death and suffering factor into psychiatric practice and care, and how these deceased patients might be better memorialized by confronting outdated and poorly supported fear-based curricula in medical education.

Presenter(s): Emery Eaves

Silent disaster: How the ghost of Covid stalks England's hidden care landscape

'Responsibilised commoditisation' refers to the state leveraging family members' sense of responsibility as a cost-saving alternative to investing in public services. In the second decade of the 21st century, austerity policies in the UK led family, friends, and neighbours to transition from being informal sources of support to becoming the primary providers of social care in the community. This situation of structural violence intensified during the onset of Covid-19, as unpaid carers were effectively abandoned due to distancing rules that severed their remaining connections with professional care providers. I examine the legacy of moral injury that results from hermeneutical epistemic injustice, which occurs when someone's experiences are not well understood either by themselves or by others. I also explore the effects of the protective mechanism of active forgetting that arises from these experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. I conclude with reflections on the ongoing, unacknowledged, and cumulative consequences for the country's future preparedness for emergencies.

Presenter(s): Andrea Lambell

An Enchanted Hauntology of Stigmatized Losses at a Green Burial Cemetery in Rural New England

Green burial cemeteries provide a portal into emerging currents in American cultural relationships to the dead. Life Forest, a conservation cemetery in rural New England, offers working-class bereaved families the ability to grow a tree from their loved one's cremated remains. Moving beyond the funeral ritual, this paper examines the long-term engagement people have with the cemetery.

The informants of this paper are bereaved mothers who have lost a child to suicide or drug overdose. Based on four months of ethnographic research at Life Forest, this paper presents an enchanted hauntology in which bereaved mothers forge relationships to their dead loved ones, as ghosts, through the ecology of the cemetery. These ghosts are transient, staging their presence in the changes of the ecology of the cemetery. This paper examines: Are the relationships forged with the dead at Life Forest bounded to the cemetery? How do these ghosts, which hide in the ecology of the cemetery, extend beyond the cemetery's limits and penetrate the everyday lives of bereaved family members?

Presenter(s): Sasha Kramer

Carrying Ghosts: Respiratory Therapists and the Hauntings of Ventilator Withdrawal

Withdrawing mechanical ventilation is often framed as a clinical procedure, yet for respiratory therapists (RTs), it can be an intimate and haunting experience. Positioned at the bedside, RTs witness final breaths, manage silences, and become stewards of a patient's last moments. This paper explores how RTs 'carry ghosts', the emotional, ethical, and spiritual residues of those they helped die. These hauntings linger in subtle ways: a familiar alarm tone, an empty ventilator, or a name on a discharge list. Drawing on interviews and reflective narratives, I examine how RTs navigate the dissonance between clinical detachment and profound emotional presence. The ghosts that follow are not always spectral, but live in memories, moral uncertainty, and institutional silences around grief. How do RTs reconcile repeated proximity to death with limited space for mourning? And how might we better acknowledge the invisible burdens they carry?

Presenter(s): Louise Chartrand

Ghosts of the Pandemic: Respiratory Therapists, COVID-19, and the Hauntings of Ventilator Withdrawal

During the COVID-19 pandemic, respiratory therapists (RTs) became frontline witnesses to mass death, repeatedly tasked with initiating, and ultimately withdrawing, mechanical ventilation. Working in isolation rooms under crisis protocols, many RTs describe carrying the ghosts of patients they never fully met: sedated, voiceless, and separated from family. This paper explores how pandemic conditions intensified emotional and moral hauntings for RTs. With rituals of dying disrupted and grief deferred, RTs were left to manage not just machines, but silence, sorrow, and spiritual ambiguity. Drawing on reflective accounts from Canadian RTs, I examine how the absence of closure created persistent, ghost-like presences that linger in memory and practice. These are not just personal hauntings, but structural ones, rooted in the erasure of care work, the moral injury of triage decisions, and the invisibility of RTs in broader public narratives. How might we name and hold space for these ghosts of the pandemic?

Presenter(s): Lea Soliman

Co-author(s): Louise Chartrand

2895 Precarity and Possibility: Migrant Youth, Transnational Schooling, and the Politics of Belonging

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Across the globe, young people are navigating futures constrained by war, economic precarity, environmental crisis, political instability, and systemic violence. The resulting forced migration and displacement have created conditions of protracted uncertainty, particularly for youth. While education is often framed as a stabilizing force and a pathway to opportunity, many migrant and displaced youth experience schools as sites where exclusions are reproduced and belonging is provisional.

This panel brings together ethnographic research from Africa, East Asia, the Middle East and the Americas to critically examine how young people make decisions about their educational futures amidst structural constraints. How might migrant and displaced youth create conditions of care and possibility? In what ways do they articulate and reimagine futures that seem increasingly unattainable? And how do people teach and learn under conditions of prolonged waiting, statelessness, or legal precarity?

Our papers, which explore the transnational dimensions of school curriculum, pedagogy, student-teacher collaboration, and educational decision-making, conceive of transnational schooling as educational experience shaped by cultural interconnectedness and mobility across nation-state lines. Drawing on conceptual frameworks including hauntology (Derrida 1994; Gordon 2008), border thinking (Mignolo & Tlostanova 2006), countertopography (Shirazi & Jaffe-Walter 2020), and relational safety (Bellino & Oliveira, under review), we center youth as active agents who strategize, imagine, and care for one another in the face of precarious futures. By foregrounding the everyday labor that young people undertake to navigate the shifting terrain of transnational schooling, this panel contributes to ongoing conversations in the anthropology of education, migration, and youth.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Noël Um-Lo, Teachers College, Columbia University

Chair: Thea Abu El-Haj, Barnard College

Presenter(s): Sophia Ángeles, Pennsylvania State University, Michelle Bellino, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Kelsey A. Dalrymple, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Noël Um-Lo, Teachers College, Columbia University, Sally Bonet, Colgate University

Discussant: Jennifer Riggan, Arcadia University

Presentation(s): Navigating Exclusion: The High School Experiences of Immigrant Youth in Rural Pennsylvania

From 2010 to 2022, the immigration population in Pennsylvania grew by 32% (Batalova, 2024). More specifically, as of 2021, Pennsylvania is one of 9 states across the United States that not only has a great number of immigrant children (59,000 children) but also a great number of recently arrived

immigrant children (21,000 children). Immigrant youth speak a variety of home languages, represent numerous cultures, have differing educational experiences and occupy a range of legal statuses (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). These intersecting identities in addition to the current sociopolitical context of Pennsylvania work in tandem to differentially shape their K-16 educational pathways (Le et al., 2024; Kanno & Kangas, 2023). Drawing from participant observations and fieldnotes collected as part of a college-and-career workshop series with immigrant youth, this paper examines how immigrant youth and teachers alike worked together (or not) to subvert anti-immigrant policies shaping their educational experiences in Pennsylvania. Given the growing number of newcomer youth attending rural K-12 schools, this paper sheds light on the need for educators to engage in both individual and collective action in order to better help immigrant youth navigate and overcome structural barriers, stemming from anti-immigrant policies, which impede their social advancement.

Presenter(s): Sophia Ángeles

Learning in transit: Waiting to learn, learning to wait

Recent U.S. immigration policy changes have contributed to longer waiting periods for migrant families in Mexican border cities, and the recent cancellation of CBP One has made waiting indefinite. Under conditions of "prolonged transit," how do migrant young people and their caregivers make decisions about children's formal educational pursuits? And what do they learn about themselves, national borders, and their countries of origin, transit, and destination/ asylum in the process? This study centers on four Honduran families enrolled in the MPP program living in Monterrey and as they entered the US (2020-2022, during and following Trump's first presidency), and two families in Tijuana (2024-2025, approaching and during Trump's second term). Experiences of prolonged displacement induced by the violence of national borders negatively impact young people's sense of self, future, and belonging. Yet this study highlights how migrant youth learned about and enacted their agency in relation to im/migration decisions, danger, and discrimination to create "relational safety" for themselves and their families (Bellino & Oliveira, under review). Building on Dyrness and Sepúlveda's concept of "border thinking," young people both waited to learn—i.e., opted out of pursuing formal schooling opportunities, and learned to wait—largely through fraught interactions with im/migration officials, prolonged periods in-transit, and evolving understandings of legality.

Presenter(s): Michelle Bellino

The Analytical Potential of Hauntology to Examine Learning in Crisis

Abstract: Hauntology is a conceptual neologism introduced by French-Algerian philosopher James Derrida in his 1993 analysis of Marx and the specter of communism. Also referred to as spectral studies, or the spectral turn, hauntology has been widely taken up by the field of anthropology to explore societies that are haunted by histories of colonialism, violence, and historical trauma, as well as the haunting presence of global inequalities and reactionary efforts to silence the past. Similarly, Weinstock (2004) conceptualizes the ghost as a symptom of repressed knowledge that

calls into question the possibilities of a future based on avoidance and silencing of the past, while Lorek-Jezińska & Więckowska (2017) maintain that ghosts should be reckoned with because they conceptualize and foster processes of understanding exclusion, oppression, and conceiving of and reclaiming otherness. Using this conceptual grounding, I aim to explore the usefulness of hauntology in analyzing the educational experiences of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Given this community's historical experiences of colonialism, cyclical violence, displacement, and more recent forms of humanitarian governance, hauntology may provide a useful tool in exploring not only documented processes of knowledge and cultural erasure through humanitarian educational interventions, but also the remnants of knowledge and culture that linger, haunt, and shape the onto-epistemological futures of this community.

Presenter(s): Kelsey A. Dalrymple

Educational aspiration and precarity in the shadow of Korean unification

For South Koreans increasingly removed from the memory of war, unification with North Korea is an unrealistic pipe dream. But for migrant youth, unification takes on an everyday symbolic presence whose specter determines their current access to rights and their future economic stability. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in and around faith-based resettlement schools in South Korea, this study examines how North Korean displaced youth confront the irony of a state that simultaneously champions them as bastions of national unification while denying them social services. This paper traces how South Korea's Ministry of Unification partners with churches and religious NGOs to form a diffuse apparatus of care and control, shaping the educational and moral lives of displaced youth. At the same time, it considers how youth respond to and repurpose the symbolic weight of unification: sometimes to secure sponsorship, sometimes to assert belonging, and sometimes to complicate the terms of their inclusion. Through these everyday acts, youth conjure the specter of unification to improve their local conditions and complicate expectations for their social integration.

Presenter(s): Noël Um-Lo

"They Are Our Children": Exploring Faith-Based Schools as Sites of Educational Opportunity for Refugee Youth

Turning the lens away from national schooling, which has long been proven problematic for refugee populations, this comparative case study explores the educational opportunities that faith-based, tuition-free schools provide refugee youth living in protracted exile in low and middle-income neighboring countries. Leveraging Shirazi and Jaffe-Walter's (2020) concept of countertopography and Bartlett and Vavrus's (2017) comparative case study, this article draws on two years of ethnographic engagement at "Cairo Christian Academy", a Sudanese refugee school in Egypt, and qualitative interviews with teachers, administrators, and staff at "Beirut Covenant School" in Lebanon to answer the following question: What is possible within private, faith-based, tuition-free schools—particularly schools that teach secular curricula and are open to children from all faith backgrounds, as these mirror some of the more egalitarian aspects of public education—which

have absorbed refugee students as a part of their mission to care for others? Findings suggest that the funding structures, hiring practices, and moral underpinnings of these schools facilitate caring, loving environments for refugee youth while also providing educational opportunities unavailable to them otherwise in these host countries. Furthermore, the study's methodological approach explores ways to conduct research in contexts mired in multiple, overlapping crises.

Presenter(s): Sally Bonet

Discussion

5477 Gustafsson's Ghosts: Honoring the Career and Legacy of Mai Lan Gustafsson's Research and Teaching on Spirit Posses

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Mai Lan Gustafsson was an anthropological scholar, writer, and educator whose profound impact continues to reverberate through diverse corridors of the discipline. Gustafsson, who passed away in 2018, chaired Christopher Newport University's Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology and, during her thirteen-year career there, authored the pathbreaking ethnography *War and Shadows: The Haunting of Vietnam* (Cornell University Press, 2009), and published numerous articles and thought pieces. In this Roundtable, a group of distinguished anthropologists who worked closely with Gustafsson and/or were influenced by her profound influence reflect on the impact and legacy of her research, teaching, and outreach. In centering the dignity and worldviews of the Vietnamese people whom she worked among-people tormented by angry and unappeased ghosts-Gustafsson's scholarship on spirit possession was bold and provocative. Her rich storytelling and refusal to reduce their traumas and afflictions to Western theoretical constructs, have, today, become standards of quality ethnographic practice. Always an educator, Gustafsson's innovative teaching shaped generations of undergraduate students, as well as colleagues who were fortunate enough to work alongside her. In addition, her work with refugee resettlement, her media appearances and film consultations, and her ironic (clandestine) role as "The Optimist" for the Syracuse Herald American newspaper exemplify the deep and complex engagements with the public that anthropology continues to strive towards. Dr. Gustafsson's research, her ethnographic innovations, her distinguished teaching career, and her multifaceted outreach cast a long and overlooked shadow across the field of contemporary anthropology. This roundtable brings together anthropologists working in academic and applied spaces across Religious Studies, Asian Studies, Migration and Refugee Studies, Linguistic Anthropology, Experimental Ethnography, the Anthropology of Education, and Health Services Research all of whom recognize the ghosts of Gustafsson's work, by embracing the thin line between those who have passed and those who remain living and honoring her remarkable career and legacy.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Anthony Harrison, Virginia Tech

Presenter(s): Lisa Knight, Furman University, Department of Anthropology, Kalyani Menon, DePaul

University, Suzanne Morrissey , Andria Timmer, Christopher Newport University, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology, paulo polanah, Virginia Tech

Discussant: Chaise LaDousa, Hamilton College, Department of Anthropology

3418 Inherited Ghosts: Memory, Lore, and Haunting Landscapes of Post-Colonial Americas

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Ghosts are remnants and connections to the past, often associated with specific stories, legends, or historical incidents. Whether one believes in ghosts or not, there is no denying the universal existence of these supernatural/spiritual beings, often tied to specific places, such as haunted houses, isolated canyons, or other points on the landscape. Typically, ghosts are linked to deaths, tragic incidents, accidents, or battles, but can also present themselves as guiding omens or warnings for the future. In these ways, ghosts and their associated spaces, legends, and lore can act as anchoring points to local descendant communities living among and around these spaces today. This panel brings together archaeologists, cultural anthropologists and Indigenous anthropologists working in the Andean highlands, Central Mexico, and the Southwest United States [three regional areas that were similarly colonized by the Spaniards] to discuss these themes of placemaking through the supernatural, spiritual, and sometimes haunted spaces. By bringing together this diverse group of scholars, we also seek to build connection and community by discussing how confronting the colonial ghosts of our discipline and the lessons we learn from the ghosts of our ancestors, help us engage with the ghosts of the communities with which we work.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Amanda Brock Morales, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Kimberly Munro, New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice

Presenter(s): Adesbah Foguth , Diane Slocum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Kimberly Munro, New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice, Amanda Brock Morales, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Amanda Brock Morales, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Kimberly Munro, New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice

2594 Ghostlier Demarcations, Keener Sounds: Language Ideological Assemblages and the Unseen Forces of Linguistic Life

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Languages, as employed by their speakers, are forces that order, shape, and haunt the world in often invisible ways. Like breath on glass, their presence is felt lingering and fading all at once. In Wallace Stevens' *The Idea of Order at Key West*, a woman sings beyond the genius of the sea-not reflecting it but remaking it, giving voice to what would otherwise remain unheard. She does not impose meaning onto the world but, through the act of singing, makes it audible, sensible, and real. The poem ends with the line, "In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds." Similarly, Language Ideological Assemblages (LIA) (Kroskrity 2018; 2021) function as ghostly demarcations-not always tangible, yet deeply structuring how language is heard, understood, and lived.

This panel interrogates how language ideologies are not merely rationalized beliefs but affective, phenomenological, and embodied forces. Linguistic anthropologists have long recognized that ideologies emerge from lived experience, political economies, and durable histories of power and resistance (Silverstein 1979; Gal 1979; Woolard 1985; Irvine 1989; Woolard 1998; Kroskrity 1998; 2004). They are the maker's rage to order words of the sea-not reflections of reality but reconfigurations of meaning, identity, and belonging. Indigenous epistemologies have long privileged aurality, sensation, and the unseen in meaning-making (Kroskrity and Field 2009; Ferguson 2019; Dennison 2024; Barrett 2024). Language is not only what is spoken but what is heard, felt, and that which lingers in silence. Ferguson (2019) reminds us that for many Sakha speakers, language is ontologically alive: with spirit, agency, and consequence. To speak is to act.

Panelists examine ideologically and ontologically informed discourse practices across diverse terrains. LIAs provide a layered canvas of historical depth and sociocultural scale that illuminate processes of becoming amid projects of endurance, maintenance, and survival, complicated by generational disjunctures (Meek 2012). Ferguson analyzes the songs and practices of Sakha punk and metal artists whose creativity is both constrained by and pushes back against dominant language ideological assemblages, echoing beyond performance and energizing emergent language planning. Kroskrity examines how the Village of Tewa community maintained a hopeful, agentive stance in the threatening contexts of pandemic, climate crisis, economic destabilization, and heritage language contraction. Barreras explores the role of Yo'eme within multilingual repertoires shaped by LIA in transborder contexts. Dzikowski explores LIA in transnational Japanese contexts, showing how linguistic self-representation is haunted by historical and political orders. Zheng analyzes digital discourse among Chinese women as an ideological battleground reconfiguring state and cultural narratives. Sinski addresses how educational migration indexes ideological hierarchies of linguistic value.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Cesar Barreras , Paul Kroskrity, University of California, Los Angeles

Chair: Paul Kroskrity, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): Paul Kroskrity, University of California, Los Angeles, Cesar Barreras, Aiko Dzikowski, haiyi zheng, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Eric Sinski

Discussant: Anthony Webster, University of Texas at Austin, Qing Zhang, University of Arizona

Presentation(s): GHOSTLIER DEMARCATIONS OF HOPEFUL

FUTURES: KEENER SOUNDS FROM THE TEWA LANGUAGE IDEOLOGICAL

ASSEMBLAGE.

Multiple threats to the language, economy, health, culture, and the very existence of the 700 members of the Village of Tewa (Kroskrity 1993) have jeopardized the future of this small but historically persistent, diasporic Pueblo community. Their distinctive language, rhematized (Gal & Irvine 2019) to their community identity and maintained for 325 years is now spoken by comparatively few youth. This paper explores the Tewa language ideological assemblage and the various resources and constraints that shape the community's hopeful process of becoming (Kroskrity 2018). Exploring both Tewa language ideologies and ontologies (Ferguson 2019,) I explore the audacity of Tewa "generative hope" (Tuck 2009)--a hope that is more than a passive wishful thinking but rather a hopeful 'reorientation of knowledge and action' (Miyazaki 2004) that recontextualizes traditional linguistic practices and language ideologies (Kroskrity 1998). Special attention is devoted to linguistic resources, including grammar, for constructing an agentively hopeful orientation to the "not yet" of an uncertain future and to the verbal art of social dance songs which have become a site of both cultural reflection and intergenerational transmission. The Village of Tewa Language ideological assemblage thus provides the ecological environment in which expressions of Tewa hope become, taking on audible and visible material form.

Presenter(s): Paul Kroskrity

Ghostlier Demarcations of the Sonoran Borderlands: Language, Memory, and Yo'eme Sovereignty

This paper draws on ethnographic research in the transborder Sonoran Southwest to examine Yo'eme multilingualism through the lens of Language Ideological Assemblages (Kroskrity 2018, 2021). Rather than viewing shifts between Yo'eme, Spanish, and English as translanguaging, I argue they are structured by ceremonial obligation, kinship ties, and spiritual accountability. Using Lingual Life Histories (Kroskrity 1993), I trace how multilingual practices are shaped by ideological forces that act across generations what we refer to as ghostlier demarcations. These are not metaphorical but material: memory, prayer, and place guide language use in context-specific ways (Ferguson 2019; Debenport 2015). Drawing on examples from ceremonial speech (Yo'e Noki) and everyday narration (Yo'e / hiiak eteho), I show how speakers use their full multilingual repertoire to maintain cultural and epistemological sovereignty. In a region marked by surveillance and fragmentation, multilingualism persists as a calibrated system of alignment tinkering speakers to community, territory, and ancestral presence. These patterned shifts do not indicate linguistic loss,

but reflect a recursive semiotic logic that reasserts relational knowledge and transgenerational continuity. Thus, the Yo'eme Language is not just a tool of communication, but a moral force that binds the past to the present and future.

Presenter(s): Cesar Barreras

Japanese American Princess: A Language Ideological Approach to Transnational Identity, Incarceration, and Pageantry within the Nikkei Community

As a population that was forced to undergo mass incarceration and assimilation, Japanese American communities provide insight into our understandings of heritage language loss, linguistic forms of social differentiation, and surrounding political economies. Haunted by collective memory – and by the ghosts of historical injustice – Japanese American language ideological assemblages offer a glimpse into the racialized, gendered nature of language as it used to both challenge and reinforce existing social divisions. Utilizing ethnographic data, interviews, and archival research conducted within a Japanese American pageant program in Southern California, I seek to examine racial, gendered, and generational divides within and surrounding the Japanese American community at large. As a participant myself – in a pageant program that seeks to foster the Japanese American community's next generation of cultural ambassadors – I aim to illustrate the linguistic and sociopolitical contexts surrounding transnational migration, racialized incarceration, and cultural performance as a means of either resisting or perpetuating ethnic assimilation.

Presenter(s): Aiko Dzikowski

Assembling Fear: Ideological Configurations in Young Chinese Women's "Fear of Marriage" Discourse

In recent years, online discussions centering on the "fear of marriage" (恐婚) have gained popularity in China's digital space, with young single women as the primary participants. Drawing on 12 months of digital ethnography and 17 in-depth interviews, this paper unpacks the complex ideological assemblages underpinning a seemingly anti-marriage discourse. I argue that rather than expressing outright rejection, women assemble their fear by negotiating among conflicting ideological forces: state pronatalist imperatives, familial expectations, and transitional feminism. First, they resist the tightening reproductive governance that treats marriage as a key site for promoting fertility, yet remain entangled in dominant imaginaries that link marriage with childbirth. Second, they reject intergenerational sacrificial motherhood while still longing for intimacy shaped by normative family ties. Third, while feminist critiques provide tools to deconstruct marriage as a trap, these critiques are haunted by affective contradictions on romantic love. In this case, fear becomes a condensed expression of ideological conflict and an affective assemblage that binds together tension and ambivalence, while also opening space for reconfiguring dominant meanings on marriage and womanhood. This paper contributes to the anthropology of language ideologies by extending the framework of ideological assemblages into the realm of digital affective discourse.

Presenter(s): haiyi zheng

Geopolitical Rupture and Ideological Assemblage: Acts of Linguistic Bricolage amongst Transnational Chinese Students in the United States

This paper explores the discursive practices of transnational Chinese students in the United States during the early 2020s through the conceptual lens of language ideological assemblages. Building upon earlier scholarly discussions of transnational Chinese subjectivity (Ong and Nonini, 1997; Ong, 1999; Fong, 2011) and global assemblages (Ong and Collier, 2003) in the early 2000s, this article locates transnational Chinese students as existing between two rival nations during a new era of profound geopolitical rupture. Here, these students strategically appropriate and deploy Chinese-language and English-language phraseology in various contexts to navigate the politics of American higher education, while simultaneously forging and expressing their respective individual and group-based identities. The author focuses on three case studies: one transnational Chinese student's deployment of *zou xingshi* (go through the motions) at a mandatory anti-bias training seminar, another's description of political protest as *luan* (chaos), and one's narration of a #MeToo incident at their college in order to illustrate how through subtle shifts in register, stance, and affect, multilingual actors assemble the ideological forces of nationalism, neoliberal individualism and political precarity and how these ideological forces echo through language, performance and silence.

Presenter(s): Eric Sinski

Discussion

5257 Speculative Histories and Cultures: Entanglements of Spirits, Ghosts, the Dead, and Nonhuman Life Forms

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel draws on ethnographic accounts from Africa, East Asia, and the US to explore entanglements between spirits, ghosts, the dead, and nonhuman agents in the historical and cultural development of modernization, state expansion, natural resource extraction, and capital accumulation. These ethnographies reveal the how and why of entanglements, the conditions of their emergence and how they manifest. Across these papers, the panelists examine the interactions between various social categories such as migrants, Indigenous peoples, laborers, tech entrepreneurs, and fish farmers and illuminate processes of disappearance, reunion, negotiation, strategy-making, and self-making with spirits and nonhuman forms. Lee and Cheng's focus on the telling of ghost stories and human communion with animal spirits enriches anthropological approaches to multispecies interactions and thinking with waterworlds and ancestral lands. By articulating these seemingly unusual yet normal relationships with "the others," the panelists' interlocutors find their ways to become resilient despite the unequal power relationships in capitalism and globalization. Stahl's contribution examines relationships between humans and the new "species" of artificial intelligence, showing how they constitute not just new

agents, but new kinds of speculative human expertise. Several papers situate relations of power in unfinished histories of race, empire, and migration which some of their interlocutors seek to write on their own terms. Through the reemergence of unmarked graves and cemeteries, Huang and Sheridan trace "ghostly presences" and engage in forms of analysis that "admit the ghost—that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present—into the making of worldly relations and into the making of our accounts of the world" (Gordon 2008 [1997]).

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Derek Sheridan , Siu Kei Cheng

Chair: Siu Kei Cheng

Presenter(s): Siu Kei Cheng, Yi-tze Lee, National Dong Hwa University, Mingwei Huang, Dartmouth College, Derek Sheridan, Laura Stahl

Discussant: Jay Schutte

Presentation(s): Negotiating with Ghosts and Deities in Waterworld: Fish Farmers' Ritual Parade in Southwest Taiwan

This article examines the sociocultural importance of an annual fish-farmer-organized ritual parade to a fishing village located in southwest Taiwan. Based on six times of participant observation of the annual parade and the related religious events in Simu fishing village, I scrutinize ritual parade as a form of purposeful walking that not only pacifies ghosts that may be harmful to villagers for religious purification, but also negotiates with deities and ghosts to provide good care of fish farmers and aquatic animals. I adopt the idea of waterworld (Hastrup & Hastrup 2017) to discuss the rituals taking place on the road and in a sacred water channel where the burning of joss paper, lifting and carrying a grand sedan chair, the villagers crawling under the sedan chair occur. Negotiations take place between human beings, deities, and ghosts to make disturbed daily lives back to social order and also bless commercialized domesticated aquatic animals to stay safe and grow well. I analyze the ritual practice in the waterworld within the context of aquaculture development in southwest Taiwan where the negotiation has been continued among human beings, deities, ghosts, and even animals for over two hundred years. Facing the recent changes of aquaculture as a vibrant sector under the influence of global trade, energy crisis, natural resource depletion, and aging population, fish farmers in this region would be both haunted and blessed to keep their fishing and religious practices.

Presenter(s): Siu Kei Cheng

Hunting with Wandering Ghosts and Protective Animal Spirits? Negotiating Extraordinary Experiences for Indigenous Rights in Taiwan

This paper explores how Indigenous Amis people use extraordinary experiences—such as ghost stories and encounters with animal spirits—to negotiate with the state over their rights to hunt and fish on ancestral lands. Since the end of World War II, the suburban coastal areas of eastern Taiwan have been designated first as military outposts and later as industrial sites for capitalist production,

restricting Amis access to traditional practices like bird hunting and coastal fishing. The struggle for hunting rights in these coastal areas is complicated by two issues: first, a cultural belief that these areas are dangerous and haunted by wandering ghosts; and second, legal restrictions aimed at protecting endangered bird species that breed in coastal and estuarine zones. Drawing on local myths and hunting strategies, this paper argues that multispecies ethnography offers a framework to recognize the agency of nonhuman beings, while ghost stories provide a source of resilience for Indigenous peoples in resisting both state authority and conservationist discourses. Ultimately, this paper proposes a contested path toward integrating nonhuman and spiritual entities into anthropological thought. Ghosts and spirits, like animals, are good to think with.

Presenter(s): Yi-tze Lee

Subterranean Traces: Unearthing Death and Disposability in the Ruins of the Mine

Drawing on ethnography, interviews, and archives, this essay charts intertwined histories of Black migrant labor, Chinese indenture, resource extraction, and race-making in the ruins of South Africa's gold mines. Connecting past to present, it examines the zama zama, informal migrant miners who work in abandoned mines, and the unmarked graves of Chinese mineworkers to understand how histories of extractive capitalism and racialized disposability reemerge, illustrating the enduring force of not only these histories but also their entanglements. It utilizes a subterranean archive of disappearing figures and buried traces and theorize the afterlife of death.

Presenter(s): Mingwei Huang

Becoming Swahili: Chinese Traces, Cosmopolitan Spirits, and Scenes of Historical Speculation in Tanzania

In 2013, a Chinese migrant in Tanzania dreamt of a cemetery, leading her to a Sinhalese Buddhist monk who had discovered an abandoned Chinese burial ground in a large Muslim cemetery in Dar es Salaam. The site held 25 graves of early 20th-century Chinese migrants from Kaiping County, largely forgotten except by a few older Tanzanians in Kariakoo—a district now dominated by post-1990s Chinese traders. This neglected site contrasted sharply with the well-known and maintained Chinese Experts Cemetery, where 51 workers who helped build the Tanzania-Zambia railway are buried. The monk claimed the spirits of the dead had asked to be remembered, prompting the migrant to raise funds in the Chinese community to restore the site and trace descendants. This paper explores how the restoration and search for descendants sparked different historical narratives about Tanzania-China relations. While Chinese media emphasized ancestral reunion, Tanzanian intellectuals I interviewed framed the graves within a cosmopolitan Indian Ocean past, including the Chinese into Swahili kinship genealogies. I situate this alongside a Tanzanian martial artist who believes East Asian martial arts originated in the Muslim world, and has been taught by Arabic, German, Korean, and Chinese jinn. These entangled stories offer alternative, spiritual, and speculative genealogies that challenge the boundaries of "Africa" and "China," and illustrate how (other)worldly traces and agents shape new histories.

Presenter(s): Derek Sheridan

Speculating Intelligence: AI, Expertise, and Self-Making in Taipei's Tech Economy

In recent years, a speculative market bubble has emerged around artificial intelligence, which is increasingly evoked as a nonhuman species bringing to the surface a preoccupation with unseen powers and the notion of a 'ghost in the machine.' Based on 19 months of fieldwork in Taipei, Taiwan, this paper shows that AI and the economic subversions it will allegedly cause have profound effects on self-making practices. In the AI industry, models of the future economy are made visible through imaginative practices, including marketing, branding, and hype. To demonstrate this, the process of subject formation in artificial intelligence work is analyzed within modalities of speculation, characteristic of startup founders, and organizations to show how imagined AI enriched futures leverage their expertise while simultaneously re-inscribing the epistemic authority of their work. Contributing to studies of expertise that seek to understand "how particular knowledges become credible and actionable" and how this knowledge "attains, force and presence in the world" (Harvey and Knox 2015, p. 13), the chapter uses the analytic of expertise to explore the profound reflections of AI professionals as they encounter what AI tools continue to teach them about intelligence. The paper draws upon science and technology studies, and social studies of finance, adding an examination of the interior lives of experts to studies of expertise and financial markets in anthropological scholarship.

Presenter(s): Laura Stahl

Discussion

7188 Dead Souls: Temporality and Narrative in the Production of Multiple Selves

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Linear temporalities and curated narratives produce constant ghosts in their omissions. From the cover letter of a failed application to the photos that remained in drafts, a version of the self dies little deaths of possibility when there is only one path for it to develop. But what is a shape without negative space to delineate it? The ghosts of selves that never materialized coexist with those that did. Ghosts, after all, occupy more than one realm at a time. Their ability to turn boundaries porous yields an expansive landscape.

This panel understands "ghosts" as an impulse to cross boundaries and approach the material, the theoretical, and the social as a matrix. The six presentations in this panel address this topic at the intersections of anthropology and queer theory, Native/Indigenous studies, media studies, Black studies, and science and technology studies. This panel thinks through technological mediations of death(s), the preternatural as a feature of the banal, multiplicitous selves, and the seemingly contradictory—which ghosts are particularly apt at navigating.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Camille Coy , Arelí Rocha

Chair: Camille Coy

Presenter(s): Frances Corry, University of Pittsburgh, Camille Coy, Areli Rocha, Anthony Brave, David Bering-Porter, The New School, Jacquelyn Marie Shannon

Discussant: Alaina Lemon, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Beyond Presence: Social Media Deletion and Self-Presentation

This contribution explores the ways that individuals produce narratives of the self through information removal on social media sites. There is robust, cross-disciplinary scholarship from communication and media studies, sociology, anthropology, and science and technology studies, showing the diverse ways that people present and produce the self through social media sites. Often drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical approach to interpersonal interaction, the overarching focus of these analyses is the way that the self is constructed through informational presence. That is, individuals use platform architectures to produce photos, comments, messages, and hashtags, that help present a mediated self to distant networks. Left implicit, however, are the ways that informational absences equally act as means of everyday self-presentation. In interviews and ethnographic accounts of social media self-presentation, scholars often reveal acts of information deletion but do not analyze how these acts also modulate identity and present the self, for instance, removing dead names when undergoing gender transition, deleting photos of exes after a breakup, or "cleaning" feeds to be more palatable for potential employers. This analysis surfaces these existing, implicit accounts of information removal to examine how absence works to narrate the self, and to argue for a more serious consideration of deletion as an everyday means of self-presentation.

Presenter(s): Frances Corry

Temporal Selves: Supernatural Affordances in Digital Temporalities

Time apparently works a little differently in fairyland. We do not enter digitally networked time as ourselves but materialize linear selves more suited to the time flows of networks and differently mediated temporalities. One cannot usually enter the worlds of ghosts and return unchanged, and the same is true for digital temporalities.

In otherworldly spaces, time flows are disconnected from "real" time and are produced and maintained spatially. Time through and among networks is understood as operating in contrast: complex, linear, and real—but following the approaches of the unseen, digitally-mediated time-spaces conflate abstract flows with stabilized nodes, posturing as reflections of reality. A queered approach to temporality may remediate the toxic chronomancy (time manipulation) of network time and intentionally fracture the self to access artistic, disconnected, generative, affective, useless, or personal temporal realms. Discussions of the chronotope and double-voicing support this approach. An analysis of digital media guided by anthropologists studying the supernatural can splinter time and self, creating possibilities of queered temporal experiences for ourselves and our selves in flawed digital spaces. One can create performances of time manipulation and proxy-self creation within and somehow away from networks. A more fantastic, ghostly understanding of the

mechanisms of network time is needed to trace the selves that can shift away from imposing linearities.

Presenter(s): Camille Coy

All The Selves I Never Was

Cover letters are an odd genre. They are full of promise and vulnerability. The sender becomes involved in a nonreciprocal epistolary relationship of sorts. Like sending a message in a bottle, the exercise often involves an unknown recipient and some degree of hope or perhaps naiveté. Unlike sending a message in a bottle, for the sender, many times their livelihood depends on it. Sometimes dreams. Often both, and some more. Each rejection resulting from another "failed" application is the small death of a specific dream, a specific self. Sometimes the rejection is more like being ghosted, never hearing back. It goes unresolved. My many idealized selves have died many little deaths. As it stands, professional and academic rejections leave multiple ghosts in their wake but seem to lack processes for mourning those selves that never were. For one, professional trajectories are often narrativized as linear endeavors—straight paths to success. As if the rejections along the way were not also how anyone is anywhere. What are the spaces, then, for mourning the ghosts of idealized selves constructed in applications? How can we mourn them? Or is it best to evade death altogether by evading the linear narrative and opening up to multiple coexisting selves? What are the delineations? Perhaps we ought to transverse them like ghosts who, having no concern for space and time, become boundary agnostic.

Presenter(s): Areli Rocha

"Whatever Killed Mary Lone Bear is Killing Us"

How many selves will media technology demand of us in our struggles to exist? Can these selves be recovered and put to rest? If so, how?

After the release of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 (2023), I found myself feeling burnt out, compulsively playing MW3's multiplayer mode which came with multiplayer maps from the original MW2 (2009). Inspired by the nostalgia of playing these maps, I followed a whim and bought used copies of a few older COD games. This led to an uncanny encounter with my 2012-self in the form of saved COD gameplay, a self I had forgotten about and whom I came to recognize as the precursor of my burnout. I wanted to put this old self to rest and to do this I made a short video "Waiting to Respawn," deanimating my ghost by splicing together my character's moments of waiting. I uploaded it to YouTube.

As I, historical researcher, barrel through, Katamari-like, the archives of America's playful, horrific, and occasionally joyous, past, the number of my selves archived in digital media is incomparable to the number of voices demanding justice I roll over and collect. The story of Mary Lone Bear, the daughter of two Lakota Buffalo Bill Wild West Show performers who died mysteriously after being photographed by Gertrude Käsebier haunts me the most.

Presenter(s): Anthony Brave

Encounters in the Terrain of the Self: Possession and Restorative Practice

The body possessed is typically imagined as one suffering from an intruding entity, an interloper or unwelcome guest of the natural subject in their own house. This paper will explore the relations between possession, surplus, and pluralism by considering how having an extra body in one's possession reveals the unsettling side of luxurious excess. This talk explores these ideas through two, contrasting cases of possession from recent film: the first is Jordan Peele's 2017 film *Get Out* and the second is Mati Diop's 2019 film *Atlantique*, where each one provides an unusual or unique view of possession. Peele's film presents a vision of the possessed in distinctly material terms, dealing in the visual language of body horror to consider possession in terms of neurological control via hypnosis, with clear resonances to the condition of slavery in which the Black body is taken as a luxury object to extend the life and wealth of a White master. Diop's *Atlantique* offers a vision of haunting and possession as a restorative practice, in which certain debts, both romantic and economic, are repaid and fulfilled through encounters that take place within the terrain of the self. In both cases, the possessed body functions as an excess or surplus body that extends the power of the possessor in time or ability. Drawing on ideas from Denise Ferreira da Silva, Georges Bataille, and Christina Sharpe, this paper explores possession at the intersections of Anthropology and Media studies.

Presenter(s): David Bering-Porter

Between Suspension and Release: Reflections on Ghostly Practice and Haunting as a “Something-To-Be-Done”

This presentation offers a critical reflection on Ghostly Practice, a constellation of ritual movement techniques I have developed and facilitated over the last decade for creative mourning and conspiring with memory, spirit, and the more-than-human in performance. Informed by extensive training in Japanese butoh, physical theatre, and ritual dramaturgy, and drawing inspiration from symbolist, spiritualist, and expressionist theatre traditions, these techniques approach performance as a liminal mode of consciousness than can be phenomenologically apprehended as a haunted encounter. Through Ghostly Practice, participants seek not merely to be haunted, but to do with and through haunting. Following Avery Gordon's claim that "haunting... is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done," I consider haunting as a dramaturgical force and Ghostly Practice as a case study in how performance may transform our relationships to ghosts, time, the body, death, and the unseen. A key focus is on Ghostly Practice as a haunted and haunting modality for sensing, sending, and bending time, reflecting on movement-based ritual techniques that produce conditions for experiences of parallel presence, temporal rupture, present-death, and living (with) death or otherwise (other)lives, haunted futurities, animist perception, ancestral lines, gates/portals/veils and mirror worlds.

Presenter(s): Jacquelyn Marie Shannon

Discussion

2540 The Sensory City: Feeling and Futurity in Urban Southeast Asia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM through 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What will the city of tomorrow be like? And what will it feel like to be there? In Southeast Asia today, developments like Nusantara in Indonesia, Silicon Island in Malaysia, and Gardens by the Bay in Singapore are competing to provide vivid sensory models of the possible future: "smart," "sustainable," even "more-than-human" cities (Wang 2024) designed by renowned international architects and built in rainforests, on reclaimed coastlines, and on islands made of imported sand (Munn 2021). Others, such as Sihanoukville in Cambodia and Forest City in Malaysia, have garnered global attention for their purported emptiness as "ghost cities" of extreme proportions (Avery and Moser 2023, Moser 2018). These projects, often controversial and unfinished, promise innovations they are hard-pressed to deliver and draw as much attention for their failures as their anticipated futures. Underpopulated, under construction, or ungrounded, they exemplify a certain popular imaginary of possibility while existing in the present as an affective reminder of what could or should have been (Luvaas and Chio 2025).

Nevertheless, these are very real places one can visit, live in, and work in. This panel critically examines the sensory landscapes of these new urban developments in Southeast Asia and the material and political infrastructures that generate and sustain them. Chio explores the work of two artists, Ai Weiwei and Sim Chi Yin, alongside architectural renderings, to expose a key tension that underlies many developments in Asia today. She argues that the glossy urban futures promised by these projects depend upon a design imaginary of a bucolic, rural past and a rural present that must be erased through the process of building. Koh discusses the green sensibility promoted by Singapore through projects like Gardens by the Bay, a showpiece of living architecture that draws tourists to a shifting sandscape of sinkholes and decomposing trees. The spectacle of sustainability, she demonstrates, literally covers over a legacy of environmental destruction. Schwenkel draws from "soundwork" conducted in formally planned, unplanned, and "deplanned" urban environments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar to argue that soundscapes serve as a sensory archive of urban transformation, a sonic, rather than visual, blueprint of what a city has been and may become. Luvaas, finally, offers a photo-ethnographic documentation of what it's like to be on the ground in future Southeast Asian cities right now. Through evocative and intimate portraits of Forest City and Nusantara as they are inhabited today, he shows how the future lingers as a felt presence in the lived moment. In each paper, the future emerges as a lived, somatic-sensory experience, constructed out of, but not defined or limited by, the built environment. It is a felt reality, rather than just an imagined temporality.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Jenny Chio, University of Southern California, Brent Luvaas, Drexel University

Chair: Brent Luvaas, Drexel University

Presenter(s): Jenny Chio, University of Southern California, Vanessa Koh, Brown University, Christina Schwenkel, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology, Brent

Luvaas, Drexel University

Presentation(s): A Pastoral Present for the Urban Future: Land Reclamation, Domestic Architecture, and the Design of an Ideal City in Asia

This paper explores designs of the "ideal city" in Asia through works by two artists: photographer Sim Chi Yin's ongoing project "Shifting Sands" and Ai Weiwei's 2012 film "Ordos 100." Shifting Sands is a multi-year photographic exploration of the transnational market for sand needed for land reclamation and urban infrastructure construction. Ordos 100 documents a project curated by Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei in 2008 in which 100 architects were asked to design 100 domestic residences (with no intention to construct) for the new city of Ordos, China. By situating these artists' works alongside ethnographic observations of Southeast Asian eco-cities now in development, I explore how the idea of the "ideal city" in Asia is rooted in the enfolding of a pastoral present within the seemingly inevitable urban future. To solve the problems of climate change and urban decay, such projects aggressively promote "ecological" and "smart" features to a rising Asian middle class with the financial and cultural capital to invest in sustainable affluence. In fantastically photorealistic architectural renderings that combine a futuristic aesthetics of glass and concrete high-rises with lush tropical waterfront landscapes, the near-future of urban Asia exists within a bucolic, verdant present. The temporality of such aesthetics reveals a curious contradiction where an imagined rural past, from which elements of the pastoral are extracted, becomes fundamental to the ideal city in Asia.

Presenter(s): Jenny Chio

Unsettling Hegemonic Grounds: Subsurface Politics in Singapore

Singapore's 'greenness' and reputation as a 'garden city' have become an economic boon and a 'national symbol of identity and pride' (Goh 2014: 245). Yet critics have argued the nature of the city-state's environmentalism is an overly aestheticized, surface-level one that fails to disrupt the logics of colonialism and capitalism (Myers 2015). Paying attention to this tension, this paper considers how the meanings of nature and ecological sustainability are entangled with state-making. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Singapore's 101-hectare nature-park, Gardens by the Bay, that was entirely 'reclaimed' from the sea, I move beyond surface politics of aesthetics to the subsurface of reclaimed land to consider what kinds of textures and material properties make certain kinds of grounds difficult to govern. This paper shows how terraforming takes us deeper than an expected story of speedy capitalism to a more complex and considered genealogy of slow settlement. I consider what must be done to the ground to make it territory (controlled by a sovereign) or environment (known by a certain kind of discipline). By casting the ground as my figure of analysis, I ruminate on what makes the ground in Singapore difficult to frame or organize in these ways.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Koh

Sonic Blueprints on the Future: Rethinking the Planned City through Sound

This paper rethinks the master-planned city through its soundscapes, asking what urban sounds—and their absence—reveal about the aspirations and afterlives of urban planning. By shifting from visual to acoustic analysis, I examine how sonic environments reflect the outcomes and challenges of centralized planning regimes. Drawing on "soundwork" in cities in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar, I use sound to illuminate three interconnected planning iterations: formal planning, unplanning (design interventions), and deplanning (disassembly of planned spaces). These processes involve the rejection or alteration of rigid planning systems, resulting in unplanned growth and fragmentation of built space. The sonic dimensions of these cities—manifested in the echoes of abandoned construction, the cacophony of ad hoc renovations, or the eerie silence of unpopulated districts—underscore the entanglements of power, adaptation, and abandonment. These sonic phenomena index shifts in urban imaginaries and disruptions to planning logics tied to political and economic changes. Rather than view planned cities as deprived of sensory intensity, I argue that sound provides a rich archive of urban transformation—one that captures the tension between design intentions and their dissolution in practice. What emerges is not a critique of planning's "radical indeterminacy," but a rethinking of how people sense and imagine urban futures—through sonic rather than visual blueprints.

Presenter(s): Christina Schwenkel

The Future as an Architecture of Now: Living Today in Tomorrow's Southeast Asian Cities

Forest City, Malaysia promotes itself as a "prime model of future city," a smart, sustainable mega-development of 700,000 people built across four reclaimed islands in the Johor Strait. The pandemic, however, precipitated a slowdown in sales. Today, there is only one island and a population of around 7,000 residents. There are no sidewalks and buildings already show cracks at their base. Nusantara, meanwhile, is the future capital of Indonesia, another "eco-city" that promises to radically re-envision what it means for humans to live with nature. A changing presidential administration and a dearth of foreign investors have made its fate also uncertain. Yet Nusantara, like Forest City, already has residents, including hundreds of workers, vendors, and municipal administrators tasked with making the city inhabitable for others.

This presentation draws from photo-ethnographic fieldwork in Forest City and Nusantara in 2024-2025 to evoke what it's like to live in a city stuck in development limbo. Through vivid, intimate, and often ghostly imagery of two cities that may, or may not, become models of sustainability, it argues that the future is very much present in residents' daily lives, shaping the sensory experience of moving through and occupying urban spaces. The future is not just temporal, but spatial, a perceptual filter that impacts how residents encounter the cities around them and create meaning out of the inchoate now.

Presenter(s): Brent Luvaas

4647 "Spirit Biographies: Ghosts of Capitalism's Past"

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The papers in this panel explore the biographies of spirits associated with the rise of capitalism throughout the Atlantic world. These include the afterlives of Haitian spirit-objects collected during the U.S. Occupation of Haiti, now held at the Smithsonian Institution; deities enshrined in Ghana's historic slave forts and castles that manifest their former European "governors"; "jumbie" spirits associated with gold extraction in the Guyanese-Venezuelan borderlands; and the mystical surgery of a Brazilian healer who channels the spirit of Dr. Fritz, a German immigrant. What do these spirit biographies tell us about the fetishized forms of human commodification associated with Atlantic slavery? What repressed histories of capitalism do they ritually restore? How do these spirits navigate pathways of mobility and immobility associated with forced and free migration, resource extraction and accumulation, as well as alienation and healing throughout emergent spheres of production and circulation? By inverting conventional understandings of material relations and their fetishized forms, we resurrect the ghosts of capitalism's past within the core of racial capitalism.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Andrew Apter

Chair: Brendan Jamal Thornton, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presenter(s): Pascale Boucicaut, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Andrew Apter, Vikram Tamboli, Smithsonian Institution (NMNH), Lauren Derby

Discussant: Brendan Jamal Thornton, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presentation(s): "Sorcery and Eschatology in Haitian Heritage Collections"

In this paper I highlight historical collections from Haiti at two Smithsonian institutions, to explore the ways bòkò (magicians/sorcerers) distributed their corporeal power using animate portable objects and then consider the implications of those objects lying dormant in museums. Unlike the sacred ritual materials of Haitian Vodou, which were animated with the divine forces of the lwa, these sorcery objects were enlivened by human persons no longer living. In the wake of discussions surrounding a federal "African American Graves Protection and Repatriation" (AAGPRA) policy, I bring together Haiti's diverse eschatological traditions to propose an examination of sorcery objects that attends to their surviving human-spirited presences.

Presenter(s): Pascale Boucicaut

"So Many Dungeons": Specters of Racial Capitalism in Ghana's Slave Forts and Castles"

The slave forts and castles that punctuate Ghana's historic Gold Coast stand as monumental reminders of the rise and fall of Atlantic slavery. Built as "factories" for bulking enslaved Africans for sale and transshipment to the Americas, they served as highly regulated sites of Afro-European exchange and interaction when royal monopolies entered the so-called "African Trade." Building on Saidiya Hartman's spectral explications of the "so many dungeons" which gave birth to modern racial capitalism, I problematize the "European" deities and spirit-worlds that cluster within and around these historic sites of human commodification and figure prominently in annual Fante

festivals. How did the fetishism of human commodities join forces with local deities and enter enshrined pathways of ritual exchange? How do the annual purification ceremonies of these coastal communities launder the accumulated "dirt" of their historic profits? And most importantly, how do these ghosts of atrocities past illuminate the mystified origins of racial capitalism? Data from Cape Coast Castle (Cape Coast), Fort William (Anamabo), and Fort James (Accra) provide telling clues.

Presenter(s): Andrew Apter

"Gold is a Jumbie: Natural Resource Extraction in the Guyanese-Venezuelan Borderlands"

This paper investigates gold as part of the spirit landscape in the borderlands of Guyana, Venezuela, and Brazil. During my fieldwork in 2019, an ex-miner, who for many years worked the goldfields of Northwest Guyana, made a point of telling me that "gold is a jumbie." He went on to clarify that gold spirits lived deep within the earth and needed to be summoned with appropriate offerings—women's bodies, alcohol, and blood. His reflections provided an important way of conceptualizing the ethics of natural resource extraction and its spiritual politics. Although he used the term "jumbie" in the coastlander Creole tradition, where jumbie generically signified a dangerous and/or malevolent spirit, the fact that the term was applied to gold also signaled the broader Indigenous conceptualizations of the spirit world and the long history of Afro-Indigenous epistemological entanglement in the Guianas. Indeed, his comment revealed the durability of precolonial and an early-colonial Amazonian and Caribbean worlds of otherworldly beings and ritual objects known as cemís or zemís, which often were or inhabited specific natural objects like stones, timber, etc. In telling a regional history of gold mining in these borderlands, this paper centers gold as one of many natural resource specters that, like oil, loom over social and political relations in borderlands and facilitates the operations of global capitalism.

Presenter(s): Vikram Tamboli

"Zé Arigó: Mysticism and Modernity in 1960s Brazil"

Zé Arigó (alias José Pedro de Freitas) was an Espiritista faith healer with a third-grade education who rose to fame during the regime of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-61), a period of high modernist faith in scientific progress and development in Brazil. Arigó became renowned for his psychic surgeries for which he earned the nickname the "surgeon of the rusty knife" for his apparent ability to excise tumors with scalpels and his gaze from prestigious clients. Much work on popular religion in Brazil has focused on how popular healing protocols channel notions of Blackness derived from slavery. This paper considers Arigo's relationship to Dr. Adolf Fritz, the spirit of a German immigrant who served as Arigo's spiritual guide, while seeking to locate Arigó's popularity within post-war Brazilian high modernism which came to a crescendo during Kubitschek's term in office. As he rose to celebrity status, Arigó attracted the ire of Catholic priests and others who sought to refute his miracle cures and who saw his healing practices as dangerous, leading to his conviction of practicing medicine without a license in 1956. This essay draws upon extensive journalistic interviews and popular writing about Arigó collected for a documentary on him in the 1970s.

Presenter(s): Lauren Derby

Discussion

2790 Living Right: Far-Right Youth Activists in Contemporary Europe

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In conversation with Agnieszka Pasiaka's newly released *Living Right* (Princeton University Press, 2024), this roundtable will explore why youth are increasingly participating in far-right social movements in Europe and beyond. In popular narratives of the rise of the far-right, people often treat illiberalism as a deviation from the norm, attributing it to critiques of neoliberalism, and as a sudden disruption. Yet, as Pasiaka argues, liberalism is not just an economic project but also a political, ethical, and cultural one, and critiques of liberalism have been rising for decades. Her ethnographic research with youth in Italy, Poland, and Hungary reveals how far-right social movements in Europe offer their participants friendship, community, and personal transformation in the context of profound sociopolitical transformations that date back to at least the 1980s. Drawing on *Living Right*, we will discuss: What is radical nationalism's appeal? What circumstances give rise to the success of the far-right? What is the relationship between the transnational and national in far-right imaginaries and actions, and what are various individuals' attitudes to the past? And finally, how does studying the far-right challenge and deepen anthropological methods and practice, offering important lessons for our current moment?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Lauren Woodard

Presenter(s): Olga Demetriou, Durham University, Agnieszka Pasiaka, University of Montreal, Sondra Hausner, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Sophie Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Dace Dzenovska, University of Oxford, Saygun Gökarıksel, Boğaziçi University

6943 Haunted Landscapes: Ghosts, Memory, and Justice in the Anthropocene.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts unsettle the relations between past, present, and future by activating a "spatio-temporality in which past and future participate simultaneously and in unpredictable ways" (McCormack 2010:642). They call us to "responsibility" and "justice" (Derrida 1994:5), evoking processes of remembering, stimulating memories, contextualizing presences, provoking imagination, and inspiring action (McCorristine and Adams 2020:106). In recent years, ghosts have emerged as significant actors in research on how landscapes are imagined and reconstructed. Studies have

explored ghost towns like Bodie in California (DeLyser 2001), memory and memorialization in urban industrial ruins (Edensor 2005), and endangered or extinct species in biodiversity conservation (McCorristine and Adams 2020). DeLyser (2001) argues that empty places or absences play particular roles in reconstructing the past and shaping visitors' imaginations. Edensor (2005) examines how encounters with industrial ruins as ghostly affordances can interrogate and contest normative ways of social remembering. Recent environmental work focuses on the "haunted landscapes of the Anthropocene," including more-than-human histories, traces left by extinct beings, remnants of industrial modernity such as tires, human-made radiocesium, abandoned trees marked by human disturbance (Gan et al. 2017), and rivers that no longer flow (Toso et al. 2020). Drawing from these perspectives, we ask: What kinds of possibilities for justice emerge when we are engaged in "arts of noticing" and encounter with ghosts that "speak for" erased/silenced histories, languages, knowledges? How do the presence of ghosts in landscapes of contestation open opportunities for communities to resist being forgotten, reclaim their sense of belonging, and reshape their futures? What kinds of ethnographic possibilities do researchers' encounters create?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Neşe Kaya Özkan, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, James Beveridge, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Neşe Kaya Özkan, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): James Beveridge, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Mara Dicenta, William & Mary, Department of Anthropology, Kip Hutchins, Oberlin College and Conservatory, Department of Anthropology, Jaime Landinez Aceros, John Millhauser, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Cailín Murray, Ball State University

Presentation(s): Time, care, and cultivation in the more-than-human production of protected spaces.

Landscapes encountered today are the assemblages of past practices and relations by humans both alive and ancestors, plants and animals, and elements of fire, water, and wind. This presentation examines the more-than-human production of spaces in two of my research sites: forests in Quichua speaking Runa territories along the Bobonaza river in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and highland balds in southwestern Virginia, United States. I analyze cultivation and care-taking practices that humans engage in to produce such landscapes in addition to the role of nonhumans and elements to bring to the fore the politics, ethics, and questions of justice. Along the Bobonaza, Runa become yacharishka (familiar) with the land by cultivating relations with nonhuman beings. Sarayaku Runa telegraph these relations to the world via the Sisa Ñambi, a network of gardens along the perimeter of their territory, and through Kawsak Sacha, their 'proposal for life' as an alternative to conventional development. In the highlands in Virginia, I analyze the contested politics and roles of various stakeholders, both human and nonhuman, in crafting the vision and future of highland bald protected areas.

Presenter(s): James Beveridge

Ghosts of the Castorcene: Spectral Care in Forests of Ruination and Organized Disappearance

In Argentine Tierra del Fuego, "forest cemeteries" cleared by North American beavers are described by ecologists as one of the most dramatic ecological transformations since the Holocene—an assessment that raises haunting questions about an Anthropocene not led by the Anthropos. But these landscapes are haunted in less visible ways too: by ghosts of state terror, settler colonialism, and extractivist modernization. Drawing on long-term ethnographic work with biologists, trappers, and Indigenous peoples involved in beaver eradication efforts, this paper explores how forests, animals, and even traps carry unsettling traces of violence and loss. Following Gordon's (2008) notion of ghosts as social figures who bring more-than-one story at a time, I discuss how haunting emerges not only through memory, but through affective and material disturbances: the smell of boiled beavers in labs, the ruins of felled *Nothofagus* forests, and the spectral presence of injured beavers whose fear of humans stems from intergenerational trauma inherited from ancestors in the Northern Hemisphere. These haunted terrains unsettle temporal, geographic, and taxonomic boundaries—between human and animal, past and present, here and elsewhere—and call us to learn to listen, and care for, a plurality of voices that animate ghostly landscapes.

Presenter(s): Mara Dicenta

Ghosts in the Fiddle: Music, Memory, and Spirits on an Eroding Landscape

At the ruins of a 10th century monastery in the Mongolian Gobi desert, the spirits of long dead monks perform operas on a nearly-desiccated former wetland that locals take as reminders of the violence of Stalin's Great Purge. Not far off, a musician performs a two-stringed fiddle with a horse's head carved into the pegbox to rid a house of "the chill," a kind of shamanic-spirit-turned-New-Age-vibe that brings jealousy and bitterness into the household on the wind that comes off the river. Even this horse-headed fiddle itself is said to be *sünstei* – bearing a soul – but the meaning of "soul" has become complicated in the wake of a near century of Soviet-style, state-enforced atheism and the mass disenchantment of the neoliberal shock treatment that followed. As desertification creeps north past the Gobi monasteries and permafrost melts away from the northern taiga, the erosion of the Mongolian landscape releases historical violences – material and supernatural alike. This paper takes cases in which people in Mongolia use music to make sense of landscapes where the ghosts of people and animals intermingle with the scars of colonialism, neoliberalism, and climate change. In each case, traditional fiddlers conceptualize the affective power of music as a powerful tool for more-than-human communication and commemoration that exceeds the category of the human.

Presenter(s): Kip Hutchins

Birding in Ruins

Once a symbol of technological progress, one of Colombia's most prominent shrimp farms now lies abandoned. Since its closure in the mid-1990s, over 600 hectares of engineered ponds have

become remnants of capitalist dreams of progress and development. Located along a key bird migratory corridor on Colombia's southern Pacific coast, these ruins now host abundant life, mainly migratory waterbirds fleeing Northern winters. In this presentation, I examine these abandoned water infrastructures as a haunted landscape, where the residues of past ecological interventions give rise to emergent life forms that, in turn, catalyze alternative futures. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with birders, I explore how sensorial practices like careful listening and close observation of the seemingly mundane lives of migratory and resident birds produce "evidentiary ecologies" (Lyons 2018). These modes of engagement with the ghosts of past aquaculture experiments not only document endangered bird life; they also reanimate a landscape otherwise marked by decaying machinery and unruly microbial life. I argue that such practices operate as modest forms of hope (Kirksey and Chao 2022) and gesture toward more than human futures grounded in interspecies alliances. In a region where the promises of Colombia's 2016 peace agreement remain unfulfilled, birding in the ruins of past capitalist projects emerges as both a form of witnessing and a modest practice of envisioning more just multispecies futures.

Presenter(s): Jaime Landinez Aceros

Unruly Objects and the Reconciliation of Past and Present at Mordecai Historic Park

At Mordecai Historic Park in Raleigh, North Carolina, a routine excavation into a 19th-century chimney foundation unexpectedly revealed Indigenous artifacts—projectile points and stone flakes—alongside materials tied to the Mordecai family, their servants, and enslaved people. These unexpected finds disrupted dominant narratives and temporal boundaries, acting as spectral presences that demanded recognition. Often dismissed as "background noise" in historical archaeology, such materials at Mordecai became ghostly agents of disruption and connection, prompting a reorientation of interpretation and community engagement. This paper explores how these traces challenged disciplinary norms and led to collaboration with the Tuscarora Nation of North Carolina, a group seeking official recognition of their ancestral ties to and claims on the land. The Mordecai case shows how archaeological encounters with unexpected artifacts—especially in urban heritage contexts—can catalyze remembrance, recognition, and resistance. By engaging with the spectral qualities of the material record, archaeologists may reimagine ethical responsibilities and create space for long-silenced voices. When descendants reconnect with place, unruly ghosts can emerge as venerated ancestors.

Presenter(s): John Millhauser

Discussion

8987 A War of Position: Defending Academic Freedom and Social Justice

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

Around the world, scholars are actively engaged in a war of position as academic freedom and the application of scholarly knowledge in pursuit of social justice are increasingly coming under attack.

This April, India prevented Prof. Apoorvanand Jha from traveling abroad to speak on the "university under a global authoritarian turn." In May, Trump attempted to bar Harvard from enrolling international students, and US scholars across the country have had their federal research grants suspended as political censorship grows. This July, Hong Kong universities were forced to accept Beijing's "guidance" agreements, deepening a climate of fear and self-censorship. These events echo broader global patterns: Hungary has ended accreditation for gender studies programs and exiled the Central European University; Argentina has gutted public university funding and curtailed institutional autonomy; and China has imposed ideological controls restricting research and disappeared Uyghur scholars. Egypt too is detaining human rights researchers under anti-terrorism laws, Uganda is arresting scholars for dissenting work on women, gender, and sexuality, and Palestinian academics are facing full-on scholasticide.

These assaults cut to the very heart of the anthropological endeavor to open space for a multiplicity of dissenting viewpoints in pursuit of more just and liveable worlds. In response, this Town Hall draws upon Gramsci's conceptualization of a "war of position" as a protracted, strategic struggle for radical social transformation. Whereas the "war of maneuver" is a direct, frontal assault on the state -- a revolution in the classic sense -- power is not only held by the state; it is also deeply embedded in civil society -- in schools, media, family structures, religious institutions, pop culture. These are the spaces where consent is manufactured, where hegemonic ideologies are naturalized, and where people come to accept the existing social order as common sense. The war of position is a slow, subtle struggle that involves building alternative institutions, shaping public discourse, contesting dominant narratives, and gradually undermining the cultural and ideological foundations of hegemony. In other words, it's a struggle to reshape common sense: to transform the terrain on which power operates.

As anthropologists, this concept is particularly powerful because it pushes us to examine how domination is maintained not only through coercion, but through consent -- and how that consent can be challenged and reconfigured from within. Although we are often adept at studying these processes, many of us feel less equipped at skillfully engaging in them ourselves. But, as recent events make clear, we must. Participants will share their experiences, struggles, and strategies fighting this war. We will think together about how to effectively reach and persuade others -- from the classroom to the newsroom -- in defense of academic freedom and social justice.

Organizer: Laura Meek, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies, Justin Haruyama, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies

Presenter(s): Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh, Hugh Gusterson, University of British Columbia, Ugo Edu, University of California, Los Angeles, Huatse Gyal, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Hayal Akarsu, Utrecht University, Angela Jenks, Radhika Govindrajan

Discussant: Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Adia Benton, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

8110 The Politics of Lingering Part Two: How Indigenous lives and practices persist in colonial contexts that disrupt or disregard them

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What happens when Indigenous practices, ontologies, and modes of relationality outlast the conditions that are meant to destroy them? This panel explores the politics of lingering-how Indigenous people, traditions, and more-than-human relations persist, adapt, and insist on life in colonial contexts designed to erase or assimilate them. We bring together eight ethnographic engagements that illustrate the nuanced ways Indigenous practices persist in altered forms, often in spaces where they are marginalized, commodified, or actively undermined. In contexts shaped by displacement, diaspora, and settler colonial violence, lingering is not merely a passive survival; it is an active, relational process. The first part of the panel explores how Indigenous ways of knowing and being help to create and manage relationships with human and nonhuman entities, including the environments and landscapes in which they live. Drawing on research from Ecuador, Peru, and the West and Southwest United States, these papers present a case for the importance of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that go beyond the scope of what is considered possible by Western settler societies. The second part of the panel focuses on how various Indigenous communities are navigating their relationships with the world and other beings in the face of colonial intervention. This session centers Indigenous perspective in their interactions with colonial states and governments in an attempt to move past narratives that see Indigenous experiences as reactionary. Ethnographic data for these papers come from Ecuador and the Western and Southern United States. Together, these papers ask how Indigenous worlds linger-sometimes quietly, sometimes defiantly-in spaces that are often apathetic or even hostile to them. We take seriously the labors of making and remaking relationships and of navigating institutions that often refuse to see Indigenous life on its own terms. Lingering, in these contexts, is not a failure to disappear; it is a politics of endurance, of presence, and of world-making.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Soren Pearce, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Vanessa Lozano Hardman, Nithya Kanamarlapudi, Sayema Khatun

Discussant: Sarai Brown, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): "If Only the Truth was Told": The Invisibility and Persistence of the Timpanogos

The Timpanogos Nation, whose people have long lived on the land now called Utah, continue to live with the consequences of settler violence that has not ended but merely shifted form. After being forced onto the Uintah Reservation and administratively absorbed into the Ute Nation—a polity to which they do not claim belonging and which does not claim them—the Timpanogos remain federally unrecognized, structurally excluded, and existentially threatened. An extermination order

issued against them in 1850 has never been officially rescinded; its presence lingers, shaping how Timpanogos people relate to the state, to the land, and to their own safety in the place they have always called home. This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork, oral history, and documented historical research to explore how Timpanogos individuals and leaders navigate the persistent violence of erasure and misrecognition. I focus on the everyday expressions of mundane millenarianism—not a concern for the future, but a daily reckoning with the slow dissolution of their people and the possibility of reconstitution. Oral history emerges here not just as a form of memory but as a mode of political action, a tool for reclaiming legitimacy, kinship, and continuity in the face of ongoing displacement. The Timpanogos persist—not outside colonial time, but within and against it—lingering in a world that is trying very hard to disregard them.

Presenter(s): Soren Pearce

Living Well Does Not Mean Living Better: Reimagining Entrepreneurship Education in Rural Ecuador

In rural Ecuador, Indigenous youth often face limited access to quality education, frequently needing to leave their communities to continue schooling beyond the seventh grade. In response, outside actors, including U.S. based nonprofits, have partnered with local communities to create alternative educational spaces. This paper examines the tensions and interactions between these actors and their competing aspirations. It focuses on Saminay El Legado, a U.S. funded and Indigenous led rural secondary school that combines culturally grounded curricula with externally developed entrepreneurship education. Whether this model disrupts or reinforces dominant ways of knowing is a central question of the research. Specifically, it explores how U.S. driven entrepreneurship education, rooted in capitalist ideals of individualism, competition, and wealth accumulation, contrasts with Indigenous *saberes*, or ways of knowing, which emphasize community well-being, reciprocity, and collaboration. This research highlights the lived economic, political, and social realities that resist capitalist development models and asks how entrepreneurship education might be reimagined to align with Indigenous worldviews.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Lozano Hardman

Stomp Dance and Solidarity: Muscogee (Creek) Ritual Practice Amidst Colonial Land Disputes

This paper examines the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's Stomp Dance as a living tradition that both anchors Indigenous world-making and galvanizes collective resistance amid ongoing colonial land disputes. The Stomp Dance, central to Muscogee spiritual and communal life and closely tied to the Green Corn Ceremony, endures through intergenerational transmission, adaptive ceremonial practice, and intertribal collaboration. In 2025, Muscogee citizens returned to their ancestral territory in Georgia to perform the Stomp Dance at Atlanta's South River Forest, a site threatened by urban development, marking their first ceremonial presence there since forced removal in the 1820s. This act of ceremonial reclamation, supported by alliances with Cherokee, Seminole, and Shawnee communities, demonstrates how Indigenous rituals persist and adapt, sustaining communal bonds and cosmological connections even in spaces rendered hostile by settler institutions. The Muscogee's engagement with public ritual, legal advocacy, and coalition-building

illustrates a politics of endurance that transcends narratives of Indigenous disappearance or mere reaction to colonial power. Contemporary threats, such as the proposed "Cop City" project on Muscogee burial grounds, echo historical patterns of dispossession, yet also catalyze new forms of solidarity with environmental and racial justice movements. Rather than fading into the margins, Muscogee ceremonial life lingers defiantly, asserting pre

Presenter(s): Nithya Kanamarlapudi

Stories of Pocatello: Reflection on the Ethical Engaged Research with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe

Reflecting on the inconsistency in the structure of scientific knowledge throughout the history of modern Western science (Thomas Kuhn, 1962) makes space for many existing systems of knowledge unrecognized in the scientific establishment. In mainstream anthropological inquiry, extracting data from a population and analyzing it for knowledge production involves establishing a relationship with the community largely defined by power dynamics. In the context of Native American societies, such a mode of inquiry gets challenged and contested. Indigenous method (IM) of inquiry developed from a worldview contrasted with settler colonial anthropology (Pidgeon, M., & Riley, T. 2021). The I-CREWS project—a collaboration between Idaho institutions and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe—exemplifies this shift while exploring energy-water systems through ethical engagement. This work pivots around the 6Rs Framework (Respect, Relationality, Responsibility, Represent, Relevance, Reciprocity) recognizing tribal and data sovereignty that ensures community control over research processes. This paper intends to reflect on the workshops (February-April 2025) on Re(Connecting) with the 6Rs hosted by the Idaho State University which is part of a workshop series (2022-2027) to reveal the novel ways of knowing and being based on the stories of Fort Hill reservation and Pocatello, home of Shoshone-Bannock tribe.

Presenter(s): Sayema Khatun

Discussion

3673 China's growing care crisis: Emerging critical anthropological approaches

Start Date: 11/21/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Many parts of the world are experiencing a growing care crisis at a time of larger demographic transformations such as population aging. East Asian countries like China are at the heart of these developments but remain poorly studied.

This panel brings together emerging critical anthropological research on China's growing care crisis to make a non-Western-centric intervention in on-going feminist debates on the current global care crisis. Feminist political theorists like Nancy Fraser (2016, 2021) have argued that the current global care crisis is a particularly acute manifestation of a social-reproductive contradiction inherent in capitalism, namely its structural devaluation of reproductive labor and its assumption that

reproductive capacities are infinite and readily available at a cheap price. This assumption means that reproductive capacities are often stretched to the breaking point. Indeed, the history of capitalism can be described as a succession of breaking points with varying degrees of intensity. Previous forms of capitalism have produced temporary solutions to these crises, but did not resolve the key issue of the structural devaluation of care work. The current world order of neoliberal digital capitalism has only intensified this devaluation, leading to an unprecedented care crisis that cannot be solved by "quick-fixes".

In this panel, we engage with Nancy Fraser and other feminist scholars to call for more critical research on the global care crisis but we are critical of monolithic approaches too centered on Western perspectives and trajectories. Inspired by recent critical anthropological scholarship in Asian studies, we call for a Chinese and East Asian de-centering of ongoing feminist debates on the global care crisis. In this panel, we invite papers proposing critical ethnographic approaches to everyday manifestations of China's growing care crisis: from childbirth care to child care, from elderly care to end-of-life care. Focusing on China's care crisis from a critical perspective is also a good way to develop new insights on what is happening in other parts of the world and what must be done to overcome or at least to attenuate the effects of the current crisis.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Ellen Oxfeld, Middlebury College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Claudia Huang, California State University, Long Beach

Presenter(s): Ellen Oxfeld, Middlebury College, Department of Anthropology, Jun Zhang, Jeanne Shea, University of Vermont, Department of Anthropology, Hui Wen, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Claudia Huang, California State University, Long Beach

Presentation(s): Circulating Elders: Beyond Dichotomies of “Left Behind Children” and Senior Caregivers in Rural Meixian

A standard model of contemporary Chinese family life held by both insiders and outside observers usually describes an arrangement of left behind children and elders in rural areas, with a middle generation that seeks employment in urban areas. Recent fieldwork in rural Meixian, a Hakka area in rural Guangdong Province, reveals a more varied and fluid family situation. In Moonshadow Pond, the pseudonymous name of a Hakka village in rural Meixian, several models of family care emerge. Elders may migrate to cities to care for grandchildren but may also return to live in their village homes when those grandchildren start high school and are more self-sufficient. Middle-aged adults in mega cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, may leave their more remunerative employment in such places and return to live in the village or county capital so that they can more closely parent their "left behind" children in their teenage years. Adults in their fifties and sixties meanwhile may face pressure as they simultaneously care for their parents and their own grandchildren. Meanwhile, many village elders continue even as great-grandparents to enjoy a communal life in the village. This paper attempts to understand these patterns not as static, or as

binaries such as caregivers and receivers, but rather as revealing the adoption of cultural models of family obligation and local identifications to an economy of wage work, migration and globalization.

Presenter(s): Ellen Oxfeld

Lost in the Connected World: Getting Old in Digital Urban China

Digital technologies are often considered to be challenging for older people. A country that is experiencing rapid ageing, China is pushing for the development of digital technologies and digital economy. Digital platforms have often become the essential infrastructure for the handling of all aspects of lives particularly in the urban areas. A growing body of scholarship has critically examined how digital platforms have reshaped everyday life experience. Yet, with attention to labor relations in the platform economy, such studies usually focus on the young and active users; older people are often invisible in these dialogues. This paper zooms in older people as smartphone users and explores their experience of vulnerability and dependency in the city of Guangzhou through the lens of care as a sociotechnical system. Older people became platform users often because the younger family members introduced them to platforms such as WeChat for familial socialization. Many had no options but to become platform users due to government requirements during Covid-19 pandemic. While some older people enjoyed digital convenience, many often felt isolated and helpless in a world where so many things have to be done online, and where family members would only focus on their smartphones in everyday lives and important festive moments. This paper sheds light on the care crisis by critically reflecting on what may be called "digital fix" in elderly care.

Presenter(s): Jun Zhang

Making Meaning and Making Do Among Older Adult Spousal Caregivers in Shanghai, China

Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in China, this talk uses interpretivist and practice theory frameworks to explore the ways in which older adult spouses in Shanghai found meaning in taking care of an ailing husband or wife and how they made do with limited resources. Despite a traditional cultural focus on filial care by adult children, spouses are one of the top types of family members providing eldercare in China. With one of the oldest urban populations in China, Shanghai is a prime site for examining spousal eldercare. Taking place over six years, this study involved periodic interviews and participant observation conducted among thirty older adult spousal caregivers who were aging in place in two lower middle-income neighborhoods. These older adults were all primary caregivers for their spouse. Rather than fixating on the insufficiency of filial piety, most spousal caregivers focused on themes such as the importance of spousal reciprocity, pride in their caregiving abilities, and the superiority of spousal care. They also described and demonstrated their creative agency in making do with limited money and materials to provide good care for their spouse. Ingenious practices described with pride ranged from setting up mirrors so a spouse could lie flat and watch television on the ceiling to using plastic soda bottles for post-stroke physical therapy.

Presenter(s): Jeanne Shea

Between Care and Deception: Navigating Self-Care in China's Senior Supplements Market

This paper explores China's growing care crisis through the lens of senior urbanites' participation in the health supplements market. As eldercare shifts from state and family provision to market-based and individualized models, seniors challenge stereotypes of dependency by actively planning their later lives through self-directed care. Yet the very sites they turn to—local health supplements stores and promotional spaces—are widely regarded by the public as fraudulent or exploitative.

Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, I examine how older adults turn to commercial wellness spaces to reconstitute care, sociality, and bodily maintenance. Senior customers purchase not only products, but also emotional recognition and everyday attention from peers and salespeople. Far from being passive victims, many seniors frame their participation as self-reliant and relationally meaningful. Yet this market-based care remains entangled with profit motives, regulatory ambiguity, and moral scrutiny.

By tracing these tensions, I argue that commodified care in China is both deceptive and meaningful—a moral and affective form that cannot be easily captured by Western feminist critiques of care's devaluation under capitalism. Ethnographic attention to these contested sites opens up new ways of understanding how seniors in China are responding to, and reshaping, the global care crisis from within their own historical and social conditions.

Presenter(s): Hui Wen

8601 Spectral Encounters in the Dark: Multimodal Interventions in Anthropology and Humanism

Start Date: 11/21/2025 1:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Jackson

Type: Installations

Spectral Encounters: Multimodal Interventions in *Anthropology and Humanism* invites participants at AAA 2025 in New Orleans into an open, resonant space where anthropology flickers at its edges—where image, sound, performance, and text meet in unfinished dialogue. This multimodal installation, hosted by *Anthropology and Humanism* is not a static display but a living intervention: a hinge, a gathering point, a site where multimodality is not only exhibited but questioned, stretched, and reimagined. What does it mean to make and review anthropology otherwise? How do our aesthetic, material and technological choices haunt the politics of knowledge production? This is a spectral space for wrestling with these questions creatively, for amplifying the experimental currents within the Society for Humanistic Anthropology and the Creative Anthropologies Network. Visitors are invited to move among projections, sounds, posters, and printed fragments—ethnographic poetry, postcards, and more—and to gather around a communal table for dialogue and reflection. *Spectral Encounters* is both installation and activation, an invitation to linger, listen, and imagine anthropology otherwise.

Organizer(s): Eva van Roekel, Fiona Murphy, Johann Sander Puustusmaa

8742 Meet the Authors: 2025 Delmos Jones and Jagna Sharff Memorial Book Prize

Start Date: 11/21/2025 1:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 2:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Special Event

Come celebrate the winners and honorable mentions of the Society for the Anthropology of North America's 2025 Delmos Jones and Jagna Sharff Memorial Book Prize! SANA awards this year's prize to Established Scholar Laurence Ralph for *Sito: An American Teenager and the City that Failed Him* (Grand Central Publishing, 2024) and to Emerging Scholar Dayna Fast for *The Best Place: Addiction, Intervention, and Living and Dying Young* (Rutgers U. Press, 2024). Honorable Mentions go to Carrie Lane in the Established Scholar category for *More Than Pretty Boxes: How the Rise of Professional Organizing Shows Us the Way We Work Isn't Working* (U. Chicago Press, 2024) and to two authors in the Emerging Scholar category: Orisanmi Burton for *Tip of the Spear: Black Radicalism, Prison Repression, and the Long Attica Revolt* (U. California Press, 2023) and Barbara Sostaita for *Sanctuary Everywhere: The Fugitive Sacred in the Sonoran Desert* (Duke U. Press, 2024). Learn about the prize committee's selection process for this biannual prize, which considered books published in 2023 and 2024. Join us in celebrating the nominees, hear this year's winners speak about their books, and bring your copy to have it signed by the author!

2840 Capitalism and Coloniality in the Thailand/Israel Migration Circuit

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The death of farmworkers from Thailand in the violence enveloping Palestine/Israel raises urgent questions about the transnational aspects of Israel's settler-colonial project and of Palestinian resistance. It also highlights the close interplay between the capitalist exploitation of underpaid, disenfranchised migrant labor and the maintenance of colonial social boundaries in Israel, Thailand and elsewhere. Combining historical and ethnographic methods, Matan Kaminer's new book *Capitalist Colonial: Thai Migrant Workers in Israeli Agriculture* (Stanford, 2024) argues that the importation of unfree labor from Isaan (northeast Thailand) to Israeli border regions cannot be understood apart from the colonial projects of both Thai and Israeli elites, which found common ground as allies of the Western imperial project of the Cold War. According to Kaminer, the replacement of Israel's Palestinian agricultural workforce with an Isaanite one solved problems of "surplus population" for both regimes, placing migrants in the line of fire as "colonizers by proxy."

This roundtable brings together anthropologists working in the Middle East and Southeast Asia to discuss the themes of capitalist coloniality raised by the book. While links between these two world regions are both longstanding and currently ramifying, they are rarely discussed together. The case of Thai migrants in Israel invites a debate on possible homologues and connections between regime

practice and subaltern resistance in the two regions. This debate, in turn, holds the promise of connecting ethnographic inquiry and anthropological analysis to urgent questions of international (especially South-South) solidarity in the face of genocide and rampant dispossession.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Matan Kaminer, Queen Mary University of London

Presenter(s): Michael Herzfeld , China Sajadian, Vassar College, Department of Anthropology, Kareem Rabie, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Prash Naidu, City College of New York

Discussant: Matan Kaminer, Queen Mary University of London

316 Society for Visual Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Ai Gu , Rachel Caldwell Hill, University of Texas at Austin, Sofia Cifuentes, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, Lucius Von Joo , Angelica Cabezas-Pino, University of Manchester, Shradha Naveen

Presenter(s): Ai Gu, Rachel Caldwell Hill, University of Texas at Austin, Sofia Cifuentes, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, Lucius Von Joo, Angelica Cabezas-Pino, University of Manchester, Shradha Naveen

Presentation(s): Beyond Ontopoetics: Untangling Ontological Poetics-making in Ecofeminist Art Practices

Amid political advocacy for decolonization, feminism, and ecological justice, recent artistic and curatorial practices have increasingly intersected with anthropological knowledge, reflexively engaging with ghosts burdened by past violence and exploring the possibilities of activism in alternative futures. Focusing on this spectral turn in art and anthropology, this research investigates its relational potential – specifically, how ghosts present, entangle with other social agents, and reconfigure vengeful forces into reparative forms of justice.

Through ethnographic and archival studies, this research examines the 2023 exhibition RE/SISTERS: A Lens on Gender and Ecology at the Barbican Centre in London. It analyzes a recurring theme across multiple ecofeminist visual artworks in the exhibition: how Indigenous women and nature, both as haunted presences historically marginalized by colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, dissolve their ontological boundaries and achieve the poetics of solidarity through coexistent, affective entanglement. For instance, in Pamela Singh's displayed photographs depicting Chipko women protesting against the local government and industry by embracing trees with their own hands to resist the exploitation of the forest environment, the dark, wrinkled skin of the women and the rough tree bark appear to merge into one entity through visual representation of monochrome film, conjuring a shared fate of life and death.

Bringing together debates from the anthropology of art and the ontological turn in anthropology, particularly the frameworks of animism (Descola, 2020) and onto-poetics (Mathews, 2009; 2017), this research critically analyzes the mechanisms of poetics-making that transform once-exploited Indigenous women and nature from ghostly others into agentive, collective actors that call for activism. This analysis makes an original contribution by examining two mediating roles in shaping such haunting relationalities: (1) the female body as a medium that substitutes texts and symbols in poetics-making in conventional surrealist frameworks, dissolving ontological boundaries between Indigenous women and nature and generating uncanny aesthetics; and (2) the camera as a medium of invocation that facilitates reciprocal meaning creation among Indigenous women and nature as subjective entities. These discussions challenge prior assumptions that ghosts operate in the intangible, unmediated presence across ontological boundaries; instead, they reveal how ghosts are embodied, mediated, and made to collaborate in social actions within contemporary art worlds. This offers insights into theorizing hauntology/ontology in anthropology and imagining a new relational ontology.

Presenter(s): Ai Gu

Fictional Histories, Storied Landscapes: Constructing Memory at Waco's Lover's Leap

This paper examines how media and circulation cemented the ghost story of Wah-Wah-Tee, a fictional "Waco princess" who leapt to her death from Lover's Leap, in public memory in Waco, Texas. Drawing on digital, archival, and autoethnographic fragments, I analyze how Decca Lamar West's 1912 *Legend of Lover's Leap* and *An Historical Sketch of Waco* constructed a civic myth that sutures a particular national identity to landscape through narrative similarities. Engaging the work of Benedict Anderson, Keith Basso, JoAnne Yates, I explore how the ghost story functioned not merely as folklore but as a medium of collective memory, allowing imagined publics to cohere around racialized absence and territorial belonging. Rather than focus on the story's factual veracity, I trace its circulation across print, oral history, tourism, and archives to ask how it became sedimented as local knowledge. I accompany this inquiry with the creation of a zine to reflect and reframe the ghost story's media life and its role in public discourse. Ultimately, I argue that the story's endurance is haunted by the continued Indigenous presence it seeks to occlude, revealing the ghost not as historical residue but as a figure of ongoing colonial entanglement.

Presenter(s): Rachel Caldwell Hill

Notes on the Latin American Menstrual Movement

In Latin America and the Caribbean there are 166 million people who menstruate (Weinberger et al., 2024). Because menstruation has historically been regarded as a "women's issue," it has been kept secret, with taboos and misconceptions surrounding it (Tarzibachi, 2017). Menstrual stigma and discrimination contribute to the devaluation of women, as the disclosure of menstruation often leads to negative reactions and the objectification of women's bodies (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013; Roberts et al., 2002). Therefore, activists' work is essential for uplifting voices and advancing on menstrual rights. Since the early 2010's, Latin American women have met in informal

spaces to challenge menstrual taboo and stigma. During the past ten years, the Latin American menstrual movement is taking shape (e.g. bills on menstrual rights are surging as well as menstrual health and education programs), thus advancing towards better conditions for menstruators.

The work of Latin American menstrual educators and activists is part of a broader movement: the global menstrual movement-a burgeoning and contested space that seeks to make menstruation a public issue (Gaybor & Harcourt, 2022).

This flash presentation will introduce the Latin American menstrual movement, a transnational movement that is working against menstrual discrimination and violence while fostering menstrual health. Through activism, grass-roots organization, menstrual education projects and advocacy for bills on menstrual rights, menstrual activists and educators all over Latin America are forging a menstrual movement for bettering the lives of girls, women and people of all genders that menstruate in the region. The Latin American menstrual movement is questioning colonized views on menstruation, embodiment, gender and the body, as Latin American women, have been deemed "inferior" by Europeans, who even considered Indigenous menstrual blood as more pathological and inferior to European women menstruation (Eraso, 2015).

Through menstrual activism and menstrual education projects, participants of the movement engage in discussions around embodiment, gender, health, feminism and decolonization, working for social transformation and a society that supports menstruators experiences.

Based on preliminary multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork for my PhD. dissertation, which includes participation in menstrual education conferences, courses and outreach activities, as well as analysis of pedagogical material of the movement and semi-structured interviews with menstrual activists and educators from various countries, this presentation will introduce the ways in which this social movement is been forged, the ways in which it combats menstrual discrimination and menstrual violence and how menstrual activists and educators are promoting menstrual health in the communities were the work.

Presenter(s): Sofia Cifuentes

Recording Layered Realms of Play: Children as Builders and World Creators in Adventure Playgrounds

What happens when children confront and remake spaces haunted by adult intention? This study examines how children redefine boundaries within adventure playgrounds-spaces of creative autonomy often overlooked in educational discourse. Using Multivocal Annotated Layers and child-led still photography, the research analyzes the anti-aesthetic and carnivalesque dimensions of play across sites in New York, Chiba, Tokyo, Berkeley, and Sacramento. Revealing how children animate "living middens" of discarded material, engaging in layered decision-making and dialogue across contexts. This discourse revalues play as a vital practice of childhood and challenges dominant frameworks of educational space and design.

Presenter(s): Lucius Von Joo

Tracing Healthcare Violence Otherwise: Feminist Multimodal Ethnography with Women Living with HIV

This paper proposes a critical theorization of violence as experienced by women living with HIV (WLHIV) in Chile, combining anthropological analysis with a multimodal, arts-based methodology to examine the embodied and relational dimensions of violence in healthcare settings. The presentation departs from visual works created by collaborators to explore the entanglements of violence and resistance from their perspectives. While dominant discourses often position gender-based violence as a risk factor for HIV acquisition, this research inverts that logic by exploring how an HIV diagnosis can catalyze new and intensified forms of violence-intimate, institutional, and symbolic.

Grounded in multimodal methods informed by long-term ethnographic fieldwork in southern Chile, the study traces the lived effects of stigmatization, misrecognition, and systemic neglect within healthcare environments. Through a combination of photographic collaborative *mise-en-scène*, surrealist collage, and felt-based narrative-making (inspired by Helena Třeštíková), the project foregrounds the subjective experiences of WLHIV, centering their voices, agency, and modes of expression.

Intersecting the multimodal with feminist modes of "making-with" that contribute to debates around the "politics of invention" (Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón, 2019), the project emphasizes iteration, collaboration, and care throughout the process with WLHIV, who act as co-creators. This way of worlding enables a phenomenologically attuned analysis of violence as it is embodied, negotiated, and relationally enacted (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012).

The paper engages with Judith Butler's (1999, 2004, 2009) concept of "normative intelligibility" and Silvia Federici's (2004) analysis of the biomedical governance of women's bodies to interrogate how healthcare systems differentially assign worth and recognizability to bodies. Moving across Scheper-Hughes' (1992, 2004) work on institutional harm, Bourgois' (2009) theorization of intimate violence, and Rita Segato's (2013) notion of the pedagogy of cruelty, the project illuminates how violence becomes inscribed in bodies, clinical spaces, and internalized through everyday encounters. Healthcare is thus not approached as a neutral domain but as a contested site.

This research reveals how violence is not only experienced but also reproduced relationally, both within and beyond healthcare institutions. It challenges traditional framings of WLHIV as passive victims, instead highlighting their creative strategies of resistance.

Ultimately, the paper argues for a politically grounded and phenomenologically sensitive understanding of healthcare violence-recognizing the entanglements of body/state, care/abandonment, and voice/silence. In doing so, it reimagines health not merely as access to biomedical services but as a relational and intercorporeal practice where resistance is enacted through creativity, resilience, and collective becoming-with.

Presenter(s): Angelica Cabezas-Pino

What I see, What you see: A Feminist Political Ecology analysis of ethnographic photographs from Rural South India

Water [the presence of, access to] is a base human necessity. However, reliable access to water for rural households has rarely been prioritized throughout the history of modern India. In lieu of this, in 2019, the Indian Government introduced the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a government initiative meant to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tapped water connections for all rural households by 2024. This work leverages a feminist political ecology framework to examine how people's relationship with water resources are changing in rural South India as the JJM program poses to bureaucratize, privatize, and modernize access, management and knowledge of water resources. A multitude of ethnographic methods drive the project, with a particular emphasis on photography. Photography has been, typically, a method used by ethnographers to capture their field site and represent the life and experiences of the communities within the phenomenon they are studying (Pink, 2004). In an interest in working differently, I am inspired by Wendy Redstar's work, 1880 Apsáalooke (Crow) Peace Delegation, and have aimed to build from her method and process of outlining and annotating photographs to bring together local (gender, caste and religious) perspectives, government narratives, my experiences, and environmental factors (climate, landscape and hydrological) back into the photographs. This process allows for easy engagement with the communities I am working with; I can put into a single photograph analysis and the experience of water within rural South India.

Presenter(s): Shradha Naveen

313 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #4

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM through 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Alyx Bontrager , Andrik Gonzalez, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Arsisto Ambyo , Audrey Conley , Orlando Zhu , Meredith Degyansky , Manjot Multani , Elijah Ash, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alyx Bontrager, Andrik Gonzalez, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Arsisto Ambyo, Audrey Conley, Orlando Zhu, Meredith Degyansky, Manjot Multani, Elijah Ash, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Art and Memory Activism in Bali, Indonesia

This project explores how political artists in Bali are using visual and performance-based art to challenge dominant narratives surrounding Suharto's New Order regime (1965 – 1998) and its legacy in contemporary policy. Special interest is given to how artists are addressing the 1965-66 'communist' genocide, a brutal massacre of an entire ideology that resulted in a rearrangement of Indonesian identity and allowing for the rise of Suharto's New Order. The New Order government employed extensive top-down memory work to suppress public discourse of the event and shape official understandings in a way that both justified the massacre and villainized the victims – an

effect that has been exacerbated in Bali due to the island's reliance on the tourist economy set up by New Order economic policy. However, this project investigates how memory activism—a term I use to describe the use of art as a tool for political memory activism—creates space for alternative histories to emerge. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from memory studies, visual culture, and anthropology, this project investigates how Balinese artists engage with the past to shape contemporary policy.

Preliminary research for this project was conducted in the summer of 2024, where I was able to meet with a few political artists that confront New Order legacy and the negative effects of tourism. I will return to the field this summer 2025 to further investigate this argument. Through ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and visual analysis, I will explore the mediums, messages, and motivations of artists whose work addresses 1965. I will also analyze how spatiality contributes to the political power of their public works. Place is significant in Balinese Hindu cosmology, as the physical and spiritual realms (Sekala and Niskala) are deeply intertwined. I am interested to understand the potential significance of these haunted (angker) mass grave sites, many under tourist infrastructure, and the agency of the dead in activist art. Ultimately, I will answer the research questions; to what extent are politically engaged artists in Bali participating in memory activism and how are their works challenging dominant narratives of the past?; and what is the significance of place in Balinese memory activism? The results of this study will be presented at the AAA conference.

This research contributes to memory activist literature by addressing the role of public political art and performance in bottom-up memory work. It also engages in the broader conversation of how communities resist historical erasure through creative, embodied forms of knowledge production, highlighting the emancipatory potential of art-based memory activism.

Presenter(s): Alyx Bontrager

Cultural Crossroads: Expressions of Identity, Resistance and Belonging on the Texas-Mexico Border

Place is central to the formation of identity and tradition within a community. The cultural scenes along the Texas-Mexico Border—such as festivals, murals, food, and local arts—serve as both a reflection of historical cross-border interactions and a form of resilience and adaptation to contemporary challenges and complex intersections of culture, history, and politics for border communities. Combining the academic disciplines of Anthropology and History, this project will utilize ethnographic and open-source mapping methods to examine how cultural practices, traditions, and artistic expressions along the Texas side of the Rio Grande reflect and respond to the social, historical, and geographical dynamics of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands through an interactive digital map. By documenting and mapping these cultural practices, the project aims to demonstrate how the borderlands foster unique, dynamic cultural expressions that are deeply tied to place and community.

Presenter(s): Andrik Gonzalez

Digital Hantulogi: Ritual Innovation and Spectral Bricolage in Indonesian YouTube Horror Communities

This research examines the emergent ritual practices within Indonesian YouTube horror communities, where content creators actively enact spiritual engagement through digital mediation. Based on digital ethnographic fieldwork and close analysis of ritual performances by prominent Indonesian horror YouTubers such as Alvin Vajhrin, Java Bros, and Son of Dad, I analyze how these creators construct what I term "haunted interfaces": digital spaces where technological affordances and spiritual epistemologies converge to produce new forms of supernatural experience and authority.

It is a part of a larger research project on "digital hantulogi" that aims to decolonize and conceptualize how digital platforms enable novel configurations of ritual practices that embrace the complexities of spectral worlds. In this particular project, I look at how YouTubers engage in "spectral bricolage," tactically assembling ritual elements from diverse sources - ranging from global horror tropes like Bloody Mary to local spiritual traditions - to create hybrid ceremonial practices uniquely suited to digital contexts. This bricolage serves multiple functions: connecting content to international horror trends while asserting distinctly Indonesian supernatural identities; establishing creator authority while maintaining connections to traditional spiritual knowledge; and creating affective experiences that resonate with viewers navigating between global media cultures and local spiritual sensibilities.

Rather than documenting spiritual beliefs as static cultural artifacts, I analyze ritual enactment as a distinctive mode of knowledge production that reconfigures relationships between spiritual specialists, spectral forces, and broader communities. The research reveals how Indonesian horror creators approach ritual not merely as entertainment but as experimental interfaces for testing the boundaries of supernatural reality, developing a digital supernatural vernacular. These practices demonstrate how digital media technologies do not necessarily diminish spiritual belief but instead enable its creative reconfiguration, offering young Indonesians opportunities to reshape spiritual worlds from the bottom up while remaining embedded within broader religious and political contexts. By examining these digital ritual innovations, this research contributes to anthropological understandings of how spiritual authority and supernatural knowledge are transformed in the digital age.

Presenter(s): Arsisto Ambyo

Ghosts in Motion: Rhythm, Trauma, and Collective Liberation

Historical events like colonialism, slavery, and segregation leave spectral imprints on present-day societies and bodies. The event has passed, but its ghost remains. This paper argues that the pain of those times, as well as sacred knowledge lives in the bodies of individuals. Through the use of rhythm, collectives are able to experience healing on a generational level. Dances which were started in traumatic times, or shortly thereafter, act as a portal for ancestral wisdom and the processing of trauma through the body, enacting healing on a physical, mental, and spiritual level.

We can see this with how the expression of rumba evolved. Slaves had chains at their ankles while dancing, forcing them into limited foot movements. They adopted exaggerated hip movements, as that was the part of the body most free to dance. Such dances are framed not just as coping mechanisms, but as active sites where improvisation allows participants to connect with, retrieve, and share ancestral knowledge. The historical banning of drums and certain dances is presented as evidence of their recognized efficacy in cultivating collective power. Evidence points towards a collective spirit aiming to resolve their lineage injustices. This liberation through movement and rhythm was a threat because it brought power to the people, allowing dance to serve as a facilitator for ideas of resistance, something elites were not too fond of. Through following dances from their origins to their present day form, this paper aims to uncover the ghosts embedded into rhythmic patterns of the body, most commonly seen through dance. It analyzes the evolution of these rhythmic traditions to demonstrate how dance movements function as conduits for ancestral wisdom, offering pathways for contemporary healing and the resolution of historical injustices.

Presenter(s): Audrey Conley

Ghosts in the Freezer: Zombie Meat and the Embodied Nostalgia in Post-Socialist Urban China

What kinds of ghosts haunt the refrigerator in post-socialist China? This paper examines the fridge not only as a domestic storage device but as an archive of spectral memories-where expired meat, hoarded food, and frozen parcels sent by distant kin embody the residues of past traumas and moral worlds. Focusing on elderly residents in a former work-unit compound in Beijing, I ask how practices of stocking and freezing preserve not only food but also the moral logics of scarcity and care that resist erasure under market-oriented reforms.

These everyday acts of hoarding-often pathologized as irrational or excessive-are in fact deeply embedded in embodied remembrance and what I term involuntary nostalgia: a form of memory that is not verbalized, but enacted through bodily routines and material accumulation. By tracing these ghostly values, the paper engages broader debates in anthropology on material memory, post-socialist temporality, and the spectral politics of welfare and abandonment.

The paper draws on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in urban Beijing, including long-term engagement with elderly residents, observations in their kitchens, and interviews about domestic routines and past crises. Particular attention is paid to "zombie meat"-frozen, long-expired foods that remain untouched, yet carefully preserved. These objects, mundane and haunting, index a moral world in decline and a state infrastructure in retreat.

I argue that the refrigerator serves as a material archive of ghostly value systems-where the ethics of thrift, survival, and care are materially sustained despite their displacement by neoliberal governance. These ghostly accumulations reflect not nostalgia for the socialist past per se, but a struggle to maintain moral orientation amid bureaucratic neglect, suspended redevelopment, and post-socialist liminality. In doing so, the paper contributes to anthropological debates on memory, infrastructure, and the spectral life of political transition.

Presenter(s): Orlando Zhu

Myths as Maps toward an Ecological Otherwise

This ethnographic work is situated on a 12-acre plot of land, where an immigrant-led cooperative farm attempts to build other ways of worlding in the wake of the one dying through mutual aid and solidarity economy practices. Carving out other ways of knowing, being, and doing must necessarily contend with place, the violence and possibilities embedded in the land and in our bodies, that both forward other ways of worlding and impede on their capacity to thrive.

As poet Sophie Strand reminds us, myths have historically been used to help us understand our ecological relationship to a place – when to gather, when to make medicine, how to be part of a community, how to act, who to trust. Myths offer us a language to grieve, to reckon with violences wreaked, moral lessons to follow, and the capacity to imagine other worlds. In this presentation, I explore how myths, as both stories and practices, can guide us toward an ecological otherwise, urging us to tend to the ghosts that linger – those of the land, ancestors, animals, plants, spirits, and ourselves. In the face of overlapping crises, how might we turn to myths to re/imagine and re/define pathways toward abolition and collective liberation?

Drawing on the cooperative farm as a case study, and joining calls from anthropologists moving us toward the speculative, I examine how myths can and do inform practices that shape how we might live and die well together as we plod along in the chaos of our times.

Presenter(s): Meredith Degyansky

The Shadows of 'Becoming Independent:' Aspirations and Sexuality among North Indian Youth

This ethnography explores how young unmarried Indian adults currently residing in Chandigarh navigate their sexuality. From fieldwork during the years 2021-2022, the study's findings aim to address the following research questions: How is sexuality constituted in the lives of young people living in Chandigarh, India? How do various social institutions configure and consequently politicize sexuality in young people's everyday lives while living in Chandigarh? Participant in this study included cis-gender and queer individuals between the ages of 19-23 of whom predominantly compose the middle-class in Chandigarh. The participants shared their personal stresses, sexual curiosities, and personal and professional aspirations. These concepts help them negotiate power within both the private and public domains and allow them pathways to diverge from or conform to the sexual scripts (Gagnon and Simon 1974) embedded in these domains. I showcase how Indian youth in Chandigarh diverge from social norms or cultural scripts in a bid to fulfill their own desires.

This presentation details what young people's sexual aspirations are, how these aspirations are formulated, and what significance they hold in their lives. Sexual aspirations are linked to certain class-associated expectations, which can only be understood in the context of caste (Kang 2024). Long-term sexual aspirations are tied with the desire to "become independent," which, for the participants, means to attain economic success and secure financial independence. Participants vocalized the aspiration of "becoming independent" as the gateway toward freedom and the necessary agency to make decisions, including choosing who their life partner would be or what their life might look like on their own terms with a career. Here, the participants were alluding to

their adherence to the expectations of a neoliberal middle-class subject. Becoming independent, then, is the framework within which young people understand their sexual aspirations as aligning with middle-class, social expectations often supported and upheld by upper caste standings. I argue young people coming of age in contemporary India are negotiating their aspirations as they recursively revise the sexual scripts they encounter in their daily lives, while also traversing their intimate self-making negotiations across social position of age, sex, caste, class, and gender. Ultimately, this study outlines the gendered realities of sexuality within a heteropatriarchal society that shadows the 'becoming independent' framework youth strategize to pursue their aspirations.

Presenter(s): Manjot Multani

To Be a Young Ximi in Beijing: Sonic Subcultures and Ideological Fashioning among China's Urban Youth

Xiqu is an umbrella term for many subgenres of traditional Chinese theater, which involve dance, pantomime, acrobatics, poetry recitation, and singing. In the early twentieth century, xiqu was perhaps the most popular form of public entertainment in China. Today, it is far from being mainstream. Xiqu fans are given the special moniker ximi, a word which literally refers to persons who are enthralled or even obsessed with theater. For a young adult, to be a ximi means taking up a socially tenuous position. It also demands the cultivation of everyday sensory and bodily practices that mainstream society deems strange and repulsive. This presentation will explore why xiqu nonetheless appeals to its fans, including an analysis of how young ximi navigate issues of ideological affiliation, class dynamics, and community belonging through the sonic practices that structure their leisure time. Following Bourdieu and Ranciere, previous anthropological studies of expressive culture have tended to emphasize how aesthetic preferences are consistent with class positioning and ideological dispositions. In contrast, I will analyze xiqu's attributes that are visceral (based on the senses, emotions, and the body) in addition to those that are ideological (based on logical, verbal associations). This conceptual distinction will allow me to demonstrate how ximi are self-contradictory and creative thinkers. It will also allow me to explore the complex heterogeneity of contemporary Chinese society.

This presentation will be based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted between summer 2023 and summer 2025. My presentation will discuss this fieldwork in detail, paired with analyses of audiovisual media and online social networks. Drawing on anthropological traditions that focus on China, the senses, technology, and aesthetics, I will consider what the xiqu fandom reveals about China's first generation to have been raised by the pioneers of the reform era. In sum, I find that xiqu enables its young fans to strategically make claims of affiliation and continuity with a wide variety of Chinese historical eras and philosophical schools. In doing so, they interrogate their relationship with tradition, socialism, and the international order.

Presenter(s): Elijah Ash

3604 The Legacy of Ernesto de Martino (Part II): Rituals and Temporalities

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the death of Ernesto de Martino (1908-1965), a founding figure in Italian anthropology whose ghost still looms large in the Italian tradition, continuing to inspire countless works today. De Martino's thinking is incredibly timely for the current state of world crisis, as demonstrated by his masterwork on apocalypse (*The End of the World*, published in English in 2023). Bringing together established as well as junior scholars, this double session interrogates the legacy of de Martino's eclectic thought from various angles, providing the opportunity to think with him and acquaint a broader audience with his work. In line with critical "world anthropologies" perspectives, the sessions counter anthropology's anglophone hegemony by focusing on a brilliant anthropologist who is not widely known outside of Italy.

Part 2 considers how the theoretical influence of de Martino's work often transcends the Italian context. De Martino's theories on the crisis of presence, apocalypse, magic and ritual have significant impact on analytical frameworks at the core of anthropological research, including temporality, historicity, and religiosity. Presenters in part two showcase the reach of de Martino in contexts including Catholic eschatology, psychiatric care, and the Afro-Brazilian diaspora. The panel furthers the comparative project by bringing de Martino into conversation with key figures of thought in anthropology, such as Victor Turner and Claude Lévi-Strauss. All papers speak to the relevance of de Martino's concepts in contemplating the events of today, including how collapsing worlds of polycrisis signal the need to rethink our relationship to time, history, and even 'reality' itself.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews, Dorothy Zinn

Chair: Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews

Presenter(s): Alyssa Erspamer, Luigigiovanni Quarta, Richard Irvine, University of St Andrews, Ann Arbor, Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews, Charles Stewart, University College London, Claudia Antonangeli

Discussant: Dorothy Zinn

Presentation(s): The ritual process. The instituting anthropologies of De Martino and Turner

My research project presents one of the first systematic comparisons of two important 20th century anthropologists who both studied the structure of rituals in preindustrial societies: Ernesto de Martino and Victor Turner. It draws from the ethnographies of the two anthropologists to sketch the basic skeleton of a ritual process or mechanism that exists across cultures and societies. At the heart of this mechanism is a dialectic between the structure of social organisation and the anti-structure of the ritual moment, or between order and conflict, *nomos* and social normality on the

one hand and individual creativity and subversion on the other. Both anthropologists give central importance to the two sides of this dialectic in their particular ritual theories. Through a detailed comparison, my project opens up several key overlapping themes between the two thinkers, such as the question of whether the integrative/post-ritual phase represents a moment of conformity and repression, or instead the necessary foundation for a wider collective sense of social belonging; and what the relationship between the ritual process/mechanism and moments of crisis may be. This comparison between De Martino and Turner suggests that ritual and rituality are instituting processes able to contribute to the continuous re-creation and renewal of a specific society or community. Such a conclusion opens wider questions on the essentiality of rituals in society and their role in the contemporary world.

Presenter(s): Alyssa Erspamer

The reality of reality. Going back to the early de Martino to grasp the world of schizophrenia

In *The End of the World*, Ernesto de Martino, describes schizophrenia as the most philosophical of illnesses. Schizophrenia, he argues, illustrates how a world can collapse, leaving individuals outside any conceivable horizon of meaning and agency, destroying the sense of reality. However, in his second major work, *Il mondo magico*, de Martino raises a fundamental question: what defines reality? This question takes on particular significance when examined through an ethnographic lens, highlighting what we could call the problem of the reality of reality. How should we deal with extra-ordinary experiences like the imaginary constructs of a delirious patient?

This paper explores the "reality of reality" through the lens of early de Martino and existential psychiatry, particularly Binswanger's work, within an ethnographic framework. Drawing on ten years of fieldwork in psychiatric institutions, I argue for the necessity of conceptualizing the existence of a patient's world. Ultimately, I propose three key arguments: 1. taking Otherness seriously requires expanding the Western concept of reality because 2. reality is not an absolute ontology but a historically situated way of articulating the world. In closing, I aim to argue, in the wake of demartinian reflections that 3. a shared framework of psychiatric care is only possible through continuous negotiation of foundational concepts such as world, reality, and truth.

Presenter(s): Luigigiovanni Quarta

The uncanny valley and the unsettling of the landscape: Catholic AI eschatology through the lens of De Martino's *The End of the World*

This paper draws on De Martino's investigation of cultural apocalypse to reflect on the eschatological character of the encounter with AI. Taking as its starting point De Martino's well-known engagement with the case of the Bernese peasant, it considers how this characteristic account of the unsettling of the landscape resonates with the concept of the 'uncanny valley' – the sense of unease in the presence of that which emulates the human, leaving us with an unnerving sense of people and things being not in the right place. I take as my case the emerging Catholic response to the potential epochal change wrought by AI, articulated in the recent Vatican note *Antiqua et nova*. There we see a grappling not only with AI but how its co-option of the word

'intelligence' unsettles our understanding of human intelligence. In this encounter we see what De Martino described as a crisis of presence: indeed, implicated in this crisis is not only a dislocation of the human body, but a notion of 'intelligence' that lacks presence. What manner of apocalypse emerges from this encounter with the uncanny valley?

Presenter(s): Judith Irvine

De Martino for Unprecedented Times(?)

'Unprecedented' has become a marker of our time, denoting the supposedly unparalleled magnitude of the entangled challenges facing human beings as we hurtle toward the middle of the turbulent 21st century. The unprecedented label imbues an event with a sense of urgency and the need for immediate action, but also has a subtext that implies that the problem is insurmountable, thus foregoing accountability and action. Through de Martino's work on time and crisis, this paper investigates the relationship between the unprecedented and an increasing sense of existential 'presentness' and analytical 'presentism'. In crisis, time can be experienced as speeding up or slowing down, swirling and surging, and throwing one off in all manner of trajectories. There might be a hyperconsciousness of being present inside, outside, or alongside time, manifesting in uncanny feelings and heightened senses. The familiar texture of the present – in the sense of the historical continuity grounding the present – is lost. In this respect, crisis turns ordinary daily routine inside out and exposes the seams of temporality to view. de Martino helps usurp the popular 'unprecedented' trope that is so readily applied to events today by disrupting assumptions on mono-dimensional historical consciousness, the linear progression of time, and the importance of being present in the present as the cornerstone to creating novel history.

Presenter(s): Daniel Knight

De Martino, Dehistorification and Transcendence

This paper seeks to explicate one of de Martino's most intriguing ideas, 'dehistorification' (deistorificazione), a term that he deployed to call attention to the ways in which people may overcome crises such as paralyzing anxiety or melancholia. Participation in religious rituals, in his view, mobilizes stories and choreographies where the suffering person addresses the crisis that threatens their existence. Dehistorification describes this momentary escape from the inexorable unfolding of present misery into a level of metahistory where the cord strangling the present is cut. The individual reiterates archetypal scenarios where heroic figures overcame obstacles. In identifying with these metahistorical successes individuals (and collectives) find the energy to re-enter their present lives. Immersed in collective support and moral values they step back from the edge of dehumanizing misery and regain a foothold on social life. I will set de Martino's ideas in relation to parallel ideas by his contemporaries such as Turner (liminality), Lévi-Strauss (the sorcerer and his magic) and Eliade (in illo tempore). And I will illustrate dehistorification by reference to dream journeys to the beyond that I collected on the island of Naxos (Greece). The idea of dehistorification does possibly bear some marks of 1950s functionalism which need to be

considered on the way to deciding if destorificazione can be a fruitful idea for contemporary anthropology.

Presenter(s): Charles Stewart

Afro-Brazilian Cults through de Martino's Perspective: The Terreiro as a Project for World Regeneration

It has been nearly 50 years since the posthumous publication of *La fine del mondo* by Ernesto de Martino, and in a post-pandemic scenario, under the devastating effects of climate change and on the brink of a third world war, the threat of the apocalypse still presents itself as an imminent risk. However, the face of this widely perceived apocalypse takes radically different forms between the Global North and South. Based on an ongoing fieldwork bridging Europe and Brazil, this article aims to offer a reflection on the apocalypse as perceived within the African diaspora in Brazil and its repercussions in the European context, through the analysis of two Afro-Brazilian religions on both sides of the Atlantic. In the apocalyptic scenario, the umbanda and candomblé terreiros are conceived by the community of followers as collective projects for the regeneration of the world, as they have managed to withstand centuries of human and environmental destruction caused by colonialism and slavery. The purpose of these communities is to respond to the threat of "the end of the world", viewed as the "white disease" of binary, racist, and colonialist thinking, with terreiro epistemologies capable of proposing a different relationship with the environment and with human and more-than-human collectivity. African-rooted religions could thus be interpreted as a decolonial alternative able to restore that "intersubjective project" without which, echoing de Martino, no possible world can exist.

Presenter(s): Claudia Antonangeli

Discussion

7454 Eerie Overlaps in Food Sovereignty and Nationalism: Part Two

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Food justice, food sovereignty, food security, and efforts to ensure access to good food are generally understood as positive goals, but when people with commitments to ethnonationalist ideologies or advocacy for punitive criminal justice efforts can be under the same umbrella as emancipatory, racial justice, and anti-colonial efforts, then the umbrella concepts deserve greater scrutiny and examination. This panel explores the various ways that causes drawing from opposed political viewpoints can fall under the same food politics, and how we as anthropologists should respond to that reality.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Sydney Giacalone, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Ryan Adams, Lycoming College, Anthropology Department

Chair: Sydney Giacalone, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sydney Giacalone, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Anasthascia Boateng, Gerardo Hernandez, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology
Presentation(s): A Rural Agrarian Reckoning: Multigenerational Farmers Seeking to Repair Soil, Agriculture, and Rural America Itself

Across U.S. agriculture, a small but growing subgroup of rural, multigenerational farmers are thinking about their own culpability in American agriculture's past and present, and desiring to change. This research studies producers in the American South and Midwest who are transitioning away from conventional practices towards environmentally and social repairing approaches, and reckoning with what this entails. Drawing from 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with 73 participants from 47 farms, this research follows producers questioning internalized ideologies, collaborating with plants, animals, and microbes to repair degraded soils, making breaks from family and institutions, and creating networks to align with others. These activities are often contentious within their communities and are intertwined with debates around politics, nationalism, and belonging. This paper pieces apart the unfolding, murky relationship between these farms' projects of ecological repair and the simultaneous rhetoric of regenerative agriculture's reparative effects on rural communities. Unpacking concepts of health, value, and community, my findings demonstrate a fundamental tension happening in US environmentalism and American ruralness itself: are the changes these farmers are working toward antithetical or counter to rural America, as their critics (including family & neighbors) often imply, or are these changes the very thing necessary for rural America to thrive (or revive)?

Presenter(s): Sydney Giacalone

Haunting Hungers: The Ghosts of Food Insecurity and Youth Violence

Food insecurity lingers like a ghost in the daily lives of many youths, an unseen but deeply felt presence that influences their actions. Building on ethnographic research at the Felege Hiywot STEAM Farm Camp, an Indianapolis urban gardening program for teens, the "ghost" experience of hunger and violence amplifies structural inequities that low-income and Black teens experience. While their everyday effect exudes resilience and energy, in surveys these kids express the catalyst for anger and violence that hunger can become. To navigate this ghost experience of food insecurity, the teens recommended providing more food pantries and community gardens, building acts of defiance, and encouraging shared meals. Framing their ideas with the broader discussion on food sovereignty and nationalism, we examine how youth perceive hunger as a societal failure with far-reaching consequences that reinforce violence. Here, we argue that their voices illuminate the ghost impact of failing policies to address food apartheid that continue to shape food access in the U.S. To conclude, we invite everyone to consider how addressing food insecurity can prevent youth violence. In amplifying the voices of these teens, we envision confronting the ghost of food insecurity that leads to hunger and violence in our communities. We encourage that food accessibility and security be ensured for all where food becomes a tool for peace rather than physically felt violations.

Presenter(s): Anasthascia Boateng

Co-author(s): Jennifer Meta Robinson

Ghosts in the Garden: Urban Youth, Memory, and the Politics of Good Food

Food sovereignty is often framed as a liberatory project rooted in resistance, care, and justice. Yet under the same conceptual umbrella of "sovereignty," we increasingly find both anti-colonial movements and exclusionary ethnonationalist agendas. This paper examines how shared food language—centered on autonomy, reclamation, and identity—can obscure deep ideological divergences. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with BIPOC youth in urban farming programs in Indianapolis, IN, I explore how "good food" becomes a site of negotiation: materially grown, emotionally remembered, and politically charged. Youth define a "good meal" not solely through nutrition or production, but through sensory memory, cultural belonging, and emotional satiation. Their reflections reveal that food sovereignty extends beyond land—it's also about healing, recognition, and relationality. These farms function as social infrastructures, where soil holds both displacement and possibility. Yet these spaces are also haunted by the uneasy proximity of conflicting political projects. This paper proposes that community farms are haunted infrastructures—repositories of ancestral hope, structural violence, and speculative futures. It asks: What happens when shared food ideals travel across contested terrains? And how might anthropologists remain critically attuned to the political ghosts embedded within food justice vocabularies?

Presenter(s): Gerardo Hernandez

529 Anthropology and Environment Society Flash Session #4

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Urmee Priya Das , Nathalia Dothling Reis, Australian Anthropological Society, Hunter Vaughan , Angela Alvarado Florez , Hannah Boone , Hess Love

Presenter(s): Urmee Priya Das, Nathalia Dothling Reis, Australian Anthropological Society, Hunter Vaughan, Angela Alvarado Florez, Hannah Boone, Hess Love

Presentation(s): "Haunted Ecologies: Environmental Destruction and the Spirits of the Land"

With rapid climate change and the growth of extractive industries, the adverse impact on land has become more than an ecological and geopolitical concern—it is now an ontological and emotional rupture. This paper examines landscapes that have been ecologically damaged as places of tangible injury and mourning, haunting, and memory. This paper draws from anthropological debates, such as animism, affect, political ecology, and environmental justice, to explain how communities undergo loss. Gordon's concept of haunting helps define it as a socio-political force. At the same time, Povinelli's geontopower informs this paper by illustrating how absence dominates frameworks of nonhuman agency, ancestral presence, and historical trauma. The work encompasses the Athabasca River in Alberta, where the extraction of tar sands is framed in

Indigenous resistance as spiritual desecration, and the Mississippi River in the corridor of 'Cancer Alley' in Louisiana, where petrochemical landscapes intersect with the Black and Indigenous histories of displacement and death. It also includes the Salton Sea and the Amazon, which are globally recognized as sites of ecological devastation. Boundless secondary sources inform it, including Indigenous testimonies, environmental justice reports, ethnographic literature, and artistic and news responses. It constructs the idea of 'haunted ecologies' as both affective and discursive formations. Stratified in these cases is the notion that landscapes serve not only as passive witnesses to the violence of extraction but also as active agents of memory and resistance.

Using discourse and document analysis, this paper ethnographically interprets media coverage, environmental evaluations, and public memorials through the lens of 'narratives' and employs a multi-sited analytical approach. It uses multispecies ethnography and relational ontology, drawing from Deborah Bird Rose and Marisol de la Cadena, to ask how land is imbued with spirit, kinship, and grief. The paper claims that haunting operates simultaneously as cultural critique and political action, used by those who witness what environmental violence attempts to annihilate. The paper attempts to construct a spectral, affective, and cosmological approach to ecological harm and, in doing so, proposes a fresh understanding of environmental violence founded on the remembrance, erasure, and resistance of obliterated lands.

Presenter(s): Urmee Priya Das

Cyclical time-beings: the liveliness of the ocean and the arrival of the mud of Samarco in the Degredo quilombola community in Brazil

In November 2015, the Samarco (BHP and Vale joint venture) dam tailings collapsed in Minas Gerais, southeast Brazil. The tons of toxic mud traveled 600 km and arrived at the ocean, harming many communities through the path, including the Degredo Quilombola community in Espírito Santo, southeast Brazil. Quilombola people descend from African enslaved people and compose over 6,000 quilombola communities in all the Brazilian regions. They are characterized by their particular way of communal living, kinship relations, Afro-descendancy, and interactions with the land and nature.

Since the arrival of the mud, the Degredo community has been part of the ongoing repair process that intends to compensate, mitigate, and repair the damage caused by the most significant environmental disaster in Brazil's history. Degredo's population used to be fishers in the ocean and rivers, and they had deep connections with these beings, who, for them, were alive and whole. This perspective demonstrates connections between Degredo's population and their whole environment. This local concept refers to what one of the griots told me for the first time in 2019 when I started working with the community regarding the Samarco dam tailings collapse repair process.

Through seven months of fieldwork from July 2023 to February 2024, I was introduced to the practices of the community. Activities like the dance of Jongo, fishing, cassava flour production,

and medicinal plant use reveal a worldview where "nothing is half-done, all things are whole," as one of the main griots in the community used to say. The community's practices align with the African and Afro-Brazilian principle of circularity (Nego Bispo 2015, 2018, 2023), reflecting the cyclical (Fu-Kiau, 1994) and spiral time-wisdom (Martins, 2021). This is performatively embodied in the Wheel of Jongo, where I argue that circular movements enact the cycles of the territory and the quilombola ecological practices. My research is an invitation to leave the certainties of linear time and plunge into a world where beings are animated by cyclic time to discover a new conception of life.

In this paper, I explore how Degredo's people conceive the ocean as a cyclic living being, the fishing techniques they developed with the whole environment and the whole beings, and how it affects their explanations about the arrival of the mud of the Samarco dam tailings collapse. Through fieldwork examples and people's narratives, I raise discussions around relationality and new animism from an Afro-diasporic perspective.

Presenter(s): Nathalia Dothling Reis

From Tetrapods to Terabytes: The Ghosts of Deep Time Relational Values in the Shallow Time Expansion of Digital Infrastructures on Ireland's Coast

With its exponential growth in digital infrastructures and renewable energy development, data and energy - or what Bresinhan and Brody (2022) dubbed the "moebius strip of wind/data" - infrastructure growth in Ireland provides a unique tapestry of the interwoven currents guiding (and being guided by) twenty-first century big tech growth, climate adaptation, and the tensions between globalisation and local communities. Recent scholarship has largely focused on the socioenvironmental entanglements of – and greenwashing tactics – around the proliferating data centre-scape in eastern urban Ireland on the outskirts of Dublin (Brodie 2020a) or on the backlash against big tech insurgence in larger western coastal towns such as Galway (Brodie 2020b). Drawing from desk research on the historical trajectory of telecommunications infrastructure growth in rural west Ireland from the original Transatlantic telegraph station on Valentia Island to fiberoptic cable landing stations that connect the global Internet, and site visits and fieldwork from Valentia to the subsea cable landing station and community of Killala (County Mayo), this talk explores the historical unfolding and present entanglements of data and energy infrastructures where cable landing stations have for centuries connected largely rural spaces at the stop gap for global and regional connectivity, and where grazing fields, coastlines and community football pitches are increasingly overshadowed by the towering whirl of data centres and wind power turbines. Leaning into Anna Tsing's notion of "friction", which "reminds us that heterogenous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (5), this talk explores the tentative windows of local agency, from the telegraph's role in bolstering international support for the Irish Rebellion to one fisherman's fight against new Internet infrastructure construction, sparked by these otherwise largely colonialist and extractive technologies that ultimately pull energy and capital back to the international offices of big tech on Dublin's Silicon Docks.

Presenter(s): Hunter Vaughan

Seasonal Ghosts: Nostalgia, Ecological Change, and the Haunting of Time in Southern Chile

In this paper, I explore how ecological transformations and seasonal rhythms in southern Chile are experienced through affective registers of nostalgia and haunting, based on ethnographic fieldwork with women living near native forests and berry cultivation zones in the Araucanía region, I examine how the landscape itself becomes a site of memory, desire, and loss. The arrival of summer is intensely felt, not only for the warmth and vibrant social life it brings, but also due to the latent fear of its imminent disappearance, marked by the onset of new seasonal changes. As the seasons shift and autumn and winter approach, which in the Southern Hemisphere span from March to August, conversations are charged with a quiet anxiety about the climatic transformations at hand. The onset of cold, long rains, and the shift in the air are perceived as a ghostly presence drawing near, evoking a sense of finitude and ecological mourning.

I argue that climate change and seasonal transformations are not merely environmental events, but embodied experiences that structure emotional and social life. The notion of ghosts becomes a useful tool to understand how temporalities—both climatic and affective—are sensed, narrated, and anticipated. The ghost of the cold, of winter, or of a vanishing landscape reflects broader anxieties about ecological degradation, altered temperatures, and changing patterns of life in rural southern Chile. Nostalgia, in this context, is not only about the past but also about feared and foreclosed futures. Through fieldnotes, diary entries, and sensory observations, I suggest that the landscape is haunted, by memory, by climate, and by the looming transformations of the Anthropocene.

Presenter(s): Angela Alvarado Florez

The Memory of Helene: Conceptualizing Resilience and Recovery Within the Arts Community in Asheville, North Carolina

While the concept of ghosts often brings up images of the deep past, some of the most haunting memories are those that remain freshly imposed on the landscape. This is the case for people striving to recover after Hurricane Helene while confronting physical reminders of the destruction. One culturally-important site that was decimated was the River Arts District (RAD) in Asheville, North Carolina. The RAD housed many artists' galleries, shops, and studios, and was a major tourist hotspot within western North Carolina. This research seeks to address the ways in which the physical medium of art (whether lost in the storm, damaged, or remaining after the storm) and artists' engagement with the RAD through the process of recovery memorialize their experiences of Hurricane Helene. How do they conceptualize and connect with art and place, and has that changed post-Helene? Although the research is in the beginning stages, proposed methods for investigating disaster through a lens rooted in art, emotion, and sense of place will be discussed, along with the guiding question of what resilience actually means to those who carry the memory of disaster.

Presenter(s): Hannah Boone

To Haunt With, Not Study: “Big Lizz” and the Ethics of Black EcoFeminist Invocation

This presentation engages the legend of Big Lizz, a towering Black woman said to haunt the Greenbriar Swamp near DeCoursey Bridge on Maryland's Eastern Shore. According to regional folklore, Lizz was enslaved, betrayed her Confederate captor by aiding Union forces, and was beheaded after helping bury a chest of gold in the swamp. Locals say she still appears if summoned through a ritual at the bridge.

Rather than extract meaning from her haunting, I propose a methodology grounded in haunting with. I treat Big Lizz not as an object of study, but as co-researcher, witness, and ancestral collaborator. Combining folklore studies, ethnographic fieldwork, ecological observation, and ritual performance, this work unfolds through embodied site visits and spiritually grounded practices.

I visited DeCoursey Bridge multiple times. At midnight, I engaged the local folk ritual and created my own. During daylight, I observed plant life, water movement, and the emotional and spatial textures of the swamp. I developed a personal ritual grounded in ancestral care, rooted in permission, silence, and reciprocal presence. The work emerges from a commitment to story with, not over.

In addition to poetic fieldnotes and folklore analysis, I conducted water quality testing, soil analysis, and botanical biodiversity surveys using a quadrat. These practices support an ecological reading of the site as memory keeper. The land, water, and plant life are not background. They are part of the archive. They co-haunt.

This ecological data offers insight into how the swamp holds grief, witness, and resistance. The swamp as an extended embodiment of Big Lizz and of myself. The research draws from Black feminist ethnography, hauntology, and speculative method. It centers ritual as a legitimate form of knowing and remembering, and extends the idea of the specter as more-than-human.

This presentation reimagines Big Lizz and frees her from the limits of a ghost story.

She is memory, resistance, and refusal to vanish.

What does it mean when the swamp itself becomes a collaborator?

When haunting is not unrest, but return?

How can we understand being haunted by the present?

Through landscape sketches, ritual cartography, layered images, and sensory fragments, the presentation offers a quiet invitation into swamp, spirit, and story. I argue that haunting is a methodological offering. It is a form of care and critique for researchers navigating silence, absence, and the afterlives of violence.

Guided by the ethics of Black feminist invocation, I position haunting not as spectacle, but as practice. Not as performance, but as care. Sometimes the impulse to document must yield to the need to witness. Through Big Lizz, we are invited to listen. We do not need to master the story, but to move with it. To haunt with her is to remember her. To walk with her is to see the land differently. The bridge is not the end.

Presenter(s): Hess Love

517 Middle East Section Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: James Redman , John Schaefer, Miami University, Department of Anthropology, Lara Sabra, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Muzehher Zeynep Kucuk , Samirah Jarrar , Isaac Friesen, Saint Paul University

Presenter(s): James Redman, John Schaefer, Miami University, Department of Anthropology, Lara Sabra, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Muzehher Zeynep Kucuk, Samirah Jarrar, Isaac Friesen, Saint Paul University

Presentation(s): An Ethnography of Measurement: Innovation Metrics for Life After Oil in the Arab Gulf

For the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – the second half of the twentieth century was a period of petroleum fueled, fast-paced development. As the continued sustainability of this oil-funded growth has become questionable, GCC governments have started imagining what their post-petroleum socioeconomic futures might look like. At the moment, and in concert with what is very much a current policy trend across the globe, the GCC regimes are focusing their efforts on innovation and going to great lengths to quantify, and sometimes benchmark, their shifts in that direction.

Yet, while all of this might be in line with the objectives and calculative management practices of policymakers, some caution is warranted about what it truly means to try to put this into practice and to try to gauge the outcomes at a national level. This is because innovation itself can be a very nebulous concept that gains no clarity when it is leveraged as a new economic model or pillar of modern-day statecraft and, as the GCC cases clearly illustrate, things quickly get even muddier with innovation when it is cast as a quantifiable, objective target that can comparatively measure countries in terms of how much or how little of it they have.

This paper looks at a particular aspect of how those efforts at innovation for development are being quantified and benchmarked as policies. Specifically, this research presents the GCC as a case study that shows exactly how notions about innovation are, if anything, very transmutable and indefinite concepts that are morphed into something seemingly concrete once they undergo quantification. In other words, the argument here is that attempts to quantify and measure innovation in the hopes of securing the golden ratio – or the perfect recipe – that will spur national economic growth runs the risk of taking something that is very disorderly and, through numbers and models, giving it the appearance of abstract orderliness that can be managed.

Finally, after an overview of some of the actual models that are being used for measuring innovation at the national level, this discussion will raise the possibility that there is an underlying difficulty in determining whether or not the innovation measurement instruments are actually measuring real world state-level innovation or if they are simply gauging a representative model of innovation that they, the instrument makers themselves, have created.

Presenter(s): James Redman

Ashkenormalization: Cantorial melodies, Persian immigration to the US, and Jewish assimilation in the 1960s

In their award-winning 2024 podcast *The Nightingale of Iran*, sisters Danielle and Galeet Dardashti document the self-discovery that their father Farid, a retired cantor originally from Teheran, undergoes as he comes to terms with his assimilation into American Jewish religious practice while in his late teens and early 20s. Born in Teheran, Farid grew up in the presence of his acclaimed father, Younes Dardashti, a famous maestro of *avaz*, which is an improvisational form of classical Persian vocal performance. Younes never taught his son the art, however. Farid had to find his own brief teen fame singing pop songs on Iranian TV for a few months in 1961-62, before he traveled to the United States for education. Eventually, he found a dream fulfilled in cantorial school and a successful professional career chanting prayers in synagogues. This route was fraught with difficulty, however, given the extreme attitudes against professional musical performance that Younes faced among the tiny Jewish community of Iran--Younes' devoted fans were nearly all Muslims. His son Farid ran up against similarly implacable attitudes among American Jews regarding the "correct" Jewish melodies for synagogue prayer--Ashkenazi or European ones. Farid inadvertently followed his father's example by failing to teach the Persian melodies of his childhood to his daughters (who include a cantor and a rabbi). This presentation begins by briefly reviewing the history of public attitudes toward musical professions in the Middle East, in Iran, and among Jewish communities thereof. The presentation concludes that not only religious identities come into play, but also class formations in Iran and the United States.

Presenter(s): John Schaefer

Beyond Prison Walls: Unseen Images and Stories from Lebanon's Former Prisoners

Imprisonment is a well-documented human experience – almost exclusively, however, from the perspective of the incarcerator. The perspective and experience of the incarcerated is less visible. One of the many ways in which incarcerating regimes document and chronicle incarceration is through a variety of dehumanizing images: arrest photographs, crime-scene images, "wanted" posters, etc. Carceral states actively disseminate such images while purposefully obscuring the violence, neglect, and brutality perpetrated behind prison walls. The public, in short, sees only what the incarcerating regime wants it to see.

There are other images being produced about incarceration, though these are less

widely disseminated and consumed. While conducting fieldwork for my ethnographic research project on Lebanon's carceral system, I found that formerly incarcerated people employ artistic and imagistic modalities to express their painful, contradictory, and non-chronological experiences of carceral violence. Prisoners produce a diverse assortment of artworks, illustrations, pictures, stories, and objects. These images offer alternative testimonies of prison life while destabilizing the dominant narrative presented by the carceral state.

In my presentation, I outline the main tenets of the "imagistic" research methodology I employ to make room for and understand the different images that formerly incarcerated people produce. Then, I proceed to discuss the images themselves, exploring how violence is visibilized and invisibilized through practices of image-making. Why are former prisoners drawn to image-making? What does it offer them? How can image-making resist and memorialize carceral violence? How does image-making fill the gaps left by memory holes and hauntings? I conclude by reflecting on what we can learn from the agentic practices of former prisoners who chronicle their experiences, against all odds, through images and stories, amidst a landscape that profits from their dehumanization and brutalization.

Presenter(s): Lara Sabra

On Ambiguous Seismic Time: Exploring the Limits of Futurity in Istanbul's Disastrous Landscape

Governance of impending emergencies has predominantly been studied through a futurist lens, revolving around concepts such as uncertainty (Button, 2010), risk (Mills, 2019), or anticipatory action (Anderson, 2010). This work highlights the limits of futurity and contributes to the recent literature that foregrounds the analytical and material significance of social memory in governing disasters yet-to-come (Gulum, 2024; Kroepsch et al., 2018). Based on ethnographic fieldwork with a volunteer Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team in Istanbul, the study investigates how these professionals temporally situate themselves in preparing for the expected Grand Istanbul Earthquake. In an urban context laden with recurrent devastating earthquakes, their professional practice unfolds within a unique temporal terrain, theorised here as ambiguous seismic time—a temporal condition shaped by the tension between uncertain yet inevitable futures and unresolved catastrophic memories. Focusing on the team's training sessions, this research examines symptomatic temporal ruptures manifesting in the conflictual self-imaginings of USAR professionals as both experienced rescuers and potential victims: Enacting "as-if" scenarios, seeking to make future disasters palpable in the present, yet the epistemic value and reliability of these anticipatory tools are often disrupted by the spectral presence of their experiences in past devastating earthquakes in Turkey. Those ethnographic moments set a broader conversation regarding existing bureaucratic inertia, urban precarity, and Turkey's prevailing memory regime organised around manufactured amnesia; all delimiting the possibilities for meaningful anticipatory action.

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Presenter(s): Muzehher Zeynep Kucuk

Specters of Resistance: Withheld Bodies and the Haunting of Palestine

In Palestine, the bodies of individuals killed in confrontations with Israeli forces-referred to as martyrs by Palestinians-are frequently withheld by Israeli authorities, preventing families from performing traditional burial rites. This practice has given rise to persistent rumors of organ theft, as families fear their loved ones' bodies are being subjected to unauthorized harvesting. These fears are not baseless: historical cases have documented such violations (Scheper-Hughes & Boström, 2013), and recent reports have reignited these concerns.

These withheld bodies, along with the rumors surrounding them, function as spectral presences within Palestinian society. They embody the suspended grief of families, the systematic confiscation of time (Sbeih, 2024) imposed by the colonial regime, and the broader context of structural violence that pushes the colonized subject into a necropolitical condition-the "living-dead" (Mbembe). Their physical absence transforms them into ghosts that haunt both personal mourning and the collective Palestinian consciousness.

Yet these detained martyrs, though disappeared, continue to exert influence. As catalysts for mobilization, they challenge the mechanisms of control and erasure imposed not only on their individual bodies but also on their communities-rendered invisible and targeted for annihilation under settler-colonial domination. Drawing on the words of Palestinian political prisoner and intellectual Walid Daqqa-who died after 38 years in Israeli prison and whose body remains withheld-this presentation takes inspiration from his play *The Martyrs Return to Ramallah* (2024), in which the liberated ghosts of detained martyrs come to lead the revolution. Through ethnographic fragments and an analysis of these haunting phenomena, this presentation explores how spectral

figures become symbols of both loss and resistance, illuminating the political potency of the ghost in a landscape marked by ongoing dispossession.

Short bibliography

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Presenter(s): Samirah Jarrar

"An (Im)Possible Reconciliation: Copts, Jihadis and Everyday Peace in Provincial Egypt"

States and societies around the world are engaging with questions of how to live with religious and cultural difference. Middle Eastern states, in particular, appear in political and journalistic discourse as incapable or increasingly failing to accommodate religious and cultural diversity. Unprecedented sociopolitical turbulence in many Arab states, combined with the proclivity of anthropologists to study committed piety movements in isolation, has resulted in anthropologists also overstating the level of separation between religious groups in Middle Eastern societies. This paper fills this gap by exploring a simultaneously mundane and exceptional manifestation of religious diversity in contemporary Egyptian society. Set amidst the tumult of the 2011 Arab Spring, and based on over four years of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper illuminates local forms of revolutionary politics, reconciliation and communication at an unlikely interfaith dialogue event between Coptic Christians and Jihadis (militant Islamists). First, the paper surveys histories of identity, border-making and interaction between Ghadi groups and Copts in Egypt. The second section examines the political interests and calculations which brought Coptic and Ghadi leaders together for a June 2011 conference. Documenting meetings and dialogue before, during and after the conference, the paper reflects on local processes of intention, meaning and peace. It shows how, despite the often pragmatic, episodic and fragmentary nature of the Coptic-Ghadi exchanges, the interfaith relationship resulted in very concrete manifestations of everyday peace. This conclusion, in turn, speaks to the perennial significance of local forms of community, peacebuilding and non-Western approaches to living with difference.

Presenter(s): Isaac Friesen

7857 What Haunts the House: Chronotopes, Capital, and the Unruly (After)lives of Place

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable returns to the haunted house not as a static metaphor, but as a persistent trope through which place is made-and unmade-under the pressures of nation-building and capital expansion. Working across anthropological subfields that engage sites such as ruins of the recent past, borders, museums, and tourist resorts, we ask: what makes a haunting, and for whom? Exploring these questions through this assemblage of perspectives and contexts, we draw on Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope (Bakhtin 2006) alongside the concept of the hyperobject (Morton 2013), to consider how specific places become overdetermined by national and capitalist logics, saturated with affective and ideological force. From this vantage point, we trace how narrative techniques are deployed as a means of chronotopic levelling to render certain pasts invisible and certain futures inevitable by attending to what these processes cannot fully contain: the residues, resistances, and presences that persist in spite of material and narrative erasure. Through these spectral (Derrida 2006) disruptions of spatial and temporal enclosures, chronotopes of the uncanny (Eckhard 2011, Freud 2003) emerge in which repressed spectres of the past are returned to the present through the temporal dislocation of space in the classical tradition of the ghost story, by the haunting of a house. From the persistence of Indigenous memory in bordered lands to the unruly archives and the ruins under luxury resorts, these papers explore what haunts the present house even after its story has been written.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Moon Pankam , Michael Min-Torresdey

Presenter(s): Eryn Talevich, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Gian Gregorio, University of California, San Diego, Moon Pankam , Jordan Griffin , Michael Min-Torresdey

Discussant: David Pedersen

5164 Work and Social Transformations in African economies viewed from below

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines how structural transformations are reshaping African economies, with particular attention to the lived experiences of traders, workers, and social groups operating across urban and rural spaces. Amid accelerated integration into global markets, the adoption of new technologies, shifting trade routes, and evolving extractive regimes, African economies are undergoing profound change. These dynamics generate both new opportunities and new forms of

vulnerability - experienced unevenly across geographies, class positions, and social relations. The papers in this panel engage critically with the contemporary structural dynamics shaping African economies, with particular emphasis on transformations in labor. Contributors examine how shifting economic regimes - marked by increasing informalization, precarization, and new forms of extraction - intersect with enduring structures of class, gender, and age. Through ethnographic attention to traders, workers, and entrepreneurs navigating precarity and opportunity, the panel explores how labor is organized, valued, and contested across different contexts. Together, these contributions offer grounded insights into how broader political-economic shifts are mediated through everyday laboring lives, and how inequality, aspiration, and survival are negotiated in the wake of structural change.

Section: Association for Africanist Anthropology

Organizer: Héritier Mesa, University of Ottawa, Joshua McDermott

Chair: Elisa Tamburo

Presenter(s): Ismaël Maazaz, Ludovic Bakebek, Joshua McDermott, Héritier Mesa, University of Ottawa, Lucien Ramazani

Discussant: Elisa Tamburo , Sasha Newell

Presentation(s): Working the waterscapes: popular water labor at the Chad-Cameroon borderland

Residents of the Chad-Cameroon borderland require everyday labor to survive and navigate the complexities of local water landscapes. Such essential labor includes efforts towards ensuring access and supply of drinking water but also managing water excesses during the rainy season. Indeed, fountain managers, porters and technicians of the national water corporations (STE in Chad and CamWater in Cameroon) are among the workers who strive to provide water to local households networks by carrying cans, building boreholes or pounds, and maintaining pipes and handpumps among other critical activities amid limited resources, uncertainties and the absence of universal standardized. In addition, water-related disasters such as flooding are allegedly becoming more frequent in a context of climate change and impose significant amounts of labor to protect communities by establishing large-scale protections (dams) through transnational development projects or with small-scale initiatives, as exemplified by sandbagging. This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork in several towns on both sides of the Chad-Cameroon borderland to analyze water labor as part of an essential popular economy. It turns the spotlight on an original, gendered infrastructure shaped by workers' solidarity, embedded interactions with end-users and struggles against authorities. Thereby, the paper contributes to ongoing academic debates on agency, popular economies, climate resilience and natural resource management.

Presenter(s): Ismaël Maazaz

Building socio-professional trajectories in the construction sector in Douala, Cameroon.

This paper explores the multiple factors that shape career trajectories in the construction sector, whether they relate to skills, social networks, financial resources, or identity. The aim is to analyse how these various factors — conceived as different forms of capital — operate across different

categories of workers, shaping both their social positions and professional pathways. The reflection seeks to offer a critical perspective on the literature dealing with informal economies in Africa. This body of work has long been structured around a relatively homogeneous dichotomy between accumulation and survival as frameworks for understanding the experiences and trajectories of economic actors. On one hand, there are small entrepreneurs oriented toward accumulation; on the other, informal economies are seen as primarily composed of precarious workers engaged in survival strategies. In contrast, this paper proposes a sectoral approach to African urban economies, moving beyond the limiting category of the "informal economy." The objective is to examine, at the level of a specific sector, how access to diverse forms of capital structures economic activity and determines career opportunities — that is, the possibility of establishing a lasting presence in the profession by seizing perceived opportunities such as becoming a technician, setting up a craft workshop or a small construction company, or securing public procurement contracts. The analysis is based on qualitative study.

Presenter(s): Ludovic Bakebek

Invisible Legion: The Political Economy of Informal Own-Account Work in Sierra Leone and West Africa

Informal own-account work is ubiquitous in contemporary Africa. For millions of workers who cannot find adequate wage work, own-account work is their last line of survival. However, few scholars have offered a class or labor-centric analysis of own-account workers, usually conceptualizing them in de-classed terms as entrepreneurs, small-business owners, excluded semi-proletariats, or market innovators. This chapter offers a different perspective, applying the peasant-studies concept of the "commodification of substance" to the urban context of own-account workers and introducing the concept of "the irregular army of labor," a novel contribution to the Marxist theories of the "reserve army of labor," to analyze own-account workers as essential parts of both domestic and global working classes maligned to precarious petty trading in the face of the structural inadequacy of the formal labor market across Africa.

Presenter(s): Joshua McDermott

Mobility, Capital, and Precarity: Configurations of Trade in Contemporary Kinshasa

This paper draws on ethnographic research among Congolese traders working at different scales in Kinshasa's imported clothing and hardware sectors. While the DRC's import trade has historically been dominated by expatriate traders from Southern Europe, West Africa, and more recently Asia and the Middle East, increasing numbers of Congolese traders now engage in transnational circuits, traveling to Guangzhou, Istanbul, or Dubai to source goods. These new mobilities reveal both the globalization of Kinshasa's urban economy and internal hierarchies within the trade sector. Transnational traders – those able to cross a threshold of financial capital – are better positioned to accumulate wealth, as their goods yield higher margins in local markets. In this context, mobility itself becomes a form of capital. By contrast, traders who cannot travel rely on intermediaries or limited local stock, constraining their profits. While all traders navigate an uncertain socio-

economic environment with weak state protections, transnational traders mobilize diverse forms of capital to move beyond the precarious, subsistence-level commerce that dominates the lower rungs. This paper juxtaposes these trajectories to explore how work, mobility, and accumulation intersect in Kinshasa's contemporary economy, and how opportunity and precarity are differently negotiated across the trade hierarchy.

Presenter(s): Héritier Mesa

Class, Gender and work on the Lake Edward.

Artisanal fishing and the sale of fish at the local markets along the shores of Lake Edouard constitute the backbone of the economy in North Kivu province, in the DR Congo. This paper is based on the ethnography of the lives and practices of fishermen and fish traders in the villages surrounding the lake Edouard. This local economic activity is embedded in a broader regional network of commodity exchange between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Within this context, this paper focuses on the concept of work in artisanal fishing and fish commercialization. This paper argues that this form of work is fundamentally a social relationship - one that is embedded in systems of value production and class consciousness. Work in this context not only structures economic roles but also delineates social boundaries, producing differentiations between the "haves" and "have-nots." Moreover, it acts as a gendered marker of distinction, shaping the social positioning of men and women within this economy and social space.

Presenter(s): Lucien Ramazani

Discussion

2479 Language, Environment, and Changing Climates: New Approaches to Language Reclamation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Around the world, linguistic and environmental knowledge are intimately bound. Through language people apprehend the material world, communicate with animate places, beings, and spirits, and transmit stories that capture underlying environmental ontologies. The transformation of natural ecologies can have profound effects on a community's vocabulary and ethnoecological learning opportunities, as well as other forms of engaging and understanding the nature of the world. In many colonial and postcolonial settings, the attempted separation of Indigenous peoples from their lifeways has included theft of local knowledge, land and the languages through which that land was named and known. Agricultural systems, food ways, ethnobotanical knowledge, medicinal practices, and spiritual and philosophical systems are found at the intersection of linguistic and environmental knowledge. Interruption of Indigenous language transmission has also involved interruption of land-based relationships and knowledge.

Indigenous activists and language promoters have increasingly linked reclamation of land and language in the pursuit of recognition and sovereignty. As Mel Engman and Mary Hermes (2021) have suggested, "local land is central to ways of knowing and being, thus it is also central to learning." Yet, language revitalization practices and materials are often haunted by colonial language ideologies and ways of knowing that focus almost entirely on reconstructing a grammar. In some cases, language is reduced to code, rather than being viewed as a complex, embodied means of knowing and engaging. In contrast, in the Americas and elsewhere, language promoters and local culture revivalists alike are increasingly connecting their activism to broad environmental and climate change concerns. They are reclaiming and reanimating environmental and linguistic practice as shared goals. Such activities surface in narratives, conversations, meeting data, and contemporary media production, pointing towards more expansive approaches to reclaiming language and culture, based on community needs and perspectives (Leonard 2012).

Papers in this panel open a conversation between linguistic and other anthropological approaches to understanding the environment. With contributions that span the globe, our presenters consider the diverse ways that linguistic and environmental reclamation intersect through explorations of place names, media technologies, health systems, agricultural practices, and genres of speaking and reading the environment. By emphasizing local, non-institutional, and quotidian forms of linguistic and environmental reclamation, this panel explores openings through which more sustainable linguistic futures may grow.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Georgia Ennis, Western Carolina University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Jacqueline Messing, University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Georgia Ennis, Western Carolina University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology

Presenter(s): Georgia Ennis, Western Carolina University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Jacqueline Messing, University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Anthropology, David Tavaréz, Vassar College, Department of Anthropology, Anthony Webster, University of Texas at Austin, Neşe Kaya Özkan, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology, Colleen O'Brien

Discussant: Paul Kroskrity, University of California, Los Angeles

Presentation(s): Weaving Ecological Influence: Social Media and the Revalorization of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

How might community-based social media production contribute to the reclamation and revalorization of traditional ecological knowledge and related linguistic practices? For many speakers of Upper Napo Kichwa in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the plants, animals, forests, rivers, and mountains that surround them are animate beings, with whom they communicate through songs and dreams. Such ontologies shape other forms of environmental engagement from hunting to the harvesting of medicinal plants. Yet, wage labor, school, and mainstream media are influences away from the place-based knowledge of elders for younger speakers of Kichwa. Although many Indigenous Amazonian people are active on social media, relatively little of the content available to

them reflects their experiences and languages. Against a backdrop of environmental change, Kichwa activists have increasingly turned to community and social media to raise awareness of environmental injustices and to revalorize traditional environmental practices and knowledge. Grounded in long-term ethnographic engagement in the region, this paper explores preliminary results of a pilot project to collaboratively produce environmentally-focused social media content with members of the Association of Kichwa Midwives of the Upper Napo. Media production represents an emergent vitality (Perley 2013) for environmental knowledge related to health, material culture, and food ways among intergenerational participants and wider audiences.

Presenter(s): Georgia Ennis

Tlaoltzintli, dear corn: Linguistic and ideological reclamation among environmentalists and activists in Tlaxcala, Mexico

As part of an ideological resistance to the broad encroachment of Spanish and bioengineered crops, Nahuatl language activists in Tlaxcala, Mexico promote semiotic parallels between linguistic diversity and biodiversity, with Nahuatl aligned with maize and other Native crop seeds. In the central Mexican state of Tlaxcala, Nahuatl is a heritage language and sometimes first language alongside Spanish, the language of instruction in all Mexican public schools. Local language promoters including teachers, writers, poets and families concerned about the rapid decline of the use of Nahuatl in Malinche region homes contribute to language reclamation projects across the state. Youth engaged in these language reclamation efforts themselves share Nahuatl on social media. There has been a parallel interest in the renewal of local environmental and linguistic knowledge, particularly with the Mexican movement to block crop bioengineering. People interested in promoting local, heritage crop production have entered into conversation with language activists creating an ideological reevaluation of hyper-local discourse of linguistic and environmental knowledge. Based on extensive field work in this region this paper analyzes data from language activist meetings, environmental events and social media.

Presenter(s): Jacqueline Messing

Revitalization, knowledge and self-determination in the Zapotec diaspora

Sovereign entities and institutions have played a determining role in Indigenous language reclamation projects in the Americas (Davis 2018, Dennison 2024). In Oaxaca, Mexico, an entanglement of state-sponsored programs, such as the Intercultural Bilingual High School (BIC) system, and institutions that train Indigenous teachers (like CEDELIO) engage in top-down management of language instruction and revitalization. In contrast, non-institutionalized attempts to revitalize Indigenous languages have been episodic in their engagement with diasporic communities in Mexico and the US, particularly in "Oaxacalifornia" (Cruz-Manjarrez 2013, Gellman 2023, Stephen 2007). This paper examines the production and circulation of works by Zapotec intellectuals, including Dilla Walhall, a dictionary and phrasebook compiled by the educator Ricardo Ambrosio over a 20-year period to promote the use of a Zapotec variant from his hometown, Lashichhij. This dictionary and other works promote the use of local terms to

emphasize the environmental diversity in communities that local intellectuals reclaim as Indigenous and autonomous in Oaxaca. This strategy focuses in part on the identification and naming of animal and plant species that constitute a shared body of knowledge for diasporic communities. My presentation theorizes these efforts as a rhizomatic framework that fosters diasporic self-determination through non-institutional, individualized efforts (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, DeLanda 2006).

Presenter(s): David Tavaréz

"My roots nestle deep:" A Navajo poetry of place

This paper begins by looking briefly at the history of documenting Athabaskan/Dene placenames by Mescalero and Tolowa language activists. It shows how in both the Tolowa and Mescalero Apache case, placenames were vital to language reclamation efforts. It then turns to the work of Keith Basso on Western Apache placenames and moral discourse and building on Basso's suggestion that poets know well the evocative and moral work of placenames, it turns to the use of Navajo placenames in contemporary Navajo poetry. To begin that discussion, I look at a Navajo philosophy of language that highlights the importance of sound (a Navajo acoustemology). From there, I turn to the sonic and visual qualities of Navajo placenames and the careful attention they show towards attending to the environment—Tóniil'aha'nii 'sound of something moving in water out of sight.' This is then reiterated in a series of examples from a variety of poets (from the first poem published in Navajo to more recent work). For many poets, the use of placenames establishes "roots" with a place. It concludes by looking at the politics of Navajo placenames as they relate to a controversy over Laura Tohe's book Tséyi': Deep in the Rock. Here we see the way that a moral history and a humane attention to the environment are interwoven through placenames.

Presenter(s): Anthony Webster

Voices in the Honey Forest: Vibrant Encounters, Linguistic and Environmental Survival in Turkey's Hemshin Lands

This paper explores the links between language and the environment by tracing the ongoing "becoming" of Hemshin environmentalism among Hemshins "returning home" to Turkey's Hemshin town. As the Hemshin landscape is dramatically transformed by the growing investment and infrastructure projects, partly driven by IMF-imposed liberalization of the agriculture and energy sectors after 2001 (Erensü 2018), Hemshin people are increasingly engaged in a process of "reading" and rereading (Matthews 2017:G153) their landscape, while they participate in emergent Hemshin environmentalism. Within this process of "reading" Hemshin landscapes, young Hemshins unexpectedly encounter many linguistic and material traces, which inspire them to think about and act against environmental degradation in their lands, provide them with resources to be used to fight against destructive development projects, and induce a process of reestablishing bonds with and a reclamation of Hemshin lands, language, past knowledges, and lifeways that have been severed, due to generations of the structural violence of Turkish nationalism, outmigration and socio-economic transformations. Attending to the agentive roles of language and

other non-human beings, such as trees, in the shaping of Hemshin environmentalism, selfhood, and socialities, I show how language and the environment mutually constitute one another creating possibilities for the revitalization of traditional agricultural practices and Hemshin language.

Presenter(s): Neşe Kaya Özkan

Losing the language of spirits: Changing linguistic practices and environmental Knowledge in Sulawesi

Among the Gorontalo of Sulawesi (Indonesia), like many Indigenous groups in the world, relationships with the environment have traditionally been mediated through spirits. These spirits, called *lati*, must be addressed with special language to provide rain and avert pests. The language includes profanity that would not be permitted in normal conversation. Although the Gorontalo have been Muslim for hundreds and years with a long history of syncretism between Islam and traditional practices, recent social and political shifts in Indonesian culture have been creating new taboos about a number of customs, including communicating with *lati*. In this talk, we explore the traditional discourse strategies and linguistic forms of communication that are used with *lati*. We contextualize them within Indonesian social norms and practices, drawing comparisons with other groups that also traditionally communicated with spirits as a way of interacting with the environment. This research highlights how linguistic practices related to *lati* not only reflect cultural beliefs but also embody critical environmental knowledge essential for sustainable agricultural practices. We examine how the diminishing belief in the involvement of *lati* in sustainable farming relates to environmental degradation, as many farmers neglect these traditional practices in favor of modern agriculture that relies on toxic chemicals and discuss perceptions of these rituals by the wider Gorontalo community.

Presenter(s): Colleen O'Brien

Discussion

7033 Interrogating Indigeneity: Deconstructing a Haunted Concept

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

As scholars have begun to use indigeneity as a lens for understanding the struggles of ethnic minorities in increasingly varied contexts, tensions in the concept are exposed. Scholars (Morton 2017; Pelican 2009; Sugimoto 2019) have argued that indigeneity as a lens can problematically flatten complex histories, result in a messy struggle over "first-ness", essentialize nuanced cultural practice, and erase the struggles of other groups. Leaning into the complexity of indigeneity as an analytic, this panel takes on the task of interrogating indigeneity, its relationship with sovereignty and settler colonialism, and the particular kinds of power hierarchies it describes. Looking at ethnographic contexts from the Middle East, this panel follows Cattellino and Simpson (2022) in exploring how the conjunctures of anthropology with different scholarly traditions might offer opportunities for thinking through indigeneity.

Cattelino, Jessica R., and Audra Simpson. 2022. "Rethinking Indigeneity: Scholarship at the Intersection of Native American Studies and Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 51: 365–81. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-101819-110339>.

Morton, Micah F. 2017. "Reframing the Boundaries of Indigeneity: State-Based Ontologies and Assertions of Distinction and Compatibility in Thailand." *American Anthropologist* 119 (4): 684–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12948>.

Pelican, Michaela. 2009. "Complexities of Indigeneity and Autochthony: An African Example." *American Ethnologist* 36 (1): 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.01109.x>.

Sugimoto, Tomonori. 2019. "Urban Settler Colonialism: Policing and Displacing Indigeneity in Taipei, Taiwan." *City and Society* 31 (2): 227–50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12210>.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Allison Stuewe, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures

Chair: Allison Stuewe, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures

Presenter(s): Niv Likwornik, Candace Lukasik, Mississippi State University, Allison Stuewe, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures, Christopher Sheklian, Mississippi State University

Discussant: Linda Green, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Interrogating Global Indigeneity: The City of David

The issue of indigeneity has been as central to the subject of Palestine/Israel as it has been ill-defined. Jewish Israelis increasingly feel the need to "prove" their indigenous status, corresponding with the larger themes of twentieth-century colonialism and the rise in decolonial action and discourse. The "City of David," an archaeological-touristic site run by the settler organization ELAD in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem, is an extremely popular destination for Israelis and international tourists alike. The site combines archaeological research, biblical references, notions of purity, and embodied performance to prove an exclusive primordial Jewish connection to the land. Based on fieldwork that includes taking tours of the site, analyzing tour guides' rhetoric, attention to the audiovisual exhibitions shown to tourists, and studying the texts provided with each artifact, I will examine the ways in which a critical view of the site shows how our conventional understanding of indigeneity as pure, fixed, and "naturally" autochthonous, rather than a category built through oppressive power relations, is highly problematic and enables the co-optation of the language of indigeneity in pursuit of the foreclosure of a reckoning with and rectification of the actual violent power hierarchy in place.

Presenter(s): Niv Likwornik

'Indigenous, not Christian': Secular Separations and Decolonial Sovereignty in Global Assyria

In 2014, ISIS took control over large swaths of land in Iraq and Syria. Iraq's minority communities and especially Christians were specifically targeted by the group leading to the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands. Christian displacement by ISIS was read by Western (and particularly Christian) politicians and policymakers as part of a larger concern over the future of Christianity in the Middle East and global Christian persecution. During this onslaught, a new generation of Assyrian diaspora organizations was formed in places like Detroit, Chicago, and Washington DC to aid and advocate for kin back in the homeland, as well as unify an ecclesiastically divided diaspora into a movement for indigenous rights. This paper asks: How is indigenous sovereignty in northern Iraq (espoused by transnational Assyrians) shot through secular mediations of ecclesial forms of kinship and contextualized by colonial legacies and imperial presents? In tracing the shadows of secularity in the geopolitics of concern over Middle Eastern Christian suffering, this paper broadly explores how we may be better able to parse a decolonial approach to the intersections of Christianity and indigeneity in the Middle East, that exceeds Western, neo-colonial instrumentalization.

Presenter(s): Candace Lukasik

The Politics of Yezidi Indigeneity: Centering Displacement and Dispossession in Scholarly Analysis of Iraqi Yezidi Identity

Since the ISIS attacks on the Yezidis of Shingal in August 2014 that displaced hundreds of thousands, Yezidis in the US, Europe, and Iraq have established many NGOs focused on rebuilding Iraqi Yezidi villages and advocating for international protection for Yezidi land. Many of these groups have begun to use the language of indigeneity to describe the political and economic effects of colonialism and imperialism on their communities. This framing is controversial—particularly in how it places Yezidis vis-à-vis their Kurdish neighbors, who are also engaged in their own bids for sovereignty sometimes rooted in identification as an indigenous people. Based on a combined 22 months of fieldwork with Iraqi Yezidis in Germany, including archival research and the collection of oral history interviews, this paper explores specific episodes of Iraqi Yezidi dispossession and displacement in the 20th and 21st centuries and the ongoing consequences of these episodes in the lives of Iraqi Yezidis living in Europe. Inspired by Glen Sean Coulthard's (2014) and Patrick Wolfe's (2006) analysis of the extraction of value from land in settler colonial relations, I argue that the mechanisms of Iraqi Yezidi exploitation, displacement, and dispossession should be centered in scholarly analysis of the growing Yezidi identification with indigeneity.

Presenter(s): Allison Stuewe

Liturgical Indigeneity: Sacramental Presence, Memory, and Land in an Armenian Village in Turkey

Vakıflı, known as the "last remaining Armenian village in Turkey," sits on the slopes of Musa Dağı. It was made famous by Franz Werfel's historical novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, depicting Armenian resistance during the Genocide committed by the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. While the post-imperial borders shifted, placing the survivors first in French-mandate Syria and then the Republic of Turkey, the local Armenian Christian population

continued to cultivate the land. Today, they bring organic farming techniques and longstanding customs around the Christian liturgical year together as part of their continued claim on the village. This paper explores the connection between contemporary liturgical practice, land stewardship and organic agricultural practice, and historical memory in Vakıflı. Armenian liturgical services make a link between community and place explicit. Indigeneity, a concept whose utility for describing the Armenian situation has recently been debated within Armenian studies, likewise posits a link between people and land. By focusing on liturgical tradition, theological notions of sacramental presence, and postcolonial memory of Genocide and resistance, the paper suggests alternative groundings for a notion of indigeneity that often depends on claims to land funneled through ethnonational conceptions of place, territory, and belonging.

Presenter(s): Christopher Sheklian

Discussion

8055 Collections Lessons: Teaching and Learning through Collections (Part 2)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will share successes from recent experiments with collections-based learning, while reflecting critically on the pedagogical, logistical, and ethical challenges involved in bringing an "object-based" or "collections-based" focus to teaching and learning. Our discussion will be positioned alongside current efforts to decolonize anthropology museums and collections.

Object-Based Learning approaches, often grounded in multisensorial and experiential learning pedagogies, have been proposed as encouraging active learning in formal education settings (Chatterjee and Hannan 2015, Adams 2015, Kukhareva et al. 2020). Logistically, teaching and learning with collections often presents special challenges as it requires either bringing a group of learners into a museum or bringing its collections to the learners. Ethically, this approach can be problematic where it reinforces learners' authority to analyze and interpret other communities' cultural belongings, privileging the colonial gaze over the stories and voices of makers and owners of the items exposed to study (Schultz 2019, Hodge 2018).

In this two-part roundtable, we discuss collecting and curating as learning strategies that cross boundaries between museum, classroom, and community. Presenters in this session have explored museum collections in their courses to support multisensorial engagement with history and material culture (Knutson) or to encourage reflection on the relationships between meaning, movement, collection, and display (Berk). Others have worked on public anthropology projects that involve community partnerships, such as an initiative to create finding aids for collections from Mexico at the Sam Noble Museum (Nicholas), or the curation of an exhibition at the Jones Museum at Moundville Archaeological Park following a major repatriation (Brazelton & Nelson).

These and other experiences invite us to ask: What criteria and best practices can we put forward for effective, pedagogically sound, and ethical teaching and learning through anthropology collections? How can we ensure that Object-Based Learning is properly grounded in the broader perspectives and methods of anthropology as a discipline, including sensory anthropology and "engaged" approaches? And how can we ensure that our collections-based teaching and learning, in museums or in the community, contributes to decolonizing anthropological museums and education?

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Eric Thrift, University of Winnipeg

Presenter(s): Sara Ann Knutson, University of British Columbia, Christopher Berk, Auburn University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work, Claire Nicholas, University of Oklahoma, Elizabeth/ Lisa Brazelton, The University of Alabama, Clayton Nelsen, Parkland College

Discussant: Christina Hodge, Brown University, Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Deborah Johnson-Simon

5064 Paranormal Panoptic Activity: New Surveillance Mechanisms in Educational Contexts

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Under threat of "learning loss" during COVID-19, we experienced a collective desensitization to public surveillance of private lives (Stacy & Casar, 2023), allowing new panoptic technologies to evolve amidst an increasingly autocratic society. Today's political climate has only intensified draconian educational surveillance, forging new techniques of discipline for systems, curricula, and people challenging oppressive ideology. The quiet background hum of panoptic ghosts present in schools since inception has progressed to a more aggressive haunting of surveilling forces across all facets of educational life - and beyond. Without documentation and critical analysis of how panopticism is infiltrating education, what was once considered extreme "paranormal" activity will simply become normalized, giving "power of mind over mind" so that humans reform themselves to align with dominant forces (Foucault, 1977, p. 206). In this round table, scholars draw upon anthropological perspectives to delineate mutating surveillance tactics that are being used to advance and normalize extremist ideologies that disenfranchise marginalized communities. Mike Karlin explores how emerging education technology and generative artificial intelligence seek to continuously, unquestioningly gather, sell, and exploit student and classroom data with those outside the classroom, presenting a significant danger for both students and teachers, particularly for those who hold marginalized identities and beliefs, as they unknowingly share private information to be used in undisclosed manners. Ted Hamann discusses how Project RAÍCES, a multi-pronged home-grown teachers of color initiative, was accused of being 'pro-DEI' and abruptly cancelled by DOGE. He analyzes this disciplining and the institution's uneven response. Sepideh Yasrebi examines how technological and institutional surveillance tactics

enforce linguistic policing through hegemonic pedagogies, ultimately erasing emergent bilinguals' rich linguistic and cultural repertoires and identities. Jen Stacy depicts how Moms for Liberty has appropriated the concept of "parents' rights" to usurp democratic ideals of local control, morph regulation with censorship, and legitimize a new brand of sociocultural panopticism. Ava Kaplan considers the ways libraries are haunted sites caught between privacy and surveillance, normalization and transgression, by unpacking how librarians' feelings of paranoia materialize in self-censoring behavior and quiet resistance with regards to books about LBBTQ+ and People of Color. Jessica Sierk investigates novel forms of surveillance within sexual and reproductive healthcare that emerged leading up to and since the U.S. Supreme Court overturning Roe vs. Wade and their chilling effect on formal and informal public health education. Confronting today's panoptic ghost raises critical consciousness to dismantle current and prevent new forms of radical surveillance.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Jen Stacy, University of New Mexico

Presenter(s): Edmund Hamann, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Sierk, Jen Stacy, University of New Mexico, Mike Karlin, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Ava Kaplan, Sepideh Yasrebi, University of New Mexico

Discussant: Wesley Shumar, Drexel University

2776 Race Elsewhere

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Race is a fundamental reality in many societies around the world, structuring social, political, economic, material, and affective life. However, following early anthropology's complicity in co-constructing race as an idea and system, the anthropological study of race has largely been confined to physical or biological anthropology, sidelining its examination within sociocultural anthropology – save a significant yet frequently overlooked body of literature (eg. Davis 1941, Drake 1945, Hurston 1935, Powdermaker 1939). More recently, there have been several calls in anthropology (Harrison 1991, Mukhopadhyay & Moses 1997, Visweswaran 1998) to study the cultural dimensions of race, alongside which there has been seminal scholarship on the anthropology of race in the US, UK, and Latin America (eg. Brown 2005, Gregory 1998, Smith 2016, Thomas 2019). This panel, however, shifts the focus elsewhere, foregrounding race as both globally and historically constituted as well as locally embedded within specific contexts in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.

The papers on this panel enter debates about 'where in the world' race can be used as an appropriate analytic, turning to Africa, Asia, and the Pacific where race is still relatively understudied and undertheorized and where questions arise over whether other categories like 'ethnicity', 'community', or 'tribe' are more relevant or accurate. At the same time, these are areas of the world long shaped by colonial and colonially adjacent histories of race-making, and legacies of

racialized regimes of labor. They are also home to historical and ongoing massive movements of people and subject to contemporary forms of colonialism, settler colonialism, and global and local modes of racial governance. These dynamics make them rich sites to study the everyday life of racial formations, subjectivities, politics, and relations. By bringing together ethnographic work that examines race in its "vernaculars" (Pierre 2020) and beyond its usual geographies, this panel explores the theoretical and methodological challenges, frontiers, and imperatives of taking race seriously in places where its legitimacy as an analytic is often contested, yet its effects are deeply felt.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Alisha Elizabeth Cherian

Chair: Alisha Elizabeth Cherian

Presenter(s): Gayatri Reddy, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Vivian Chenxue Lu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Veronika Kusumaryati, Harvard University, nisrin elamin

Presentation(s): Siddi Chronicles: A Historical Ethnography of a 'Racial' Category in Hyderabad, India

"Everybody knows. We were ghulams [slaves] from Africa...but we don't like to talk about it," Zarina, a siddi elder told me, referring to descendants of 19th c. East African migrants in Hyderabad. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with Zarina and other descendants of this community in contemporary Hyderabad as well as archival material speaking to slavery and its abolition, this paper traces this unspoken haunting and the shifting contours of race and blackness in India, through the lens of siddis. It highlights events in the 19th century—largely imperial, but also local and regional—that significantly impacted, indeed transformed, these geopolitical migrations and the meanings attached to race and slavery in India. Specifically, it argues that slavery's abolition by the British in the 19th c. is what helped to produce the object in its wake, as the many meanings and practices of slavery in India became distilled into one form, mapped singularly onto "African" bodies. As such, the globalization of race and slavery provided cover for the invisibilization of Indian slavery and the concomitant unseeing of caste and the seeing of religion in its wake. The paper will explore these shifting signifiers of slavery, race, caste, and religion in India, arguing for the long afterlives of these 19th c. events as well as their location in local and regional contexts to better understand the meanings of race outside the Atlantic world and their impacts on Zarina and others in Hyderabad.

Presenter(s): Gayatri Reddy

Capital personified: Ethnoracialization and economic sovereignty in Nigeria's Global South shift

This paper examines processes of capitalist ethnoracialization, or how increased mobilities of people, commodities, and capital amongst the Global South has precipitated new ethnoracial and national imaginaries of suspicion and political anxiety. For example, Nigerian notoriety has emerged as a global national stereotype – in relation to drug-trafficking and prolific scamming rackets – alongside global racial ones, that are ever present in Nigerian diasporic livelihoods in the

Global South. Through ethnographic and archival material, the paper revisits Stuart Hall's (2017) *Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* alongside emergent anthropological works on white supremacy (Beliso-deJesus, Pierre, and Rana 2025), racial capitalism (Huang 2024), and ethnoracialization in non-Western contexts (Byler 2022). By focusing on the multiple valences of racializing discourse - domestic ethnic stereotypes, national notoriety in of Nigerians abroad, pan-African pro-Black economic and geopolitical visions, the paper considers how racial difference is constantly regenerated at the nexus of global racial capitalism and the current geopolitical order of nation-states.

Presenter(s): Vivian Chenxue Lu

Spectral categories: Race and its Endurance in West Papua

Critical race theory has highlighted the constructed-ness of race as a social and political category. Race has been understood as a way to characterize and rank difference (Bernasconi 2018; Valls 2005; Ward and Lott 2002; Bernasconi and Lott 2000). It has also been used as a technique to organize power (Jeffers 2014) and "an arbiter of judicial architecture and procedures of the global present" (da Silva 2014). In Indonesia-occupied West Papua, race, however, has marked spectral historiography of power. While slavery and colonialism were considered to be the most important factor that shaped racial politics in most former European colonies, a more complicated history of slavery and an enduring colonial present have allowed for the effacement and conjuring of race as a social category. Drawing from Papuans' articulation of racial difference and its repression, this presentation proposes how the spectral categories of race shape the architecture of repression and liberation in the region. It also suggests that while race is made durable through an institutionalization of racism, race is made and remade through palimpsestic processes of historymaking.

Presenter(s): Veronika Kusumaryati

Race, Sufi Power and Empire-making in central Sudan

Over the past two decades leading up to the current war in Sudan, Saudi and Emirati elites have invested billions of dollars in Sudanese land and infrastructure. This surge of Gulf-Arab investment coincided with the former Bashir regime rolling out neoliberal privatization policies aimed at decimating Sudan's small-scale agricultural sector in order to attract foreign investments in land. Far from new, this phenomenon of foreign "land grabbing" echoes previous waves of state-driven, colonial and postcolonial land dispossession. This paper will explore the ways race and non-european forms of empire-making are intertwined in contemporary struggles over land, drawing connections to histories of enslavement and racialized regimes of labor in the 1800s, when central Sudan was under Ottoman-Egyptian rule. In particular, it will focus on the words and activism of a recently deceased, well-respected Sufi Shaykh, whose analysis helps us discern and understand contemporary forms of empire-making in Sudan by revealing the "racial vernaculars" (Pierre 2020) and colonial logics of the agricultural development and charitable projects that undergird them.

Presenter(s): nisrin elamin

8683 FLASH ETHNOGRAPHY Workshop

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Workshop

Flash ethnography is short form ethnographic writing. Complete in only 750 words, flash essays are full unto themselves rather than excerpts from a larger body of writing. In this workshop, Carole McGranahan and Alisse Waterson will lead participants in the writing of flash ethnography drafts. We will write together, share our writings, and offer feedback including ideas for publication. All you need to bring to the workshop is your own ethnographic research. Is there a story you've been saving to tell? Or one you haven't quite figured out yet? Or want to write in different form or tone or pace? We welcome you to join us for this workshop. Together we will see what truths unfold in our writing. The flash genre is a beautiful fit with ethnography, enabling us to illuminate the world in new ways.

539 Association for Feminist Anthropology Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Chang Liu , Yishuai Ding , Arunima Shandilya, University of Sussex, Department of Anthropology, Sojung Kim, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Joshua Ellenberg, New York University, Maral Sahebame

Presenter(s): Chang Liu, Yishuai Ding, Arunima Shandilya, University of Sussex, Department of Anthropology, Sojung Kim, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Joshua Ellenberg, New York University, Maral Sahebame

Presentation(s): A Quest for Certainty: Evidence-based Parenthood in Contemporary China

In recent years, "evidence-based childrearing" has gained remarkable traction in China. Promoting evidence over intuition, experience, or tradition, it redefines what counts as legitimate childrearing knowledge and claims authority through alignment with evidence-based medicine. Emerging as a grassroots movement among parents, bloggers, and pediatricians, this paradigm has rapidly expanded into a multi-platform discourse and commercial ecosystem. Why has evidence-based childrearing gained such appeal among Chinese parents? How does it establish epistemic authority in a context of institutional mistrust and patient consumerism? And how does it reshape everyday childrearing practices, constructions of childhood, and moral expectations around what it means to be a "good parent"? This paper draws on ethnographic research combining online observations in evidence-based parenting communities with interviews conducted with parents, bloggers, and pediatricians. It explores how evidence-based childrearing constructs a Foucauldian "regime of truth" in mobilizing medical expertise, digital metrics, and algorithmic visibility to naturalize certain forms of knowledge while problematizing others. I analyze how the biomedical and epidemiological notion of "evidence," redraws the boundaries of legitimate childrearing

practice, and recode previously taken-for-granted practices as irrational, risky, or outdated. In doing so, evidence-based childrearing not only establishes itself as an authoritative discourse, but also generates new forms of labor, consumption, and moral subjectivity. The study further examines how these discourses are taken up, negotiated, or resisted in everyday family life. Within households, evidence-based childrearing is not simply applied but enacted through emotionally and cognitively demanding forms of labor-what I term "learning labor." Staying informed becomes a parental obligation, requiring time, money, and cultural capital to access, interpret, and apply scientific claims. For many parents, especially mothers, this knowledge-seeking intensifies fatigue and anxiety, producing a heightened awareness of risk and a relentless sense of moral accountability for every childrearing decision. The burden of becoming an "informed parent" is unevenly distributed along gender lines: while women disproportionately bear the work of researching and implementing evidence-based advice, men are often absent. Within extended families, where caregiving is often shared across generations, conflicts frequently arise when evidence-based norms clash with embodied, inherited childrearing traditions. In this quest for certainty, childrearing is reconfigured as an epistemic project-defined by vigilance, optimization, and evidence-and governed not only by care but by calculation. What circulates as scientific truth ultimately reshapes not just how children are raised, but what parenthood means, what counts as good care, and who bears its moral weight.

Presenter(s): Chang Liu

The Ghosts of Motherhood: Postpartum Breastfeeding, Techno-hauntings, and the Maternal Vulnerability

This paper examines postpartum breastfeeding in contemporary China as a haunted domain where ghosts of ideal motherhood, scientific authority, and generational expectations linger in the everyday. Drawing on life-history interviews, digital ethnography, and institutional observations, I investigate the intangible yet potent presence of "maternal absence" that manifests when breastfeeding does not proceed according to biomedical guidelines or cultural norms. While conventional discourse frames breastfeeding as a purely beneficial, scientifically validated act, many mothers are haunted by specters of failure, guilt, and societal judgment when milk supply runs low or lactation is delayed. These unseen pressures often compel women to endure physical pain or invest in expensive technologies-lactation massages, herbal remedies, and breast pumps-further entangling them in a ghostly cycle of redemption and self-sacrifice.

By engaging the meeting's theme of hauntings, I foreground the spectral quality of postpartum vulnerability: the medical and familial expectations that loom like apparitions, the uncanny dissonance of technological interventions that promise liberation but often amplify a moral imperative to "do everything possible." In China, the coalescence of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western biomedicine creates a uniquely charged landscape, where mothers confront competing medical paradigms while navigating a resurgent rhetoric of "scientific motherhood." Government policies and public health campaigns further intensify these pressures, producing an

everyday environment in which spectral traces of past reproductive mandates collide with new imperatives for maternal perfection.

In tracing these ghostly presences-social, emotional, and institutional-this research illuminates how postpartum bodies become sites for negotiating broader cultural anxieties. Ultimately, I argue that the "ghost of maternal love" is not merely a metaphor but a lived experience that unsettles binary distinctions between failure and success, body and technology, self and society. Through this spectral lens, we may better understand how the past haunts the present in the most intimate of human experiences.

Presenter(s): Yishuai Ding

The negotiated belonging of Pakistani-Hindu migrants in India: the complexity of hyphenated and intersectional social location

While intersectionality in migration research is discussed in terms of how displacement and resettlement affect people owing to their intersectional social locations, post-colonial nations have also seen hyphenated identities emerge from newly drawn borders. Following post-colonial independence and mass migration across often newly established borders, communities had to adopt new nationalities and identities while sharing cultural and religious similarities with bordering nations. Thus, postcolonial hyphenated identities, along with their intersecting social locations, raise a need to further nuance our understanding of migrant belonging without the dichotomy of country of origin and country of migration. The example of Pakistani-Hindu migrants to India is a case in point.

Drawing on empirical data collected during 12 months (2023-2024) ethnographic fieldwork in Pakistani-Hindu settlements in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, as well as 32 life story narratives of migrants, this paper aims to detail how intersecting social locations as well as postcolonial hyphenated identities play a crucial role in informing migration aspiration and in providing individuals with differential resources to claim a negotiated belonging. Thus, the paper addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the participants' hyphenated identities (as Pakistanis and Hindus) affect their perceived belonging to India after migration?
2. How do Pakistani-Hindu migrants' gender, caste belonging, class, and age affect their ability to claim a negotiated belonging to India after emigration?

Specifically, this study examines how the participants' intersecting social locations of gender, caste, class, and age operate simultaneously with their hyphenation of being Pakistanis and Hindus, affect their responses and strategies to cope with various formal and informal barriers to participation in society.

Presenter(s): Arunima Shandilya

Voices in the Ordinary: Weaving Absent Kinship in the Everyday Lives of North Korean Migrant Women in South Korea

Based on a decade-long ethnographic study of North Korean migrant women's daily lives in the Northern Gyeongsang Province of South Korea, I explore everyday practices and expressions of kinship by attending to women's voices emerging within the ordinary (Das 2007). In particular, I consider the context of the Partition of Korea where women's intimate relations with kin, friends, and neighbors become vulnerable to surveillance while they are simultaneously expected to fulfill obligations to families dispersed through their multiple migrations. Building on feminist rethinking of kinship emphasizing women's perspectives within intimate formations of family and the state, I focus on two women's stories through genealogical methods and participant observation in domestic spaces. With a particular focus on these women's searching for or refusing to search for their kin in the South, and textures of their words repeatedly revealing the failure of families, I explore how the endurance of kinship knowledge corroded by war, displacement, and economic precarity signals the intricate intermeshing of domestic and public domains. In a careful comparison of the rhythms of releasing one's voice and withdrawing it in everyday life, I describe the myriad ways they weave absent family back into the ordinary. Such gestures suggest how kinship can be understood as between the natural and the social, where its practices and expressions entail a politics of the ordinary (Das 2020), casting possibilities for repair within kinship worlds marked by unended war and state violence.

Presenter(s): Sojung Kim

Worlding Anthropology: A Plea for A New Ethnographic Method

Anthropology, as we popularly understand it, is concerned with a scientific study of what makes us human. If this is true, then how we as anthropologists come to write about and understand the infinitely faceted notion of 'culture' is underpinned by a certain externality to the social as an anthropological object. This vision of writing the social, as I see it, myopically focuses on individuals within a social or ecological environment and the modes by which they ebb and flow within it—we are merely focusing on people experiencing a space and each other. But, how are we meant to more accurately study 'culture' if it is anything but intersubjective, that is, formed through a relation to others and to the world? Put simply, how can we more vividly portray the dynamic relation between people, each other, the world, and their experience?

I turn here to the feminist-new materialist notion of 'worlding', which in its essence, as Kathleen Stewart defines, entails an "...attunement to a singular world's texture and shine [wherein] The body has to learn to play itself like a musical instrument in the world's compositions" (Gregg & Seigworth eds. 2010, 341). Foundationally different from the notion of world-building, which is the development of fictional worlds for novels or stories, worlding as a critical, creative method invites us to reckon with entanglement, co-presence, and critical reflection upon both our semiotic and literal physical positioning in relation to others in-the-world, and to the world itself.

What I see, here, as the particular salience for anthropology is that as we continue to explore how cultural worlds are rendered and experienced affectively, we must also pay mind to a dialectical relation to people and the aesthetics of their worlds, individualized-but this is, necessarily, not to suggest that there is a binary separation between the two, if we are to consider there to be a separation between them at all. Worlding in anthropology allows for a creative, novel consideration of who lives in the world, how it is experienced, and how the world itself lends itself to the way we interpret those experiences all the same. In such a creative ethnographic practice, we grow attuned to the experience of the ordinary as a prized mode by which we are sentient, remain attentive, and hold present to different ways of being.

Presenter(s): Joshua Ellenberg

'A Woman Invests Her Entire Being': White Marriage as an Affective Site of Neoliberalism in Iran

Marriage practices in Iran have evolved rapidly since the turn of the century as unfulfilled expectations of intimacy in marriage have led to a spike in divorce rates, marriage postponement, and engagement in intimate partner relationships that are neither sanctioned by societal norms nor state laws. Over the past decade, the emergence of 'white marriage,' vernacular for cohabitation, has exacerbated what the state calls a marriage crisis. While prominent clerics and state officials condemn white marriage because it violates Islamic principles and causes a decline in birth rate, some Iranians prefer this conjugal arrangement to sanctioned permanent or temporary marriages. Drawing on years of ethnographic fieldwork on heteronormative cohabitation in urban cities in Iran, this paper will show that through their everyday practices, white marriage practitioners have sparked a public discussion on the politics of intimacy and forced state actors and clerics to revisit legal and Islamic debates about marriage and more broadly, about gender. This paper highlights the co-constitutive relationship between the Iranian state and society, where those who choose alternative forms of intimate partner relationships wield their power in effecting social change. In so doing, it reveals the connections between intimacy and the shifting moods of neoliberalism in a hybrid authoritarian state.

Presenter(s): Maral Sahebame

2955 The Unthinkable Boundary: Exploring Death as a Socio-Cultural Event Horizon in Medical Systems

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Event horizon" is a concept originating in astrophysics, used to describe a boundary beyond which events cannot affect or be known by an observer. Do such boundaries also exist in our socio-cultural world? In this panel, we explore cases in which death may be an event horizon, as something that cannot be thought beyond, whether as: the end point for care practices, conceptions of illness and healing, or healthcare systems' organization. We look into how the cultural constitution of death as the end point or worst possibility for humanity shapes the

knowledge claims and lived realities of practitioners, patients, medical systems, and other caregivers.

In astrophysics, any object approaching an event horizon from the observer's side appears to slow down, never quite crossing. In such a way, the event horizon is seemingly impassable, unthinkable, even though objects may indeed pass as there is no physical barrier. Through its functioning as such a boundary, event horizons fundamentally separate regions we can access and interact with from those we cannot. In other words, the event horizon organizes the parts of our universe that are within our grasp. This panel uses focused ethnographic examples to interrogate the event horizon as a possible metaphor for social forms. Why does medicine have so much difficulty taking "states worse than death" into account when calculating the relative value of interventions? Why in some health systems does hospice receive privileged status, collapsing otherwise fraught ethics, economies, and care possibilities? How does death organize parts of our medical world, including power relations, experiential perspectives, and the politics of global healthcare? What happens when there are nonetheless attempts to constitute a medical world that does not take death as its event horizon? What paradoxes may arise when death is an event horizon?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Yael Assor, University of California, Los Angeles

Chair: Scott Stonington, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Allen Tran, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Sylvia Tidey, University of Virginia, Department of Anthropology, Devin Flaherty, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology, Abby Mack, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology, Yael Assor, University of California, Los Angeles, Scott Stonington, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): Mental health and the psy-disciplines fifty years after the Vietnam War

This paper examines the event horizon of mass death through the lens of the psy-disciplines and the limits of biomedical imaginaries in Vietnam. Fifty years after the fall of Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City residents still struggle to make sense of the Vietnam War. Scholarship on the Vietnam War has highlighted the ways that the conflict and its aftermath have been remembered and memorialized through journalism and state propaganda, novels and memoirs, films and photography, and museums and monuments. I analyze the event horizon of mass death through the lens of mental health not by focusing on the the traumatic memories war survivors but rather how questions about those memories reverberate within and structure ongoing debates about mental health and illness in contemporary Vietnam. Psychotherapists describe the challenges of working with those who lived through the Vietnam War, either as their clients or the family members of their clients, as a matter of emotional intelligence (or the lack thereof). Throughout my observations of and interactions with psychiatrists, therapists, patients, and their families, the war and its scale of unimaginable suffering loomed large as an unspoken but conspicuous part of conversations about mental health. Perhaps even more unimaginable than the suffering are the ways that people survived and endured the country's traumatic history. The event horizon of the Vietnam War becomes as the starting point, rather than the end point, of care for individua

Presenter(s): Allen Tran

The Gravitational Pull of Death: Care, Collapse, and Meaning in a Dutch Secular Context

In physics, the event horizon marks the boundary surrounding a black hole – a threshold beyond which nothing, including light, can escape. Black holes emerge when massive stars collapse into singularities: points of infinite density where conventional physical laws cease to apply. In highly secular societies, death functions much like a metaphorical black hole, indiscriminately pulling one toward it from the moment of birth. In the absence of a spiritual guarantor – whether heaven, hell, afterlife, or reincarnation – death becomes the singular beyond of what is knowable or thinkable. Much like how approaching a black hole warps time and space, nearing the event horizon of death can be experientially, temporally, linguistically, and relationally disorienting, not only for the dying but also for family and caregivers. How, then, can one prepare for the unfathomable? In this paper, I discuss the lead-up to the death of my father, who died of COPD-related complications after a prolonged period of physical decline. I focus on processes of meaning-making around impending death in a secular Dutch context, where death is largely stripped of metaphysical significance. While palliative and end-of-life care offer some degree of certainty and control, they remain insufficient in addressing the deeper existential uncertainty posed by death's singularity. Within this space of insufficiency, my father along with those in his orbit of care sought to locate the boundary between

Presenter(s): Sylvia Tidey

Terminal Prognosis as Fact:

Rendering (Post)colonialism Unthinkable through Hospice Care

This paper examines the terminal prognosis as productive of an anti-political event horizon. In St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, over a century of (post)colonial disregard has created a situation in which residents face old age in the midst of entrenched poverty, consistent out-migration of potential family caregivers to the metropole, and a deeply deficient landscape of public healthcare. In this context, it is common for older adults searching for improved health to sign up for the one form of free, professional care that is reliably available to them: federally sponsored public hospice care. To become a hospice patient, however, requires an official terminal prognosis. This paper focuses on the critical and puzzling events through which these terminal prognoses are assigned, and older residents are socially transformed into dying individuals. Ethnographically tracing how these prognoses come to immediately be taken up as objective facts among hospice workers on St. Croix, this paper critically investigates the social mechanisms through which the (post)colonial trajectories that brought older adults to hospice are erased and rendered unthinkable.

Presenter(s): Devin Flaherty

Revival: Harm Reduction Beyond Bare Life

Appalachian Christians participating in addiction recovery ministries carry out their work with theologically specific understandings of death and salvation very much in mind. Where a harm

reduction program might look at the number of deaths avoided as an end in itself, these Christians instead look to help people avoid dying at least until they are saved through sincere conversion and repentance. Rather than orient to death generally as a failure in care (as we might see in some harm reduction models), Appalachian Christians attend to a different kind of temporality, seeking to avoid deaths that may consign someone to hell for eternity. There is, then, a right kind of death, and a right time for death, but death itself is not an end. Drawing on an ethnography of Christian addiction recovery ministries in Central Appalachia, this paper explores how Christian theological commitments reshape understandings of life-saving interventions. Thinking through moments of overdose and revival, we explore how the prospect of overdose brings particular Christian relations to death to the fore. When are life-saving measures urgent? When are they not? We argue that for Christians, death resists being categorized as an event horizon, there is always more to come, and yet at the same time, particular possibilities for salvation are threatened by the prospect of death in ways that compel people working in church-based recovery programs to act.

Presenter(s): Abby Mack

Co-author(s): China Scherz

The Worse-than-dead event horizon

Despite growing recognition that certain health states can be considered worse than death itself, most healthcare resource allocation frameworks treat death as an absolute boundary—an event horizon beyond which nothing is calculated or considered. As life-extending treatments proliferate, leaving more individuals in these potentially worse-than-dead states (SWD), such conditions remain speculative entities: acknowledged in theory but systematically excluded from healthcare planning, financing, and bureaucratic frameworks.

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted at a prominent U.S. health economics research center, this presentation examines why death has become the definitive event horizon in Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs), the globally dominant cost-effectiveness analysis methodology. While QALY assessments ask respondents to evaluate health states along a continuum from "perfect health" to the worst imaginable condition, only a small fraction of studies account for SWD as their lowest category—effectively reinforcing death as the predominant conceptual boundary.

Economists explain this paradox by pointing to differences in how people imagine health states. "Perfect health" is relatively easy to conceive because it is often framed as the absence of illness or impairment. In contrast, SWD resists a universal definition. I thus show how the desire for methodological simplicity in economics plays a key role in the constitution of SWD as beyond the event-horizon

Presenter(s): Yael Assor

Death's Gravity, Affective Taint and the Contorted Epistemologies of Suffering in
Thailand

In the early 2000s, globalizing religious palliative care ideologies combined with Thai spiritual movements to teach individuals to face death and thereby accept the ultimate reality of human life. In the 2010s, many members of this movement began to disavow it, claiming that the overemphasis on facing death had led them to ignore suffering, and that opioid pain medications needed to be liberalized and incorporated into end-of-life care. The terms of this shift revealed underlying Thai and global imaginations of death as brimming with inspiration and truth, and pain as morally insidious, ready to spill out of its temporal bounds and affectively taint caregivers and dying individuals alike. Out of this conflict, in the late 2010s, cancer emerged as a site of détente between poles, an entity so egregious and bound to an imagined risk of death that it could be treated with impunity. In this paper, I propose that the seemingly stark pendulum swing from facing death to relieving pain, and the ultimate use of cancer as a unifying trope rely on incommensurable imaginative horizons available for thinking both death and pain, and that this incommensurability continues to haunt practices surrounding both death and suffering-filled life.

Presenter(s): Scott Stonington

2383 Religious Anthropologists and the Ghosts of Secular Modernity: Reflections on Spirituality and Religiosity in Ethnographic Practice

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Despite anthropology's long tradition of questioning the fundamental assumptions of secular modernity and positivist science, not to mention the discipline's history of self-reflection and critique, relatively little has been said about the ways the personal spiritual and religious lives of anthropologists intersect with their scholarship. This roundtable asks whether that lack of discussion might stem from sources that we like to imagine the discipline has moved beyond - the positivist binary between subjective experience and objective science and the secularist insistence that personal religious experience be kept from public view. The roundtable seeks to interrogate those assumptions and their ongoing role in the discipline by inviting personal reflections on how religious and spiritual experiences have affected anthropologists in their discipline as well as how anthropology has informed its practitioners religious and spiritual experiences. It also invites historical reflections on the religious experiences of our disciplinary ancestors, for religious anthropologists are not a new phenomenon. For example, E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Edith and Victor Turner all famously experienced Christian conversions well into their careers in anthropology. Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood's personal relationships with Islam were foundational to their work, and Mary Douglas was a lifelong, practicing Catholic. In considering both personal and historical perspectives, the roundtable asks not only what it means to be a religious anthropologist, but also how anthropology might be positioned as a fundamentally spiritual tradition. Drawing on backgrounds and experiences in the Afro-Cuban Lucumí tradition, Catholicism, Charismatic Christianity, Hmong Shamanism, Islam, and Mormonism, panelists will consider questions including: How does anthropology invite religious and spiritual experience? How might we make

sense of transcendent religious experiences that occur during fieldwork? How do our personal religious commitments affect our relationships with our interlocutors, whether they are in our own faith tradition or outside it? How, if at all, do religious commitments affect the fieldwork experience differently from other kinds of commitments anthropologists carry with them to the field? How is our religiosity and spirituality taken up by colleagues in anthropology and by the academy more broadly? What are the stakes for anthropology in considering the religious experiences of anthropologists? In approaching this conversation, panelists are invited to consider following recent efforts (e.g. from Joel Robbins and Khaled Furani) to put anthropological theory in conversation with theology, broadly defined, and following Bruno Latour in "talking religiously."

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Clayton Van Woerkom, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Kai Ngu

Presenter(s): Kai Ngu , Clayton Van Woerkom, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Perez, University of California, Santa Barbara, Nursyazwani Jamaludin, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Quincy Yang

Discussant: Mayanthi Fernando, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology

7561 Exposures and Their Bodies: Part 2, Multispecies Entanglements and the Ecologies of Harm

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Studies of exposure have brought attention to the fragile and entangled relations of bodies and environments. From toxic chemicals to changing climates, exposure challenges notions of bodies and selves as separable from the worlds in which they work, play, eat, and breathe in. This panel builds on conversations on exposure from feminist studies of science and technology and environmental anthropology. These studies have drawn attention to how experiences of exposure are not simple facts but are rather caught up in epistemic struggles that materialize the impacts of exposure on some bodies and not others. They demonstrate ways exposure makes, even as it degrades, bodies and selves, inscribing local and global hierarchies of race, gender, and class in corporeal forms and capacities.

In the second part of this double panel, we focus on how environmental exposures inscribe spectral traces across multispecies landscapes, revealing the lingering presence of past harms in present ecologies. We turn our attention towards exposure's entanglements-towards ecological systems and interspecies configurations of harm and endurance. Contributors examine how exposure operates as both a physical condition and an epistemic event that entangles human and nonhuman bodies through toxicity, sensory disruption, and shifting ecological relations. Case studies span the molecular politics of PFAS contamination in the U.S. Midwest, interspecies ethics in Australian beekeeping, and fungal exposures at planetary temperatures. They also trace the

afterlives of rocket crashes in Kazakhstan and glacial retreat in the Peruvian Andes, highlighting the entwinement of climate, health, and sovereignty. Together, these papers interrogate how exposure configures relations of care, vulnerability, and resistance across species lines.

- How do nonhuman and more-than-human bodies register environmental exposure?
- What sensory, aesthetic, or affective modes emerge in shared ecologies of harm?
- How might multispecies perspectives challenge dominant paradigms of environmental management and risk?
- What spectral or lingering effects of exposure haunt more-than-human environments and interspecies relations?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University, Adam Sargent, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology

Chair: Adam Sargent, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Thomas Pearson, University of Wisconsin, Stout, Department of Social Science, Allison Caine, University of Wyoming, Department of Anthropology, Makar Tereshin, Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University, Jamie Cross, University of Edinburgh

Discussant: Damien Bright, University of Chicago

Presentation(s): Contested Thresholds of PFAS Contamination and Ecological Impairment

Exposure to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, is unavoidable. Different PFAS chemicals are widely used in consumer products, and PFAS have been released into the environment through industrial emissions and other activities. Some are so pervasive that they are detectable in drinking water, rain, snow, soil, plants, fish, and humans around the world. In the face of such planetary-scale pollution from a toxic chemical, the creation of exposure thresholds – an official level at which an exposure is considered harmful – has become a contested political arena. The notion of an exposure threshold is premised on the logic of "assimilative capacity," the assumption that a body, such as a body of water, a human body, or even the Earth as a bounded planetary system, can absorb a certain amount of something before harm occurs. This paper unpacks the idea of thresholds and draws on ethnographic research among contaminated communities in Wisconsin to explore how victims of contamination make sense of their exposure through stories of toxic injury and ecological impairment across human and nonhuman bodies, including themselves, their pets, wildlife, and waterbodies. Victims of contamination challenge the creation of thresholds as a simple line between "unpolluted" and "polluted" that stops at the human body. Instead, they articulate lived experiences of toxic injury and ecological disablement to illuminate the interconnected reality of chemical embodiment in today's world.

Presenter(s): Thomas Pearson

Fluid interventions: Glacier retreat, malnutrition, and blood loss in the Peruvian Andes

Glacier retreat and recurrent drought are shifting the lived experience of humans, animals, and landscapes in highland Peru. Global climate change has altered hydrological profiles and seasonal rainfall patterns throughout the Andes, leading to lower moisture levels in grassland ecosystems and less edible biomass for alpacas, sheep, and llamas. While herders struggle to feed hungry animals and landscapes, they have also become targets of malnutrition campaigns, like that of the Peruvian Ministry of Health, which pledged in 2017 to reduce anemia rates by half within four years. Anemia and malnutrition have emerged, often interchangeably, as focal points through which bodies and environments are evaluated, managed, and contested. Nutritional interventions aim to manage body-environment interactions within culturally situated understandings of the boundaries of entanglement and exposure. For example, while anemia programs often mobilize racialized anxieties around food and landscapes deemed "marginal" and thus requiring biotechnical intervention, a competing Quechua category, *pisiyawar* (lack of blood), draws attention to the entangled fates of drying landscapes, hungry animals, and ailing humans, and suggests a more widespread fluvial reparation. This paper explores the incommensurability of these conditions and the differing renderings of bodies, substances, and the permeability that connects them.

Presenter(s): Allison Caine

After the Crash: Toxic Exposures and the Struggle for Environmental Justice in the Shadow of Baikonur Spaceport

This paper explores how Kazakhstani communities living under rocket trajectories launched from Baikonur Spaceport, Russia's main gateway to space, articulate environmental marginalisation through embodied experiences of toxic exposure. Drawing on ethnographic research in the village of Karbyshevka—affected by the 1999 crash of a highly toxic Proton rocket—I examine how my interlocutors forge connections between their bodily ailments, environmental degradation, and broader political landscapes.

In the absence of official recognition or scientific proof linking rocket fuel exposures to specific health outcomes, villagers articulate environmental harm through embodied experience—mapping contamination through resonances in their own bodies and surrounding environment. As they witness premature deaths, cancer clusters, and livestock die-offs occurring alongside changes in the environment, they develop sophisticated interpretive frameworks that counter official dismissals of their health concerns. This embodied knowledge allows exposed individuals to challenge state denial and make space for political claims grounded in the experience of exposure. At the same time, by linking bodily suffering to territorial sovereignty, affected communities contest the sacrificial geographies imposed on Kazakhstan and engage in the struggle for environmental justice on the fringes of the Russian space industry.

Presenter(s): Makar Tereshin

Interspecies Exposure and the Ethics of Care in Australian Beekeeping

Insect industries are increasingly shaped by intersecting environmental and biosecurity crises. In Australia, recent varroa mite outbreaks and climate events have transformed beekeeping,

generating new relationships between human and insect bodies, and between technical expertise and embodied practice. This paper draws on ethnographic research with beekeepers to examine how exposure—to parasites, chemicals, and environmental volatility—reconfigures multispecies care, responsibility, and resilience in the Australian honey bee industry. Through fieldwork at hives and association meetings, I explore how biosecurity protocols and scientific innovations translate into everyday action. Beekeepers are not passive recipients of policy, but key interpreters of risk, adapting practices in conversation with ecological conditions and institutional demands. At the same time, bees are subject to competing regimes of care and control—as agricultural allies, economic actors, and vulnerable species. Hives, in this context, become infrastructures of interdependence—sites where regulatory frameworks, ecological precarity, and care practices are materially negotiated. This paper argues that exposure operates not only as a condition of vulnerability but as a framework through which multispecies relations become actionable. By analyzing how care is negotiated across species and scales, it contributes to conversations in environmental anthropology on technoscience and ethics amid crisis.

Presenter(s): Chitra Venkataramani

Toxic Mould at Two Degrees: Exposure, Ethics, Interventions

Around the world, the risk of exposure to potentially pathogenic species of fungi is creating new hotspots for planetary health, attracting the attention of environmental and biological scientists, as well as activists and entrepreneurs. Whilst other members of the fungi kingdom (mushrooms and yeasts) have received attention from the multispecies and microbial turn across the social sciences and humanities, there has been little interest in other environmentally ubiquitous fungi: moulds. Moulds differ from other fungi in several biological respects but—in the context of rising global temperatures—it is their capacity to tolerate heat that makes them uniquely concerning.

This paper draws on comparative research with biological scientists, chemists, and public health specialists working to address the impacts of climate change on exposure to toxic mould. In high-income countries like Scotland, exposure maps onto patterns of income and health inequality as much as damp and humidity. In low-income countries like Rwanda, the lack of surveillance and diagnosis systems means exposure represents an unknown health burden.

Efforts to address toxic mould offer a chance to rethink human-nonhuman relations at late capitalist temperatures—above 1.5°C. Making mould visible also reveals longstanding global health inequalities and multi-morbidities, and draws attention to the material politics of exposure—linking people, buildings, and fungicides used in food, homes, and hospitals.

Presenter(s): Jamie Cross

Discussion

5505 Panel 2 - Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines how urban communities, living on the margins of interconnected energy hubs, manage the sociocultural and health effects of chemical air pollution. A secondary focus explores how longstanding struggles over industrial toxicity are newly being shaped as climate science becomes increasingly integral to contemporary governance. The panelists, all contributors to the forthcoming edited volume *Habitable Air: Urban Inequality in the Time of Climate Change*, draw on qualitative methods - including ethnographic participant observation and historical archival research - applied at a scale typically reserved for quantitative climate studies. The panelists work within a clear network of scientists, policymakers, workers, and residents across transnational sites. Each panelist investigates the practices and interactions of ordinary people as they grapple with energy industries that are at the center of their lives and with community debates about their health and that of the planet. By studying these networked practices and interactions as key drivers for reordering urban life and politics, we may be better able to dismantle homogenized perspectives on transboundary air pollution to build more equitable and sustainable cities.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Kerry Ryan Chance , Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Kerry Ryan Chance , Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley

Presenter(s): Charlotte Bruckermann, Stefan Ogedengbe, Felix Lussem, University of Cologne, Adam Hasan

Discussant: Christine Walley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Kerry Ryan Chance

Presentation(s): Atmospheres of Hazard: Different Socio-Technical Ways of Knowing Airborne Risks in North China

This paper, focusing on an energy hub of North China, examines different socio-technical modes of knowing atmospheres of hazard. Exploring residents' use of the Air Quality Index, mobile phone apps, collecting medical evidence, and relying on somatic symptoms, the paper tracks how bodies, lives, and populations become entangled with atmospheric risks. The paper argues that as citizens engage in networks of ecological redress around hazardous atmospheres, their political and personal stakes in environmental governance fracture shared visions of local and global energy futures.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Bruckermann

"Cheap" Life: Asthma and the Passing of a Refinery in Durban, South Africa

In May 2024, the state-owned Central Energy Fund (CEF) bought a flooded and inoperable oil refinery in Durban, South Africa, for 1 rand (or 5 cents in \$US). The purchase was meant to mark a new era of environmental struggle between the state and citizens in response to emerging forms of "energy transition" in South Africa, an ostensible move away from fossil fuels and toward less-carbon intensive alternatives. By focusing on asthma symptoms among local residents living near to the refinery, this paper examines public discussions about the "cheap" refinery and "cheap life" in the petrochemical hub of Durban at a time when demands for energy justice and Pan-African social ownership are taking hold.

Presenter(s): Stefan Ogedengbe

Air Pollution without Human Lungs: Lignite Mining and "Geopolitics" against Geopolitics in Germany

This paper unpacks issues of air pollution and geopolitics in Germany's Rhineland region, where vast open-pit mines supply power plants and energy generation. Lussem analyzes how, in this "hotspot of energy transition," diverse critical civil society actors try to localize problems associated with global climate change in the context of national coal exit policies. This contribution focuses on how these actors frame air pollution as a question of the unequal distribution of planetary habitability between generations. The paper ends with a brief reflection on the return of "classical" geopolitics in the sense of accounting for "Earth" as a political actor.

Presenter(s): Felix Lussem

Prospectors: Power and Pollution in South Lebanon's Artisanal Crypto Mines

Amidst Lebanon's worsening economic crisis, the paper focuses on South Lebanon as a hotspot for small-scale, artisanal cryptocurrency mining due to its availability of Litani River hydropower. The chapter delves into economic opportunities created for some and new demands on an aging fleet of dams and the rural communities that rely on them. Discussing how miners navigate a complex and dynamic terrain, the paper investigates how this geography of digital extraction exposes the changing relationships between rural communities and the state, as energy infrastructure itself becomes a newly contested site of accumulation.

Presenter(s): Adam Hasan

Discussion

Discussion

3802 Making biosocial collaboration happen: beyond co-option, extractivism and ventriloquism

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Calls for biosocial collaboration are increasing where problem-based wicked problems and challenges reveal the limits of disciplinary silos. These silos continue to be intractable features of collaborative work shaped by wider ecologies of funding and institutional infrastructure. Despite these challenges, researchers continue to collaborate in biosocial projects albeit in non-linear and uneven ways across divergent national and institutional contexts. Navigating this terrain for both anthropologists and their collaborators can be both rewarding and disorientating. Historically embedded epistemological differences tend to surface, often destabilising researchers own disciplinary theory and methods. Yet this disorientation can also facilitate reorientation to a problem as collaboration pulls those engaged in this work beyond their familiar safe bounds and bounces them back to reshape working practices within their 'home' discipline. Trust between researchers is key to these collaborations, yet building and stabilising sufficient trust for these collaborations to unfold is painstaking work and not without its complications. Given the power and infrastructures that support biomedical and scientific institutional contexts more generally, there is a high potential for social science practice to be co-opted or subsumed. While this remains an ever present possibility, anthropologists have paid less attention to the situated experiences of collaborators engaged with us in our interdisciplinary research. How can we foreground their voices, reflections and experiences of doing this work in ways that become relevant to creating and sustaining interdisciplinarity and not simply extracted as resource or data point for our research? How can we ensure that the perspective of our collaborators is not ventriloquised through our own more readily accessed reflexive engagement in biosocial work?

Building on and extending the dialogues that took place in 2023 AAA Roundtable 'Navigating Enclosure, Explosion and Implosion: Pathways to biosocial synthesis' and a forthcoming Vital Topics forum in *American Anthropologist*, in this roundtable we place our collaborators experiences alongside and in dialogue with our own anthropological reflections. Each roundtable participant will be asked to creatively facilitate a contribution to the roundtable where their biosocial collaborator(s) is/are 'present' (e.g. using excerpts of film, audio, interviews or discussion or other creative intervention) and are asked to reflect, alongside and with their partner, on the work of biosocial collaboration and the challenges/opportunities it facilitates for their research. By bringing our collaborators voices and reflections to the table we aim to expand the possibilities and parameters for doing biosocial research in times where the work of biosocial interdisciplinarity continues to remain fragile, requiring constant sustenance and care.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Sahra Gibbon, University College London, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Roberts, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Delaney Glass, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Stephanie Lloyd, Laval University, Bilinda Straight, Western Michigan University, Agustin Fuentes, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Luisa Rivera, Emory University, Rosie Mathers

Discussant: Emily Yates-Doerr, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, Dominique Behague, Vanderbilt University

8757 NAPA Professional Development Workshop: Fundamentals of AI

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Workshop

If you're new to using AI tools but want to learn more, this workshop will provide the fundamental knowledge to help you understand the range of current AI capabilities and how to start using them. We will differentiate between automation, machine learning, natural language processing and generative AI, as well as the difference between open source and closed source models. You'll learn how to discern which tasks are appropriate for AI applications and pick the appropriate tool for those tasks. We'll practice creating prompts and experiment with querying an open source model while learning how to protect your information and reduce bias. Please bring a laptop or tablet. This workshop is not intended for those more experienced in AI use and will not involve coding.

2946 Doubles and Troubles

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Doubles seem to be enjoying a pop cultural renaissance around the world, from literature and theater to film and television, to the vast world of digital not-you-yous: sort-of reproductions, spin-offs, avatars, mirrors, shades, and "uncanny twins" – all rooted in the meaning of the term doppelgänger, "double goers," who do not merely appear but also act, sometimes destructively. We coexist with many 2d versions of ourselves – negative images or partial reflections of who we think we are – which circulate on screens and social media, acquiring their own trajectories and agendas beyond our control even as they carry our desires and fears beyond our fleshy bodies. These doubles include enhanced selves, whether by filters or surgery; augmented and virtual reality selves; genotypes; legal and political aliases; deep fakes in which we find disturbingly real-passing clones; and so-called data doubles: data voodoo dolls representing the aggregation of users' complete digital history. Consider the digital doppelganger that more accurately predicts an individual's behavior than their conscious mind, or chatbots that undetectably enhance a spouse's text or a colleague's emails. Ravetto-Biagioli offers the concept of the "digital uncanny" to describe our experience of encountering our own increasingly robotic nature in these digital traces. The uncanniness of this experience exacerbates the difficulty of developing a critique or defense, at the same time as it opens an arena for creatively interrogating the ethical and political stakes of doubling ourselves "in real life," in performative genres such as ritual, theater, and film.

Why are doubles suddenly populating (or over-populating) our worlds? And is their appearance really so sudden? At stake in their proliferation are more deeply rooted psychical and social tensions around identity and its repletion: tensions between multiplicity and coherence, fluidity and durability, continuity and rupture. Doubles regularly upset distinctions between real and fake, true and false, authentic and fabricated. These tensions and reversals are not new, though they are

assuming new digital and material forms of expression that demand rethinking and retheorizing. Participants in this panel will explore a variety of doubles, attempting to move beyond the experience of the uncanny to develop methods of contextualization and critique across locales: verbatim theater in New York and virtual reality dance performance in Florence; satirical identity play in the work of a Danish documentary filmmaker; mirroring in large language models and social media; and sobrenombres (sobriquets) used by cartel members and crooked cops in northern Mexico. If we take this constellation of doubles seriously, we might gain clarity on how and why doubles are haunting our everyday lives, and how we might repurpose them as means to our own ends.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Noelle Molé Liston, New York University, Elizabeth Davis, Princeton University

Chair: Noelle Molé Liston, New York University

Presenter(s): Noelle Molé Liston, New York University, Elizabeth Davis, Princeton University, Cate Morley, Princeton University

Discussant: Tom Boellstorff, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Reality Doppelgangers: Doubling in Verbatim Documentary Theater and Virtual Reality Dance Performance

Tina Satter's (2019) "Is This a Room" stages a verbatim transcript of a government contractor's arrest. Promotions promised that "every cough and snuffle" was faithfully enacted. In Lucas Hnath's (2019) "Dana H." the audience hears the story of a kidnapped psychiatrist literally in her own voice: the on-stage actor mouths the psychiatrist's pre-recorded vocal narrative. This paper examines how and why these theatrical doubles are positioned in between performance and real life. Delving further, I turn to a stage in another part of the world: a Florentine choreographing real-time dance by sending signals inside her dancers' Virtual Reality headsets. Florentine dancers are mimicking hidden virtual avatars, while New York actors ventriloquize voices. American theaters and Florentine stages seem to be doing what performance, broadly speaking, excels: extracting a deeply unconscious and historically emergent feeling and embodying it before the eyes of an audience. How do these verbatim documentary theater plays and virtual reality dance performances depend on both doubling and something tied to real life? Why do these multiples share a body, or part of one? This paper attends carefully to three key parts of these extraordinary performances: the body, whether multiplied, shared, virtual, or duplicated; temporality, whether synchronous or delayed; and reality, the way doubles are tethered to a virtual or empirical reality. I aim to uncover why these doubles are tethered to the re

Presenter(s): Noelle Molé Liston

Unfacts are Fun Facts: Body Doubles and Identity Play in Documentary Film

This paper explores body doubles as instruments of political critique whose efficacy lies in the complex pleasures attending the onto-epistemological problems of identity, identification, and consensus reality they raise for viewers. I take as a case study the work of Mads Brügger, a Danish

investigative journalist who has made a series of documentary films addressing political corruption, repression, and secrecy in locales from the US to North Korea to Central African Republic. In these films, Brügger engages in a practice of "identity play," often captured with secret cameras hidden on his person. The identities he plays with are not only investigative tools used to "get the truth from people," as he has put it, but also fantasies viewers might have of themselves. His doubles thus raise questions about identity, and propel processes of identification, that open audiences to a reflexive reassessment of their political positions and commitments – and therein lies their efficacy as critique, by contrast with practices of debunking deep fakes and conspiracy theories (for example). I closely examine Brügger's most recent film project, in which men who have served in reality as the body doubles of political leaders convene to interact "in character" on film. Any identity play is a form of impersonation, offering the player's body as a site and a tool of deception, but the symbolic capital of thereness in nationalist ideology raises, or changes, the stakes of play when it is per

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Davis

False Idols: Aliases and the Doubling of the Law in Northern Mexico

This paper draws upon 15 months of ethnographic research in Northern Mexico to examine the common use of sobrenombres, or aliases, among cartel members and corrupt public authorities involved in forced disappearance and related crimes. Sobrenombres, I contend, enable these figures to shield themselves from repercussions for criminal acts; yet they help these same individuals gain power through the cultivation of infamous reputations, as rumors of impunity enjoyed by, say, La Sombra [The Shadow] circulate. Through this act of doubling, they present themselves as figures who remake or transcend the law. Following Bhrigupati Singh's (2012) prompt to consider how attention to the "lower strata of deified life" might nuance critical theory's uptake of political theology, I examine similarities between power possessed by rogue cops and criminals, and the divine power of uncanonized saints, who are often known only by sobrenombres, and who enjoy robust devotional cults in Mexican Catholicism. Even as they shelter doubts about rumored records of violent crime, many devotees evince a willingness to suspend judgment, glorifying would-be saints in the name of miracles granted. Likewise, Mexican cynicism toward the judicial system prescribes that victims appeal through personal connection or bribe to powerful individuals, or hire a lawyer willing to bend rules. As one criminal prosecutor explained to me, in Mexico the law is "doubled"—different in theory and practice—and "one has to know

Presenter(s): Cate Morley

Discussion

3467 Specters of Authoritarian Anti/Environmentalisms - Part II

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel seeks to take stock of the global wave of authoritarian politics that has gathered strength

over the last two decades with the intensification of neoliberal capitalism, the waging of the wars on terror and drugs, the rise of digital surveillance, the regressive redistribution of wealth, and accelerating resource extraction amidst growing greenhouse gas emissions. This has spurred some sociopolitical forces to embrace different modes of authoritarianism predicated on corporate freedoms, ultra-nationalism, the militarized defense of borders, theocratic patriotism, the enlisting of self-defense as a legal shield to justify the use of violence (both for individuals and countries), and the unleashing of state and non-state forces of repression to secure domestic resources, ensure the sovereignty of national natures, and to stake out geopolitical claims on foreign resources.

Some far-right regimes have condemned climate activism, sustainability, and environmental justice as propaganda pushed by partisan zealots. The rise of anti-environmentalism has become a point of commonality across some authoritarian movements as they seek to undermine socio-environmental rights, roll back environmental regulations and laws, and destroy the expertise of public agencies dedicated to environmental and climate science. In the process, some protected areas are subject to de-gazettement, downsizing, or fragmentation. Biodiversity protections are weakened. Meanwhile, fossil fuels industries can continue with business as usual despite the push for global decarbonization and the pivot toward green capitalism. Fears of stranded assets can be attenuated, at least for a time.

Anti-environmentalist political agendas, however, run into the realities of constitutional orders, entrenched capitalist markets, and sociopolitical forces aligned with environmental protection, modes of care, and advocacy. The need to build political coalitions in government means that anti-environmentalist agendas might be understood alongside new forms of authoritarian environmentalisms that emerge in practice. These may draw upon the legacies of colonialist environmentalisms or advance neoliberal environmentalisms in unexpected directions. These efforts might apply hyper-nationalist politics to conceptions of protected nature through attempts to evict actors, groups, and communities perceived as enemy forces 'polluting' to national lands. Or they might attempt to strip away biodiversity protections while enlisting pro-environmentalist language to justify these measures. Environmental NGOs might become willing collaborators with these state agencies and corporate partners. These currents of authoritarian environmentalisms can further harness or even spur 'late fascist' environmentalisms.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Marcos Mendoza, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Marcos Mendoza, University of Mississippi, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Emma Pask, University of Chicago, Meghan Morris, Temple University, Bradley Tatar, Cindy Isenhour, University of Maine, Whitney Russell, California State University, Stanislaus, Srishti Sood, George Washington University

Discussant: James Blair, Cal Poly Pomona, Department of Geography and Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Range: A Political Ecology of Texan (Il)liberalism

Why did Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk move their operations to Texas? The easy answer is to avoid paying taxes, but Texas' property regime, where 95% of land is privately owned, also affords these billionaires space and time for technoscientific and environmental experimentation without oversight. I take Texas, a place often seen as the epicenter of anti-environmentalism in the United States, to be a laboratory for extreme political forms. From it, and based on ethnographic research with environmental scientists who repeatedly tried and failed to access Bezos and Musk's land to conduct ecological surveys, my work theorizes Texas' political ecology as the range. I take the range to be a material and fantasy space, a logic of property invested in policing who gets to live where and how, and a testing ground for old and new forms of capital accumulation. It exists at the intersection of the borderlands, the settler colonial frontier, and the plantation. The mythos of the range is contingent on an attachment to the environment that is suffused with an extreme libertarian ethos: one that exists in this paradoxical space carved out by liberal desire for new and better technologies of place making and an illiberal commitment to its violent policing. I use my ethnographic investigation of the range and its arrangements, those made on the ground between governments, businesses, and environmentalists, to historicize the environmental authoritarianism embedded in Texas' property regime.

Presenter(s): Emma Pask

Of Owls, Cowboys, and Disappearing Fish: Anti-Regulatory Common Sense in the American West

This paper examines conflicts over endangered species protections in the American West. Federal regulation of species protections has defined debates over who and what properly belongs in the West and what they can do there, as protections have come into conflict with the expansion of logging, mining, farming, and hydroelectric power. Opponents of these protections frequently question the very terms of the debate, citing the need to protect property rights to land, water, businesses, and homes as particular versions of the American way of life come under threat due to species protections. These arguments often ground their critique in the notion of common sense. The paper draws on archival work and fieldwork on endangered species protections to examine the production of anti-regulatory common sense. It analyzes the alignments of anti-regulatory common sense with divergent modes of contestation and environmental care, as the question of who and what is endangered comes to shape the broader political landscape.

Presenter(s): Meghan Morris

Korean Whaling: The Ghost of Colonialism?

In this case study I inquire if the diminishing influence of U.S. and European opposition to whaling at the worldwide level could enable a return to whaling as it was practiced during South Korea's authoritarian era. The Ulsan Whale Festival is a cultural event to express local citizens' demand to continue whaling as their livelihood. Initially the festival promoted the tradition of whale meat consumption, but the national government's support required the organizers to change their message, in compliance with the international moratorium on commercial whaling. However, the decree of conservation status for whale species already on the verge of extinction merely rehearses

the conservation practices from 100 years ago, when Korea was under the colonial regime of the Japanese Empire. Furthermore, the promotion of whale-friendly and ocean-friendly messages at the festival occurs in tandem with a mostly invisible and quasi-legal trade in whale meat. Coexistence of conspicuous signs of whale protection with invisible exploitation of whales illustrates the entanglement of local cultural policies with the conservation imperatives of the international environmental movement. However, a shift in environmental policy under the Trump administration will open space for major changes in Korean marine conservation policy. I conclude by arguing that the Ulsan Whale Festival is likely to serve as a cultural vehicle to generate political support to reinstate the Korean whaling industry.

Presenter(s): Bradley Tatar

“Recycling Done Right”: On the Techno-Politics of Efficiency in Corporate-State Environmentalism and the Dispossession of Discards

Speaking out against the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging (EPRP) policies recently enacted in the US might seem contrary to environmentalist concern. EPRP—which requires producers to pay for the end of life management of packaging and, theoretically, provides an economic incentive to reduce waste—has gained considerable momentum in recent years. But the activist's warning illustrates a growing concern about how emerging corporate-state alliances in support of circular economy policies have generated "environmental rule" predicated on state-sponsored corporate freedom. Here, contemporary environmental policies evoke old specters of waste reduction in the name of efficiency. The petro-plastics-packaging industry has promised to deliver more efficient systems, or "recycling done right". However, in practice, these promises have enclosed the value of discards and dispossessed people who have long practiced environmentalism by salvaging that value. Further, corporate polluters have leveraged increasingly authoritarian tendencies in right-leaning US states to secure state-level protections for highly controversial "chemical" or "advanced" plastics recycling technologies that can technically meet the requirements of producer responsibility, but bypass the contamination concerns and rights of fence-line communities. These observations invite engagements with theory that links the techno-politics of waste with increasingly authoritarian projects of environmental rule.

Presenter(s): Cindy Isenhour

Biomass and the Promise of Harm

When the European Union committed to climate neutrality by 2050, they effectively invented an industry known as "biomass" - the felling of forests for fuel under the erroneous argument that, since trees grow back, it is carbon neutral. The greening of Europe would be accomplished by widespread environmental devastation elsewhere. What has happened, however, is a bit surprising; through public subsidies that finance well over 100% of operating costs, private companies such as Drax have successfully taken to destroying the coniferous forests of the American southeast. In only a few years, dozens of facilities emerged to process forests into fuel for export, leaving small rural communities further impoverished, deafened by noise pollution, and struggling to breathe. In

California, however, Drax has taken up a new position. This paper explores a proposed biomass plant in Tuolumne County, a low-income (and relatively conservative) rural county that rolls from the Sierra Nevada foothills to mid-range mountains just north of Yosemite. The Stop Drax campaign provides an ethnographic entry point into how environmental narratives get repurposed in the interests of capital. I show how a community is promised a reduction in wildfire risk in exchange for the health and environmental harms of indiscriminate logging. As concerns about fire become rhetorical tools, the Stop Drax campaign provides insight into how capital exposes us to harm, and systematically promises to reduce it.

Presenter(s): Whitney Russell

Labored Confidence: Authoritarian Affect and Exhaustion in Varanasi, India

This paper examines how authoritarian environmentalisms cultivate what I term "labored confidence" – an affective state characterized by the iterative work of asserting faith in their "modernizing" projects despite pervasive moods and experiences otherwise. Drawn from ethnographic fieldwork in Varanasi, I trace discourses surrounding the recent construction of a multimodal shipping port in the city that lies largely defunct because of the diminished capacities of the river Ganga to service it. Despite this, the government has floated plans for its expansion, creating widespread anxiety in residents of nearby villages whose lands will be acquired in the process. This situation exemplifies a broader dynamic in Varanasi, a sacred city for Hindu religiosity, where discourses of urban development and environmental stewardship are deeply intertwined with the rise of Hindu nationalism and its vision to reshape the city and its relationship with the Ganga. I argue that "labored confidence" arises from tensions between the state's insistence on progress, the felt experiences of uncertainty, ambiguity, and deferred resolution amongst affected residents, and the exhausted but assumed productivity of the Ganga. This analysis contributes to understanding the affective dimensions of authoritarian environmentalisms, throwing particular light on the development of individual and collective subjectivities in late industrial times.

Presenter(s): Srishti Sood

Discussion

4516 Sites of Extraction, Scenes of Experimentation, Histories of Resistance: Development as Horror

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the living consequences of extractive imaginaries-how people inhabit and endure projects that frame their territories, bodies, and futures as sites to be tested, transformed, and controlled. From Amazonia and the Caribbean to post-socialist and Balkan landscapes, we examine how geographies and lives are turned into laboratories-testing grounds for policies,

markets, techno-scientific interventions, and development dreams. These are spaces haunted by colonial and imperial desires, techno-bureaucratic fantasies, western scientific dissection, and ambitions of progress that refuse to die. We bring together ethnographic, historical, and discursive analyses to consider how laboratory logics are reproduced, contested, and lived with across distinct yet resonant settings. In Amazonia, we examine how the region continues to be framed by the neocolonial gaze as a site of intervention, erasing local histories and sideline Amazonian epistemologies. On the Greek island of Astypalaia, we explore how sustainability transitions are semiotically laminated onto "island-laboratory" discourses, reinscribing colonial tropes of testing and transformation under the banner of climate action. In Colombia, the use of DDT in malaria eradication campaigns and agricultural modernization reveals how science, disease, and agribusiness co-produced chemically haunted landscapes under developmentalist regimes. And in post-socialist/post-Soviet Eastern Europe, we follow women displaced by war and repression as they reassemble fragments of a collapsed order into vernacular archives of memory and survival-refusing disappearance through place-making practices grounded in material and affective continuity. Together, these papers ask: What happens when life itself becomes the object of experimentation, surveillance, and imposed transformation? How do people live with, make sense of, or unsettle the unsettling? And in what ways do these geographies function as sacrifice zones—spaces and subjects rendered disposable in the service of distant fantasies of order and development? By foregrounding the lived experiences of those who inhabit these zones, this panel challenges sanitized narratives of innovation and progress, insisting instead on the messiness, violence, and resistance that accompany experimental governance in the name of the future.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Adriana Abreu, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Eliza Frenkel

Chair: Adriana Abreu, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Nikolina Zenovic, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Adriana Abreu, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Nikolina Zenovic, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Eliza Frenkel, Claudia Rivera, Indiana University, Bloomington

Discussant: Andres Leon Araya

Presentation(s): Refusing the Lab Lenses: On the Experimental Fantasies Projected onto Amazônia

This paper critiques the long-standing tendency to frame Amazonia as a laboratory—a site of experimentation for scientific models, conservation strategies, and anthropological theory. From colonial and neocolonial projects to climate politics, Amazônia has been repeatedly constructed as a space of radical alterity (exotic, pristine, and ready for intervention), ecological urgency, and future-making. These imaginaries—often rooted in technoscientific authority, developmentalist desire, and extractive logic—have sought to turn the region into a testing ground for global projects, frequently under the guise of development. Drawing on political ecology, decolonial critique, and Amazonian scholarship, this paper offers a literature-based analysis of how neocolonial framings of Amazônia have circulated across disciplines and policy arenas. I examine how these imaginary

erases local histories and obscures the violence of imposed transformation. Rather than accepting Amazônia as a zone of intervention, I argue for an approach attuned to its political and historical complexity—what Amazonian thinkers have called Amazonidade: a lived condition shaped by plurality, bleeding colonial scars, and resistance. Refusing the lab means refusing the fantasy of external mastery—and insisting on other ways of knowing, living, and relating that have endured, transformed, and resisted through time.

Presenter(s): Adriana Abreu

An Island of Sustainable Experimentation: Island-Laboratory Discourses in/around Astypalaia

Many Astypalaiaans, like many people growing concerned with climate change, have been talking about sustainability for a while now. However, the implementation of the Smart and Sustainable Island's (SSI) sustainable development project is recontextualizing orientations to Astypalaia's past, present, and future. In addition to instilling new modes of electric mobility on the island, the SSI project has also brought new sustainability discourses into circulation in/around Astypalaia. In some instances, the SSI project's sponsors, including Volkswagen and the Greek government, articulate the island as a "test site," a "laboratory" for experimenting with smart and sustainable mobility. How are such experimental fantasies of sustainable transition linguistically and semiotically laminated to island-laboratory discourses? This paper examines such language use that positions the island as research lab, ripe for sustainability-oriented experimentation. These "island-laboratory" discourses pertaining to Astypalaia are analyzed through combining considerations of intertextuality, language ideologies, and political ecology. This paper demonstrates the layered process of linguistically situating Astypalaia as a test site. More broadly, the following examines the specters and consequences of previous conceptualizations of islands as sites of experimentation that haunt the present articulations of Astypalaia as such.

Presenter(s): Nikolina Zenovic

Vernacular Archives of Order: Post Socialist/Post soviet women's Place-Making through Objects and Memory in Exile

In the Western imagination, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the definitive failure of a political experiment. Yet for those living its aftermath, the collapse was never complete. Its fragments endure in the objects people carry and the stories they tell. This paper explores how Ukrainian and Belarusian women refugees in Poland-fleeing the full-scale Russian invasion and escalating repression under Lukashenko-navigate these layered histories through material assemblages of meaning. Drawing on my fieldwork, I illustrate the processes of selecting objects during rapid displacement. I argue that these selections index a particular habitus of what I call vernacular archives of order: everyday practices of sorting, storing, and organizing objects, memories, and spaces to reweave continuity in exile. Through the lens of visual anthropology, I trace how these women transform remnants of a broken world into scaffolding for new life. Visual methods allow me to recover textures-the settings, gestures, and silences, that written accounts alone might miss, revealing how material culture becomes a living conversation with disrupted

ordinariness. Rather than framing nostalgia as simple longing, I draw on Svetlana Boym's notion of the off-modern to argue that nostalgia emerges from histories of rupture and incomplete transitions. In this context, memory becomes a method of survival, an ongoing negotiation with the unfinished promises of both socialism and western liberalism.

Presenter(s): Eliza Frenkel

“Poisonous miracle”: DDT and mosquito control in Colombia, 1959-1979.

Although the molecule had been around since the 19th century, dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, or DDT, became popular worldwide after World War II because of its effectiveness against many arthropod species. In the 1950s, the pesticide was utilized in malaria eradication campaigns based on mosquito control. At the same time, DDT was fundamental in what Colin Duncan calls the chemicalization of agriculture as part of the Green Revolution in Latin America. This dual purpose intertwined the old concern for urban hygiene with the developmentalist discourses that characterized those decades in the region. Little was known about the side effects of DDT that would become increasingly visible in bodies and ecologies over the next two decades. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, this presentation reflects on mosquito control policies and practices for malaria eradication in Colombia between 1959 and 1979, decades in which DDT was extensively employed, to study the links between mosquito management and the production of rural and urban spaces. I rely on Leigh Johnson's concept of accumulation by degradation to explore, from a geography and political economy perspective, the links between science, disease, agribusiness, and the city, in the production of mosquito haunted landscapes in Colombia.

Presenter(s): Claudia Rivera

Discussion

4539 “The Child as Material, Spectral, and Engaged: New Anthropological Methodologies in Childhood and Youth Research”

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

[SPONSORED BY ACYIG]

Anthropological understandings of children's and youths' bodies and cultures are affected by ghosts of our academic past – for example, our reliance on traditional methods like participant observation, sensory explorations, and "being there." At the same time, the specter of the present shifts our methodological approaches with global social forces and new technologies intersecting and influencing young people's lives. Our Roundtable discusses new research that captures how contemporary young people interpret their lives both materially and spectrally: their bodies, virtual presence, social media selves, and expressions of identity. Helfrecht uses her research with Sidama children in Ethiopia and adolescents in Alabama to assert the need to reassess how we traditionally measure and mark children's physical development-heights, weights, teeth, etc. -and

explores how social factors such as mobility and dietary diversity can be incorporated into such measurements; Morelli uses "ethnographic animation" that brings together ethnographic techniques with animated films written and coproduced by young people in the Amazon to better understand their lives; Chapman describes participatory and visual-material methods as a way for children under Japanese state care to create life story narratives; Spray examines the creation of comic books as a useful methodology based on her research with young people in New Zealand, Ireland, and the US; Shaw uses music (both through the activity of listening as well as interpreting song lyrics) to "listen creatively" and learn about young Filipinx lives in Canada; and Leggett delves into American girls' curated Instagram pages as indicators of their virtual imagined communities. This Roundtable features anthropologists of childhood and youth who demonstrate these methodological ghosts, hauntings, and mergings of the traditional with the contemporary, all while working creatively to think with (rather than simply about) young people in the apparition of a changing world. Through this discussion we explore how research methods with young people have the potential to reflect worldly hauntings of the body as a transnational palimpsest of beliefs and experience. We also consider how creatively working with memories and imagination can reveal ghosts, shadows, or projections of the past and future.

[Sponsored by ACYIG]

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Ida Leggett, Middle Tennessee State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Courtney Helfrecht, University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology, Ida Leggett, Middle Tennessee State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Christopher Chapman, Jennifer Shaw, Julie Spray

Discussant: Camilla Morelli

2673 Towards a Decolonial Ethnography: Building Power through Co-Authorship with Indigenous Collaborators

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The history of Anthropology has been a strife with extractive practices, from material remains to stories and viewpoints. In response to Faye Harrison's call to decolonize anthropology, there have been strides forward in the way we teach, show up in communities, methods used in the field, and publication. This panel explores the methodology of co-authoring with community counterparts. Papers will discuss the importance of authorship as a means of decolonizing the field. Additionally, papers explore the methodological nuance of how co-authorship is operationalized when working across locations, languages, and temporal timelines.

Section: Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

Organizer: Kristin Hedges, Grand Valley State University, Carolyn Smith-Morris, University of Texas

Chair: Kristin Hedges, Grand Valley State University

Presenter(s): Emma Bunkley, University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus, Kristin Hedges, Grand Valley State University, Jessica Hardin, Rochester Institute of Technology, Camilo Ruiz, University of Connecticut, Department of Anthropology, Carolyn Smith-Morris, University of Texas

Presentation(s): Levers of Power: navigating co-authorship, solo authorship, and tenure within anthropology

The discipline of anthropology and the method of ethnography have long held three fixations, "danger, isolation, and intimacy" (Hanson and Richards 2019). Tales of roughing it "in the field," living alone, risking safety, all to better understand and know the subject of research. This produces the belief that researchers work alone, without help, connection, or input from anyone "in the field." These fixations then reappear on the publishing end with the fixation on solo-author publishing. Unfortunately, for purposes of retention, promotion, advancement, and tenure within anthropology, the solo authored publication is highly coveted and highly rewarded with many institutions valuing the solo-authored piece above all else. This fixation and desire require junior faculty to reproduce and manufacture this sleight-of-hand of lone-wolf researcher and writer to maintain job status or move from the insecure postdoctoral, teaching track, or non-tenured position to the more secured tenure position. This paper grapples with what it means to be junior faculty committed to co-authorship and decolonization practices, but existing in a discipline where materially that is often not valued and, in some instances, not recognized.

Hanson, R., & Richards, P. (2019). *Harassed: Gender, bodies, and ethnographic research*. University of California Press.

Presenter(s): Emma Bunkley

Olosho Ethnobotany Project: The importance of co-publishing results within a Maasai community-based project

The Olosho Ethnobotany project was launched in the summer of 2017. This project was in response to a community request to document traditional medicinal plants in a written format for the Purko Maasai community in Narok, Kenya. To date, our team has collected descriptions and samples of thirty-two local medicinal plants. The data collected was analyzed and disseminated locally in the first and second editions of a local field guide, *Olosho Ethnobotany Project—Medicinal Plants of the Purko Maasai*. After the local dissemination of the field guides was complete, we focused on peer-reviewed publications. This presentation will discuss the process and importance of co-authoring publications. To date, we have two peer-reviewed publications and one book chapter. We will explore the operational details and challenges of co-publishing across locations, languages, and timelines.

Presenter(s): Kristin Hedges

Co-author(s): Joseph Ole Kipila

When Methods Hurt: Embracing the Ethics of Relational Inquiry

Drawing from Pacific Research Methodologies (PRM), this paper explores how relationality—rather than collaboration—is foundational in ethical research with Pacific communities. Pacific epistemologies challenge conventional notions of collaboration as a panacea for extractive research, suggesting that decolonization involves recognizing the complexities of relational obligations and embracing incommensurability in knowledge production. Based on our ethnographic research on diabetes complications in Samoa, in this paper, we take up the call to be encumbered (Uperesa 2016)—not just in the abstract sense of being aware of anthropology's colonial history, but in the practical sense of being accountable to the relationships, histories, and responsibilities that shape our research. Ultimately, we argue that knowledge creation in Pacific contexts is not about harmonizing diverse viewpoints but navigating tensions in ways that respect Indigenous ontologies and empower Pacific voices. Through relational practices, we seek to understand diabetes complications but also to care for our own research relations, showing how relationality can transform both the methods and ethics of anthropological inquiry.

Presenter(s): Jessica Hardin

Learning to Listen: Dialogues with Mayor Alfonso in his Journey to Recapture the Links between Amazonian Life and Time through Ecological Calendars

Mayor Alfonso knew he had to embark on a research journey around Amazonian ecological calendars when we visited a community in the Primavera reservation in the Caquetá River, a fiduciary of the Amazon River. Since then, an interdisciplinary group of indigenous and non-indigenous scholars in different stages of our careers have been learning about the malleability and complexities of the interdependencies of the life cycles in the Amazon Forest. We have learned that these ecological calendars operate as portals that provide access to the understanding of the entangled teachings and relationships among animals, humans, plants, rain and sun, rivers and forests, and ancestors. They speak about seasons, rituals, preparations, and work across beings through the always changing time. In a similar way, our learning journey has proven to be malleable, nonlinear, and multiple. We have established pedagogical dialogues in which Mayor Alfonso has patiently explained to us key aspects of the calendars and how these are windows to the plural, complex and circular notions of indigenous time and space. Similarly, as the weaving of time occurs, our learning process resembles the shape of a basket that is patiently weaved by various people.

Presenter(s): Camilo Ruiz

Collaborative Authoring, Developmental Editorship, and Other Apparitions of Decolonized Authority

Can the muse of ontology somehow be brought closer to the science of inter-cultural collaboration? Or does "speculative knowledge-production" represent the best that

anthropologically trained, 4-field social scientists can achieve? In this panel, we consider the disciplinary practice of invisibilizing or interpreting voices that still lies behind most anthropological work and consider whether, how, and why they might be made more visible. First, we consider ontological anthropology's "concern is in the generation of an alternative analytics rather than an understanding indigenous life and practices per se". This part leads to an exposition of the corporate-academic enterprise: its exchange in English, impact factors, and tenure dossiers. Second, we consider the foreign view (of so many Latin American scholars) that scientific methods harnessed by community members with their own expertise can do more to protect Indigenous ontologies (or communities, or lands) than philosopher-anthropologists from another tradition. Is our scientific mediation crucial? Or is Alcida Rita Ramos' critique of the perspectival approach as, simply, 'essentialist' and 'exoticizing' true? We close with reflections on what alternatives to mediation (philosophical or otherwise) have been tried over the past 100 years of anthropology, and what kinds of new ones are needed like revisions to the CRediT and ICMJE standards.

Presenter(s): Carolyn Smith-Morris

Co-author(s): Carolyn Smith-Morris, Cesar Abadia

2394 The Ghosts of Analyses Past

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

From fieldnotes to field journals to dissertation chapters to articles, lectures and books, the analytic activity of ethnographic work and writing unfolds over long periods of time, during which large scale political economic shifts and our own biographical transitions from student to the precariat and beyond (ideally!) may occur. Ethnographic moments and nuggets of analyses often fade more and more into the/our past. That weight can haunt: so many years later, what did it mean then? Or, so many years later, what does it mean now that it meant that, then? How do analytic ghosts, the specters of our past analyses, haunt us? They can indeed inspire: a moment becoming historic can enable new perspectives on meanings then and now. They can also paralyze: the synapses created through repeated previous analysis can be hard to break, and the zombies of good ethnography can be hard to escape. This panel invites participants to reflect on the long timelines of anthropological work through the figure of the ghost. The papers reflect on the work of bringing analyses past into the present and how it intersects with life course, the timelines of an academic job and its modes of knowledge production, as well as larger historic and ideological shifts.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Anna Jabloner, IE UNIVERSIDAD, Malavika Reddy, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Anna Jabloner, IE UNIVERSIDAD

Presenter(s): Joseph Sosa, Bowdoin College, Anna Jabloner, IE UNIVERSIDAD, Erin Moore, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Mrinalini Tankha, Portland State University,

Department of Anthropology, Lee Cabatingan, University of California, Irvine, Malavika Reddy,
Harvard University, Department of Anthropology
Discussant: Nomi Stone, University of Texas

Presentation(s): Political Disorientation

What structure of feelings are attached to the indeterminacies of meaning endemic to democratic action? How do political actors ground claims in shifting ideological terrains to which they are always catching up? This paper proposes political disorientation as a key mode of contemporary political praxis. Distinct from what social theorists describe as left melancholia—the inability to let go of passed revolutionary horizons—disorientation is felt not as stuckness in the past but as out-of-syncness with the present. Activist ethnography is doubly disorienting as we untangle the "present" of fieldwork from the "present" of writing.

Brazil's "June Days" protests in 2013 are often interpreted as such a disorienting event. These protests exposed the rifts between leftwing politicians and social movements allied in Brazil's "pink wave" (2003-2013) and were retrospectively interpreted as the inauguration of the "long Brazilian crisis" (2013-2018). This conjunctural jolt disrupted the aspirations of LGBT+ activists with whom I conducted fieldwork from 2011 to March 2013 and shifted the genre of my ethnography from a critical appraisal of human rights to the genealogy of a culture war. This paper names disorientation as the way I related with interlocutors between fieldwork and writing. Our shared agnosticism of the present, I argue, shaped the epistemological and ethical contours of this project.

Presenter(s): Joseph Sosa

Zombie liberal genomics: what is science in Trump's America?

Under the twin liberal-democratic goals of advancing knowledge and furthering the economy, life science and biomedicine emerged over the past four decades in US industry, academia, and taxpayer funded research. The paradigmatic life science, genomics, is both liberal, in the sense that it entails democratic values like equality and strives for such things as inclusivity, and neoliberal, in the sense that it entails specific contemporary and locatable varieties of economic relations (Reardon, Sunder Rajan). But US liberal democracy (no matter how fantastical it has always been) is waning, alongside tenets of neoliberal economies. Funding for major projects of this paradigm, centering on genome and brain, is under threat. In ethnographic perspective, my technoscientific field-sites are becoming more historical every day, and the analytic of liberal genomics, vis-à-vis (or at times against) which I wrote, now has a blatant outside, from where it haunts my writing. What becomes of liberal genomics, and the science it epitomizes, in an authoritarian US regime? And how does one grapple with proliferating historicity in "the field," this field's pivotal moments, and our own ways to read such moments?

Presenter(s): Anna Jabloner

Leaving the field, haunted by sickness: on the privilege of health in anthropology

In November 2019, I left a suitcase at the Kabira Hotel in Kampala, Uganda's capital city. In the suitcase is field equipment: recorders, notebooks, long skirts and sandals. For the previous two years I had been traveling between the Kabira and Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health regularly enough to have developed some conviviality with the hotel staff, and they gladly accepted my suitcase. And then. Covid-19 happened. My family grew. Like many anthropologists', my research agenda shifted. My fieldwork got "patchy." I turned to fieldsites online and closer to home, closer to me. But I think about that suitcase often. I know from another researcher that as of 2023 it was still at the Kabira. Along with my recorders and files and travel adapters, the suitcase also contains insulin pump supplies, syringes, an extra glucometer, and some now-expired, rapid-acting insulin. This equipment was as unobtainable in my former fieldsite as it was necessary for my fieldwork. But it was impossible to list on itemized budgets for grantmakers and university accounting offices, part of a regime of invisibility around chronic illnesses ethnographers carry into their fields. This paper takes up this regime of invisibilization as anthropology's "privilege of health." Tacking between world events, life course unfolding, and research trajectory, I will consider forms of knowledge foreclosed by disciplinary orientation toward health.

Presenter(s): Erin Moore

Haunting Debts

Doing research in Cuba, a seemingly dynamic economic landscape with spiraling inflation, wildly fluctuating exchange rates, multiple currencies, and erratic geopolitics with the United States, I have grappled with pinpointing and fixing "the current context," as well as preventing the empirical material from being construed as outdated. Repeatedly updating or making research "current," however, assumes the researcher is able to continuously travel and have access to their field site, access that, in my case, became limited due to a variety of circumstances. Instead, I pivoted to other analytical possibilities and found it productive to trace broader historical economic arrangements and debt relations that haunt and culminate in considerations of the contemporary Cuban economic experience. Suturing diverse economic histories of debt—from cancelling odious debts to the Spanish colonial administration, to the neocolonial republic's debts of gratitude to the United States, to debts owed for property nationalized by the Castro government—enabled new interpretations of how Cubans have confronted economic crises in the past decade. In this paper, I argue that moving past the impulse to constantly incorporate "currentness" permits a theoretical recasting through archival inquiry into the specters of debt and their spatio-temporal linkages within which economic relations in Cuba are indeed embedded and better understood.

Presenter(s): Mrinalini Tankha

Memories of Fidel and the Ethics of "Tough Girl" Ethnography

Do you know that photo of Che Guevara? Scruffy beard, tilted beret, intense eyes. It haunts me. Or of Fidel Castro? Olive green garb, beard, and the same intense gaze. It haunts me, too. Same with the one of Camilo Cienfuegos. Lesser known but also an instrumental Cuban revolutionary figure. I still see these photos cascading behind the plain-clothed young man sitting at an ancient desktop

computer in the inner offices of the Ministry of the Interior in Havana, Cuba in the summer of 2011. That scene spelled to me, at that time, disaster. The end of my research. Bolstered by Guevara, Castro, and Cienfuegos, that young man – and his uniformed counterparts beside him – told me to stop what I was doing. So, I stopped. Three-quarters of the way through my PhD. It was a true crisis in a graduate student career, and this ethnographic moment has continued to haunt me. But not because it ended my career as an anthropologist, but because, in many ways, it bolstered it, providing fodder for speaking engagements, book chapters, articles, and conference presentations. In this paper, I explore the ethical and methodological questions that arise from using such harrowing experiences for career advancement. What standards does it set? In what ways does it promote a "tough girl/guy" mode of ethnographic research that is uncomfortably reminiscent of other anthropological ghosts? How should anthropologists think about these moments in ways that can still teach but not flex?

Presenter(s): Lee Cabatingan

Signs of Law?

As I write a book about the relation of legal aid and capitalism in Mae Sot, Thailand, long-removed signs of law -- on billboards, posters and advertisements -- haunt my thinking. This is because, when I did fieldwork, on and off from 2009-2014, signs about the procedures related to the legalization of migrant workers abounded, on shopfronts, billboards and municipal buildings. I read the prominence of those signs as iconic of the legal structures I sought to analyze. Ten years later, those signs are no longer there yet lawyers with whom I worked report that the legal dynamics pertaining to migrant workers are largely unchanged. This paper grapples with the question of how meaningful those signs of law were, and what it means that a past analysis relied so heavily on them. If a certain arrangement of law, capitalism and sovereignty perdures in Mae Sot, how can the ethnographer know which materializations of that arrangement are analytically significant? Following Derrida (1993), I explore how these signs, while no longer present, might nevertheless be specters both in Mae Sot and in this ethnographer's understanding of it.

Presenter(s): Malavika Reddy

Discussion

6869 Ghosts, Coloniality, and Promise in Black Movement Legacies

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Conversation/Debate

The ghosts of Black histories emerging from slavery and colonialism continue to echo in the present. However, they do not speak only through ongoing modes of racialized oppression and violence. These ghosts also dance: twining through Black expressive culture and forms of liberatory joy. This session explores how the ghosts of global Black history emerge through what Celina de Sá describes as both "coloniality and promise," as capoeiristas in West Africa use expressive movement and imagination to simultaneously embrace the history of coloniality and refuse its

burdens. In conversation with de Sá's brand-new ethnography of capoeira in Senegal and The Gambia, this panel asks how a careful attention to joy, artistry, and the liberatory potential of movement might enable a different reading of global blackness and diaspora. While Black history is often narrated through ruins and loss, how does coloniality and its ghosts also incite liberatory forms of joy, friendship, and community? While the "African diaspora" is most often understood through the wrenching histories of successive displacements, what does it mean to talk about diaspora on the African continent, and therefore, without displacement? Finally, drawing these connections in New Orleans—a crucial site in the history of Black performance—what might these alternative readings of Black history show us about how to confront our troubled present?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh

Presenter(s): Lyndsey Beutin, McMaster University, Celina de Sá, University of Texas, Austin, Department of Anthropology, Diego Arispe-Bazan, Northwestern University, Jessica Winegar

7255 Haunted Timelines: The Afterlives of Images in Fragile Digital Worlds.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Images haunt us. They move through time and space, outliving their original contexts, reappearing in new places, reframed with new meanings, and activated for varying political, social, and affective ends. In the 19th and 20th centuries, photography was seen by many as a magical enterprise. Yet, the prospect of endless mechanical reproduction raised fears of a drained aura and diminished authenticity. This tension intensifies in today's age of digital image-making, where reproduction and circulation are not only limitless but actively desired, fueling expectations of permanence and the capacity to reach vast audiences. As links rot and interfaces refresh, digital images circulate as ghosts, their afterlives suggesting they are not static representations, but social agents with temporal, spatial, and affective trajectories.

Our panel interrogates these afterlives of images as they manifest in varied geopolitical contexts—from the Americas to South Asia. We trace the production and movement of images across circuits of political meaning-making, sites of ecological grief, archives of collective memory, and mechanisms of value accumulation all while navigating digital fragility. How do we cope with the affective impacts of the temporality and volatility of the visual in our virtual worlds (Schull 2018)? How do these "demanding images" (Strassler, 2020)—which insist on ethical engagement, compel audiences to bear witness, and refuse to be relegated to passive representations—operate as contested sites of memory and political struggle?

Through ethnographic approaches, we reflect on how different publics emerge from and engage with shared digital experiences. Our inquiries examine: How do communities navigate the tension between the algorithmic logics that shape image circulation under neoliberal digital economies and the enduring promise of digital spaces as arenas for political struggle and collective resistance?

How does digital surveillance, algorithmic removal, and content erasure impact the temporality of political imagery and their life cycles (Azoulay 2008; Sontag 2003)? When images detach from their origins and enter meme pools, how do communities challenge the dispersal of meaning and reassert control through technological tools, creative interventions, or memory practices (Russel, 2024)?

Our presenters address these questions focusing on the themes of permanence, loss, and memory, and on the dynamic afterlives of images as agents of political, social, and affective change.

Citations:

Azoulay, Ariella. 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Zone Books.

Russel, Legacy. 2024. *Black Meme: A History of the Images that Make Us*. Verso.

Schull, Natasha. 2018. "Digital Containments and its Discontents". *History and Anthropology* (29), 42-48

Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Strassler, Karen. 2020. *Demanding Images: Democracy, Mediation and the Image-Event in Indonesia*. Duke University Press.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Tatiana Bertolucci Peixoto, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Aiman Rizvi

Chair: Insha Bint Bashir, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Shanti Escalante

Presenter(s): Tatiana Bertolucci Peixoto, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Aiman Rizvi, Shanti Escalante, Insha Bint Bashir, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Maria Sosa, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Karen Strassler, CUNY, Queens College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): *Paste, Post, Paint: Images as Battlegrounds of Collective Memory and Political Imagination in Brazil*

This paper examines how images of resistance circulate across physical and digital terrains in Brazil, haunting the present with unresolved pasts and speculative futures. I focus on the recurring visual pairing of Marielle Franco and Carlos Marighella—two Black political figures assassinated decades apart. These images, I argue, are not passive symbols but demanding images (Strassler, 2020)—agents that insist on ethical engagement, reconfigure political imaginaries, and blur temporal boundaries.

Through ethnographic tracing of a wheatpaste mural on Avenida Paulista and its digital afterlives on Instagram, I read this pairing as a heterochronic image-event unfolding across multiple temporal and spatial scales. I explore how acts of walking and scrolling through São Paulo and social media platforms reactivate memory, unsettle linear Western time, and expose algorithmic erasures. By

reanimating Black leadership and historical struggle, the Marielle-Marighella juxtaposition creates a visual counter-memory to the "present past" staged by the far right.

This paper shows how collective memory is contested in fragments—through street walls and social media timelines, defacement, and re-posting—where political images live on, disappear, and return. In these haunted circulations, resistance is not only remembered but reimagined, forming new chronotopes where history and futurity collapse into acts of visual insurgency.

Presenter(s): Tatiana Bertolucci Peixoto

Ecological Death on the Internet and the Afterlife of Visual Protest

In 2022, flooding displaced 33 million people in Pakistan, placing the country at the climate crisis' forefront. As the government legitimated its claim to climate reparation through international diplomacy, local activists - living in the most impacted areas - advocated for ecological protection by visually documenting the unfolding crisis. Working with these activists, I examine how those most affected imagine a visual language that legitimates their plight. How do they navigate the fragility, temporality and changing infrastructures [Schull 2018] of the digital spaces where they archive the death of their ecological worlds?

Amid media blackouts, these activists feel pressure to create image-events [Strassler, 2020], leveraging digital circulation and its affective textual feedback to prompt coverage by broadcast media. Mapping the virality of images captured during the 2022 floods, I follow them into their afterlives. What becomes of them once the crisis they visibilize loses the internet's attention? How do their quality, framing and texture [Steyerl, 2009] influence where they live on in the virtual world, how they shape memory, and who decides to revisit them? How do the producing communities make sense of internet's precarity [Kneese, 2022] as a site for grieving and legitimating ecological crisis and loss? Underlying these inquiries is an interest in digital inequities underlying movement building and the shifting stakes of who gets to use the internet as archive.

Presenter(s): Aiman Rizvi

Materiality Troll: NFTs and the Failure to Keep Digital Images

When Kevin McCoy invented the NFT in 2014, his goal was simple: as a new media artist who had exhibited in elite art institutions, he hoped to create a mechanism that would allow digital art creators to sell their work to collectors skeptical about the archivability, provenance, and permanence of digital images. The digital or the virtual are often framed as not-real, inauthentic, constituted by copies rather than originals, "prosthetic, synthetic, pseudo, wannabe, adulterated, ersatz, and many other words besides" (Kockleman 2017).

How did the NFT community hope to "fix" this ugly duckling status of digital images using blockchain technology before it got overtaken by "bad actors"? Why did they fail?

Focusing on the "right-click save" troll, which was popular in 2021, I argue that the NFT community lacked the authority to create a semiotic encounter with digital images as valuable objects. The

"right click save" troll involved responding to Tweets of NFT owners in which they proudly displayed a new purchase of a digital image with the same digital image- screenshotted or downloaded- indexing that digital images cannot be owned as they cannot be kept back from circulation and lack a legible "original" (Benjamin). This paper asks how anthropological theories of value and materiality (Weiner 1992, Graeber 2015, Keane 2005) can be adjusted to address how the specificities of digital materiality - especially transparency and ephemerality - are socially managed and contested.

Presenter(s): Shanti Escalante

The Ghosts of Deleted Archives:

In Kashmir, where military control extends into digital spaces, images don't simply exist or disappear—they live, die, and haunt. This research examines the lifecycle of political imagery under intensive digital surveillance, where documentation of protests, human rights violations, and everyday resistance face algorithmic removal. Drawing on ethnographic work with journalists, activists and civilians, I analyze how such systematic erasure generates what Derrida (1994) terms "hauntology"—a presence-in-absence that structures political discourse and memory.

Through autoethnographic reflection on my disappeared photo documentation of political graffiti, alongside accounts from others facing similar erasures, I trace how these absences become forms of presence. When images of military presence or resistance are removed, they transform rather than vanish. The void left by deletion becomes a site of meaning-making, as communities develop practices to recall and sustain the political significance of censored content without reproducing it.

These practices reveal how surveillance creates distinctive temporalities of political imagery (Azoulay 2008; Barthes 2000; Sontag 2003), where disappearance often marks the beginning-not the end-of its political efficacy. By examining these spectral circulations, this paper explores the tensions between algorithmic governance and visual memory, revealing images may exert their greatest political force precisely as they become ghosts.

Presenter(s): Insha Bint Bashir

Haunted Democracy: Tracing Dictatorship's Afterlives in Feminist Claim-Making during a Right-Wing Government (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

In contemporary Argentina, the civic-military dictatorship (1976–1983) haunts a precarious democratic present. This paper examines how Ni Una Menos, a key feminist collective, mobilizes the signifiers dictatorship and democracy in its visual claim-making under the current far-right government. I analyze the collective's Instagram feed—from Milei's inauguration in December 2023, to June 2025—as a fragile digital archive and a lieu de mémoire (Nora, 1998) for ongoing feminist struggles.

Ni Una Menos's feed showcases a diverse visual repertoire - protest flyers, photographs, video clips, and screenshots of tweets and news headlines- where dictatorship and democracy emerge not as fixed historical markers but as fluid and mobilized signifiers, linking past state violence to

current democratic erosion, feminist resistance, and contested futures. While Instagram's linear design structures the feed chronologically, its associative visual logic foregrounds temporal entanglements, blurring boundaries between past and present.

This paper contributes to understanding how Argentina's last dictatorship operates as an image-event (Strassler, 2020) reactivated in contemporary feminist discourse, and how digital feminist archives reframe memory through visual practice. Finally, I propose a methodological approach for interpreting Instagram feeds as dynamic, affectively charged archives shaped by platform logics, political urgency, and meandering feminist temporalities.

Presenter(s): Maria Sosa

Discussion

Discussion

8823 Association for Queer Anthropology Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

The Association for Queer Anthropology Annual Business Meeting

Topic: AQA Business Meeting/Awards Presentations

Time: Nov 21, 2025 02:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://nyu.zoom.us/j/98885442895>

Meeting ID: 988 8544 2895

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,98885442895# US (San Jose)

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8556 Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA) Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 3:30 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA) Board meeting

4982 Anthropologies of Occulted Play: Through Play Genres and into Playing

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Play" is both a powerful means of social expression and an expansive cultural signifier for other social phenomena. The meaning of play has historically been cloaked by several "rhetorics" (Sutton-Smith, 1997) that have sought to capture its essence by emphasizing its evolutionary or developmental function at both the phylogenetic and ontogenetic level, its capacity to materialize the chaotic and unpredictable dimension of existence or vice versa to harness conflict and reveal players their powers, its potential to bring together people and offer a commentary over their collective life and identity, and its power to reimagine and remake the world anew or to mock, unsettle or subvert its order. But play is also more than the use we make of it as a metaphor for something else: "not a figure of speech, not a trope, not a metaphor; play is at first a kind of biological, prelinguistic enactment with its own claims on human existence, no matter how metaphorized it is in other claims" (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 143).

This panel invites an anthropological reflection upon both these dimensions of play: about play genres – "efforts to contain, enslave, tame, use, and colonize playing" – and about playing – "the ongoing, underlying process of off-balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming-the permeating, eruptive/disruptive energy and mood below, behind, and to the sides of focused attention" (Schechner, 1988/1993, p. 43). Across these two dimensions, we tease out the occulted relationships between play as a panhuman imperative and other fundamental axes of the human condition.

We begin with Myrdene Anderson and Katja Pettinen's exploration of play as a dynamic semiotic metacommunicative system, which challenges the boundaries between "real" and "digital" and encourages a more complex understanding of play as a continuum punctuated by shifts in embodiment and sensoriality. Next up, Kyle Bikowski's work sheds light on the generative value of play beyond the digital/actual divide by retracing the pervasiveness of the play mode in the life of "Gaymers" (gay-gamers) communities in Mexico. Seth Sagstetter hones in on the explorational character of playing in Tabletop Roleplaying games (TTRPG) and highlights the potential for emotional consultation, elaboration, and catharsis that await players at the interface between

reality and fantasy. Attending to the ethical pragmatics of playing "modified games" in Physical Education leads Adriano De Francesco to rethink the way games can provide avenues for perceiving and constructing contextually significant others, beyond the modern functionalist rhetoric of play as a site of moral development. Finally, Nicholas Mizer brings us to the terrain of praxis and activism by conceptualizing games as technologies that can foster collaboration with human and more-than-human beings and actualize important changes in collective forms of life.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland, Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Chair: Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland, Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Presenter(s): Myrdene Anderson, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Kyle Bikowski, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology, Seth Sagstetter, Colorado State University, Adriano De Francesco, University of Auckland, Nicholas Mizer, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Discussant: Kellynn Wee

Presentation(s): The Rhythm and Structure of Play

We explore embodied and sensorial dimensions of play, attending to how spatiotemporal contexts shape how play unfolds through movement, gesture, voice, and proximity—by affordances of the context and sometimes by objects. Play is co-orchestrated by space itself, with bodies in reciprocal engagement with their surroundings and each other. As dynamic metacommunication, play shifts toward greater abduction with increased variability and unpredictability. As play structure becomes more predictable—with greater poles of induction and deduction—temporal rhythms also shift. Tactile embodied movements require a real-time sensorial interaction, like dance that can only occur within a rhythm, not outside it.

We trace a continuum from open, spatially-mediated play toward increasingly structured contexts, culminating in digital situations with disembodied interaction filtered through screens. What becomes of play when touch and olfaction are absent and vision limited to pixels? How does the absence of physical co-presence reshape engagement? Rather than offering a binary between "real" and "virtual" play, we reflect on how shifts in embodiment and sensoriality both enable and constrain play. Individual autotelic play can also be centered on non-tactile dimensions (via imagination), or on synesthetic sensorial exploration (via object shapes and surfaces). We foreground how play—as embodied interpretive practice—intersects with broader questions of personhood and species Umwelt.

Presenter(s): Myrdene Anderson

Co-author(s): Katja Pettinen

Gayming Beyond Games: Play as a Foundational Component to Community Building Among Gaymers in Mexico

Research into the lives of gay men frequently focuses on stories of victimization, disease, or the bedroom, overlooking the multi-faceted lives gay men lead. This work focuses on Gaymers, who build their identities around their love of video games, providing an opportunity to study the joy also present in gay men's lives. Currently, queer video games studies has focused on digital spaces or on the content of games rather than players, often recapitulating the same narrative of victimization. Doing so hides a foundational aspect of Gaymer identity: Gaymers do not stop playing when the video games are switched off.

Following ethnographic research in Querétaro, Mexico and WhatsApp groups, this study reveals that play permeates nearly every group interaction among Gaymers. These interactions range from sharing memes which construct and define group masculinities, to role-playing as "Señora Católica" [Catholic Lady] during gossip sessions, to wordplay pushing back at linguistic imperialism. As in person play among Gaymers happens apart from, alongside, and between virtual spaces, it challenges the idea of a digital/actual divide. Similarly, Gaymer interactions often fit into Caillouis' categories of games, while being performed outside of Huizinga's "Magic Circle," which separates play from "real" life. By moving beyond the surface level of Gaymer play through video games, the hidden role of play as foundational in Gaymer community construction and maintenance is brought to light.

Presenter(s): Kyle Bikowski

Catharsis in the Wild: Confronting and Clarifying Emotion in Tabletop Roleplaying Games

Emerging from my work with Tabletop Roleplaying game (TTRPG) communities in North America, I explore the cathartic potential of play as a clarifying force in which participants engage and negotiate negative life experiences. In the course of TTRPGs as a form of structured, ritualized play, players enter into a state of quasi immersion, referred to as "enthralment" (Stromberg 2001) and "distance" (Scheff 2007). Enthralled, players detach from the immediate reality outside of the game, absorbed in a collective experience. When players achieve a balanced distance, they remain grounded in reality yet immersed into the character acting before them. Donning character masks, TTRPG players place constructed character proxies into compromising situations which mirror life experience - anger, grief, and dissolution. By engaging fantastic unrealities, players are able to more safely confront disturbing emotional states. In TTRPGs confrontations take the form of improvised roleplay, chosen character traits, or challenging villainous beings. In confronting tense in-game scenes or defeating manifestations of evil, they confront real emotional afflictions. I return to the cathartic process first laid out by Aristotle in Poetics, a catharsis not bound to clinical oversight, but found in the wild, in playful exposure to relatable fantasy.

Presenter(s): Seth Sagstetter

Unpacking Moral Development: Toward a Processual Approach to the Ordinary Ethics of Play and Games

Over the last two decades, the anthropology of ethics has complicated pre-existing models of the formation of the "moral subject" by rejecting both the structuralist reduction of morality to a matter

of social rules and the individualist conception of "ethical agency" as a "quality internal to the subject" (Laidlaw, 2023, p. 12). Still, more research is wanted to address the fundamental question of "How do we become the kind of complex reflective subjects who can enter into all these diverse forms of self-cultivation" (Mattingly & McKearney, 2023, p. 572). This paper takes a step in that direction. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork at a New Zealand high school, I analyze how the games played by students during Physical Education constitute an interface between the interactants and the ordinarily ethical.

According to psychology and pedagogy, play and games are crucial mediums for children's development of an autonomous capacity for moral judgment. But is there a more complex, more "processual" (Keane & Lempert, 2023) pragmatics of engaging ethics via the "play mode" (Schwartzman, 2024), lying beyond the modern functionalist rhetoric of play as a site of moral development? If games are avenues for perceiving and constructing contextually significant others, what skills do they actually cultivate? Illuminating the relationship between ethics and play through an anthropological lens can bring new insights into the ontology of both these facets of the human condition.

Presenter(s): Adriano De Francesco

Playful Methods for Collaboratively Imagining Worlds in Albany, New York

In this paper I report on the development and use of playful anthropological methods to guide collaborative research between neighbors, colleagues, and students in Arbor Hill, my neighborhood in Albany, New York. Using a multimodal approach, we have adapted worldbuilding games like Microscope (Robbins 2011) and I'm Sorry Did You Say Street Magic (Asercion 2019) to aid our collective imagination of the present and futures of Arbor Hill. This methodology also guides our collective work to cultivate more playful, more resilient futures for our neighborhood in ways that build on local legacies of resistance and transformation.

This work is based on an application of the Cosmographer's Circle, a model that for playful praxis conceptualizes play as a spirit of autotelic exploration of possibility and games as technologies that enhance our exploration of possible worlds (Mizer 2025). In this context, games allow us to collaborate with other human and more-than-human beings to bring critically important aspects of the virtual into the actual (Germaine 2025).

Presenter(s): Nicholas Mizer

Discussion

6963 Law, Governance, Coloniality and Decoloniality in Transnational China

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Contemporary China's sociopolitical governance is haunted by intersecting histories and spectral inheritances: the legacy of socialist legality, entrenched global capitalism, authoritarian rituals, the reflection on international law and its colonial reminiscence, and the endurance of conservative moral orders. As a multiethnic, post-socialist and emerging global power, the national and the local state mediates between these legal lineages. Domestically, the state and grassroots deployment for the rule of law reinterpret and reappropriate liberal frameworks, while localized customary codes, grassroots jurisprudence and indigenous narratives strive to be extending. Internationally, China's legal influence has been expanding through state-led initiatives and the everyday life of formal and informal socioeconomic activities.

This panel explores how coloniality and decoloniality intersect in transnational Chinese legal practices, focusing on both mainland institutions and their diasporic extensions. Situated in the emerging conversations between scholars based in the US, UK and China, panelists will examine the theoretical trajectories and ethnographic engagements of legal anthropology in contemporary China in relation to the paradigmatic power of Western social science in shaping interpretations of custom, legalism and harmony. We also consider efforts to navigate non-Western discourses of legal identities through traditional Chinese legal and political philosophy. Dwelling on historical and sociopolitical complexities, we trace the emergence of legality and legal subjectivities at the nexus of stratified and gendered forms of statecraft, transnational legal norms, indigenous political formations, and bottom-up everyday articulations—from the Belt and Road projects to the legal encounters of ethnic minorities, rural communities and overseas migrant populations navigating the afterlives of Western colonialism.

As China arrives at the crossroads of historical spectres and future-making promises, this panel engages with the critical question of the global circulation of Chinese legal norms and Chinese identities as histories of colonial violence, socialist legality, and neoliberal governance are condensed, contested, and reassembled. Situating Chinese legal anthropology in broader ethnographic engagement on the afterlives of colonialism, we move beyond "rule of law vs. rule by law," and explore the new theoretical insights on governance, state power, and the hauntings of colonial power structures. We ask: what possibilities exist for crafting decolonial alternatives or reconfiguring sovereignty within and beyond the state's borders? By centering native jurisprudence and vernacular legal articulations, the panel positions China as a generative site for reimagining domination and justice through decolonial lenses.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Hongyun Yu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Heyu Zhang, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Yi Liao, Hongyun Yu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Shunfeng Liu, FEI FENG, Matthew Erie, University of Oxford, Yanshuo Zhang, Pomona College, Hongyun Yu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Heyu Zhang, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Deepa Das Acevedo, Teemu Ruskola

Presentation(s): Custom in Legal Anthropology: Conceptual Genealogy and Interpretive Paradigm

This paper situates customary laws in China from a historical perspective and explores the different manifestations of the meanings and practices of customs in ancient Chinese, Western archives and contemporary legal practices. On the one hand, there is a close relationship between customs, cultural taboos, and formalized laws; meanwhile, the institutionalized legal framework of the state overdetermines the contemporary scholarly understanding of customary laws.

As the concept of custom in Chinese legal anthropology scholarship and methodology has been shaped by notions of "primitivity," "normativity" and "legality", this paper traces the intellectual development in legal research following functionalism, historicism, and normativism of custom, and shows the variety of interpretive paths as well as the incommensurabilities they established for a native, grounded, and scientific understanding of customs in current Chinese legal anthropology field-building. This paper foregrounds situationism as a generative vehicle to overcome the inheritances of both colonial knowledge paradigms and rigid legal formalism. By engaging contemporary legal practices, it explores decolonial possibilities for rethinking customary law beyond the dominant frameworks of state legality and universalist legal rationalities, and toward more locally legible and epistemically pluralistic articulations of justice.

Presenter(s): Shunfeng Liu

Legal Incentives: China's Wisdom in Governing a Mega-State through the Rule of Law

Legal incentives encompass more than mere behavioral control mechanisms: they embody profound governance philosophies. Rooted in China's traditional governance theories and legal thought, the concept of legal incentives is deeply embedded in historical governance structures. This is most vividly captured in the expression "the great affairs of the state lie in rewards and punishments," which reflects a long-standing tradition in Chinese political philosophy. It stands as a treasured element in the intellectual heritage of Chinese legal thought. The system of "rewards" and the underlying philosophy can be seen as a uniquely Chinese contribution to the art of governance and a key to the nation's long-term stability and peace.

In China, the rule of law system is not solely punitive, but also incentive-based. Reform has been central to the development of the legal reward system. Governing through punishment is reactive and passive—addressing problems after they arise. In contrast, governing through rewards represents a proactive and preventive strategy—addressing issues before they occur. Legal incentives, therefore, reflect economic rationality, serve as a means of behavioral guidance, and function both as mechanisms of behavioral reinforcement and as forms of symbolic exchange.

Presenter(s): FEI FENG

Law at Interregnum

In a quote attributed to Gramsci, the imprisoned critic allegedly wrote, "The old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born. Now is the time of monsters." We are living in an interregnum as

suggested by the Chinese political slogan: 东升西降 ("The East is rising and the West is declining"). What is the role of law at interregnum, the period between political orders?

We think of law as having a definite provenance, as tied to the state, but what if interregnum shows that modern law has other genealogies (both past-referential and forward-looking), including empire, globalization, infrastructure, assemblage, and ensemble? In parallel, today, we use categories like "liberal law" and "authoritarian law" and while there may be real-world examples of these, it may also be the case that law, while never fully divorceable from politics, may be detachable from the political systems of which they are a part, that is, law may transcend the political. One result of the foregoing is that, at interregnum—a period of deep flux—law may move between political orders assuming novel forms and trajectories.

This talk will reflect on the nature of law at interregnum with a particular emphasis on what may come next. It draws on ethnographic research conducted over the last six years as part of the "China, Law and Development" project which explores how diverse Chinese actors are affecting international law, transnational law, and the internal orders of non-PRC jurisdictions.

Presenter(s): Matthew Erie

Paradise Recrafted: Intangible Cultural Heritage Law and Ethnic Minority Subjectivity in Contemporary China

The term "intangible cultural heritage," a UNESCO coinage, is deployed in the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (ICHL) to refer to a wide variety of non-material cultural properties, defined as "expressions of traditional culture handed down from generation to generation by the different ethnic groups and considered by these groups as part of their heritage." These include oral literature, traditional art forms and performance, and traditional rituals and festivals. The ideological apparatus of institutionalizing intangible cultural heritage both generates confidence for minority writers to proclaim ethnic distinctiveness and imposes creative and ideological limitations on cultural expressions.

This paper discusses how ethnic minority subjectivity in contemporary China is formed through minority writers' and grassroots activists' critical engagement with the ICHL. I show how minority villagers and writers mobilize ICHL through and beyond its legal parameters to create communal ethos and creatively re-invent minority traditions. I engage with an ethnographic and a textual reading of a grassroots cultural publication, A'er Archive, produced under the leadership of a Qiang village leader and collectively authored by A'er Villagers. I also ethnographically examine ethnic Yi writer Duan Haizhen's novel Heavenly Songs, which juxtaposes the Yi mythic time-space with the legal-political pragmatical modernity encountered by its characters amid interethnic interactions.

Presenter(s): Yanshuo Zhang

Legal Southernism: Chinese Law from an African Perspective

Legal Orientalism describes how Western societies—exemplified by the United States—have constructed Chinese law as the Other, thereby reaffirming their own narratives of legality and rule-of-law modernity. It had significant influence in both China and comparative law, and resonates with China's current effort—oscillating between decolonial aspirations and self-Orientalizing tendencies—to "construct an independent knowledge system" for jurisprudence. Yet beyond the China–U.S. binary, beyond the East–West lens, another, more contemporary perspective emerges: a Global South view of Chinese law. In this view, Chinese law takes on three identities: as it is, through the lens of Legal Orientalism, and—still largely missing—from a Global South perspective.

This paper draws on fieldwork conducted at courts in Rwanda and East African judicial cooperation mechanisms. Through the lens of litigation, experts, and communities, it seeks to reconstruct how Chinese law, legal culture, and legal values are perceived and reconstructed in African societies. It seeks to engage with and complicate the following questions: From a Global South perspective, is Chinese law emerging as a new global legal force—or even reshaping legal globalization? What drives the varied interpretations of its triple identity in the African context? And how might China's efforts to exert global legal influence remain committed to decolonial ideals while avoiding the pitfalls of a neo-colonial narrative?

Presenter(s): Hongyun Yu

Co-author(s): Yixuan WU

Rights Consciousness, Gendered Citizenship and Socialist Hauntings Amongst Rural Young Women in Northern China

Mounting youth unemployment—worsened by the post-COVID economic downturn—has driven many young Chinese to leave metropolis and return to their rural hometowns. This paper examines how young rural women performing precarious labor in Shandong Province claim citizenship rights, articulate personhood, and imagine empowerment in the search of rural livelihoods. While existing studies often center urban feminist movements, this paper builds on scholarship on rights-conscious individuals who both reinforce and contest state authority highlighting rural women's political and legal consciousness under shifting state policy agenda, precarious labor, and gendered dispossession within families.

Through ethnographic attention to the disjuncture of citizenship claims and the lack of viable social security provisions and women's rights, this paper explores how these women carve out agency and autonomy by tactically navigating work, marriage and reproduction. This paper foregrounds how the afterlives of socialist imagination and nostalgia intersect with gendered narratives of individualism in contemporary China within the broader context of state-led developmental capitalism and gendered labor of rural revitalization. As situated critics, I will show how young women engage with their lived experiences not merely as subjects of precarity under the heteronormative patriarchal nation-state, but as theorists articulating alternative visions for more just, and equitable futures.

Presenter(s): Heyu Zhang

Discussion

Discussion

4621 Isms, Ists, and Phobias: Navigating How the Past Becomes Prologue

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

We propose a roundtable discussion facilitated by community college faculty and administration specializing in Anthropology, Diversity Equity, and Inclusion, English, History, Social Work, and Sociology. Political attacks on academic free speech and freedom have become prevalent in 2025. This discussion will showcase six educators' salient identities (e.g., sexual orientation, race, gender, and sex) and how they navigate difficult conversations in our classrooms and academic service. This session may provide new ideas and best practices as we invite audience participation.

Section: Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges

Organizer: Angela Guy-Lee

Presenter(s): Melissa wallace , Angela Guy-Lee , Donald Winter , David Hopkins , Chris DeEulis

Discussant: Christina Miller-Bellor

4986 Deities, Monsters, Ghosts, and other Specters of the State.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What might monsters, wandering deities, or ghosts teach us about state violence? This panel traces how migrant encounters with state violence manifest through spiritual and supernatural understandings or metaphors. Through ethnographic and autoethnographic accounts, including intimate witnessing (Rosas 2023; Behar 1996), this panel examines devotional practices of border crossings along the India-Pakistan border, nocturnal monsters terrorizing Black Istanbulites, and spiritual warfare and ghostly terror along the Mexican-United States borderlands. Together, these papers reveal how monsters, ghosts, and wandering gods and goddesses materialize in spaces where the specters of the state, like police officers, border guards, and immigration agents, enact violence. By centering the so-called "supernatural" as an analytic of state violence, we argue that such metaphors are not only cultural tropes but also epistemic tools from the bottom up that help articulate the trauma and violence of displacement, racial profiling, deportations, and border crossings. We thus show that metaphors hold political weight and potential beyond the poetics of description.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Manuel Galaviz, California State University, Fullerton, Division of Anthropology

Chair: Manuel Galaviz, California State University, Fullerton, Division of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alize Arican, CUNY, City College, Department of Anthropology, Gender Studies, and International Studies, Natasha Raheja, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Manuel Galaviz, California State University, Fullerton, Division of Anthropology, Almita Miranda, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Discussant: Gilberto Rosas, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Monsters Lurk at Night: Black Migrant Life and Policing in Istanbul

In the lead-up to the 2023 local elections, the Turkish government pointedly stopped extending West African migrants' residence permits, aiming to gain votes by drawing on the anti-migrant sentiments of voting Turkish citizens. Soon after the government's claims that police brutality and Black Lives Matter debates are irrelevant, since they "happen over there, in the West," and since "there is no racism in Turkey," this paper tells a different story: focusing on the lived experience of Hassan, a Sierra Leonean man whose residency permit has not been extended, I pay close attention to his narratives around being policed. Likening police officers to monsters that lurk at night, Hassan solidifies the nighttime as a specific temporality in which police identify and deport Black men, after racially profiling them on the street and following them home. I argue that the nocturnal monster metaphor, combined with that of "lurking," provides a reference point through which Black Istanbulites make sense of continually shifting policies that alter their migration statuses, oscillating between belonging and non-belonging, regularity and irregularity. The metaphor also lays bare the contradictions in state claims to the nonexistence of Black racism in Turkey, showing that it constitutes a particularly ambiguous logic around migration. That ambiguity itself lurks, through night and day, configuring and reconfiguring Black migrant lives.

Presenter(s): Alize Arican

Divine Migrations: The Cult of the Mother Goddess in the Indo-Pak Borderlands

A Hindu goddess with a cross-caste following, Hinglaj's chief abode is in Balochistan, today's southwestern Pakistan. She lives in a womb-like, cavernous hill off the Hingol River whose waters wind to meet with the Arabian Sea. Shrines to her abound across the region.

In Charani mythology, Hinglaj is the fallen head of the goddess Sati's dismembered corpse. After Sati was killed, a grief-stricken Shiva carried her body around the universe. As he wandered and danced in rage, Sati's body parts and blood fell in different places - her forehead falling in a cavern near the aforementioned Hingol river. What happens now when devotees of Hinglaj cross the India-Pakistan border?

This paper considers how migrant's possessions and peripatetic movements across the Thar Desert invoke the itineraries of wandering gods and goddesses. The dispersal of the goddess Sati's dismembered body alongside the erection of new Hinglaj shrines speak to how devotion forges a dispersed migrant geography across the Indo-Pak borderlands. Based on long-term fieldwork with Pakistani Hindu migrants in India, I examine the ways that migrants travel with their gods,

constructing temples to familiar deities in new places. In doing so, they thread together devotional landscapes that exceed the seams of national borders. I argue that in contrast to top-down, religious nationalist geographies that emphasize ideological unity, migrants' own sacred geographies emphasize disaggregation and dismemberment.

Presenter(s): Natasha Raheja

La Llorona: fragmented yet haunting memories of childhood border crossings.

This paper recounts the author's lasting terror of his childhood run-in with Mexico's most infamous ghost, the Llorona (the weeping woman). It was late at night on New Year's Day 1987 in San Diego, California's mountainous border terrain, where the Llorona appeared to him and chased after his family. While the legend of the Llorona permeates in Mexican and Chicanx oral and literary traditions (Perez 2008), the author's visceral encounter with the Llorona occurred the same night he became an undocumented child in the United States. During his childhood border crossing, the author mistook "la migra" (the border patrol) with the Mexican folkloric Llorona specter. After all, in the mind of a four-year-old, what other being than the Llorona could induce so much fear in his parents that made them run and hide in the cold, dark, mountainous terrain? Building on Gilberto Rosas' (2023) concept of "The Lloronx," this paper weaves testimonio and intimate witnessing on the struggle to reconcile with fragmented yet haunting memories and stories of childhood border crossings along the Mexican-US Borderlands (Farfán-Santos 2022).

Presenter(s): Manuel Galaviz

Dios es mi abogado (God is my Lawyer): Faith, Mental Health, and Spiritual Warfare with the U.S. Immigration System

Caught between the pressures of punitive U.S. immigration and enforcement policies and the mental anguish and trauma that may result from these, immigrants and their families turn to their faith and spirituality to find comfort and solace. In this paper, I explore the ways in which Latinx mixed-status families rely on faith-based practices like prayer and mandas (vows), dream interpretation, and traditional healing (e.g. limpias) to help them cope with the anxiety and mental health challenges that arise from living in the U.S. with the constant fear of deportation and family separation. Through an examination of people's testimonios from border crossings and family-based visa petitions, I analyze how their legal, mental, and spiritual worlds collide, blurring the boundaries between the physical and the supernatural. For some of these families, navigating laws that attempt to criminalize and punish immigrants for creating a better life for them and their children becomes more than a legal battle, but one of morality and evil forces that only God and their faith can help them withstand.

Presenter(s): Almita Miranda

Discussion

1148 The New Reproductive Order: a feminist reproductive studies roundtable, Part 1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

In 1995, Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp published the landmark anthology *Conceiving the New World Order*, the first major volume to explore the global politics of reproduction from the point of view of both its marginalization within anthropology and related disciplines and its simultaneous centrality to both the social order and political economy. Ginsburg and Rapp's ambition to 'transform traditional anthropological analyses of reproduction and to clarify the importance of making reproduction central to social theory' has succeeded in many ways. Over the past 30 years, the rapid expansion of the anthropology of reproduction has been accompanied by the global spread of the reproductive justice movement, and a new centrality for reproductive politics on the world stage. Increasing concerns about reproduction and fertility now intersect with many of the most important political challenges of our era, including climate change, economic instability, the rise of authoritarian regimes, debate over immigration, battles over national borders, and marginalization of varied minority and LGBTQ+ communities. This double roundtable revisits these themes in the context of the launch at AAA 2025 of a new anthology of ethnographic work on fertility and reproduction edited by Sarah Franklin and Marcia C. Inhorn that builds on the pathbreaking work of Ginsburg and Rapp. *The New Reproductive Order: Technology, Fertility and Social Change around the Globe* argues that despite its new centrality to both politics and scholarship, reproduction and fertility remain haunted by past absences as well as the spectral presence of longstanding stereotypes and misconceptions. In our two-part roundtable we will focus on what has changed and what has stayed the same from the point of view of feminist reproductive studies over the past three decades. What can we learn from the narratives, images and tropes – as well as products, practices and politics – through which reproduction and fertility are organized today about their ongoing significance to social and political life? Using specific examples from detailed case studies around the world, our roundtable participants will reflect on these and related questions at a key turning point in global reproductive politics today. The two co-editors as well as nine contributors to *The New Reproductive Order* will be joined by Rayna Rapp as a final discussant to offer an historic occasion to look back over three decades of feminist reproductive studies at a crucial pivot point for global reproductive politics.

[[Note to Executive Session Reviewers: This proposal and its other half would also work as a single roundtable with extended time if that is a preferable option to a two-parter. In that case, the two co-organisers (Franklin, Inhorn) could act as informal chairs of a session with 8 presenters (Kantsa, Blell, Wahlberg, Gagne, Van de Weil, Rudrappa, Homanen & Whittaker) and two discussants (Bharadwaj & Rapp)].

Organizer: Sarah Franklin, University of Cambridge, Marcia Inhorn, Yale University

Presenter(s): Sarah Franklin, University of Cambridge, Venetia Kantsa, Mwenza Blell, Newcastle University, Ayo Wahlberg, University of Copenhagen, Nana Okura Gagne, Waseda University

Discussant: Aditya Bharadwaj

2718 The Living Dead, the Living Landscape, and Other Nonhuman Agents in the Maya World (Part II)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What a western framework often labels as ghosts, apparitions, spirits, and specters inhabit the world with us, but they are called different names by different cultural groups. As such, how these groups relate to them also varies from western imaginings. In the Maya world, which spans across the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador, these entities still permeate through an imposed reality that stems from the colonial era. Starting in the 16th century, Indigenous groups of Maya descent were subjected to destabilizing colonizing forces in order to assimilate them to a Christianized way of viewing the world. Often, colonizers labeled these nonhuman agents as demons that needed to be purged from Indigenous minds, bodies, and souls. In Maní, Yucatán, Mexico on July 12, 1562, Friar Diego de Landa commissioned an auto da fe, in which "thousands of sculpted deity images and associated ritual paraphernalia," such as hieroglyphic codices, were burned (Christensen 2016, 22).

Yet, neither fire nor time could destroy these nonhuman agents, as they still inhabit the world—for instance, as features in the landscape. In this interdisciplinary session—split into three parts—we examine the myriad of nonhuman agents who populate the Maya world and regularly engage with human communities, as ancestors, deities, earth spirits, guardian angels, and other powerful beings. Using perspectives rooted in all four anthropological subfields and related disciplines, participants will examine how the Maya conceive(d) of, engage(d) with, and depend(ed) upon these beings in the past and present. Part 1 will focus on the living dead. Particularly, how the Maya interacted with their real and imagined ancestors, from regular ritual offerings to incorporating the dead into the foundations of houses and other structures. Part 2 will focus on the living landscape, from guardian spirits of specific domains to how statues were treated as living humans. Part 3 will focus on a wide range of other beings who populate the Maya landscape, from living mountains to the spirits of unborn children.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Brent Woodfill, Winthrop University

Chair: Brent Woodfill, Winthrop University

Presenter(s): Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Maia Dedrick, Santa Clara University, Department of Anthropology, Caitlin Earley, Ken Seligson

Discussant: Miguel Astor-Aguilera, Arizona State University

Presentation(s): Aj Kanul: Understanding a 'Guardian Angel' in Contemporary Yucatec Maya Thought

Among the Yucatec Maya of Mexico, the landscape is home not to just to humans. It is also home to supernatural beings. One such being is the aj kanul. Drawing on over 15 years of ethnographic field work in Xocén, Yucatan, Mexico, my collaborators translate this entity as a 'guardian angel' in Spanish. Each person is said to have one. Like a guardian angel, an aj kanul protects their designated human from harm and serves somewhat as an intermediary between the natural and supernatural worlds. Often, they are described by my collaborators as waiting patiently at one of the four corners of the yard for their humans to exit their home. If this 'guardian angel's' designated human leaves, they follow and protect their designated human. Yet, unlike a guardian angel, the aj kanul can be turned malevolent by the yuum balamo'ob, guardians, of the land in which the household resides. Oral narratives typically term malicious aj kanul, as those who steal babies or kill animals and humans. In this presentation, I provide a description of this entity. First, I attempt to provide a linguistic analysis of the term to situate the term's use in history. Then, I move to discuss how my collaborators relate to their aj kanulo'ob (plural form of aj kanul) in their daily lives through examining narratives from various speech genres that focus on how these 'guardian angels' became spiteful in the eyes of those they sought to protect.

Presenter(s): Crystal Sheedy

Auguries in Yucatán: their role in communication between human and nonhuman agents and their potential for informing climate change adaptation

Traditional weather forecasting in Yucatán, Mexico, depends on auguries (tamax chi') and the observation of days in the new year (xook k'iin). This presentation focuses on the first of these, which involves the observation of animals, insects, and other beings, which communicate coming trends, such as the rainy season or drought. Auguries are based on empirical observations as well as underlying beliefs about how certain creatures signal important information to humans. Many continue to function today, while others do not due to climate or environmental change. When considered in aggregate, those that work can provide detailed information about climate shifts, potentially complementing the development of scientific models. Sometimes agricultural pests also act as auguries, a point that has come up in interviews we conducted with expert farmers in the town of Tahcabo. In this paper, we explore opportunities that the study of auguries can offer to climate change observation and adaptation. We compare the scope and sensitivity of such forecasts to scientific weather forecasting and climate modeling. In addition, we consider the significance of observed animals and insects as nonhuman agents that engage with humans and other beings across the landscape, to probe how auguries are understood to function. To do so, we draw on past interviews we have conducted together in the town of Tahcabo as well as those Kanxoc Kumul conducted as part of his thesis research in Chemax.

Presenter(s): Maia Dedrick

Co-author(s): Miguel Kanxoc Kumul

Dead but not gone: Captured Warriors and Revered Ancestors in Classic Maya Art

Captives in Classic Maya art are tied with rope, stepped on, and positioned in ways that emphasize their subordinate status. Yet they share some of these traits with depictions of ancestors. In this presentation, I explore the conceptual overlap between captive warriors and ancestors in Classic Maya art. Considering case studies from three Classic Maya sites, I examine works of art within their archaeological context to present an embodied analysis that considers the entanglements between sculptures, paintings, and people. Comparative material from Mesoamerican cultures past and present helps to clarify the role of both types of individuals. I argue that mapping the conceptual overlap between these archetypal characters in Maya art helps us better understand representations of power and agency in Maya site centers, and ultimately, how works of art communicated with many types of people in the Classic Maya world.

Presenter(s): Caitlin Earley

Over the Hill, and Through the Wood: Amidst the Ancestors in the Puuc Region

Xanab Chak is a small, Preclassic Period site (c. 900–300 BCE) that was identified as a result of a recent lidar flyover of the Eastern Puuc Region. Investigations within the civic core of the site over the past three years have confirmed that it remained relatively unaltered by later construction activities despite dense Classic Period settlement blanketing the region. Dozens of other Preclassic communities in the eastern Puuc were covered by successive cultural layers, as evidenced by Preclassic plazas uncovered at Kiuic, Muluchtzekel and Labna. The proximity of Xanab Chak to Labna leaves little doubt that the Classic Period residents of the eastern Puuc were familiar with this ancestral community in their midst. The fact that the site was largely left alone suggests later populations purposefully avoided disturbing the site too extensively. This may have stemmed from a reverence for the ancestors and their consecrated spaces, or perhaps the site's fortuitous location on the outskirts of the Classic Period Labna polity. At least one specific act of irreverence was uncovered during the 2024 field season in the form of an ancient pit excavated in the exact center of the ballcourt, demonstrating that respect for ancestral spaces was not absolute. This paper will explore the relationships between Preclassic Xanab Chak and the later communities that surrounded it, as well as the continued importance of visiting ancestral Puuc sites through the Postclassic Period.

Presenter(s): Ken Seligson

Discussion

8567 Public Engagement for Anthropologists of Reproduction

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

Since the 2022 Supreme Court decision which ended federal protections to abortion rights, reproductive justice has been in the mainstream media and popular culture more than ever before.

Yet if you open a newspaper to read about this topic, you will find doctors and lawyers quoted as the sole experts on what is happening to people on the ground. Anthropologists are not often seen as experts on contemporary social issues - yet, we are the scholars most familiar with how people are experiencing structural, legal, and medical changes in their everyday lives, and in global perspective. The Council for Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) wants to change that - starting with this workshop opportunity for researchers working on any topic related to reproduction (e.g. surrogacy, contraception, maternal health, welfare policy) to explore how they can become more engaged scholars. From the session you will learn about types of public engagement available to scholars, from advocating for policy to communicating with the media. The workshop will be led by Lisa Hernandez, Senior Reproductive Health & Rights Associate at the Scholars Strategy Network, with contributions from the Advocacy Subcommittee of CAR. The workshop emphasizes that there is no single way to be a publicly-engaged scholar, and demonstrates the different roles researchers can play in the policy and media arenas. We will lead participants through activities to identify how their own research can connect with the public, and then provide them with concrete tools and resources to take action. This workshop builds on the work that AAA is already doing to support engaged scholarship, by providing expert guidance specifically for anthropologists working across the subfields topics of reproduction, broadly construed. With growing attacks on biological and social reproduction globally, it is more important than ever that anthropologists how our research findings can contribute to making a more just world.

8546 Enacting NAGPRA's Duty of Care: Challenges and Best Practices

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

This workshop will familiarize participants with recent updates to the Regulations for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (“NAGPRA”), focusing on section 10.1(d), “Duty of Care.” This section requires museums to consult with Tribal Nations regarding the appropriate care, handling, and curation of Native American Ancestors and cultural items; to incorporate these Nations’ preferences to the best of their ability based on traditional Tribal knowledge; and to obtain free, prior, and informed consent prior to any form of access to NAGPRA collections. The workshop will provide an overview of these requirements as well as examples of the successful incorporation of traditional care and consent practices in museum curation for these Ancestors and cultural items.

Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss possibilities for this work with the organizers and with each other. Please bring questions and concerns for group discussion. If time allows, we will also address other updates to the NAGPRA Regulations; but Duty of Care has become a primary focus for museums and Tribal Nations under the new requirements. We will discuss how practitioners can work collaboratively across units, departments, and even institutions to facilitate thoughtful and impactful NAGPRA compliance.

3700 Reflections on Mentoring Black Anthropologists in the US South

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The roundtable discusses mentoring amongst Black anthropologist working in academia across various departments and appointments and explores the challenges and opportunities of working in Southern U.S. public institutions. Working in various departments outside of anthropology, including Black Studies and Sociology, we detail experiences working in an environment where diversity is under assault politically at the national and state levels. We will explore the challenges of institutional racism and bias, political climate, limited resources, cultural and social barriers. Mentorship, including mutual mentoring, plays a significant role in navigating challenges spaces at PWIs, as well as emotional and mental support. Despite these and other challenges, Black Anthropologists built supportive networks, continued activism and advocacy, worked across disciplines, and demonstrated resilience and adaptability.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Kenneth Williamson, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Luciane Rocha, Kennesaw State University, Emelda Curry , Meya Hemphill-Hodges , Kenneth Williamson, Kennesaw State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

Discussant: Griselda Thomas, Kennesaw State University

7047 Haunting Presences and Absences: Ghosts in Contemporary Institutional Contexts - panel 2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Death does not always bring closure. In many cultural, clinical, and personal contexts, the dead linger as memories, as spirits, as unresolved trauma, or as institutional absences. Death can also awaken haunting recollections of past (traumatic) events or revive forgotten relationships. Hence, this panel explores the theme of Ghosts through the lens of medical anthropology, focusing on how individuals, families, communities, and healthcare systems engage with the spectres of death and dying.

Within Western medicine, ghosts, as well as other supernatural mysteries and unquantifiable experiences, have been largely displaced by objectivity and evidence-based frameworks. Yet despite this clinical omission, ghosts remain omnipresent (e.g., Langford 2013; Hume 2018). They manifest in the quiet hauntings of healthcare workers, the persistent presence of ancestors in patient narratives, the gaps left by institutional neglect, and the emotional and spiritual residue of

suffering and dying. Medical practices may even be built on or around the very ghosts they were supposed to supersede (e.g., van der Geest 2005; Langford 2016).

Organized by the Death and Bereavement Special Interest Group of the Society for Medical Anthropology, this panel invites contributions that consider how death and dying are entangled with haunting absences and aching attendances and how the dead are remembered, embodied, erased, or summoned in medical, communal, and personal spaces.

The papers of this panel will examine literal and metaphorical ghosts across diverse settings, illuminating the ways in which presence persists, despite medicine's best attempts to render absence final. More specifically, this panel will address how structural ghosts of colonialism, racism, and systemic neglect continue to shape experiences of dying and mourning. How do ghosts make themselves known in the lives of the bereaved? What does it mean to be haunted by a death poorly handled, or silenced, or by a grief that defies linear resolution?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Maija Butters, University of Helsinki, Louise Chartrand, University of Manitoba

Chair: Louise Chartrand, University of Manitoba

Presenter(s): Charlotte Ikels, Case Western Reserve University, Department of Anthropology, Veronica Sousa, Aminata Ndow, Maija Butters, University of Helsinki, Nikki Mulder, Leiden University

Presentation(s): Managing Ghosts in Cantonese Culture

The research on which this paper is based was carried out in the Cantonese-speaking region of southern China which includes Hong Kong and the adjacent province of Guangdong. Canton is the old name in English for Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong. In traditional Chinese culture ghosts of all kinds have been viewed as significant actors capable of participating in everyday life. This paper will focus more narrowly on two kinds of familial ghosts who, for one reason or another, communicate their distress or disappointment with their family's failure in its duties to the ghost. The first type of ghost is that of someone who died young and never had the chance to be married. It wants its family to arrange a "ghost marriage". The family will seek out a spirit medium to arrange such a marriage. The second type of ghost is that of someone who died very recently, and its gripe usually concerns shortcomings in funerary or mourning activities. People become aware of a ghost's efforts to contact them when a family member experiences inexplicable anxiety or illness or when the family is embroiled in conflict. Hopefully managing the ghost will solve the problem.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Ikels

Specters of Covid Care: Loss, Death, and Temporality in Elder Care in Lisbon

Amélia, grieving alone in silence, is haunted by the specter of her husband. They both arrived at the Santo António Parochial Senior Social Center in Lisbon in 2021, which houses a day center for the elderly and an overnight "short-term" rehab center called the Night Center. Both Amélia and Joaquim were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and experienced injuries/illnesses associated with old age. While in the Night Center, they adjusted to a shared space, to the uncertainty allotted

to unstable yet temporary changes to daily life. Temporary modifications morphed into permanent uncertainty – Joaquim passed away suddenly. Given Covid-related restrictions, or so she thought, Amélia was unable to attend his funeral. No one had even asked her if she wanted to go.

With full Center life moved on from Joaquim's death, Amélia languished in her grief. His absence haunted her experience in institutionalized care, in which temporal boundaries themselves began to vanish. Despite it being a short-term facility, Amélia has been at the Night Center for years. Joaquim's death became unspoken but lingering, a specter of what gets lost in underfunded, over-stressed, neoliberalized institutional care settings that exist between/betwixt social life and social time. In discussing the melancholic case of Amélia and Joaquim in this paper, I aim to illustrate how the specter of early Covid-19 continues to haunt the limits and potentiality of the Center, and how it continues to affect the ways elder

Presenter(s): Veronica Sousa

Absent Fathers, Institutional Hauntings: Grief, Silence, and Spectral Justice in Post-Dictatorship Gambia

In post-dictatorship Gambia, grief persists in the absence of closure. For adult children of the forcibly disappeared, many of whom lost their fathers during Yahya Jammeh's regime, mourning is shaped by both personal loss and the state's failure to acknowledge it. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with victims' families and civil society organizations, this paper explores how the disappeared reappear in everyday life: in portraits, WhatsApp avatars, silences, and untouched archives. These ghosts haunt the very institutions meant to deliver justice, including commissions that heard testimonies but failed to return remains, bureaucracies that stalled on reparations, and governments that transformed remembrance into delay. Once hailed as a site of reckoning, the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) now symbolizes suspended expectation. Through the lens of medical anthropology, I explore how haunting circulates across personal, communal, and bureaucratic spaces, and how grief becomes a form of resistance. It demands recognition where the state offers silence. In this context, even institutions become haunted: by the unburied, the unacknowledged, and the still-waiting.

Presenter(s): Aminata Ndow

Finnish Deathlore Revisited: Sightings of the Spirit Birds

Thinking, talking, and imagining one's death can become paralyzingly tricky the closer death comes. This is especially true in secularized and highly medicalized cultures, such as Finland, where the Christian language provided by the Lutheran Church has "ceased to speak" to people. How do people communicate about death and dying in this climate?

While conducting ethnographic research among Finnish hospice patients, the absence of the language of death was occasionally filled with aesthetics and nature imageries, which were used to point toward death. These were not merely expressions, however, but accounts of actual, real-world events and encounters concerning supernatural agents—the dead. Some of these involved

the ancient Finnish idea of an ominous kalma bird ("death bird") foretelling an approaching death. The more common and consoling encounters took place with a sielu bird ("soul bird"), a manifestation of the soul of the deceased, which visits grieving family members. The idea of a "soul bird" directly references the shamanistic understanding of a spirit departing in animal form.

In this paper, I will delve into the various ways in which the haunting presence of death becomes speakable and tangible via pre-Christian imageries and language. My data illustrates modern adaptations and innovative aesthetic ritualizations built around the ancient Finnish deathlore, shedding light on how these traditions continue to evolve in contemporary Finnish culture.

Presenter(s): Maija Butters

The Haunting Presences of Future Deaths: Life insurance and the Right to Grieve in New Orleans

While the city of New Orleans is a haunted place, specters of death do not manifest equally for all residents. Patterns of mortality reflect enduring histories of racialized inequality and intersect closely with socioeconomic class. Since the rise of urban violence in the 1970s, Black and poor residents have had to increasingly deal with sudden, untimely deaths in their families. This situation has upturned normative expectations about the timing of death and about who will have to care for whose remains. Based on ethnographic fieldwork (2017-2018), I describe how African American parents and grandparents in New Orleans find themselves confronted with the need to reckon with the (future) deaths of their children and grandchildren. They do so, importantly, by securing finances to mourn not yet deceased kin through the consumption of life insurance policies. In this paper, I consider the ways that people relate to the future potentiality of untimely death in terms of haunting. While haunting tends to be used as a metaphor for the lingering presence of systemic injury from the past (Gordon 1997; Holloway 2003), some scholars have suggested that ghosts may come from the future as well (Zeitlyn 2020). I use the notion of haunting—of absent-presences and morbid dreads—to draw out how death acquires a ghostly presence: not yet fully present but already effective in anticipatory actions like the consumption of life insurance.

Presenter(s): Nikki Mulder

7928 Educational hauntings for inclusion: Excavating the remains and learning from the resurrection of unsettled spirits

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Our present education reality is built on past education histories of exclusivity: white, ableist, heteronormative, male supremacy. This panel aims to unearth, using (auto)ethnographic methods, the sociocultural and political vestiges of these histories of education and identity exclusion that are present in institutions today: in elementary and middle schools, as well as on university campuses. The first paper examines how queer cultural apocalypses of the past inform queer

responses to crises on current university campuses, which in turn, will shape queer futures . The second paper reveals the prevalence of PTSD in the teaching profession, questioning how teachers who are tasked with implementing social emotional learning for their students when their school ignores their own well being. The third paper. focuses on the unheard--the deaf, hard of hearing, and those with assistive devices, who are neglected in the education system with regard to necessary resources. The fourth paper shows the difference a teacher can make when they prioritize their identity as mentor for BIPOC middle school students over the traditional role of teacher, who imparts knowledge and focuses on classroom management, shifting the classroom and school culture. Finally, the fifth paper problematizes mental health student services on a university campus, describing the connection between neoliberal policies and the pathology that it induces in college culture. Resurrecting these unsettled spirits, these panelists recall the past with the present and provide suggestions for the education futures of those who have been left behind, if not mummified.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Denni Blum, Oklahoma State University

Chair: Denni Blum, Oklahoma State University

Presenter(s): Austin Hayes, Oklahoma State University, Alexandra Imperi, Nicole Loper, Terrance Green, Jonathan Ishoy

Discussant: Denni Blum, Oklahoma State University

Presentation(s): Apocalyptiqueer: Lessons from Ethnographic Investigation of Queer Worlds in Crisis

Under a second Trump administration, 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the United States are facing increasing human rights infringements and erasure. From prohibition of gender-affirming healthcare, bans on transgender youth participating in sports, and the legal formalization of the false equivalence of gender and biological sex, queer and trans students and youth in particular face existential threats. By conceptualizing apocalypse as a radical shift due to "the end of the world as we knew it" either for an entire community or for one person's lifeworld (Husserl, 1970), this study examines how queer apocalypses of the past inform queer responses to crises of the present which in turn shape queer futures (Muñoz, 2009; Castiglia & Reed, 2011)

Using border theory (Anzaldúa, 1987; Morales, 1995), I examine how queer students respond to and subvert dominant societal forces mediated through schooling in the borderlands between their homeworlds and alienworlds during the Trump administration (Steinbock, 1995). Through (auto)ethnographic investigation, I highlight how LGBTQ+ university students are navigating a homeworld in crisis. By "learning from Apocalypse with grace, rigor, and curiosity" (Brown & Brown, 2017), I consider individual and collective responses to crises as informed by queer cultural memory, not just across time and space but between worlds. Such liminal experiences showcase not only how the present is shaped by the past, but also how echoes of worlds no more and even dreams

Presenter(s): Austin Hayes

Teaching with Trauma: Teachers' Ghosts of Childhood Past

Teaching can be emotionally laborious, but for educators with personal trauma histories, working in trauma-impacted schools can stir the echoes of past experiences, and may introduce unique challenges related to their mental health and professional well-being, as well as their classroom teaching (Bride et al., 2004; Figley, 1995; Jenkins, 2002; Stamm, 1999; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2025). While much research focuses on social emotional learning for students with high Adverse Child Experiences (ACEs) scores, less attention has been paid to the teachers who carry their own ghosts into the classrooms. This mixed method study combines the auto/ethnographic observations and personal stories of elementary public-school teachers, including myself, with the results of teachers' self-assessments using the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) (Bride, 1999) and the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) (Stamm, 2008). The findings interrogate a complex school culture, which asks teachers, many with PTSD themselves, to take steps to address the social and emotional well-being of its children. Attempts to do so remain inadequate without taking measures to include school culture that also ensures adequate social and emotional teacher support.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Imperi

Spirits of the Unheard: Reflections of a Speech-Language Pathologist

The purpose of this autoethnographic paper is to discuss my experience as a speech-language pathologist and advocate for elementary students who are deaf and hard of hearing and students who use Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC). IDEA (1975) and ADA (1990) are in place to protect this population, however, this student population continues to face ongoing adversities, such as not being provided with an interpreter, limited access to their speech generating devices, limited access to resources, and unequitable access to educational information/activities. The lack of these resources produces further social and learning isolation. Like Jen Stacy (2025) I use border theory to denote the spatial, cultural, social and mental markers that limit this population from living and learning fully. Noting my experiences with this population, I offer both the challenges and the different ways I have been able to advocate for these students' rights, as well as teach them to self-advocate. Therefore, this paper aims to bring awareness to the students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and those who use AAC the adversity they may encounter in school, advocacy suggestions for teachers and parents, as well as how one might teach self-advocacy.

Presenter(s): Nicole Loper

Mentoring beyond the curriculum: The hauntings of BIPOC youth and their mentor

The purpose of this autoethnographic paper is to discuss my current mentorship work in an Oklahoma public middle school, saturated with noises and silences that attach to histories and cultures, violence and joy. Schools are places haunted by histories of oppressions (Caputo, 2016; Tanner, 2022; Zembylas, 2013). In the United States, the specters of racism, sexism, ableism, and other "isms" affect students in both material and immaterial ways. Although my official job title is

special education teacher and coach, I identify as "mentor" because, for me, mentoring takes priority over curriculum and is my curriculum. As a black mentor to BIPOC youth, their struggles, in school and at home, hearken my ghosts and my ancestors' past. Using (auto)ethnographic methods to document the current stories of youth and my reflections on the ways they connect with my youth, I illustrate both the similar and distinct ways in which BIPOC youth have had to and continue to struggle, resist, fail, and succeed: resilient before a malignant education system. I also show how mentorship might be conceived and what is needed to exorcise this systemic oppression from schools.

Presenter(s): Terrance Green

It's Never Enough: An Anthropological Autoethnography of a University Mental Health Counselor

As a mental health counselor working for University and College Counseling Centers (UCCC), I have experienced commodification, objectification, and isolation in my campus profession, reflective of the structure and process of their mental health counseling services. An institution's culture is subsumed by the pathology it induces, and university counseling centers have adapted to this structural pathology in various ways. The purpose of the study is to explore how institutional structures, and the prevailing culture of mental health practices, impact the care of students in higher education institutions. Using an autoethnographic approach, I examine the evolution of university and college counseling centers and their practices, enabling the examination of social and cultural contexts through personal experiences (Reed-Danahay 2009; Chang 2016). I provide unique insights into the social and cultural experiences on campuses, especially the institutional neoliberal values that significantly contribute and shape the college counseling experiences. Thus, ironically, a service which exists to support students' wellbeing oftentimes may contribute to their mental health struggles.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Ishoy

Discussion

3461 Beyond the Colonial Specter: Haunting, Memory, and the Persistence of Black and Indigenous Worlds

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts entail the past, the haunting of places, and that they are seen, heard, and felt in the present. In Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), the author provides us with a framework for better understanding the unresolved histories of violence and exploitation, including how these histories continue to be felt in the present. Kennedy et al. (2017) use "haunting" to describe whiteness as a force, one that subtly influences perceptions, behaviors, and institutional structures, reinforcing racial hierarchies. These 'ghostly traces' persist through absence, silence, and repression, manifesting in ways that continue to shape contemporary Black

and Indigenous life (Hartman 2007; Sharpe 2016; Simpson 2020). In other words, unresolved histories of white settler violence and exploitation continue to render white bodies and practices unmarked and leave Native and Black bodies and practices highly marked. In this panel, we seek to address these structural imbalances while opening up discussions of spectral imaginaries outside colonial thought-worlds. The haunting framework allows us to think multi-directionally and cyclically, undermining the hegemony of white settler cultural norms. Being attuned to ghosts disrupts the linear space-time or chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981) of white settlerism, and allows for something beyond an ambivalent specter of the colonial past, such as benevolent ancestors "haunting" their descendants. Turning to benevolent ghosts allows a reassessment of how Indigenous and Black life continues to be haunted, ultimately pointing to the intergenerational creation and transmission of anticolonial knowledge (Anderson 2009; Sharpe 2016).

American liberalism desires a post-racial present that can ignore race altogether (Powell 2017). Refusing interpolation by whiteness as a normative positionality reframes the ghosts of imperialist and racialized acts of violence as a foil to the presumed invisibility of whiteness. There is no "settled" past upon which this presumed whiteness can rest. Even when haunting is framed as unsettling to whiteness, we work to decenter white desires and perspectives, opening up room for non-white alterities to come to the forefront (Cameron 2008). The very existence of Indigenous and Black life today has persisted through cultural and epistemic erasure, alongside the violence of white supremacy and racial capitalism (Robinson 1983; Coulthard 2014; Hartman 2019; Jackson 2020; Dunbar-Ortiz 2021). This challenges a history that always rested on Black death (King 2019; Hartman 1997), the exploited labor of non-white immigrants (Lowe 2015), and the possession of Indigeneity (Moreton-Robinson 2015). In this panel, we turn to intergroup dialogue (John and Brown 2019) to show how Indigenous and Black histories, knowledges, and relations are constantly in motion across time. Continuing to center Indigenous and Black livingness, we hope to cultivate lively possibility.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Joseph Marks, University of Arizona, Sabena Allen, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Joseph Marks, University of Arizona

Presenter(s): Sabena Allen, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Benjamin Salinas, Brown University, Kianna Dieudonne, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Joseph Marks, University of Arizona

Discussant: Jenny Davis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Speculative Indigeneity: Transformative Scenario Planning and Tlingit Ancestral Futures

This paper troubles the temporality of haunting by identifying "ghosts" in the speculative process of "Transformative Scenario Planning." Based on ethnographic research taking place on Lingít Aaní (Tlingit homelands) from January to April of 2024, it will consider the "Possible Future for Southeast Alaska" document (2024) and planning process. The document lays out four future scenarios for

Southeast Alaska between 2025 and 2050. Initiated by the CDFI Spruce Root as a resource for the new Tongass National Forest Plan, there were over thirty contributors region-wide, including several who are Tlingit. During the planning process, one suggested scenario postulated that Indigenous peoples would no longer be present in the region by 2050. Given our 10,000-year history on the land, Tlingit absence by 2050 was not considered plausible. The presence and longevity of Tlingit ancestors thereby became a haunting claim that called these ancestors forth (Cariou 2006), strengthening their descendants' present and future land claims. This connection to land is reflected concretely in the scenarios' intended use in the Forest Plan. As Tsing et al. observe, "[E]very landscape is haunted" (2017). The Tongass is haunted by ancestral knowledge and stories, as well as by settler histories and violence. The tensions between ambivalent and benevolent ghosts shape the past, present, and future of Lingít Aaní and, in turn, the speculative imaginings laid out in the scenarios.

Presenter(s): Sabena Allen

Laayli' Kuxa'ano'one: Sonic Vitality and the Haunting of Capitalist Modernity in the Yucatan Peninsula

Laayli' Kuxa'ano'one is Yucatec Maya phrase that translates roughly to "we are still living". It is a favored phrase of Yucatec Maya rapper Pat Boy and the ADN Maya Colectivo—a Yucatec Maya rap collective—who used the phrase as the title of their contribution Marvel's Black Panther soundtrack. Such public assertion of vitality is noteworthy in the peninsula where Maya erasure continues as part of capitalist modernity. Drawing on Gordon's work (1997), Castellanos (2010) demonstrates how Maya people in the Peninsula resurrect "fantasmas of modernity" through adaption of locally salient cultural practices and tactical integration into modernism. In my presentation, I build off this work to show how young Maya musicians both resurrect fantasmas and embody fantasmas to haunt capitalist modernity. Through music, they articulate their vitality against the grain of modernist practices that look to make phantoms out of Indigenous life. I present two creative concepts emerging from hip hop that contemporary Maya musicians use to assert their vitality and haunt capitalist institutions: 1) sampling—an act of reaching into collective memory and archives through sound, and 2) Flow—rappers' "way of being" that emerges through musico-linguistic performance. Such sonic vitality haunts those who listen through capitalist modernity and disrupts colonial narration of Maya ways of being dead or dying.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Salinas

"Doing it the way my ancestors showed me how": Afterlifeforms and the persistence of Black Environmental Consciousness in the U.S. West

Black kinship with the more-than-human enlivens Black lifeforms, landscapes, and futures of abundance. Intersecting Gordon (1997) and Hartman (2007) with the Black Ecological framework (Hosbey et al. 2022), "haunting" describes both the spectral imprints of Black trauma and the enduring presence of ancestors, which shape US landscapes and their relations today. The specter of Black terror on the land haunts in the form of the "big lie" – Black people don't do nature. I

examine how contemporary Black communities in Arizona and Washington engage with land through ancestral practices of care and survival against the backdrop of ongoing settler colonialism and racial capitalism. Soothing the specter of Black trauma that haunts natural spaces enlivens the work of Black ancestors as "afterlifeforms" (Padilioni 2022, 16) – or ghosts. The work of these Black gardeners, naturalists, conservationists, and hobbyists represents a call to recognize the intergenerational persistence of Black environmental consciousness, which disrupts racialized narratives of 'nature' as an arena for Black terror or 'land' as terra nullius. Black ancestral knowledge contests the erasure of Black lifeforms and insists on a relational, anticolonial re-engagement with the environment.

Presenter(s): Kianna Dieudonne

"I hear my father's people in the river": Dispelling Colonial Ghosts through Chronotopes of Tlingit Naming Practices

This paper investigates the cultural practice of naming in the Tlingit community, an Alaska Native tribe of Southeast Alaska. I look into two Tlingit speeches about names and voices. Tlingit naming practices allow people to be embodied by past ancestors in the present, transcending settler colonial temporalities of linear time. The names also derive from events that took place, allowing individuals to bring their ancestral homelands with them wherever they go. Utilizing the terms ghosts and haunting, we understand that the naming process in Tlingit allows the community to access Indigenous knowledge that overshadows settler colonial goals of erasure and elimination (Wolfe 2006). These Tlingit chronotopes, meaning space-time (Bakhtin 1981; Blommaert 2015; Ennis 2019; Wirtz 2020), show that present-day Tlingit people create space and bend time to bring in ancestors as a way to instruct and to elaborate on what it means to be Tlingit. This process of naming, which is traced back to a time before settlers came to Alaska, shows how Tlingits, by continuing their way of living, is inherently decolonial as it claims the land and allows the ancestors to saturate settler signs with Indigenous meaning (Marks 2025). Thus, even when whiteness haunts them (Kennedy et al. 2017), Tlingits dispel white ghosts by occupying space-time with ancestors, ultimately revealing how Indigenous-derived practices produce decoloniality without centering whiteness or settler colonialism.

Presenter(s): Joseph Marks

Discussion

3995 Multiple Eyes on Belonging and Dying in the Southwest Transborder Region; Theoretical and Methodological Diversity, Contradictions, and Thematics

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As the aftermath of the publication of the "The Rise of Necro/Narco Citizenship" it stimulated some

discussion to converse about how our theoretical and methodological assumptions influence the directions and thematics that we emphasize to narrate the major aspects of the Southwest North American Region especially as the consequence of militarization its intersection of and support of the drug trade and the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of its casualties: physical and cultural . Some of us found ourselves in abject pessimism after analyzing the work after years of writing about the amazing creativity of its constituent populations. Are our approaches increasingly problematic as our work matures? Are we reaching an end road to discoveries and now settling in on final spaces of material and labor extraction that confine our insights and understandings? Are we selecting ethnographic populations to reinforce our newly found grounds for pessimism? Is this a temporary juncture of a historical moment when clarity of direction is muddled and grey or clearly a road of perdition in this stage of global capital? Lastly, how do we best apply our knowledge given these issues? The roundtable seeks to uncover these layers of thinking and doing on the region.

Section: Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists

Organizer: Carlos Velez-Ibanez, Arizona State University, Robert Alvarez, University of California, San Diego

Presenter(s): Robert Alvarez, University of California, San Diego, Patricia Zavella, University of California, Santa Cruz, Margaret Dorsey, University of Richmond, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carlos Velez-Ibanez, Arizona State University, Miguel Diaz-Barriga, University of Richmond, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Josiah Heyman, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Maria Cruz-Torres, Arizona State University

4543 Real Ghosts?! Not Metaphors, Not Hauntology, Not Derrida (part 2)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In anthropology, ghosts are often understood as cultural symbols, historical residues, or figures of social haunting. Yet, for many, ghosts are also social actors-inhabitants of lifeworlds, interlocutors, and kin. This panel explores what it means to move beyond representing ghosts as metaphors and instead take them seriously as part of the social realities we study and inhabit.

Anthropologists have long walked a fine line between respecting their interlocutors' beliefs in spirits and maintaining analytical distance. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* offers a classic example of this epistemic move, where he first appears to "believe" he has seen a ghostly light, only to later assure the reader that it must have been a lantern. More recent work, such as Jon Bialecki's engagement with Bruno Latour, has called for taking spirits as social actors--without necessarily breaching the wall of methodological atheism. This panel asks: What if we do breach that wall? What happens when anthropologists, too, can see ghosts?

Bringing together scholars who not only study spirits and ghosts but also share lifeworlds with them, this panel examines how such relationships reshape ethnographic writing. It considers the

forms of storytelling, voice, and methodology that emerge when spirits are not just objects of analysis but co-authors of our worlds.

The presentations in this panel span a wide geography—from German Anthroposophy to Afro-Atlantic Spiritism, from Nigerian classrooms haunted by displaced jinn to Catholic elites engaging with angels and demons. What binds them is a shared attention to the lived presence of spirits as agents of ethical encounter, historical reckoning, and epistemological transformation. These ethnographies do not merely document belief but show how spirits move through language, pedagogy, memory, and space-demanding new methods for listening, relating, and writing within worlds animated by the spectral.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Chair: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Presenter(s): Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG, Martin Tsang

Presentation(s): A Lesson in Communing with the Dead

In Anthroposophy, the dead do not depart from this world after crossing the threshold. Instead, they linger—confused and in need of spiritual nourishment, particularly if they failed to cultivate their spiritual capacities while alive. The living are thus tasked with helping the dead find their way: by developing relationships with them, directing them toward the light, and fostering their continued spiritual development. Drawing on my fieldwork in Stuttgart among the Anthroposophists, this talk explores the techniques they employ to commune with the dead—such as reading aloud to them, addressing them in the language of feeling and image, and meditating on shared memories. These practices reflect a belief that the boundary between the living and the dead is permeable and ethically charged. I argue that the Anthroposophical approach challenges dominant secular norms in Europe not only by insisting on the real presence of the dead but also by demanding a transformation in how we think about relationality and responsibility. Much like anthropology's attempts to translate spiritual worlds into the language of belief, Anthroposophy walks a fine line between spiritual conviction and the performance of secular credibility. This paper asks what it means to speak with—and for—the dead within a spiritual movement that seeks public legitimacy while insisting on unseen truths.

Presenter(s): Arman Yildiz

Causal Social Spirits: Errancy and Dislodging in and Beyond Afro-Atlantic Spiritist Circles

This presentation will explore the *Espíritu de Causa*, a form of errant spirit encountered in Espiritismo or spiritism as practiced in Cuba, often in tandem with Afro-diasporic traditions of Santería or Lucumí. An *Espíritu de Causa* attaches itself to a medium or an individual that is announced through profound and burdensome "causes" or missions, representing a critical issue, unresolved conflict, or pressing matter and characterized and described as "stuck," similarly ascribed to ghostly behaviors and hauntings in Euro-American interpretations of supernatural phenomenon. The paper will engage ethnographic fieldwork to evidence how *Espíritus de Causa* creates opportunities for community members to discuss critical spiritual and social issues,

relating them to the spirit's life history, struggles, or unfinished terrestrial business. In this way, the Espíritu de Causa highlights a more profound, spiritual dimension of causality, where the "cause" transcends mere circumstance or happenstance and is intricately tied to the community's spiritual homeostasis. The presentation presents examples and suggests a new way of conceptualizing how moments of shared embodied and communicative practices and spiritist strategies are employed to locate, unblock, and resolve errancy and malaise for both the person and the spirit.

Presenter(s): Martin Tsang

3943 Epistemologies of coordination: learning from kinship, relational knowledges, and Indigenous pasts to imagine beyond crisis

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anishinaabe scholar Kyle Whyte (2021) describes epistemologies of coordination as ways of knowing the world that emphasize the importance of moral bonds for generating the responsible capacity to respond to a constantly changing world. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge traditions, epistemologies of coordination center moral bonds of relationships among diverse beings dwelling together in sharing environments. An alternative to crisis epistemologies— narratives which center violence, promote colonial unknowing (Calderon & Urietta, 2019), and assume the colonial power of "firsting" (O'Brian, 2010)-- epistemologies of coordination are much needed approaches to understanding knowledge and educating for community. This panel engages epistemologies of coordination in contexts of education through remembering and repurposing expansive histories of knowing rooted in continuous relation with place (Stevens, 2021) and diasporic community saberes (Urietta, 2016) to sustain moral bonds of relationality among people, the environment, and spiritual worlds. Through persistence to learn, problem solve, create, and share in moments of failure, injustice, and unethical action, papers untangle threats to sustaining long-term relationships between people and place, and examine how Indigenous Peoples, children through elders, cultivate conditions for epistemologies of coordination to thrive as guidelines for how to 'live well' with our dynamic changing planet. Drawing from oral histories, archival records, collective memory, childhood socialization, and institutional interactions, panelists highlight the intricacies of ever-dynamic practices of kinship for sustaining balance and addressing inequities in environmental, social, and cultural systems. Acknowledging the boundaries between beings from other worlds, and those living in the human world, papers enter a coordinated dance between relational accountability to the gifts and struggles of prior worlds, and the embodied responsibility to endeavor to learn and teach moral lessons into this current life. Papers ask questions such as: What does it mean to engage in a changing world with mutual responsibility? What knowledge is sustained when listening to the past and how do epistemologies of coordination open pathways to solutions in contemporary contexts of education? How are Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities threading past to present to build viable futures? and, In what ways do practices of Indigenous socialization sustain generosity and mitigate crises in the relationship between people

and land in education contexts?

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, University of Idaho

Chair: Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, University of Idaho

Presenter(s): Iva Moss, University of Idaho, Traci Lewis, University of Idaho, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Jue Wang, University of Idaho, Andrew Dayton, Alexandra Gomez, Sherilyn Analla, University of Arizona

Discussant: Sheilah Nicholas

Presentation(s): Arapaho knowledge systems, relationality, and STEM

This paper explores the intricate connection between Arapaho Knowledge Systems (AKS) and principles of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), specifically within the context of Northern Arapaho tipi construction. Rejecting school narratives of Arapaho student failure in STEM, as defined through standardized assessment tests, I propose Arapaho people are deeply knowledgeable in STEM principles, yet such knowledge has been hidden behind colonial learning systems. Through interviews with Arapaho elders and analysis of archival data, my research investigates how traditional Arapaho knowledge embodies science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The study highlights the holistic nature of AKS, where storytelling, observation, and community practices serve as foundational educational methods. The Arapaho Life Movement framework (Moss, 2022; Anderson 2008) helps explain how AKS is relational and foundational for the Arapaho nation through their storytelling and tipi construction. Using the Arapaho origin story as a setting to explain phenomena and how each life stage the Arapaho experience puts them in relation with the tipi, people, animals, spirit, and universe. Ultimately, it argues that Indigenous knowledge holds inherent STEM concepts that can enrich educational systems grounded in Indigenous Knowledge Systems(IKS) to help bridge Western contexts.

Presenter(s): Iva Moss

Chickasaw Higher education: Exploring relational investments in nation building

The Chickasaw Nation has advocated for their citizens' education since the late 1700s (Cowger & Caver, 2017). Before their forced removal, the Chickasaw nation set up schools in their homeland, where elders and chiefs regularly visited to check on student progress (Cobb, 2000). Understanding early on that colonizers would not be leaving their land, the Chickasaw people recognized federal education plans designed for "civilization" needed to be repurposed as a tool for economic resilience, cultural preservation, and survival. After removal, the Chickasaw people rebuilt their schools and were investing more per capita than any other nation at the time – allocating up to three-fourths of their annuity to education (Baird, 1974). Though Chickasaw history is full of haunting struggles, the ancestral stories have guided their present-day resilience. Today, the Chickasaw Nation honors the past and provides for the future of their people by providing tutoring, connections, and scholarships, supplying \$32.1 million in 2024 alone (Anoatubby, 2024). Most recently, the Chickasaw Alumni Association has launched to further build community and provide

guidance for citizens. This paper seeks to explore the impact of the Chickasaw Nation's efforts in connecting citizens to their legacies while creating a pathway forward. Through surveys and interviews of alumni, this research will address Chickasaw post-secondary students' current perceived needs for continued resilience and connectedness.

Presenter(s): Traci Lewis

Celebrating Hoche Indigenous language through oral and multimodal literature: Language revitalization between, within, and across generations

The challenges surrounding contemporary Hoche Indigenous language practices in rural China has created urgent demand for Indigenous epistemological coordination practices in these regions, where Indigenous Hoche ways of knowing are underrepresented in language education. The focus of this presentation is to investigate ways of fostering intergenerational awareness among the Hoche youth by integrating Hoche knowledge systems into language education. Given that Hoche language systems are embodied and culturally situated, adopting multimodal and multifaceted approaches are necessary to effectively support the reclamation of oral literature, language practices, and culture among Hoche youth. Oral traditional storytelling, as a performed art, connects past, present, and future and tightens Indigenous community kinship and bonds (Archibald, 2020; Naranjo, 2017). Indigenous language pedagogy has already developed a holistic view of literacy as a social practice that embraces stories, poems, dance, and music. Making space for these indigenous pedagogies is imperative, as they provide children opportunities to learn and construct Indigenous identities as they observe, listen to, and imitate family members (Kitson & Bowes, 2010). Yimakan storytelling is one of the most important Hoche oral literary genres that highlights the Hoche ancestral knowledge gained from Hoche land, river, history, and spirit. This paper explores the necessary inclusion of Yimakan oral traditions in schooling.

Presenter(s): Jue Wang

Everyday Embodiments of Mutual Responsibility among Babies and Toddlers who Share Space in Tahlequah (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians)

This presentation focuses on present and past coordinations of mutual responsibility (Bang et al., 2018) during daily life within a babies and toddler classroom near Tahlequah, the tribal headquarters of the Cherokee Nation and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians (UKB). Drawing from a multi-sited, video-cued study co-constructed with nine communities, we offer two examples of babies and toddlers caring and taking responsibility for one another while coordinating their efforts with caring adults. In one example a five-month-old was crying uncontrollably for a few minutes while an 11-month toddler looked on. In the second example, toddlers and babies gathered at a table in the classroom multiple times, an act that required patience and long waits by adults and children alike. The two examples were both ordinary – meaning they happened often – and extraordinary – meaning that they were significant in their happening because they showcased what Marin (2018; 2020) calls ambulatory sequences, or the ways in which learning is embodied through the conditions of sovereign, culturally-rooted and agentic movement. We share how UKB

and Cherokee educators and community leaders responded to both examples and used stories from the past and present to explain how and why their children know and respond to collective needs so young. Elders explained young children's ability and desire to collaborate as a healing act and a way for children to feel connected to the larger group.

Presenter(s): Andrew Dayton

Co-author(s): Jennifer Keys Adair, Monica Alonzo

Uncovering the benefits of programs that support Indigenous people in their academics:
Countering colonial amnesia in institutional settings

Activism of academic institutions by Indigenous people is not new (Deloria, 1969; Keil, 2013). Indigenous people were forced to assimilate through tactics such as boarding schools. It was fitting that Indigenous people would fight against colonialism through what was used to assimilate them, by continuing into and transforming university settings. The increase in Indigenous academics allows for the increase in the narratives made through "research" by non-Indigenous people. The Center for Native American Development (CNAD) is the first program at the University of Idaho to serve Native American graduate students. At the time of the development of this program, the Red Power movement was when Native Americans were protesting the Bureau of Indian Affairs, broken treaties, and were pushing for self-determination. The Northwestern Native American Graduate Program had members not only push for the program but also proposed that they be the "advisory board." Through archival research we were able to find information on the program and connect it to now, however, it was scarce. Most of what was found were Jack Ridley Jr., director of CNAD, works from 72'-78'. The addition of conducting interviews and working with people who were involved with the program, will construct a better understanding of this program and its center in its time and place. Although the program had closed, the efforts to offer programs similar to CNAD continue to breathe life into indigenizing the academy.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Gomez

Indigenous Maternal Pedagogy and Indigenous Early Education Teacher Mentorship

Indigenous early education programs are one of few of the educational arenas where Indigenous mothers can create radical spaces to facilitate empowering cultural practices and reclaim the education of their children at the most critical period of their development. In Indigenous communities it is common to find more Indigenous women teachers, mostly mothers and "other mothers" via a form of motherwork or linguistic motherwork (Hill-Collins, 1994; Ek et. al, 2013) employed in tribal early education programs than in tribal K-12 schools. Indigenous mother-teachers are in a unique role as tribal language keepers, cultural carriers, leaders, and protectors of their children. Often, these mother-teachers are learning their language and culture alongside their children as Indigenous ECE programs are prime points for awakening Indigenous languages. Mentoring early education teachers in Indigenous early education can be viewed as a healing practice in which issues of leadership, relationships, capacity building, and interactions shape how teachers engage with each other and their students to connect with land, the children they teach

and their families, and the language and culture as a way of (re)building Indigenous nations. This paper explore how mentoring teachers in Indigenous early education programs differs from mentoring, or coaching, in mainstream settings and how the former can be applied through the lens of Indigenous maternal pedagogy and motherwork/linguistic motherwork.

Presenter(s): Sherilyn Analla

Discussion

7904 Katrina's Ghost's

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable/town hall explores the enduring legacy of Hurricane Katrina in cultural anthropology and adjacent fields. Katrina's aftermath continues to shape critical debates on the racial, economic, social, and political dimensions of environmental disaster and climate change. Presenters will examine how Katrina's presence in scholarship is both foundational and limiting-at once a singular historical event and an imperfect stand-in for global experiences of environmental crisis. We ask: How do we write and think with Katrina? What does it mean to depart from it-and why? What did Katrina open up in critical debates about environmental justice, climate change, and racial inequality? How has it shaped ethnographic approaches to displacement, migration, social and environmental justice, and resistance? Discussants will also reflect on the challenges of using Katrina as a framework for studying environmental disaster beyond Louisiana and the U.S.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Monica Barra, University of South Carolina

Presenter(s): Nathan Jessee, University of Delaware, Theo Hilton, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology, Frances Roberts-Gregory, Harvard University, Lydia Pelot-Hobbs, University of Kentucky

Discussant: Helen Regis, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology

7376 Between Remains and Aspirations: A Spectral Imagination of Everyday Democracy in India

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How are everyday elements of a democratic nation conjured from the past? What are the different ways in which a thing of the past – the history, a memory, a souvenir, or a piece of nostalgia, mobilized to serve as a building block in the making of a nation? How do the relations between the State and society present itself as a palimpsest of the past but also a desire for an idealistic future? This panel will attempt to answer these questions by drawing attention to the quotidian forms of

democratic engagement in the Indian context. Building upon Habermas's notion of the 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1992) and Chatterjee's conceptualization of the 'political society' (Chatterjee, 1993), this panel will pay specific attention to everyday spaces, objects, conversations and medium(s) in and through which the society interacts, negotiates, interrogates, argues and reconciles with the State. Reflecting and borrowing from the past is not merely romanticisation but a strategic and deliberate project to enable as well as foreclose specific narratives and possibilities in a democracy. Thus, the goal of this panel is to highlight the routinised and ordinary modes of democratic engagement by outlining the continuity and ruptures between the past that lingers, the present that exists and the future that is approaching in India.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Anusha Iyer, Rutgers University

Chair: Anusha Iyer, Rutgers University

Presenter(s): Anusha Iyer, Rutgers University, Manohar Boda, Shantanu Nevrekar, Ankita Chandranath, Smruthi Bala Kannan, University of Chicago

Discussant: Anusha Iyer, Rutgers University

Presentation(s): Youth of the Nation, Ghosts of the Past: Memory and Majoritarianism in Ahmedabad

This paper examines young people's experiences in relation to their nationalistic and political attachments in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India. The present-day idea of India as a nation, built upon a majoritarian religious discourse, has begun permeating everyday spaces, objects, and conversations over the last decade. This has resulted in a routinized yet widespread idea of the discourse, that scholars are referring to as a 'banalization of Hindu nationalism' (Jafferlot, 2018). As the crucible of this discourse, children and youth are being entrusted with the responsibility of disseminating and reproducing these ideologies in and through everyday practices and ways of being. Drawing from notions of 'child-in-the-future' and the 'future-in-the-child' (Sheldon, 2018), this paper will demonstrate how ideas about the nation, that appeases a specific politico-religious ideology, are disseminated across generations through the medium of memories. I will demonstrate how the art of storytelling, the performative delivery of speeches and the curation of digital content are some of the ways through which affective attachments to the nation are manufactured, revived, and projected onto the future generations. Thus, this paper will argue how the past is invoked not only with the goal of contouring the present version of the right-wing ideology but also in reinscribing an idealistic future – one that can be led by the youth of the nation.

Presenter(s): Anusha Iyer

Inherited Stigma, Claimed Futures: The Everyday Politics of Banjara Youth

My paper explores how historically nomadic communities, upon their sedentarization, navigate and negotiate with modern democratic institutions in their everyday lives. Focusing on the Banjaras of Hyderabad, Telangana—one of many communities classified as 'hereditary criminals' under colonial rule—this ethnographic study examines the afterlives of criminalization and the uneven

processes of state recognition in postcolonial India. Although independent India formally dismantled colonial laws such as the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, the legacies of surveillance and marginalization persist in subtle ways. Through fieldwork with two youth-led collectives, Girijana Shakti and Girijana Aikya Vedika, this paper traces how Banjara activists engage with the state—not merely as subjects of policy but as agents shaping its everyday enactments. I argue that these everyday forms of democratic engagement are often made possible through invoking things of the past, memory, identity, and the residues of colonial governance. In doing so, the paper contributes to anthropological debates on the state, political subjectivity, identity, everyday life, and the experience of marginality.

Presenter(s): Manohar Boda

The Spectre of Politics: Debt, Democracy and Power in Indian Cooperatives

Urban credit cooperative societies have become a ubiquitous part of urban credit markets in India. In India, credit cooperatives operate as democratic associations, albeit regulated and supported by the state. Off late, narratives of crisis saturate discussions of credit cooperatives, and at the heart of this crisis are spiralling loan defaults. Moral diagnoses of these loan defaults address one cause in particular - 'politics' - which is opposed to 'professionalism' as criteria guiding loan distribution. Invoked as a remnant of an 'old India' that haunts an 'emerging market' (Kaur and Hansen 2016), this talk of politics is a symptom of the peculiar anti-politics that haunts Indian democracy. My paper will examine the concepts and practices that these narratives of 'politics' invoke in diagnosing the crisis haunting cooperatives. In this narrative, the pervasiveness of 'politics' is sought to be replaced by a technocratic 'professionalism', with the latter apparently based on merit and economic efficiency. This narrative resists implicating caste in diagnosing debt defaults. In fact, caste (of the upper castes) is seen as constituting productive forms of social and cultural capital. With this, I demonstrate how the narrative of 'politics' shapes a social imagination of state and the public in India, making associations like cooperatives a site of "a political struggle in caste terms" (Witsoe 2011).

Presenter(s): Shantanu Nevrekar

Spectral Nationalism: Reimagining India through Everyday Encounters of Unbelonging

Democratic imagination in contemporary India is not primarily constructed through grand political narratives, but through what transpires in the most mundane and intimate spaces of everyday life. Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork with Rohingya refugees in India between 2023-2025 with diverse interlocutors— neighbors, family members, journalists, community leaders, and local activists—I trace how the spectral promise of "Vishwa Guru" materializes through seemingly disconnected fragments of social experience. The margins of my research reveal a complex topography of national becoming: from digital surveillance of civil society to the ritualistic demands of the Ram Mandir, from censorship's quiet suffocation to the architectural reimagining of the Central Vista project. Conversations about nationalism, filtered through hardened positions on identity politics, internal armed conflicts, Hindu-Muslim coded performances, Bollywood

narratives, casual casteism, and the systemic marginalization of "undesirables" like the Rohingya, became sites of intense negotiation. My paper will trace these spectral formations by analyzing how seemingly disparate elements collectively produce and simultaneously fracture this not-so-new imagination of national belonging. Through these quotidian processes, I aim to illuminate the subtle mechanisms through which democratic ideals are being negotiated, contested, and reimagined in contemporary India.

Presenter(s): Ankita Chandranath

Moving Spectres: Bicycling and Childhood in Urban India

State governments in India have actively presented bicycle distribution programs as enablers of adolescent children's socio-economic and educational mobility and democratic participation, including in urban areas. The paper will explore how childhood discourses influence bicycling as a form of transport and leisure in Chennai and Delhi (India). I draw from mixed-methods qualitative research in the two cities (as a part of a multi-institutional research project) to ask: What is the place of bicycles in these cities? How are they associated with childhood and adolescence? How do specters of bicycling and childhood shape each other in South Asian cities? What possibilities and limitations does this association produce for children's and bicycles' democratic participation in the urban public? I will read the marginal place of bicyclists within road transport planning against their complex everyday negotiations on the road to critically interrogate the imaginary of the bicycle as a transitory, 'adolescent', and liminal form in the pathway to aspirational automobility for both the city and the children. I analyze the associations between childhood and bicycling as moving specters composed of fond nostalgia, age-appropriate mobility, and fear of traffic crashes.

Presenter(s): Smruthi Bala Kannan

Discussion

2379 Sites of Violence, Mobilization, and Resistance in Contexts of Political Violence and Authoritarian Rule: the Cases of Colombia and Turkey

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this oral presentation session, we focus on how people and communities promote mobilization, community organization, and resistance amid authoritarian rule, state repression, and other forms of political violence. The papers in this session ask: What forms do mobilization and resistance take when states tighten their grasp on everyday life through surveillance, coercion, and environmental destruction? How do people enact politics amid violence, dispossession, and entangled operations of state and non-state armed actors, as well as market forces? Where do people go when paths of resistance, mobilization, and justice are blocked?

The presentations draw on cases from Colombia and Turkey to illuminate these questions. In Colombia, following the 2016 Peace Accord between the government and FARC guerrillas, different forms of political violence have persisted, including state repression during national strikes and forms of control and violence by non-state armed actors in various territories of the country. In Turkey, with the increasingly autocratic rule of President Erdogan, dissent is severely surveilled and criminalized, curtailing when and where resistance can take place.

We analyze how dynamics of collective action and political agency are shaped across urban and rural settings through the work of diverse grassroots actors such as: Campesino communities in rural Colombia organizing to navigate the presence of illegal armed groups, revolutionaries in urban Istanbul engaging in choreographed protest, grassroots activists and families in Cali who participate in a People's Tribunal, and middle-class urban-to-rural migrants in Turkey mobilizing around ecological futures.

We consider the varied forms that resistance and community organizing can take, from overt forms of collective actions such as protest, confrontation, and local mobilization to more everyday practices like public mourning, ecological production, and improvisational organization. We foreground a wide array of repertoires and modalities of creative, collective, and embodied practice. By tracing these expressions of collective action, we explore how grassroots actors grapple with and redefine the limits and the meanings of mobilization, resistance, and political agency in hostile and unstable contexts.

Grounded in long-term ethnographic commitment, the papers in this panel scrutinize the everyday textures of struggle-disillusionment, improvisation, endurance-as well as the affective and ethical dimensions of collective action.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Diana Hoyos-Gómez, West Virginia University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Chair: Ana Marrugo Gómez, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Diana Hoyos-Gómez, West Virginia University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, ilkim karakus, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Ana Marrugo Gómez, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, Burge Abiral, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Navigating Post-Peace Accord Violence: Organizational Processes and Resistance in Rural Communities in Montes de María, Colombia

In 2016, the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas signed a peace accord to end more than 50 years of armed conflict. However, in the region of Montes de María, the post-accord context has been characterized by the reconfiguration of the presence of non-state armed actors and forms of political violence against social leaders, ex-FARC members, and rural communities. The Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC), a non-state armed group that emerged after the demobilization of paramilitary groups in 2005, expanded its presence to the municipalities and rural areas of Montes de María in the post-accord period.

This paper examines forms of organization and resistance promoted by campesino communities to navigate and respond to the attempts of control and violence associated with the presence of the AGC in the territory. Some campesino communities have relied on their organizational processes to oppose the presence of non-state armed actors, local mobilization to demand security and compliance with the peace accord, and more subtle forms of resistance. Community organization and less overt forms of resistance have acquired prominence in a context where some regional and local state actors have denied or minimized the presence of illegal armed groups or have been unable to provide effective and long-term responses to this situation. However, the presence of these armed actors and increasing violence are also impacting organizational processes in rural communities.

Presenter(s): Diana Hoyos-Gómez

Cop Per Capita: Anticipation, Absence, and the Choreographies of the Street in Urban Turkey

In Candere, a working-class district in Istanbul with a history of leftist mobilization, protest unfolds through calculated choreographies of confrontation. Based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper examines how revolutionaries organize demonstrations through the lens of anticipated repression. I develop the concept of Cop Per Capita (CPC) to describe how activists evaluate police presence—predicting state response based on past patterns, calibrating tactics accordingly, and reading shifts in CPC as indicators of the state's political sensitivity. In this context, repression becomes a necessary component of protest's political legibility: arrests and clashes serve not only as obstacles but as confirmation of struggle. When the police fail to show up, as in a 2022 demonstration against poverty, revolutionaries experience not relief but uncertainty. Without confrontation, the protest risks feeling unfinished—its force diluted by the absence of state response. Drawing on the choreographies of street politics, I argue that authoritarian governance in Turkey not only constrains what is possible, but also structures how dissent becomes meaningful. Protest in Candere is not simply oppositional; it is a performance shaped by state anticipation. Through CPC, I track how endurance, spectacle, and disruption converge in a political landscape where even absence can signal abandonment.

Presenter(s): ilkim karakus

Mournful resistance: The People's Tribunal of Siloé and the Struggle for Justice After Colombia's 2021 National Strike

In 2021, Colombia experienced massive protests during a national strike, which were met with violent state repression, leaving over 60 people dead. Cali's commune of Siloé became a critical epicenter of this violence, suffering at least 16 fatalities. Facing an inefficient justice system, community members organized a People's Tribunal as an act of symbolic justice—gathering testimonies and evidence to present before an international panel of jurors. After the jury delivered its ruling, victims' relatives continued to meet and work together, demanding justice and constructing an alternative account of the 2021 national strike.

This paper explores how the People's Tribunal's creation of the Garden of Life and Memory in Siloé serves as a powerful form of collective mourning and political resistance. By publicly grieving, naming, and memorializing victims of police violence, the Tribunal challenges the state's uneven distribution of grievability, which renders some lives disposable and unworthy of remembrance. This mournful politics does more than demand accountability for the events of the 2021 national strike—it actively contests long-standing historical and structural violence. Moreover, through everyday practices of care, encounter, and communal labor, the garden fosters a political community rooted in shared vulnerability, interdependence, and affective solidarity, redefining political engagement beyond traditional protest and advocacy.

Presenter(s): Ana Marrugo Gómez

Farming Against the Grain: Ecological Experimentation in Authoritarian Turkey

In contemporary Turkey, urban-to-rural migration has taken on a new political meaning as educated, secular professionals turn to ecological farming and alternative food networks to resist both environmental degradation and authoritarian rule. Based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork with back-to-the-landers, this paper explores how aspirations for agroecological transformation unfold through fragile experiments in collective living and production. I argue that these projects constitute deeply ethical attempts to reimagine relationality, value, and livelihood in a context where conventional forms of political action are foreclosed. Drawing on scenes of subtle confrontation—whether with institutional neglect, extractive market forces, or internal failures of solidarity—I examine how participants navigate disillusionment, cultivate new forms of care and responsibility, and confront the limits of their transformative dreams. Rather than locating resistance solely in visible defiance, I trace how the mundane work of growing food, conserving resources, and managing disappointment becomes a terrain for moral and political struggle.

Presenter(s): Burge Abiral

3903 Development as a ghost: Anthropology of becoming in the age of global decoupling

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Seductive and powerful, development is one of the defining ideas of our time. Its operative categories are presented as rational and immovable, until moments of crisis when "all that is solid melts into air." Through the ethnographic approach to developmentalist interventions, anthropology has long shed light on the lives lived in the aftermath of progressive schemes with their illusory trappings of inexorability and permanence. If development effects change by creating its others, then what, we ask, are people left with when purportedly coherent, universalist ideas – and the political, social and moral communities forged under their aegis – fracture into fragments? This panel invites consideration of development itself as a ghost that animates various conditions of "post"-ness, from postsocialism to post-colonialism and indeed the current moment of global

decoupling. Shaoyu Tang begins the discussion by examining how narratives of local resilience among residents of the post-industrial northeast of the country compete with a state-level insistence that the region is past its best and needs a "renaissance." By contrast in southeastern Kazakhstan, Ed Pulford discusses a community consciously renouncing "national" categories alongside other markers of externally ratified identity. The mobile ethnic pasts of the Sinophone Dungan community offer post-Soviet, Muslim, Chinese, and other referents to hitch "identity" to, but some younger Dungans seek relationally "clean" lives free from the vestiges of these troublesome categories. Yaru Yang's paper examines the racialization process as it emerges through everyday linguistic practices in Kenyan-Chinese encounters in today's Nairobi. These transnational communicative acts reflect an entangled inheritance of divergent colonial legacies and broader ideological formations. Tracing how interlocutors use, interpret, and contest inherited categories, the paper shows how language becomes a site of ambiguity, negotiation, and emergent knowledge amid fragmented ideological residues. Where developmental and civilizational hierarchies are concerned, Ruiyi Zhu's Mongolian interlocutors have deep experience of navigating the planned structures and unplanned aftermaths of totalizing cross-border schemes. The postsocialist economic success of the mining town Bor-Undur emerges as a context haunted by ghostly narratives of extraction vs. contribution, Soviet and Chinese development, and the Janus-faced promise of enrichment and exploitation. Finally, Ruslan Yusupov's paper examines how the Chinese government maims mosques which were until recently been promoted as the very symbols of integration of Islam with the Chinese civilization. Ruslan shows the campaign to be an exercise in the racialization of progress which effectively makes Sinophone Muslims guilty of their past development and urbanization.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Ruslan Yusupov, University of Arkansas, Department of Anthropology, Ed Pulford, University of Manchester

Chair: Ed Pulford, University of Manchester

Presenter(s): Shaoyu Tang, Ed Pulford, University of Manchester, Yaru Yang, University of Manchester, Ruiyi Zhu, University of Cambridge, Ruslan Yusupov, University of Arkansas, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Heangjin Park, Loyola Marymount University

Presentation(s): Outdated or Unfailing?: Contesting "Renaissance" and "Crisis" through Refashioning Ma Dashuai in contemporary Northeast China

China's postsocialist market reform has turned Northeast China, once an honorable industrial center, into an "outdated" region that embodies the petrified socialist past. A recent trend of transmedial storytelling, celebrated by scholars and local elites as the "Northeast Renaissance," has transmitted past trauma and memory as spectacles and media landscapes in popular culture. However, my Northeastern interlocutors criticized such Renaissance discourses and articulated, "Northeast China does not need Renaissance in that it has not been outdated." This ethnographic study shows how Northeastern people interact with Ma Dashuai, a television drama made 20 years ago in Northeast China, to come to terms with their postindustrial past, reckon with cultural

authenticity, and imagine a prosperous future. I theorize the slippages between concepts of "Renaissance" and "unfailing" to examine the role media plays in re-making historical subjects in post-reform China. It reveals a complex storytelling that moves the deindustrialized Northeast China from the nation's periphery to the center. My analysis shows how the spectre of the nation-state, whose market reform policy "abandoned" Northeast China, is conjured up by Northeastern people. Through refashioning Ma Dashuai, they refuse the idea of "outdatedness" and imagine an unfailing Northeast China. As such, I argue that theorizing "outdated/unfailing" reveals the central role nationalism plays in the making of Northeastern subjectivity.

Presenter(s): Shaoyu Tang

Exorcising modernity: Detached aspiration among a Dungan collective farm diaspora

Subject to decades of state projects to root them in place, Kazakhstan's Dungan people navigate ghostly layers of "identity" and "usable" ethnic pasts like many communities across the post-Soviet canvas. Yet as Muslim speakers of one specific regional Chinese language, the dispersed residents of former-collective farm (kolkhoz) land in southeastern Kazakhstan have more potential reference points than most when asked by fellow citizens or social scientists: "who are you?" Kazakh, Soviet, Chinese, Russian, Shaanxi, Muslim and Silk Road coordinates may all feed into a partially satisfying response. But while questions of this group's 'origins' or 'belonging' circulate in both scholarship and daily conversation, my research suggests that – haunted by modernist attempts to make them 'legible' – some younger Dungan men are today adopting a future-ward gaze which seeks detachment from these retrospectively-tinged categories. Against a vogue for situating origins or belongings, contemporary Dungan aspiration draws on a polysemous combination of economic advancement, religious traditionalism and a spatial scope which strings together hub locations in Central Asia, Russia and China. All these sites have a place in narratives of Dungan histories, but their mobilisation in the present suggests dissociation from the taxonomical trappings of codified ethnic identity.

Presenter(s): Ed Pulford

From "Black" to "Local", from "Mzungu" and "Ching-chong" to "Mchina": Language and the Making of Race in Everyday Chinese-Kenyan Interactions

How do colonial and global ideologies of race play out in contemporary encounters between Chinese and Kenyans, both subjects historically 'racialized' by overlapping but distinct colonial histories? This paper explores the evolving linguistic practices in everyday Chinese-Kenyan interactions in Nairobi, offering an alternative view of Chinese presence in Africa beyond geopolitical and economic framings. Based on 13 months of fieldwork, it examines how people refer to and address each other using shifting terms—such as "Black" to "Local," or "Mzungu" (white person) and "Ching-chong" to "Mchina"—that reflect historical residues and ongoing negotiation. Drawing on race and language as social processes rather than fixed categories or products, the study highlights how meaning is both expressed and interpreted—shaped by divergent colonial legacies and broader ideological formations, including African-American civil rights discourse,

Chinese socialist rhetoric, and global racial imaginaries. These influences inform how people make sense of themselves and others amid transnational mobility and everyday asymmetries of power. Moments of linguistic misalignment are not simply sources of confusion, but opening for reflection, negotiation, and learning. In such moments of friction and ambiguity, people alter terms and meanings that reflect, contest, and unsettle inherited racial imaginaries—making language a dynamic site of racialization, power negotiating, and knowledge-making.

Presenter(s): Yaru Yang

The Soviets departed, but the mine remained: A spectral analysis of extractive development in eastern Mongolia

Mongolian industrialization in the 20th century bears indelible Soviet marks. Established in 1973, Bor-Undur was not only the site of the first Mongolian-Soviet joint mining company, but also the embodiment of the Soviet design for a company town. As the Soviet presence started dwindling in the 1990s, the infrastructure of this town remained — its abandoned apartments were redistributed to local Mongolians who embraced privatization, while the mine, nationalized in 2016, continues to thrive. The recent influx of Chinese investment has breathed new life into Bor-Undur's mining sector. When compared to the Soviets, the Chinese were perceived as less generous, bringing capital, labor, and machinery from China and siphoning profits back at home. This paper employs Gregory Delaplace's (2012) insight into the spectral narratives around Russian and Chinese presence in Mongolian urban legends to analyze these two contrasting developmental models. How does a provincial town, eager for progress, navigate entanglements with two significant Others? Does the promise of extraction bring hope or spell doom? Drawing on ethnographic interviews and archival research conducted in 2024, this paper offers a spectral lens to examine the entwined narratives of aspiration and discontent that shape Bor-Undur's evolving identity.

Presenter(s): Ruiyi Zhu

Racializing Development: "Arab Style" Mosques and the Logic of Sinicization in Contemporary China

Since 2018, thousands of mosques across China have witnessed their domes and minarets beheaded and amputated. The changes are due to the nationwide campaign of "Sinicizing" Islam that the government sees as exhibiting the so-called "Arabization" and "Saudization" trends. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and classified documents, I show, however, that the so-called "Arab style" mosques emerged in China in response to urban renewal and redevelopment schemes. Like various Sohos, Beverly Hills, Amsterdams, and Thames towns that mushroomed in China at the turn of the century, they too projected affluence, progress, and fine living of Sinophone Muslims in Chinese modernity. They became the embodiments of multicultural integration in the age of reform economy. What Sinicization finds threatening, therefore, is not the "foreignness" of Chinese Islam as its uncanny ability to integrate itself into the body of the nation. By casting the Reform-era progress as evidence of "Saudization," the campaign effectively makes Chinese Muslims guilty of modernization and urbanization. It thus seeks to reduce Muslims back to the official stereotypes

that the Party-state holds about them, thereby producing sociopolitical impotence as the definition of what it means for Muslims to be Chinese today.

Presenter(s): Ruslan Yusupov

Discussion

7841 The Spectre of Affirmative Action & DEI in the Trump Era: A Year One Status Update

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What haunts anthropology and our institutions is not just what was denied, but what was promised by decades of legislation and policies that seemed to codify gains made by social justice movements. On January 20, 2025, President Trump began signing a series of executive orders that attempted to position diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, initiatives, and activities as illegal on the grounds that DEI is "discriminatory." Positioning DEI as discriminatory at the federal level has had a number of interconnected impacts, from bolstering the ongoing uptick in state-level anti-DEI legislation to exacerbating popular misconceptions of DEI in the popular imaginary throughout the United States.

As the language of DEI has become more commonplace, we also see the echoes of earlier social justice and affirmative action efforts, for better and for worse, still lingering in DEI and DEI-related policies, perceptions, and practices: the spectral presence of the murder of Emmett Till and George Floyd, the Stonewall uprising, claims of reverse discrimination, the silencing of human rights protests, and the legal erasure of transgender people. These legacies persist in current DEI efforts in ways that can be counter-productive and demoralizing in some cases and yet productive and inspiring in others.

Almost one year since the executive orders have been signed, this panel convenes graduate students, faculty, and industry professionals from various states in the country to provide a status update on the successes and failures of anti-DEI efforts, collective resistance strategies, and new pathways forward. In particular, panelists will reflect on how responses and resistance to anti-DEI executive orders have taken shape within, by, and against institutions; what strategies have worked; and what strategies have not. They will grapple with questions about the ghosts that have been encountered in the process of resisting and how these ghosts have facilitated resistance or made it more challenging. Panelists will also report on what has been lost and gained in resisting anti-DEI efforts and the hope that remains for building more inclusive and equitable futures. Ultimately, through layered conversation across roles, sectors, and generations, this session seeks to give voice to the unfinished business of DEI in social justice efforts and envision pathways forward that eschew symbolic gestures in favor of sustained, systemic change.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Luzilda Arciniega , Melissa Maceyko, California State University, Long Beach,

Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Melissa Maceyko, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Antione Martin

Discussant: Luzilda Arciniega

6983 Mines, Microbes, and the Making of Value

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In 1980, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* enabled the patenting of living organisms, opening the door for the commodification of life. Although the case involved a bacterium capable of breaking down crude oil, research exploring the forms of value created through this new legal structure has largely overlooked the extractive industries, focusing instead on biopharmaceuticals and genetically modified crops. Yet since that decision (and, in some cases, before it), oil, gas, and mining companies have extensively used and/or patented a wide range of bacteria, yeasts, molds, and fungi to facilitate their operations. Often marketed as "nature-based" and therefore "eco-friendly," these biotechnologies raise questions about their capacity to disrupt-or entrench-the extractive logics from which they emerge. While anthropologists have turned increasing attention to microbial life in sites such as the human gut, garden soil, oceanic currents, and even extraterrestrial speculations, the microbial actors entangled in extractive zones remain understudied. This panel brings extractive industries into closer conversation with the growing literature on microbial life, examining how microbial worlds attend extractive processes.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Lindsay Ofrias, Harvard University

Chair: Lindsay Ofrias, Harvard University, Douglas Rogers, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Erika Szymanski, Douglas Rogers, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Lindsay Ofrias, Harvard University, Alicia Ng, University of Helsinki

Discussant: Sophia Roosth

Presentation(s): Microbial worlds beyond worlds: Extracting value from/through/with/in microbial biotechnologies in space

In zero-gravity environments, up and down are a matter of local convenience, if they are recognized at all. Without a shared center of gravity, with fewer socioenvironmentally stabilized cues and constraints about how to orient one's self in space, a wider range of potential perspectives can be recognized as potentially reasonable. I want to talk about microbial biotechnologies for extracting resources in space—in part because the reasonable, appropriate, or most useful frames of reference for describing them are less codified than complementary cases anchored in earth's gravity well. In doing so, I am compounding an affordance (and challenge) of studying microbes

generally, especially microbes that dwell beyond human bodies: neither the units of analysis for describing relations nor the social roles of those relata are obvious or pre-scribed. Inspired by Strathern's mode of redescription, I will outline how microbes are being developed to extract more and different kinds of value from the moon, Mars, and astronauts, to investigate what perspectives might be taken on how creatures, roles, value, and values are enacted in these cases. I do so through a material-semiotic-energetic framework, recognizing that all things can be described in terms of physical, discursive, and energetic dimensions, to investigate whether and how it might be useful to question distinctions between resource and resourced, extractor and extracted.

Presenter(s): Erika Szymanski

Oil-Eating Microbes in the Soviet Union: From Party-State Utopia to Ecological Protest

From the early 1960s through the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union undertook a wide-ranging effort to produce dietary protein supplements by growing yeast on hydrocarbon feedstocks in massive industrial fermenters. This paper looks in on the industrial metabolism of oil-eating microbes in a non-capitalist context that nonetheless responded to the global political economy of food, oil, and biotechnology of the time. The paper pays special attention to the end of this era in the Soviet Union. In the late 1980s, a series of spills and accidents at a biochemical plant producing microbial protein sent a mix of yeast, hydrocarbons, and other elements of industrial fermentation into the environment of Kirishi, outside of Leningrad. The subsequent citizens' ecological protests mobilized not only a familiar imagery of devastated human bodies—especially children—but also a larger imaginary of microbial growth, spread, fermentation, and infection. As scattered protests turned into a USSR-wide movement, newly ecologically aware citizens transformed a microbial imaginary that was originally developed in the service of a socialist utopian future into a mobilizing tool directed back against the party-state. Oil-eating microbes did not end the Soviet Union, but we may want to give them—and the humans and larger forces that gathered around their metabolism—more of a role than we have.

Presenter(s): Douglas Rogers

On Mushrooms, Petrochemicals, and Remediation in Ecuador's Oil Frontier

In northern Amazonian Ecuador, where decades of oil extraction have devastated the environment, affected communities are exploring how to harness the digestive systems of fungi to break down the recalcitrant bonds of hydrocarbons. Unlike industrial remediation methods, which aim to return to a prior state by reducing total petroleum hydrocarbon levels, these grassroots projects more expansively seek to repair relations fractured by extractivist logics. They emerge from an understanding of repair as a process that moves through distinct stages: from contaminating relations, to non-contaminating relations, to decontaminating relations, to, ultimately, enriching relations. Here, mushroom mycelia become agents of a prefigurative politics, helping to cultivate a collective affect and ethical disposition—what I call multispecies joy—that is oriented toward preventing future harm.

Presenter(s): Lindsay Ofrias

Dwelling in technoscientific bioremediation

Research on technoscientific practices concerning the more-than-human, such as microbes, has focused on microbial extraction and valuation for capital accumulation in/from laboratory settings. Broadening the scope of scientific microbes beyond valuation and the lab, this paper investigates scientist-microbe relationality in the practice of bioremediation, a technoscientific, nature-based solution. Applying ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and scientific reports on bioremediation, I argue that the outdoor environment of the scientific fieldsite, as opposed to the laboratory, enables a mode of involved relation that affects how scientists approach the microbes they work with and shapes the practice of bioremediation. This paper highlights the possibilities for the technosciences to move away from fixity on microbial commodification and capital gain to reorientate towards alternative systems and forms of technoscience.

Presenter(s): Alicia Ng

Discussion

8753 Anthropology and Environment Society Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 3:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

This will be the annual board meeting for our section.

3737 The anthropology of reparations

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Reparations are among the most important political and economic claims of the twenty-first century. They tend to be made during and after wars, terrorist attacks and major moments of institutional violence, and they increasingly feature in calls to address the ghosts and legacies of colonialism, slavery and genocides. In recent decades, reparations have also been claimed by various minority groups, and they are invoked to address today's most pressing social and environmental problems, including climate change, large scale pollution and poisoning, famines, and infectious disease outbreaks. This panel compares reparations claims and programmes in new and understudied contexts. It asks how the anthropology of reparations should develop in times when the ghosts of the past continue to haunt us and reparative claims multiply.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Felix Stein, University of Amsterdam

Chair: Felix Stein, University of Amsterdam

Presenter(s): Geraldine Ramilo, Shruti Iyer, University of Oxford, Felix Stein, University of Amsterdam, Tabitha Hrynicky, Sera Park, Mausumi Chetia

Discussant: Barbara Rose Johnston, Center for Political Ecology

Presentation(s): Reparations payments worldwide

This paper contributes to the emerging field of reparations economics by providing a new and comprehensive overview of the global reparations landscape. It does so by presenting a dataset of major reparations payments made since World War II, a turning point in the history of reparations. The dataset encompasses both domestic and international payments, and includes reparations made by and to states as well as non-state actors. Through an analysis of the data collected, this paper highlights key global and regional trends in reparative payments and asks what kind of an economic force reparations represent worldwide.

Presenter(s): Geraldine Ramilo

Valuing Risk and Responsibility: The Calculative Grammars of Compensation

Legal systems of compensation are tasked with translating concrete harms into abstract sums of money, and in doing so, determine who is responsible for harm, to what extent, and what form restitution should take. These forms of reparation or compensation work to recognise harm, facilitate claims for justice, and redistribute resources to those who are harmed. In this paper, I draw on sixteen months of participant observation with social movements negotiating a state social security programme that compensates workers affected by occupational lung disease in northwestern India. I describe how two social security programmes operated in tandem, valuing the same injury differently based on the documentary evidence affected workers could gather. By attending to the technical and calculative forms through which injury is diagnosed and compensated for, I argue that the form that reparations take encode moral and ethical values that differentially value life in economic terms. This draws attention to how claims to reparation are transformed into bureaucracies of redress, the moral values that undergird and legitimate them, and the broader political economy within which compensation claims are embedded. I close by considering what lessons this might have for new reparations demands that emerge within transnational contexts and by critically reflecting on the place of compensation within demands for justice.

Presenter(s): Shruti Iyer

Responsibility and reparations for cholera in Haiti

This paper investigates the 2010 cholera outbreak in Haiti and the subsequent cholera response. It asks how responsibility was assigned to UN Blue Helmet soldiers from Nepal in the aftermath of the 2010 outbreak, how the UN avoided legal liability, and how discussions around responsibility for the outbreak shaped the subsequent epidemic response. Thereby the paper asks what pandemic outbreaks can teach us about the anthropology of responsibility and how debates about pandemic responsibility relate to broader attempts at obtaining restorative justice.

Presenter(s): Felix Stein

Repairing radioactive harm in New Mexico?

This paper considers reparations in the context of radiation exposure and its health and social harms in New Mexico, USA. While some reparative measures, including apology, compensation fund, and environmental cleanup efforts have been made, it is unclear how they have been experienced and perceived by affected people – both who have received and been excluded from them. The paper provides early ethnographic insights from research with radiation-affected people, including former uranium miners who provided raw material for US nuclear arms production and for the energy sector, 'downwinders' who were exposed to fallout from the world's first nuclear bomb test in 1944, and their descendants.

Presenter(s): Tabitha Hrynicky

Justice beyond reparation: Remembrance and future-making in the aftermath of the Sewol Ferry Disaster in South Korea

The sinking of the Sewol Ferry in South Korea on April 16th, 2014 claimed 304 lives, 250 of whom were students from Danwon High School on a fieldtrip. It quickly became clear that this was an utterly preventable tragedy, precipitated by neoliberal deregulation, dereliction of duty, and bureaucratic failure. More than a decade later, bereaved families and allied citizens continue to campaign for investigation, accountability, and the building of a safer society. For my interlocutors, the South Korean state's version of reparation, in the form of financial compensation in the early aftermath of the Disaster, was seen as a means to stifle their call for thorough, systemic change. It was the antithesis of the kind of justice they imagined. Justice and repair, in my interlocutors' activism, requires a look to both the past and the future: remembrance of the Disaster and its victims, and creation of a safer world in which no such tragedy befalls other families. This paper considers a justice claim that moves beyond the closure that reparation claims may entail, towards a more capacious understanding of justice.

Presenter(s): Sera Park

Rhetorics, realities, and climate reparations

This paper examines the evolving international relations between the Global North and the Global South through the concept of climate reparations. It focuses on the International Court of Justice's first-ever Advisory Opinion on the State's Responsibility to protect the Climate System issued in 2025, and its impact on global climate negotiations, with a focus on the small island developing states (SIDS). Drawing on from socio-legal scholarship on climate reparations, the paper examines how reparations can become a political-economic catalyst in realising diverse forms of climate justices for the SIDS, despite the concept's operational limitations.

Presenter(s): Mausumi Chetia

Discussion

4899 When Ghosts Knock: Anxiety and Care in East Asia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Echoing the 'spectral turn', this panel highlights the enduring presence of spectral beliefs and practices alongside dominant ideologies, offering a fresh perspective on their contemporary articulations in ritual and embodied practice.

This panel evokes the mixed blessing of the spectre's ongoing presence and its re-articulation in East Asia, approached through the counterbalancing concepts of anxiety (Zhang, 2020) and care (Kleinman, 2020). First, although a feeling of anxiety invokes the (re)emergence of ghosts, an unflagging desire to practice self-care and the ethics of care for others help soothe it away. Second, this panel taps into how people conjure up the rhetoric of the spectral and engage with the supernatural in everyday practices and eventful rituals to deal with and respond to increasing anxieties when living in a politically depressed and financially precarious era. As, such this panel retrieves affectively charged, unheard voices from the gaps of this structure, positioning 'anxiety' and 'care' into the shifting embodiments of spectral forces that reflect precarious realities in East Asia.

The mediumship of ghosts leaves us a research-worthy 'trace' (Derrida, 2017) to reflect on not only the alternating process of anxiety and (self)care in general, but also how they connect the living to the dead, humans to nonhumans and imagination and action. Instead of satisfying with the reduction of the spectral power to a rigid anxiety/care binary, we seek to salvage multiple unheard and unbearable voices from, between and in the gaps of the binary structure. This panel traces a trajectory from individual anxieties to the social repair found in self-care and care for others, mapping an affective spectrum from spectral symptoms to relational healing. Yang explores how Kinmen residents' anxieties of 'living-in-between' (manifested in encounters with 'unclean' objects like mainland waste and unrooted ghosts) reshape local negotiations of Taiwan's maritime borders. Fan examines how China's collecting craze reanimates the past through mediated storytelling, allowing both influencers and audiences to construct cultural identity and resist dislocation. Gao analyses late Qing Shanghai lithographs to reveal how female subjectivity was negotiated within the male gaze, highlighting gendered anxieties. Guo investigates heritage conservation in Mianzhu as both a trigger and remedy for anxiety, reflecting on its dual role as identity crisis and redemption. Li focuses on the storytelling of female shamans in Northeast China, showing how nonhuman agencies like animal spirits and ghosts enable self-empowerment and expose status anxieties. Finally, Qu explores how Chinese internet literature, as spectral imagination, allows readers to navigate uncertainties and assuage anxieties. Bringing into fruitful dialogue heritage studies, folk studies, history and anthropology, we approach the spectral interdisciplinarily.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Juwei Fan, University of Bristol, Qiwei Guo, University College London, Institute of Archaeology

Chair: Zhiyue GAO

Presenter(s): Chengyu Yang, Bristol University, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Juewei Fan, University of Bristol, Zhiyue GAO, Qiwei Guo, University College London, Institute of Archaeology, Haozhen Li, University of Tartu, Xin Qu, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology

Discussant: Alevtina Solovyeva

Presentation(s): Navigating with "Unclean Things": Unrooted Ghosts and Drifted Waste on the Beaches of Kinmen

This paper explores the beaches of Kinmen to illustrate the "unusual" (im)material objects found in archipelagic borderlands. By examining everyday interactions with two kinds of "unclean things"—waste from the Chinese mainland and the 'ghosts' of soldiers who perished along these shores—I highlight how immaterial aspects of spirituality and local practices of living with "the haunted" become integral to residents' responses to the unexpected material "invasion" of waste and animal remains.

For decades, Kinmen's beaches have become repositories for waste from the mainland, carried ashore by currents and tides. This includes incidents such as dead pigs washing ashore during China's ASF outbreak and the ongoing influx of medical and household waste. While securitisation of these waste is typically understood as a method employed by Taiwanese authorities to assert sovereignty distinct from the PRC through everyday practices, Kinmen's residents often interpret these materials as unintentional or incidental encounters. However, by exploring local grassroots perceptions that intertwine responses to beach waste with interactions involving another 'unclean' presence—ghosts—I argue that even these seemingly unintentional encounters are underpinned by future-oriented anxieties of 'living-in-between', which actively 'making' local understandings of how Taiwan's maritime borders should or should not be defined.

Presenter(s): Chengyu Yang

The Ghost in the Cabinet: : Mediated Re-enchantment and Cultural Authority in Chinese Collecting Practices

This study explores how the past is reanimated as a "specter" in China's contemporary collecting craze, becoming both an absolute cultural authority and a means of self-empowerment. Amid the anxiety triggered by rapid modernization since the 1980s, collectors revive the past as an idealized standard to resist perceived cultural loss and Western-dominated modernity. Central to this process are opinion leaders—such as celebrity collectors and online influencers—who enchant the past by narrating personal encounters with objects, imbuing them with emotional depth, spiritual resonance, and historical destiny. Through these stories, mundane artifacts are transformed into vessels of memory and cultural meaning. Media platforms further amplify this affective authority, constructing a renewed traditional supremacy that resonates with nostalgic publics. Audiences do not passively receive these narratives; rather, they actively engage, emulate, and internalize the symbolic values conveyed. This process of mediated re-enchantment blurs the boundaries between private memory and national heritage, cultivating a participatory cultural field where

identity, value, and belonging are negotiated. By treating the past as a living presence, collectors and their audiences collaboratively shape a moral and aesthetic order that both challenges and coexists with modern paradigms of knowledge and authenticity.

Presenter(s): Juewei Fan

Fissures in the Gaze: Gender Anxiety and Women's Negotiated Subjectivity in Late Qing Shanghai Pictorials (1884-1912)

In the history of imagery, men's dominance in art enabled them to "gaze" at women, crafting idealized female images. This gaze not only disciplined women's identities, but also projected anxieties about preserving traditional gender structures. Since the late Qing dynasty, pictorials, aided by lithographic technology, became new popular media, reflecting Shanghai's urban modernity. Controlled by male creators, these pictorials still expressed female images within the constraints of the male gaze. As women entered urban spaces in the late 19th century, it also exposed gazers' fears of losing power: they tried to attempt a visual "exorcism" to fixate a vanishing gender world.

However, as commercial products, pictorials represent both artists' intentions and pressures from multiple fields. This allows a re-examination of the male gaze: artists, balancing subjective habitus with external pressures, reveal traces of real women. This paper introduces "negotiated subjectivity" to highlight this ghostly female presence in pictorials. These images become mediums of gender power anxiety and negotiation, maintaining male-dominated visual language while unconsciously yielding to female agency. Using Bourdieu's field theory, the study analyzes pictorials from 1884 to 1912 in Shanghai, exploring how the male gaze transforms through visual compromise, becoming a dialectic of male anxiety and female subjectivity, examining gender power dynamics in late Qing society.

Presenter(s): Zhiyue GAO

Heritage protection as 'redemptive formulas': the salvage and self-redemption of Mianzhu New Year traditions

The 'invention' of cultural heritage is usually linked to the 'past', attempting to 'salvage the essential, "authentic" self/selfgroup'. This 'redemptive' nature is understood as the pathway to revive the past and shape a better future by repossessing the lost past and reconnecting to the imagined homeland in modernity. This study explores how local authorities in Mianzhu have faced urgent economic and identity crisis of revitalization and urbanization, and tried to protect and activate the potential of the local traditional New Year ceremonies through cultural tourism development and heritage policy support. With bureaucratized performativity, excessive commercialization and homogenization have led to weakened local participation and poor tourist response, which heightened local uncertainty and mental concerns about the current and future situation. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional New Year rituals have become daily rites to re-interpret the memory and self-identity of the local residents, which heals emotional trauma, alleviating loneliness, and strengthening senses of belonging. The heritage conservation thus

transforms from a rational tool for urgent salvaging losses to emotional and spiritual anchors within the community, which cures their experiences of rootlessness and rupture in the isolation period.

Presenter(s): Qiwei Guo

Women Empowered by Spirits: the Nonhuman Agencies in the Reshaping of Familial Power Relationship of Female Shamans in Contemporary Northeast China

The power relationship in contemporary Chinese families has experienced dynamic and profound transformations. Females' attempts to fight against status anxiety and enhance discourse power in the family can be observed from various perspectives. Resonating with this tendency and outside the attention of the mainstream, the contemporary female shamans in northeast China are continuously overcoming the status anxiety by reshaping and even reversing the traditional patricentric power relationship within their families by the means of appealing to the agency of animal spirits, ghosts, and deities of folk and institutional religions. In this context, the female shamans are not only empowered by the specters as spirit mediums channeling between human and nonhuman agencies but also as wives, mothers, and daughters claiming their position in families. This paper analyzes the empowerment of females with the agency of spirits from a folkloristic perspective by focusing on the female shamans' belief narratives about the involvement of spirits and ghosts in their family lives. The materials of this research are from my fieldwork interviews in northeast China. By understanding the world of the story-telling of the female shamans, the family domain is viewed as an ecology of other-than-human agency, where the intra-action between different agents, which lead to the partial collapse of patriarchic power, are demonstrated.

Presenter(s): Haozhen Li

Romance is Dead, Long Live Myth

Internet literature is a born-digital literary phenomenon in contemporary China. On literary platforms, writers typically publish and distribute their first 15-20 chapters for free as a literary 'gift' (Mauss, 2002) wherefrom writers then segue into the economic groove of the literary industry, expecting readers to subscribe for subsequent plots. This literary form has been recognised widely, albeit not necessarily approvingly, as a genre of romance. 'My favourite author is Weiyu, definitely. Her novels are short of cringy romance but full of ghosts and gods.' When I discussed with my interlocutor what kinds of internet literature she was looking for, I expected something more romantic but received something mythical. Later, I understand that what I assumed to be a deceptively personal taste turned out almost to be a literary trend in the coterie of internet literature readers. Why do readers shy anxiously away from romance but love myth? Why do readers prefer supernatural and extraordinary things over which our ancient master Confucius cast a veil? Inspired by the unexpected turn from my two-year fieldwork in China, I develop a theory of how the literary imagination of ghosts and gods promotes a sense of certainty and assuages a fear of the unknown in 'uncertain and precarious' China (Hillenbrand, 2023; Zhang, 2020). More broadly, this

paper expects to examine the social function of literary (re)imagination of the spectral force in China through the prism of anxiety.

Presenter(s): Xin Qu

Discussion

4748 Enduring Ethical Complexities in Research for Justice and Transformation

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This session features an intergenerational and interdisciplinary roundtable discussion on research ethics in pedagogy, principle, and practice. Our discussant is the leading scholar of research ethics in anthropology, Rena Lederman, in conversation with fellow senior scholars and next generation thinkers. Presenters include authors of recent and forthcoming works on research ethics, critical theory, and collaborative research, including co-authors of a forthcoming book on research ethics for community-engaged scholars, entitled *Ethical Complexities in Research for Justice: A Companion for Engaged Scholars*.

Our conversation will focus on four interconnected themes:

- 1) Conventions of research ethics guidance in pedagogy and practice, and the limitations of procedural ethics conventions based on biomedical models and positivist science (as well as ghosts of colonial legacies and western paradigms);
- 2) The intersection of ethics and epistemology, with attention to important interventions from critical Indigenous studies, Black radical feminist tradition, and critical pedagogy;
- 3) How place, land, multispecies relations, and the communities we belong to and/or work with shape our ethics practice; and
- 4) Ethical motivations and implications of community-driven research, activist anthropology, and other forms of engaged scholarship for social justice and transformation.

We will intentionally weave intergenerational reflections, place, and community into our discussion. Senior scholars will reflect on the shifting terrain of politically engaged research and ethical praxis with community in their respective fields, while junior scholars will discuss how they are navigating the emergent present of assaults on higher education amid perseverance toward decolonial, abolitionist, and transformative research for justice. Indigenous scholars in the session will address the ethical and social justice challenges faced by Indigenous communities, and all participants will consider how research in North America and across the globe is shaped by systems of white supremacy, imperialism, and colonialism.

Our discussion will be grounded in story, with each presenter bringing stories to illustrate moments of learning and ethics in practice. Building on Lederman's recent commentary in *American Ethnologist*, this transdisciplinary conversation will consider how the next generation of anthropologists and scholars in related fields will be trained for engaging and enduring the political and ethical complexities of their changing work in a changing world.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Natalie Baloy, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Natalie Baloy, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Sheeva Sabati, Ronald David Glass, Mia Rodarte, Jamie Haverkamp, Bates College, Diana Lewis, University of Guelph

Discussant: Rena Lederman, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

8779 How to Search Like a Librarian: Systematic Search Skills for Professionals and Students

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Workshop

Have you ever been frustrated by the difficulty of finding relevant journal articles for a literature review? Are you interested in the searching techniques involved in systematic review or meta-ethnography? This workshop is designed to provide hands-on practice (bring a laptop!) with systematic searching techniques.

Led by a social sciences librarian, this session will cover advanced searching techniques such as creating concept tables, identifying controlled vocabulary, stemming, exploding terms, and locating search hedges. Attendees will see (and experiment with) how these techniques can be applied in AnthroSource, JSTOR, and any database on the EBSCO or ProQuest platforms. These are the techniques used by librarians conducting searches for systematic reviews, and can be useful for professionals and students who are interested in conducting systematic reviews or meta-ethnographies with or without the assistance of a librarian, and for anyone wishing to conduct more comprehensive and/or accurate searches in library databases.

To make the most of this workshop, bring a laptop or tablet that you can use to connect to your institution's library databases. Unaffiliated attendees who are AAA members will be able to search AnthroSource and JSTOR. Come with a research question or search topic idea so you can apply what you learn to a relevant area.

8743 Celebrating SANA at 35: Insurgent Anthropologies Then and Now

Start Date: 11/21/2025 2:45 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Thirty-five years ago, right here in New Orleans, near one hundred people crowded into a 1990 AAA Annual Meeting room to demand the creation of a new section that would recognize the existence of an anthropology of North America. Angry and frustrated that their ethnographic research here "at home" was deemed outside the purview of anthropology, limiting their access to grants, publication opportunities, jobs, and professional recognition, they began to organize for change. In 2025, facing challenges both familiar and distinct, a new generation of anthropologists seeks to learn from the strategic efforts of SANA's past. How have SANA and its sister "insurgent sections" of the AAA shifted the intellectual and political landscape of the association, and of the discipline more broadly? What does SANA's legacy mean for our next steps and for the future of critical insurgent anthropologies? Join this roundtable of longtime SANA founders and builders to root our ongoing struggles in our shared insurgent foundations. Roundtable Participants: Lee D. Baker, Lindsay Bell, Sue Hyatt, Jeff Maskovsky, Ida Susser, and Maria Vesperi. Moderated by Angela Stuesse.

8614 Commemorating the Life and Work of Deborah Pellow

Start Date: 11/21/2025 3:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

Friends, colleagues, and ex-students will come together to commemorate the life and work of Deborah Pellow of Syracuse University. Deborah was an outstanding urban anthropologist with extensive fieldwork in Ghana, and also served as President of the Society for Urban, National, and Transnational Anthropology, the predecessor to the Critical Urban Anthropology Association.

Many in SUNTA/CUAA have fond memories of her as an exuberant friend, mentor and teacher. We invite anyone who feels moved to join us in honoring her at this Special Event.

8835 Society for Visual Anthropology Robert Lemelson Fellowship Panel

Start Date: 11/21/2025 3:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 4:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Napoleon (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

A special plenary panel during which the 2025 SVA Robert Lemelson Fellows present their research followed by audience Q&A.

9087 Nonportfolio Options Discussion

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Crescent (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

meeting to discussion nonportfolio options

8651 Student Council Reception

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Section Student Seats are invited to discuss the future of student representation and structure in AAA, concerns, requests, programs, activities and events. This is a catered event - invite only.

8656 Spirits, Stories, and Solidarity: Collaborative Ethnographic Encounters with the Mandingo Warriors & the Neighborhood Story Project

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Poydras (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

In an open-forum, we will discuss the ongoing collaborative projects of the past 25 years. The Mandingo Warriors are one of 90+ groups of Black Indians, found throughout Afro-American neighborhoods in New Orleans. Big Chief Victor Harris, who has made a new suit and masked for 59 consecutive years, is an innovative and accomplished leader and artist. Inhabited by "The Spirit of Fi Yi Yi"-an African Spirit Harris is an iconic figure in the life and culture of New Orleans. The discussion will focus on the collaborative nature of the long-term relationships and ongoing ethnographic/ photographic/ story-telling projects between the anthropologists (Neighborhood Story Project) and the Mandingo Warriors. We will explore the impact of Harris' vision and his embodiment as the Spirit of Fi Yi Yi on the lives of the members of the tribe and the surrounding community in which it is embedded, and as well on the lives and work of the anthropologists who have journeyed with the Mandingo Warriors through the years.

8325 (Re)Engaging Art-Based Research: The Power of Dual Creative/Anthropologic Orientations for a More Innovative and Applied Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores the potential utility and value of researchers' dual creative/anthropological orientations in research contexts. As anthropologists increasingly turn to artistic methods to revitalize ethnographic inquiry and engage nonacademic audiences in scholarship, a dual creative/anthropological orientation empowers anthropologists by providing an additional critical mode of inquiry and way of engaging research participant engagement. This orientation enables researchers to reimagine fieldwork relationships, dynamics, methods, research outputs, and epistemologies in ways that foster renewed connection and collaboration with research communities.

Significant figures in anthropology, like Zora Neale Hurston, and contemporary researchers, like Trinh T. Minh-ha and Sarah Pink, have long blended creative and traditional ethnographic methods, combining photography, film, and creative storytelling in combination with more traditional

anthropological modes of research like participant observation and interviewing. Further discussion on one's locus of identity as an anthropologist or artist, or, importantly, anthropologist and artist, can contribute to our understanding of creative and artistic practices as a means of conducting, orienting, and interpreting research.

Incorporating practices such as storytelling, visual arts, performance, poetry, and multimedia installation allows for more flexible, responsive, and innovative forms of ethnographic representation, interpretation, and production. In particular, creative modes help reveal emotional, sensorial, and ambiguous affects often absent from conventional anthropological scholarship. These forms resonate deeply with both researchers and research participants, cultivating empathy, shared understanding, and affective and reflexive insight. They also open space for co-creation, production, and analysis, enabling research communities to contribute more meaningfully to knowledge production and translation. Additionally, skills developed through artistic pursuits, such as problem-solving, active self-reflection, spatial/visual reasoning, and comprehension of audience engagement, are highly applicable to rigorous anthropological research.

As academic institutions seek to decolonize anthropology and expand the practical reach of research, creative orientations offer powerful perspectives to engage broader and more diverse audiences. Panelists of this roundtable include designers, performance artists/dancers, writers, musicians, and fine artists whose research production and dissemination are enriched by their dual orientations as anthropologists and artists. Through brief presentations and a Q&A, this roundtable will address how dual creative and anthropological orientations and art-based methods contribute to transformative and more inclusive work in anthropology.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Alyna Woodall, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Sophie McKenzie

Presenter(s): Miles Jordan, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Sophie McKenzie, Erin Kurtz, Chloe Hale, University of Louisville, Alyna Woodall, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Sierra Mack Erb, River Coello, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sierra Mack Erb

317 Society for Visual Anthropology Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Morgaine Lee, Dawn Roe, Rollins College, Sara Wong, Anne Pfister, University of North Florida, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Ashley J. May, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Morgaine Lee, Dawn Roe, Rollins College, Sara Wong, Anne Pfister, University of

North Florida, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Ashley J. May, Brown University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): "This does not render the world gentle" An Anthropological Foray into the Worlds of Fungi and Art

This flash presentation sits with fungal magnetism as affect that "does not render the world gentle," but instead invites a non-innocent wonder in the face of indifference. To do so, I present a series of short, poetic vignettes taken from my master's research project working with artists inspired by fungal worlds.

For the project itself, I worked with artists whom I gave prompts, some of which included each other's art, as poachable points of inspiration to create new works in various mediums. Art and interviews for this project are gathered in a written thesis and a short experimental documentary, "do i know you, mushroom?" The film and thesis are not explicitly linked, but rather, entangled as two expressions made with art and themes gathered throughout the research process - two baskets of mushrooms collected along the same forays.

In this talk, I offer some of these 'mushrooms' as 'poachable' prompts for listeners to feel through the pull of mushrooms, to consider what it means to make art in the midst of climate crisis, and to critically examine stories that position fungi as hero.

Presenter(s): Morgaine Lee

Arts/Anthropology Session: What if the H(a)unted Could Make Images?

Informed by ongoing conversations and collaborative work between arts and anthropology practitioners, this quasi-performative talk will draw upon still and moving imagery included within the indefinitely ongoing visual art project, DESCENT $\approx$ An Atlas of Relation. Presented as a meditation of sorts, the question, What if the H(a)unted Could Make Images?, will be repeatedly posed in correspondence with projected visuals of earth, plant, and animal forms living and dying together across both great and small distances. Occupying the liminal space(s) of water-based worlds permanently re-shaped by extractive actions and colonial forms of "species management," the varied Beings gestating within and along these waters endure ongoing disruptions, forever altering how these spaces have and continue to function as home, and community. As print and video recordings, their bodies are transformed into phantom residue, bringing visibility to aspects of our world(s) that often go unnoticed, or are difficult to see. The screen-based images perpetually cycle and return against their isolated fragments embalmed in still(ed) form. These temporal distinctions re-present entangled life as unpredictable, dynamic, and relentless, suggesting the rich potential of transgenerational, multispecies relations.

--- Much of the language, above, is indebted to Donna Haraway's thinking and phrasing, explicitly referred to in certain passages. Other sections loosely allude to Luce Irigaray's, *Marine Lover*, a text I became aware of through the writing of Astrida Neimanis who references this work in relation to concepts of hydrofeminism. The session title, "What if the H(a)unted Could Make Images?," cites a

version of a question posed by Michael Taussig during a discussion moderated by Andrés Romero related to Taussig's book, *Corpse Magic*.

To view in-progress works from the series referenced above, please visit:

<https://dawnroe.com/descent.html>

Presenter(s): Dawn Roe

Ghosts in the gallery: autoethnographic reflections on curation

Drawing on autoethnographic reflections from curating a visual art exhibition, this paper destabilizes the boundary between fiction and non-fiction to interrogate the politics of language and knowledge production within the ghostly architecture of the academy. It stages a fragmented encounter between four figures-the Researcher, the Curator, the Artist, and the Activist-who navigate a collaborative Exhibition in the haunted afterlives of empire. Through these entangled personas, the paper explores the limits of conventional academic forms in representing the embodied, the relational, and the exilic, asking what it means to curate knowledge under the weight of colonial inheritances and epistemological rigidity. By foregrounding the ghostly as both metaphor and method, the work experiments with narrative as research-creation, interrogating who speaks, who is silenced, and how voice is curated in contexts of violence and hegemony. In doing so, it calls for a scholarship that holds space for the spectral-what lingers, haunts, and resists capture by traditional forms-proposing curation as an alternative modality of thinking, feeling, relating, and knowing.

Presenter(s): Sara Wong

Papernest: A Multimedia Project Housing Insect Imaginaries

Papernest is a multimedia project that uses images, film and an interactive website to explore the commodification of insects in Oaxaca, Mexico. It houses research interrogating globalized and colonial forces that impact participants economically, socially, and ecologically, and how their lived experiences might be representative of broader post-colonial tensions and realities (Pfister and Gaytán 2024). We use sensory, ethnographic filmmaking and participatory methods to engender resonances and contradictions between long-standing traditions and newly-emerging narratives surrounding insects that range from shock and disgust, to energies toward "rediscovery" of trendy Mexican "super foods" (Katz and Lazos 2016) and natural dyes with longstanding cultural significance in Oaxaca. Multimedias communicate anthropological ideas with audiences beyond the academy, including dialogue with research participants about their ideas that informs this collaborative work.

Presenter(s): Anne Pfister

Signifying Blackhood in Toni Cade Bambara's "The Golden Bandit": Or, Notes for the Revolution That Is Here

On 25 February 1985, the late author and cultural critic Toni Cade Bambara opened a Library of Congress reading of her novel *If Blessing Comes* with a tale she fashioned "to remind people to question the official version of things, to put the authorized tale, a con text, into a critical context." (Bambara 1995). This tale, "The Golden Bandit," is a sharp retelling of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" that offers a Black feminist anti-oppression critique, resituating the classic narrative into a Black space (Sullivan 2022). Bambara continued to fashion and refashion this tale, "The Golden Bandit," throughout the 1980s while working on a novel about the Atlanta missing and murdered children's cases and a documentary about the Philadelphia police's bombing of the MOVE home in the Cobbs Creek neighborhood. In this reimagining, Bambara signifies Blackhood (Bambara 1970), by way of a call and response of strategic utterances with a particular shared meaning (Kernan 1999). Using this film collage as source material, I discuss how language and sound are used to signify Blackhood by way of Bambara's anti-oppression critique. How this tale of the deep south is nothing new—rather, an expression of the Black south's hauntings, its ongoing violent reincarnations as a project and not a place, to conjure the words of Glissant (1989). Fashioned in the wake of serial murders of Black children in Atlanta from 1979 - 1981, it orients us toward an immense devastation in the world that settles, like dust, in barely perceptible traces allowing us to carry on (Glissant 1989). This paper positions the tale as a site where Bambara sets the stage for the ideological work her posthumous novel is doing—revising and challenging a variety of prevailing official narratives about victims, suspects, con/texts, and the consequences of racialized terror, interrupting narratives of place naturalized by western framings of North/South. It is a conversation with the dead, a response to Bambara's call to get our house in order: "If your house ain't in order, you ain't in order. It is so much easier to be out there than right here. The revolution ain't out there. Yet. But it is here." (Bambara 1970).

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Presenter(s): Ashley J. May

322 Society for Anthro of North American Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM through 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Emily Steinmetz, Washington College, Department of Anthropology, Andrew McGrath, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Alexander Lowie

Presenter(s): Emily Steinmetz, Washington College, Department of Anthropology, Andrew McGrath, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Alexander Lowie

Presentation(s): Ghosts and the Carceral State in Western Ohio

Inspired by the conference theme, I explore ghosts that haunt the carceral landscapes of Western Ohio and those who are imprisoned there. The Dayton Correctional Institution (DCI), a women's prison in West Dayton, opened in the 1980s. Archival photos of the prison's construction show a panopticon tower from the old prison work house peeking at the scene from the background, from a site adjacent to the new facility. Images from inside the new DCI – after it was built but before people were brought there – are eerie in their emptiness, particularly from the vantage of 40 years later after countless people have suffered, survived, and struggled in those spaces. Additional photos from the archives offer glimpses into people's lives in the old work house from the 1920s-1970s: men playing cards, women doing laundry, a boxing ring with clothing draped over the ropes, an incarcerated couple getting married. The work house is one layer of the state's carceral past upon which the new carceral infrastructures are built. Throughlines of targeted state investments in toxic infrastructures – prisons and landfills – alongside broader disinvestment in human capital and community, connect the past to present.

Over the past eight years I have collaborated with a group of women sentenced to life in DCI. In their writing and our conversations, they describe the ways that they are haunted by their pasts, in all of their complexity. Their pasts are shaped by layered violences, from interpersonal to state-level organized abandonment. They also describe their ghost lives, the lives that could have been had they never been imprisoned, that exist like a shadow to the lives they are living. The ghost lives are happier and family-filled: their ghost selves are caring for sick relatives, making pancakes for grandchildren, snuggling kittens, wrapping birthday presents. One participant called the prison "The Netherworld," suggesting that the people inside were spectral, haunting the land of the living from the carceral margins. In many ways, participants use the Netherworld, their ghost lives, and other spectral metaphors to express their sense of loss and dislocation, their profound grief, and other emotions for which we lack a common language since the experience of life sentencing is indeed uncommon. They also live inside the broader social, physical, and political-economic landscapes that redirect resources from possibilities of human flourishing to carceral buildup. They become part of a complex carceral story and lineage, yet they persevere, try to find hope, and reconstitute meaning amidst the wreckage.

Presenter(s): Emily Steinmetz

Positively Haunting: Ritual, Signs, and Belief within a Spectral Science

The supernatural and the aristocratic share epistemological discursive space in the worlds of American ghost hunters. The contemporary search for empirical evidence of the afterlife is reflected in resurgent signs of Judeo-Christian identity in the social praxes of otherwise secular middle and working-class Americans. Filtered through the so-called "Death of God" and seeded by the paranormal works of William James and Carl Jung, latter-day ghost hunters are increasingly guided by a consecration of western science. Contemporary ghost hunting pulls its spiritual weight from the aesthetics of both faith and physics, and tech-minded wraith-hunters assemble scientific toolkits that do more than add a veneer of positivistic legitimacy, the tools themselves have become artifacts of ritual, hybridized with the legacies of occult practices such as mediumship and the intrinsic lay-channeling of affective registers that permeate purportedly haunted locations. With meaning cultivated in the dual invisibilities of electromagnetic fields and demons, informed by the rotating sign values of noises, goosebumps, and camera compression rates, contemporary ghost hunting has given the paranormally-attuned the ability to simultaneously anchor themselves to the legacy of Cartesian rationalism while surrendering themselves to the mysteries of an elusive supernatural Gnosis.

In this strange brew, once sacred liberal formations such as democracy and equality are conspicuously absent. The acceleration of identity-centered communication platforms including YouTube, has made the performative a crucial aspect of the hybrid rituals of the paranormal scene. Here, in the tumult of branding, hoaxing, and relentless self-promotion, humble subservience to the mystical and divine and any belief in the righteousness of the meek has been replaced by the aristocratic impulse of 21st Century American life, furnishing a latter-day feudal ethics validated at the fulcrum of science and religiosity. This flash presentation materializes from my ongoing ethnographic project in the world of American ghost hunters where the objects of their practice signify the scientific predilections of contemporary American spirituality among the working and middle classes.

Presenter(s): Andrew McGrath

The Ghosts of Supremacy: Conspiracy, Subjectivism, and the Metaphysics of Militias in North Central Florida

This flash presentation is based on my ethnographic fieldwork and explores how contemporary militia movements in North Central Florida, particularly groups affiliated with the alt-right "Patriot Movement," operate within a haunted ideological landscape. Though participants claim to have distanced themselves from explicit white supremacy, my research reveals that foundational narratives of racial paranoia, elitist betrayal, and apocalyptic struggle remain deeply embedded in their worldview. Drawing on fieldwork with local actors including members of the Proud Boys and an allied rural collective which identifies with the Three-Percenter Movement, I show how conspiracy theories serve not only as ideological glue but as theological doctrine: a metaphysical framework that codes resistance to liberal institutions as moral good. A frame which ultimately led, in part, to the storming of the Capitol on January 6th.

Participants view mainstream knowledge producers and taste-makers, like universities, media, and government agencies, as corrupted vessels of deception, leading them to embrace what Michael Barkun terms "stigmatized knowledge." This knowledge, often shared through memes, YouTube videos, or informal gatherings, circulates through affective and moral registers, producing what I argue is a subjectivist epistemology. Belief becomes a performance of patriotism, and personal truth is valorized over shared empiricism. "Doing your own research" leads you down an experiential subjectivist rabbit-hole.

Rather than simply reviving past supremacist movements, these actors construct a new metaphysical terrain, one in which belief in conspiracy, spiritual warfare, and self-reliance becomes a form of social and political identity. This terrain is compared to those described in Kathleen Belew's "Bring the War Home," which is rooted in post-Vietnam War survivalism and white separatism. This talk contends that the "ghosts" of white supremacy are not absent, but transformed and embedded in a politics of myth, martyrdom, and moral clarity that continues to animate the American alt-right.

Presenter(s): Alexander Lowie

540 Association for Feminist Anthropology Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Hannah Noblewolf , Elisa Muntoni , Xuan Jin , Patrick Clarkin , Lucy Yanow , Mairéad Smith, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Gianna DeJoy

Presenter(s): Hannah Noblewolf, Elisa Muntoni, Xuan Jin, Patrick Clarkin, Lucy Yanow, Mairéad Smith, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Gianna DeJoy

Presentation(s): "I Think We're Getting a Little Handmaid's Tale-y Here": Understanding Abortion Bans Through Dystopian Literary Allusions

This talk explores the referencing of popular literature to convey an imagined future amongst pro-choice activists in Westerborg, TX. When describing their perceptions of the present and future, pro-choice activists would sometimes allude to popular dystopian literature - primarily the Hunger Games series and The Handmaid's Tale. Through these literary references, interlocutors were able to convey a larger scale dysfunction than they could otherwise communicate by utilizing popular images of imagined dystopian futures.

Presenter(s): Hannah Noblewolf

Abortion, affect, and the nation: emotional regimes of reproductive governance in contemporary Italy

In the context of growing concern over Italy's declining birthrate, recent public policies have taken a markedly pronatalist turn. Motherhood is increasingly framed as a civic responsibility and a

demographic necessity, while anti-abortion agendas advance under the guise of supporting life and families. These shifts unfold within broader dynamics of reproductive governance (Morgan & Roberts 2012), where state and non-state actors deploy "phantasmagrasms of population" (Murphy 2017) to reassert control over reproductive life in the name of national survival. Rather than acting through legal restriction, contemporary abortion governance in Italy operates through more subtle mechanisms, such as moral persuasion and the modulation of affect.

Based on my doctoral research, this paper focuses on the case of Piedmont, a northern Italian region that has become a laboratory of institutional pronatalism. In recent years, regional authorities have actively supported pro-life initiatives, such as the public funding of anti-abortion counseling centers and the opening of pro-life help desks within public health facilities. Among the most emblematic measures are programs of economic assistance for women who decide to carry their pregnancies to term after initially considering abortion. Although publicly framed as support for maternity, these programs are managed by pro-life organizations whose explicit aim is to discourage abortion through material incentives.

Drawing on feminist ethnography, the research is based on participant observation in reproductive health services and pro-life spaces, and on interviews with women and pregnant people who have had abortions, as well as with the beneficiaries of pro-life programs. This approach centers the embodied, affective experience of navigating reproductive care, revealing how abortion is not only governed through institutions, but also through feelings that are elicited, shaped, and contested. Within these regimes, affect becomes both a mechanism of governance and a site of resistance, as individuals rework, refuse, or resignify the "feeling rules" (Hochschild 1979) imposed upon them.

Ultimately, the presentation argues that Italy's demographic response is not merely a technocratic concern, but a political project of national reproduction. By foregrounding the affective and moral dimensions of abortion experiences - including dissonances, refusals, and counter-narratives - this research interrogates the contradictions of contemporary governance: policies that claim to support life may, in practice, delimit whose life is valued, whose reproduction is encouraged, and at what cost.

Presenter(s): Elisa Muntoni

Colonial Shadows: Rethinking Gender and Sexuality in Postcolonial Southeast Asia

This paper explores the enduring impact of colonialism on gender norms in Southeast Asia and highlights the value of postcolonial feminist approaches in understanding and challenging these legacies. Focusing on Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, the study draws on María Lugones' concept of the "coloniality of gender" and Aníbal Quijano's "coloniality of power" to examine how colonial regimes imposed Western binary gender systems that disrupted diverse, fluid, and localized gender identities. The paper also applies intersectionality theory to unpack the entanglement of race, gender, class, and sexuality within colonial structures.

The study analyzes colonial and postcolonial institutional mechanisms-particularly in legal and educational systems-that have reproduced gender hierarchies. Case studies include Singapore's

Section 377A, a colonial-era law that criminalized male same-sex relations, and Anglo-Chinese School, where elite masculinity and Christian heteronormativity were reinforced through British educational ideals. The paper also revisits pre-colonial gender diversity, such as the Bugis "bissu" and the flexible gender roles within Orang Asli communities, which were later marginalized by colonial and religious systems.

Through a critical review of historical and contemporary sources, this paper argues that colonial gender structures are not relics of the past but remain embedded in modern Southeast Asian nation-states. Postcolonial feminist theory not only reveals these continuities but also offers tools for reimagining gender beyond binary and Eurocentric frameworks. By emphasizing local knowledge and culturally grounded gender expressions, this study contributes to a more inclusive and decolonial approach to gender justice.

Presenter(s): Xuan Jin

Coming of Age in War: Armed Conflict and Age at Menarche

Armed conflict and forced migration (ACFM) consistently create a suite of stressors that prove challenging for biological development. Research on the impacts of ACFM often focuses on earlier pre-adult life stages (prenatal, infancy, childhood) due to the rapidity of growth and critical periods of development during this time, as well as because of their biobehavioral vulnerability. However, adolescence may also constitute a sensitive period (e.g., puberty and psychoneurological maturation) through which the impacts of ACFM adversity can become embodied, such as through linear growth, pubertal timing, and mental health. Research in public health and psychology indicates that some forms of early life adversity may accelerate puberty, perhaps heightening risks for mental health disorders. However, it is not well substantiated whether adversities typically experienced in ACFM contexts accelerate or delay relative pubertal timing. We conducted a narrative review which reviewed empirical findings (n = 29 studies, n = 36 samples) concerning the effects of ACFM-derived adversities on age at menarche. We found war-derived early life adversity was more consistently associated with pubertal delay than acceleration. We discuss the importance of emphasizing different types of early life adversities (psychological, nutritional, etc.), which cannot be operationalized in the same way across contexts and populations, especially in the presence of extreme forms of human stress and resilience.

Presenter(s): Patrick Clarkin

Co-author(s): Delaney Glass

The Haunted Womb

In the wake of the Dobbs decision, how are ghosts being represented in art, and activist spaces? Are emotions such as conflict and ambivalence becoming poltergeists in the face of new conceptions of fetal personhood? The Haunted Womb proposes that the Dobbs ruling is an invitation to reconceive and expand abortion to include transgressive, intersectional, and queer sexual and reproductive liberation.

I will present the results of a qualitative case study interrogating how activists, artists, full spectrum doulas, abortion carers and speculative fiction writers are articulating new ways to talk about death – of both fetuses and pregnant people – through their publicly available works. My research includes interviews, analysis of written texts, ethnography, and autoethnography. I interpret these sources using Derrida's (1994) concept of hauntology, which in this context refers to the way that overturning Roe vs. Wade upset linear temporality by raising 'spectres' for people who are part of diverse activist networks advocating for bodily autonomy. These spectres take the forms of remembering past trauma, both personal or historical, anxieties and fears about the future, and dissociation and anger with the present. Rather than attempting exorcism, the interlocutors integrated spectral ethics which they applied by strengthening their mutual aid networks, diversifying their tactics, and creating publicly available art that transgresses abortion binaries and tired tropes.

This paper asks us to (re)consider how we talk about death in reproductive justice space, both fetal and maternal, and the power (and failings) of speculation as an activist intervention.

Presenter(s): Lucy Yanow

Weaponizing Rape // Entextualizing Rape: The Ghosts of the Weapon of War

In response to the October 7th attacks, media reports circulated sensational claims of " Hamas mass rapes," alongside allegations of beheaded babies and children burned alive. These accounts, however, were based largely on speculation rather than forensic evidence or firsthand testimony (Tatour 2023; Elia 2024; Abunimah 2025). Despite this lack of substantiation, rape claims were weaponized to manufacture consent for intensified military violence against Palestinians as part of a broader genocidal campaign (Feminist Solidarity Network for Palestine 2024)-an example of what scholars have termed the "cunning of gender violence" (Abu-Lughod, Hammami, & Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2023).

This paper analyzes a range of sources-including mainstream media, reports by the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and public presentations and "testimonies" by the Chair of the Civil Commission on October 7th Crimes Against Women and Children. Building on critiques that situate the weaponization of rape within broader Islamophobic and orientalist tropes (Elia 2024; Ihmoud 2024; Feminist Solidarity Network for Palestine 2024), the paper examines how sexual violence emerged as an indisputable potentiality, haunting the discursive aftermath of October 7th. Using the lens of entextualization (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Blommaert 2005), it traces how the "rape as a weapon of war" discourse was appropriated, recontextualized, and circulated to tragic ends.

Specters of past violence-particularly the ghosts of Ezidi women, Kurdish female fighters, and other ethnicized and gendered figures-were invoked to legitimize state violence. This presentation interrogates how such spectral discourses continue to animate and justify militarized and ethnicized forms of governance in the present, performing the evidentiary labor that the absence of testimonies and firsthand accounts fail to provide.

Presenter(s): Mairéad Smith

“Borderlands, body-lands: Biomedical neglect and control on the margins of empire”

Across North America, reproductive and maternal health services are increasingly inaccessible outside the countries' metropolitan centers. Simultaneously, public concern surrounding potential maternal-fetal transmission of environmental toxicants puts pregnant and parenting individuals' actions under the microscope. This is especially relevant in the U.S., where the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* opened the door to new levels of reproductive surveillance and the criminalization of pregnancy outcomes. These dual forces of biomedical neglect in the form of centralizing healthcare on one hand, and both state and scientific control over reproductive bodies on the other, create a suffocating – even tacitly eradicated – dynamic that scholars have previously identified in other contexts. Based on ethnographic and collaborative research in rural communities along the easternmost end of the U.S.-Canada border, I examine how the peripheral reproductive body is treated as a metaphorical and material proxy for the larger othered and overlooked borderland/body-land: a critical merging of decolonial feminist concepts and epistemologies that acknowledge the inextricability of the body from its political and natural environment. Tucked into this crease between settler states, on the rocky continental margin, families face real healthcare scarcity as well as discursive desertification. Nonetheless, neglected corners can be fruitful places.

Presenter(s): Gianna DeJoy

8425 Multiscalar Violence and the Anthropocene

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In March 2024, the International Union of Geological Society rejected the proposal to officially recognize the Anthropocene epoch. The selection-swiftly rescinded-of Crawford Lake as the single origin site of the Anthropocene hinged on the sedimented layers of multiple chemicals, including nitrogen from fertilizers, ash from coal, and plutonium isotopes from nuclear weapons. This not only shows that the Anthropocene is overdetermined, but it brings into sharp focus the paradoxical nature of this alleged planetary era of extinction which claims a single origin born from the centuries-old accretion of violence across different sites, periods, and interactions. The panel grapples with this paradox to examine the world-making propensities of violence underpinning the Anthropocene across multiple-at once overlapping, clashing, and emerging-scales. Drawing from case studies in Turkey, Iraq, Peru, India, and the United States, the panel discusses the slow metabolization of harm across bodies of water, the inextricable relations between the creation and restoration of warzone ecologies, the volatile, mercurial, and potentially lucrative character of toxic assets, the governance of futurity through plastic materialities, and the dream images of progress in dead stands of trees. By attending to the materially and temporally unstable environmental formations and modes of being human emerging from within the battle/fields of racial capitalism and settler colonialism, the panel unpacks the Anthropocene as the indefinite effect of multiscalar violence.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Aida Arosoaie , Kevin Burke, University of Pennsylvania

Chair: Aida Arosoaie

Presenter(s): Zeynep Oguz, University of Edinburgh, Bridget Guarasci, Franklin & Marshall College, Kevin Burke, University of Pennsylvania, Ruth Goldstein, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub, Adwaita Banerjee, University of Pennsylvania

Presentation(s): What the Sea of Marmara Teaches Us About the Anthropocene

In the summer of 2021, a thick, gelatinous bloom of marine mucilage surfaced across Turkey's Sea of Marmara. Described by many as the "death of the sea," this sudden event drew national outrage and international headlines. But what if the mucilage was not a crisis in its own right, but rather the delayed surfacing of submerged, multiscale violence? What if what appeared on the surface as ecological catastrophe was, instead, a condensation of tectonic, industrial, hydrological, and geopolitical entanglements unfolding over decades? This paper traces the emergence of mucilage through the slow accumulation of marine stratification, petrochemical effluents, and the relocation of Istanbul's industry to the shores of the Marmara. It situates the sea not as a passive container but as a tectonically unsettled, infrastructurally burdened, and politically expendable body of water, shaped by the North Anatolian Fault Zone, deep-sea waste discharge, mega-project construction, and shifting political currents. Rather than marking a clean origin or a terminal collapse, the Sea of Marmara registers violence across multiple temporal and spatial scales. By attending to this in-between sea as a site of lithic drift, where stone, sludge, and policy move together, I propose a reframing of the Anthropocene through the focus of the slow metabolization of harm. What the Sea of Marmara teaches us is not how the world ends, but how ecological and political violence drifts, thickens, and reappears.

Presenter(s): Zeynep Oguz

The Value of Eden in Iraq's Marshes

Through an analysis of wartime biodiversity conservation of Iraq's marshes I analyze war as an ecology. To say that war is ecology requires analysis of war as a dynamic energy of relations that values lifeways on earth for extraction. A warzone ecology operates by producing value. In this paper, I explore wartime value creation by examining the intrinsic role of image making to that process. I share environmental historian Rob Nixon's (2011) concern that our capacity to recognize violence is directly related to the images, media and otherwise, that define the spectacular violence of bombings and gunfire rather than the mundane and less visible but deeply entrenched unfoldings of violence such as the transformation of nature. As we know from Judith Butler (2009), image-making is war. The NGO spearheading marshlands conservation made a case for the significance of doing so by arguing Iraq's marshes were the original site of the Biblical Garden of Eden. By tracking Eden, I analyze how media reportage was not only instrumental in shaping popular understandings of the Iraq War, but also that media consumption was intrinsic to the creation of economic and moral value that was transactional for multinational experts and facilitated profiteering. Warzone ecology offers a way to analyze how planetary recuperation in our

geologic era and the Global War on Terror are pursued in inseparable relation, thereby opening up new avenues for conceptualizing war, nature, and violence.

Presenter(s): Bridget Guarasci

Transecting Ghost Forests: From Dead Plantations to a Dream that Never Dies

Low-lying forest landscapes are rapidly converting to saltwater marshes and swamps along the eastern seaboard of the United States due to climate change. This process is producing a particular forest type that biologists refer to as a "ghost forest." In this paper, I retool the ecological method of walking a transect to track the multiscalar violences involved in the formation of ghost forests in coastal North Carolina. We begin at the site of Walter Raleigh's so-called "lost colony," which is memorialized in a play that has been put on annually since 1937. This origin story is an explicitly white nationalist play, and it tells the story of the "dream that never dies" of Raleigh's colonial ambitions. From there we move inland to the abandoned timber plantations and corporate farms and recount the stories of progress and improvement that animated their infrastructures. I will tell the story of First Colony Farms, named in honor of the "lost colony", which was carved out of the wetlands in the 1970s by a shipping magnate with profits made from running the logistics operations of the Vietnam War. We will move across bombing ranges and a municipal waste dump. I argue that narratives of ecological collapse can too easily mirror stories of progress if we do not attend to the multiscalar violences of settler-colonialism, militarism, and finance that subtend both narratives. How are ghost forests made, not just in the wake of rising seas, but also in the wake of plantation?

Presenter(s): Kevin Burke

Operation Mercury: Open Veins, Green Washing, and Anthropocenic Assets in Latin America

This paper examines multiscalar violence surrounding the application—and proposed eradication—of liquid mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Peru's Amazonian region of Madre de Dios. The United Nations-sponsored Minamata Convention is a global accord that seeks to eliminate human emissions of mercury. The Peruvian government has undertaken violent military evictions of miners in an emergency effort dubbed: "Operation Mercury" in the name of ecological conservation, climate crisis, and the Minamata Convention. It is an altogether undemocratic effort, an exercise of State power that fails to acknowledge the lack of alternatives for miners and the global demand for gold. The government intervention also creates ecological harm when gasoline, mining equipment and stashes of mercury are bombed in the rainforest. This paper brings ethnographic findings into conversation with debates on the Anthropocene, Latin America's "pink tide" and "green washing" as an enduring settler colonial practice. The emergence of mercury as a politically-charged substance attests to the longstanding political assemblages that involve the violent oppression and dispossession of people in extractive economies, resulting in toxic assets. This paper underscores the role that toxic assets—volatile, mercurial, and lucrative—and ecosystem-services play in neoliberal extractivism, as part of globally-scaled efforts to control who siphons natural resources from the open veins of Latin America.

Presenter(s): Ruth Goldstein

Scalar Violence, Unequal Futures: Caste and Toxic Exposure in Mumbai

Drawing from ethnographic research on caste, plastic toxicity, and municipal governance in Mumbai's informal recycling economy, this paper rethinks Anthropocene temporalities and scales through the lens of futurity. It argues that bodily exposure serves as a critical scalar nexus, intimately linking immediate corporeal harm with enduring planetary contamination, shaping who has access to livable futures and who remains excluded. Plastic materializes as both an immediate site of bodily violence and a persistent ecological pollutant, embedding toxic legacies into marginalized bodies and environments across generations. Through municipal waste governance, capitalist practices, and bureaucratic interventions, caste hierarchies are continuously reproduced, strategically allocating toxic exposure and normalizing suffering as inherent to marginalized communities. Such governance explicitly shapes futurity, determining whose bodies endure harm and whose futures are protected or foreclosed. This paper insists that environmental injustice—and hence the Anthropocene—is fundamentally about the governance futurity, about who can imagine, inhabit, or is denied a viable future. Ultimately, the paper foregrounds futurity as a political terrain shaped by administrative choices, asking whose suffering remains invisible, whose lives are deemed disposable, and whose futures are allowed to flourish or are systematically denied within Anthropocene discourses.

Presenter(s): Adwaita Banerjee

530 Anthropology and Environment society Flash session #5

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Beatriz Klimeck , Lis Furlani Blanco , YUYUN ZHAO , Patrick Robinson , Maximilian Viatori, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Anthropology, Syed Shoaib Ali , Zoe Nyssa, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Beatriz Klimeck, Lis Furlani Blanco, YUYUN ZHAO, Patrick Robinson, Maximilian Viatori, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Anthropology, Syed Shoaib Ali, Zoe Nyssa, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): A community as human sensors: “the smell”, risk and air quality research in South Bay, California

Individual perception of intrusive odors may be unique, but in South Bay, California, references to “the smell” signal a shared, embodied experience. For nearly a century, residents have endured the impacts of U.S-Mexico cross-border sewage pollution flowing from the Tijuana River, through their community, and into the Pacific Ocean. This incessant pollution crisis has been continuously downplayed as an issue of poor water quality, easily avoided by staying out of the water, while the strong sewage smell was long dismissed by authorities as a mere nuisance. In 2024, a team of

researchers launched a comprehensive air quality monitoring campaign in San Diego's South Bay, a vibrant seaside community whose sewage-contaminated beaches had remained closed for over 1000 days, revealing a long-dismissed air quality crisis. Working alongside local residents while conducting water and air measurements, the team was able to analyze not only chemical and biological compounds, but also the sensory and social dimensions of the environmental crisis. Community members opened their homes to host monitors, guided scientists to key locations, and shared personal narratives about illness, adaptive strategies, and grassroots organization. Where the sewage smell was present, extremely high levels of hydrogen sulfide were identified, closely matching community reports of symptoms such as nausea, headaches, and respiratory and gastrointestinal distress. Using an ethnographic approach, along with surveys and interviews, this paper explores how the smell itself became both a form of toxic exposure and a means of environmental witnessing. It reflects on how collaboration with residents supported the monitoring effort, showing how community observations and embodied responses helped connect scientific findings to the lived realities of pollution, environmental injustice, and border dynamics.

Presenter(s): Beatriz Klimeck

Co-author(s): Kimberly Prather, Benjamin Rico

Grounding anthropology: notes on developing applied energy research

As national energy systems change in diverse, locally specific ways, anthropologists have a critical role to play in shaping the epistemologies and methods that guide energy research and planning. While technical assistance programs and planning models increasingly acknowledge the importance of social dimensions, they often rely on narrow, rationality-centered frameworks that reduce decision-making to cost optimization and behavior change. In doing so, they risk overlooking the sociopolitical histories, cultural logics, and lived experiences that define how energy systems function on the ground.

This flash presentation shares insights from efforts to embed anthropological research into the development and enhancement of energy planning models used in federal technical assistance initiatives. Rather than merely supplementing techno-economic analysis with qualitative "context," this work positions anthropology as a core epistemological partner in co-producing knowledge about how energy systems operate and who they serve. It examines how concepts such as affordability, resilience, and reliability-central to energy planning-take on different meanings across communities, and how these meanings are shaped by legacies of exclusion, regulatory constraints, and everyday energy practices.

For example, energy affordability is often modeled as a fixed percentage of household income, yet anthropological engagement reveals that affordability is experienced relationally-mediated by housing precarity, trust in institutions, and informal support networks. Similarly, resilience is frequently framed as infrastructural redundancy or recovery time, but in many communities, it is tied to cultural continuity, social cohesion, and historical experiences of abandonment or harm.

These findings suggest that planning models and decision tools must be interrogated not only for what they measure, but for how they define and structure the very problems they seek to solve.

Working from within interdisciplinary teams in a national laboratory setting, this research also reflects on the practical and political challenges of institutional integration-negotiating timelines, data structures, and validation standards that do not always accommodate ethnographic knowledge. Yet it also highlights opportunities: building internal capacity for qualitative analysis, designing more reflexive models, and shifting from extractive engagement to long-term, community-led collaboration.

With this discussion, I propose creating a space to reflect on what it means to practice anthropology in applied, technical settings-particularly where the ghosts of positivism linger, and where suspicion of qualitative work or anti-scientific tendencies can make our roles simultaneously necessary and precarious.

Presenter(s): Lis Furlani Blanco

Growing with the Dead : Haunted Landscapes and Multispecies Care in China's Ecological Burials

This ethnographic study examines ecological burial practices in contemporary China through the lens of multispecies ethnography and the anthropology of being haunted, investigating how environmental ethics and more-than-human actors reshape traditional death practices. Drawing on fieldwork at ecological burial sites, this research explores how multiple entities participate in and transform death practices, creating new forms of connection between the living and the dead.

The study conceptualizes ecological burial sites as haunted landscapes where multiple temporalities coexist and intersect. It argues that ecological burial sites can be understood as haunted landscapes, not in the conventional supernatural sense, but as spaces where past, present, and future converge through the entanglement of human remains, living organisms, and environmental processes. Through their growth, decay, and renewal, these more-than-human actors engage in complex interactions that reshape traditional understandings of death, memory, and care.

The research reveals how different species and materials become entangled in practices of care that extend beyond traditional ethic to encompass environmental concerns. The decision to integrate human remains into natural cycles through tree or flower burial represents a significant departure from traditional death practices, reflecting broader shifts in how contemporary Chinese society conceptualizes relationships between humans and nature.

This study contributes to both environmental anthropology and death studies by theorizing ecological burial sites as haunted landscapes where multispecies relations and temporalities transform traditional practices. Through examining how environmental ethics become embodied in intimate cultural practices around death, this research offers new insights into China's sustainable development and ongoing social-ecological transformations.

Presenter(s): YUYUN ZHAO

Paraecology in Practice: Anti-Mining Science and the Political Ontology of Environmentalism-Across-Difference in Intag, Ecuador

Part of the "megabiodiverse" Tropical Andes Biodiversity Hotspot, the cloud forests of Junín, a small agricultural community in Ecuador's Intag Valley, are home to over 100 endemic and endangered plant and animal species, including jaguar, Andean Spectacled Bear, and *Atelopus longirostris*, a species of harlequin frog that was last seen in 1989 before its rediscovery there in 2016 (Meyers et. al. 2000; Torres-Jiménez et. al. 2024; Tapia et. al. 2017). Unfortunately, this stretch of the Andes is also believed to contain hundreds of millions of tons of copper ore; consequently, since 1990, the Ecuadorian state has encouraged a series of foreign mining companies to drill dozens of exploratory boreholes in the protected forests upstream from Junín. According to some assessments, the projected impacts of open-pit copper mining near Junín include the forced relocation of multiple communities, mass desertification, the extinction of several endemic species, and a severe degradation of local water quality (JICA 1996).

Aiming to prevent this, many local campesino-activists have long been working with Ecuadorian and international research institutions to monitor the environmental impacts of exploratory drilling via regular water quality data collection, biological field surveys, camera trapping, macroinvertebrate sampling, and other scientific techniques. These organizations' goal is to promote the collection of ecological data for use in legal suits, especially those brought in defense of the constitutional "Rights of Nature"-a goal they have sought to achieve in Junín by training local people as "paraecologists."

Meanwhile, many of Junín's "paraecologists" continue to engage in ancestral relations of constitutive interdependence with the "natural" entities (rivers, mountains, etc.) that they and their scientist allies now monitor-entities that they sometimes describe as capable of complex emotions and intentional action. Following the lead of scholars of science and technology who hold that reality is "enacted" via the inter- (or "intra") action of various sociomaterial agencies and therefore advocate the study of scientific praxis (Mol 2002; Barad 2007), as well as contemporary anthropologists who suggest that ontological multiplicity within environmentalist social movements can have important political implications for alliances between local territory-defenders and outside environmentalists (de la Cadena 2010), I ask: What sorts of "natural" entities are enacted via local campesino-activists' paraecological praxis? How do these entities differ from those enacted via the other prevalent local practices-like agriculture and the research practices of local activists' scientist allies-to which paraecological praxis is doubtless "partially connected" (Strathern 1991)? Finally, what are the political implications of these differences, especially for the efficacy of the collaboration between local territory-defenders and their scientist allies?

Presenter(s): Patrick Robinson

Representing an Overflowing Ocean: Marine Spatial Planning in the Gulf of Guayaquil

How are blue economy projects developing new representations of the ocean that potentially advance aquatic dispossessions and the privatization of ocean commons? I explore this question

through an analysis of a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) project in the southeastern Pacific Ocean. MSPglobal Initiative, a project jointly funded by UNESCO and the European Commission, advocates for MSP around the world to establish sustainable blue economies by balancing environmental protection and economic growth through planning. MSPglobal undertook a recent transboundary pilot project in the Gulf of Guayaquil, an environmentally and economically significant aquatic zone off the coasts of Ecuador and Peru. MSPglobal mapped environmental conditions and human activities in the Gulf of Guayaquil to identify "compatibilities" and "conflicts." Blue economy narratives have been associated with frontier imagery that frames ocean spaces and resources as empty and unclaimed (Knott, Wiber, and Mather 2024). In contrast, the MSPglobal project represented the Gulf of Guayaquil as an ocean space overflowing with a density of human activities—shipping, fishing, drilling, conservation, tourism, and more—that needed to be made visible and managed. MSPglobal's technical approach presumed that existing activities would remain in place and could co-exist in a sustainable blue future if planned correctly, thus assuming that there was no apparent conflict between aquaculture operations or hydrocarbon extraction and threatened mangrove ecologies. I argue that this representation of the ocean normalized the presence of extractive industries in the gulf, while obscuring the fluidity and instability of its constantly moving marine environment. The MSPglobal maps hid the spills, seepages, sonic pollution, movements, and migrations through which more-than-human ocean spaces and ecologies entwined and were imperiled and slowly displaced by privatized extractive rights.

Knott, Christine, Melanie G. Wiber, and Charles Mather. 2024. "Aquaculture's Offshore Frontier: Learning from the Canadian Courts on Ocean Grabbing, Ocean Privatization, and Property as Process." *Maritime Studies* 23(5): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-023-00348-8>

Presenter(s): Maximilian Viatori

The alchemy of toil: Pesticides, human bodies, and the maintenance of social environments

The optimism once widely associated with the use of pesticides, especially the harmlessness of organochlorines such as DDT, and the then benign promise of modern science is long dead. It's been replaced by a shared widespread anxiety around pesticide use and exposure. On one hand pesticides are toxic to most life, on the other hand pesticides are ubiquitous part of life. The concerns of toxicity, bioaccumulation, and biomagnification characteristic of the organochlorine pesticides have been dealt with by a constant expansion of the pesticide arsenal with organophosphate compounds, pyrethroids, carbamates, and neonicotinoids. This expansion of the pesticide arsenal continues to accompany a general sense of optimism on the relative safety of the newer compounds. This, however, has been challenged as new observations on toxic kinetics and accumulation patterns emerge over time.

Our multidisciplinary research project mapping pesticide exposure patterns of a select urban population in India has led us to question the notion that pesticide toxicity is primarily a result of 'bad' agricultural practices in the Global South. Instead, we find that exposure itself is more clearly tied to the maintenance of social environments, not just agriculture. This exposure is geographically, and technically contingent upon the ways in which places are maintained, including

but not limited to the production and storage of food. Key sites of exposure also include public gardens, office spaces, and household hygiene practices. We find that pesticide use puts certain and specific bodies to greater harm than others, human bodies whose suffering is normalised as routine, and made expendable. By analysing pesticide use and exposure, we find an intricate relationship between maintenance and toil (suffering). By making this connection visible we begin assembling neglected things, to ask whose bodies are made expendable, and in what ways, in the regular maintenance of social environments? Through our larger collaboration with scientists studying pesticides, we seek to understand what forms of collaborative, multidisciplinary evidence building can stage the politics of generating care for the suffering which does not yet count? How might we find Pandora's hope as we engage in this alchemy of toil?

Presenter(s): Syed Shoaib Ali

Co-author(s): Richa Kumar, Naveen Thayyil

What a Model Might Do: Conservation Data, Value and Governance

Computational models underpin much environmental policy and governance, informing decisions about which species need protection from extinction. How should we understand these models, when, as one scientist described it, "everyone knows that they don't work but they do"? Models have become increasingly important interventions politically, economically, and ecologically and yet the practices associated with these tools as well as their impacts remain poorly-understood. Based on archival and ethnographic research at conservation programs and projects in the U.S., this talk traces scientists' efforts to model the natural world in terms of species endangerment. Despite the deep intertwining of economic forms of rationality with conservation modeling, the models can unleash complex and sometimes surprising value practices that are poorly captured by standard economic theory or environmental policy. Recent collaborative, interdisciplinary work with the international biodiversity science community suggests potential ways to advance more effective and just forms of environmental modeling and data governance.

Presenter(s): Zoe Nyssa

514 Society for East Asian Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Presenter(s): Bohan Liu, Di Wang, Haoyu Shi, Ziqi Xuan, Phenix Lin, Gangcheng Xu, Yantong Liu

Presentation(s): Beauty, Corpse, and Skeleton: Objectified Body in Chinese Ghost Literature

This paper categorizes the female ghostly figures in Chinese ghost literature into three phases: beauty, corpse, and skeleton. The beauty represents temptation, hyper-femininity, a disguise of a

bigger conspiracy. The corpse, according to its state of corruption, can both represent the fleeting nature of physical allure and the positive manifestation of moral standards. The skeleton represents the ultimate form of human mortality, materiality, and gender-neutrality. Through poems, novels, and play scripts such as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Journey to the West*, and *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, this paper illustrates how these phases serve as symbols and imagery to drive narratives and articulate the objectification of women from life to death. In these literary works, women are recorded as aesthetical objects rather than as people. The love towards women in stories is not love for a person but a fetish for a beautiful object. Chinese aesthetics scholar Ye, S. (2018) suggests that the goddess of love and beauty is Yaoji but does not address her hidden identity as a female corpse. Yaoji was an ordinary virgin when she was alive but became a goddess with sexual power after death.

Drawing on the theory of feminist sociologist Gordon, A. F. (1997) in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* about how ghosts disrupt time, presence, and social order, this paper situates the three phases of the female body as a haunting figure that both reveals and resists the patriarchal norms of its cultural context.

Gordon, A. F. (1997). *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (NED-New edition, Second). University of Minnesota Press.

Ye, S. (2018). *The Goddess of Gaotang and Venus: The theme of love and beauty in Chinese and Western culture* [Gaotang shen nǚ yu Weinasi: Zhong xi wen hua zhong de ai yu mei zhu ti] (1st ed.). Beijing: Shanxi People's Publishing House.

Presenter(s): Bohan Liu

Haunted Without Grief: Memory, Silence, and the Afterlife of the Third Front Movement

This project examines how personal memories of suffering during China's Third Front Movement—a Cold War-era, state-led industrial campaign rooted in national defense—are absorbed into, rather than disrupt, the dominant nationalist narrative. Drawing from life histories and informal conversations with residents of Panzhihua, a key site of the Third Front Movement, the research explores how loss, displacement, environmental hardship, and emotional silence are often narrated without grief or critique. Instead of expressing trauma, participants frequently align with heroic state discourses, leaving unsettling events, such as suicide and illness, unmarked or normalized. The project engages hauntology as an analytical framework, but questions its applicability in contexts where "being haunted" fails to emerge. The research proposes the concept of "intimate knowledge" to access embodied, domestic, and affective traces of unacknowledged histories. By attending to the tensions between what is remembered, silenced, and officially celebrated, this ethnographic study aims to rethink the affective politics of historical memory in socialist and postsocialist China.

Presenter(s): Di Wang

Neither City nor Countryside: The Moral Life of Suburbanity in Post-Urbanization Xiama Village, China

Since the 1990s, China's urbanization has followed a distinctive pattern of spatial expansion, rapidly absorbing rural fringes and generating a landscape of "urban villages." These spaces, though surrounded by urban development, have preserved social structures and moral orders rooted in rural society, becoming critical sites of tension between rural and urban ethics. Corresponding to early redevelopment policies emphasizing market-led demolition, preliminary research also regarded urban villages as "socioeconomic sinkholes." Yet as governance practices institutionalized, scholars began to recognize their positive value, shifting the discourse from how to redevelop toward why and for whom, thereby opening space for reconsidering the resilience of rural moral systems within urban settings.

Following nationwide demolition campaigns, former villagers were rehoused into high-rise replacement communities. Despite their urban appearance and bureaucratic governance, these new communities remain ethically unintegrated. Many former villagers struggle with the transition to urban norms, resulting in a liminal condition—neither fully urban nor rural. This phenomenon has been described as the emergence of "suburban societies," characterized by suburbanity: a fractured moral condition shaped not by incomplete governance alone, but by local responses to institutional rupture. In the collapse of both state governance and communal authority, everyday life is sustained through symbolic improvisation and the mobilization of residual institutional forms. Concepts such as the "good life" and "fairness" are thus negotiated to produce an expedient way of life through kinship, land ethics, and generational memory instead of market and urbanization.

Rather than asking whether urban villages can be successfully urbanized, this paper investigates: how do village communities construct new moral orders and everyday practices in the face of failed urban absorption? And how are these ethical formations sustained through spatial practice and local moral evaluation, ultimately producing a durable yet non-typical outcome of urbanization—suburbanity? To address these questions, this paper draws on five months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Xiama Village, China. By analyzing materials including semi-structured interviews with former villagers and new residents, participant observation in community events and rituals, as well as historical documents and media reports related to the redevelopment, the paper captured, understood and demonstrated the process of moral emergence and the social consequences of failed urbanization integration.

Presenter(s): Haoyu Shi

Ritualizing the Ghost Boundary: The Naihe Bridge and Chinese Underworld Cosmology around Mount Tai

As the most prominent of China's Five Sacred Mountains, Mount Tai (泰山) has been ritually associated with the governance of the afterlife. Within the city where Mount Tai is located, there is also a river called Nai River (奈河): a toponym shared with the mythological river in Chinese

cosmography that demarcates the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead. In the city's sacred geography, this river similarly functions as a spatial divider: its eastern bank constitutes the domain of the living, while its western bank is ritually designated as the realm of ghosts, with Mount Tai itself representing the celestial sphere. Together, these elements form a tripartite sacred urban structure.

Drawing on local gazetteers and stele inscriptions, as well as ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2022 and 2024, this study examines the historical process through which the spatial hierarchy of "human-ghost-divine" realms was ritually institutionalized, with particular attention to the role of the Naihe Bridge (奈何桥) in materializing this cosmological imagination.

Specifically, while the Nai River's symbolic association with the afterlife has deep historical roots—attested in early texts such as the Book of the Later Han (后汉书) and In Search of the Supernatural (搜神记), which describe Mount Tai's jurisdiction over life and death and the Nai River as a liminal passage for the deceased: the sacred boundaries of pre-Ming Tai'an remained fluid, with temples dedicated to both celestial and chthonic deities spatially intermingled. The construction of the Naihe Bridge during the Ming Dynasty marked a critical juncture in the formalization of this sacred topography. Far from serving merely as useful infrastructure, the bridge was ritually incorporated into Daoist bridge-crossing liturgies (渡桥科仪), wherein priests performed soul-guiding rites to ritually enact the deceased's traversal of the Nai River's mythic boundary.

This paper argues that the stabilization of sacred space hinges on the mutual reinforcement of material structures and ritual performance. The Bridge's ritual function operated on three levels: Physically, the act of bridge-crossing superimposed a processual dimension onto the Nai River's boundary, transforming it into an embodied sacred practice; Through this practice, traversing the bridge was semantically encoded as a "yin-yang transition" (阴阳过渡), rendering the abstract life-death dichotomy sensorially perceptible through corporeal movement; Furthermore, the bridge's construction facilitated the ritual integration of state-sanctioned sacrifices to the Emperor of East Peak (东岳大帝), the bureaucratic deity governing the underworld, thereby sacralizing Tai'an's spatial boundaries. Through the iterative performance of liturgy, the Nai River's erstwhile abstract symbolism was concretized into a legible spatial order, culminating in the crystallization of Tai'an's tripartite sacred structure.

Presenter(s): Ziqi Xuan

Sanctifying the Secular: Domestic Worship Spaces in Urban Chinese Christianity

In urban China, many unofficial Christian gatherings take place in rented apartments, office units, or members' homes. These spaces are not designed for worship, yet through subtle transformations—such as placing a cross on the wall, arranging chairs in a circle, or invoking sacred language—they become temporarily "sanctified." This flash presentation explores how believers engage in the ongoing negotiation of sacredness within secular environments, turning domestic or

commercial interiors into meaningful sites of spiritual encounter. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a Chinese Christian community, I analyze how material arrangements, embodied rituals, and linguistic practices contribute to the construction of sacred space in contexts where official religious infrastructure is limited or unavailable. By tracing these everyday spatial transformations, I consider how faith is not only practiced but spatially imagined, contested, and made present.

Presenter(s): Phenix Lin

Specters of Control: Ghostly Governance and Its Consequences on China's Southwestern Border in the Post-Pandemic Era

This study is based on fieldwork conducted in 2023 in H County on the Sino-Vietnamese border, exploring China's post-pandemic shift towards "border closure" in the southwest and how the state uses the "manufacture of ghosts" to solidify its border governance. Under the guise of preventing the spread of COVID-19 from neighboring Southeast Asian countries, the Chinese government constructed a border wall in Yunnan in 2021. However, this wall is not simply an infrastructural project; it is imbued with political significance, symbolizing the presence of central state power and marking the shift in border governance before and after the pandemic. The term "pandemic" has even become a taboo among border residents, creating an invisible atmosphere of fear. This fear permeates their daily interactions and is continuously reproduced and internalized through institutional mechanisms such as community supervision and border propaganda. The state attempts to use this fear to create "ideological ghosts"-stigmatizing neighboring border residents (even though most of them share common roots with Chinese border residents), provoking nationalist sentiments, reshaping border residents' identities, and erasing the ethnic connections built on cross-border historical memories to push for the "normalization" of the border landscape as envisioned by the state.

At the same time, these ghosts, initially intended to stabilize and differentiate the geographical boundaries, gradually give rise to new ghosts, which exacerbate inequality, ethnic divisions, and rifts within China's border society, further fracturing an already complex border community. While the Chinese government has imposed strict border control measures, local elites, due to their close ties with government officials and their operation of "normalized" businesses, have seen no impact on their profits, even during the three years of complete border closure. In contrast, the markets that ordinary border residents relied on for cross-border trade have been encroached upon and even entirely replaced by local elites, further constricting their livelihoods. The divisions within border society have grown increasingly pronounced due to differences in social capital, and the invisible boundaries have further fragmented the already complex border society.

Despite facing extremely unfavorable policies, this study also acknowledges the efforts of ordinary border residents to navigate and resist the ghosts created by the government. They seek their own "weapons of the weak" from historical memories and experiences, constantly adjusting their strategies and practices. These dynamics not only reveal the "ghost" effects in China's border governance but also demonstrate the resilience and resistance of border residents under strong

state control, offering a more complex and multidimensional understanding of contemporary border governance.

Presenter(s): Gangcheng Xu

The Politics of the Face: Mixed-Race Aesthetics and the Haunting of Postcolonial Legacies in China

In contemporary China, the rise of "mixed-race beauty" in social media, beauty trends, and cosmetic surgery unveils a paradox: while nationalist rhetoric champions cultural self-sufficiency, beauty ideals remain deeply entangled with postcolonial aesthetic hierarchies. This hybridity is not merely an embrace of global beauty standards but a carefully curated vision that privileges Euro-Chinese features while systematically excluding African-Chinese, South Asian-Chinese, and other non-European mixed identities. Such selective hybridity reveals the racial hierarchies embedded in contemporary Chinese beauty culture.

This paper traces the spectral presence of colonial aesthetics in China's evolving beauty standards. While traits like light-colored irises, deep-set eyes, and sharp brows reflect an enduring admiration for Western ideals, others-such as light skin, double eyelids, and high nose bridges-are rooted in historical Chinese aesthetics. Through digital ethnography and interviews with beauty influencers and social media users, I examine how individuals interpret and embody "mixed-race beauty" in everyday beauty practices.

A striking pattern emerges: when asked about "mixed-race" appearances, respondents overwhelmingly associate the term with Euro-Asian heritage, rarely considering African-Asian, South Asian-Asian, or other non-European mixes. This selective vision of hybridity exposes an aesthetic logic that is as much about exclusion as it is about admiration. In China's media and beauty industries, white or "Euro-American" features enjoy heightened visibility and aesthetic privilege. However, unlike countries with deeper colonial histories-such as South Korea, Japan, and Singapore-China's engagement with Eurocentric aesthetics is less a direct legacy of colonial trauma and more a product of globalized cultural imaginaries. Rather than a remnant of colonial occupation, the preference for Eurocentric beauty reflects a modernist narrative that equates Western aesthetics with progress and sophistication.

By treating the face as a political site-where histories of postcolonialism, nationalism, and globalization intersect-I argue that China's "mixed-race beauty" obsession is not merely a beauty trend but a manifestation of deeper anxieties about identity, modernity, and global positioning. Even as China asserts itself as a rising power, the ghosts of its colonial past continue to shape the most intimate markers of self-presentation.

Presenter(s): Yantong Liu

2661 Geopolitical Hauntings: Rethinking Fieldwork and Knowledge Production Under China-US Geopolitics

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Geopolitical tensions between China and the US began escalating with the 2018 trade war and have now reached a point that many scholars have termed a new Cold War. Indeed, nationalist and anti-US sentiments across China have been on the rise, and the trope of "collusion with foreign forces" has been socially and politically legitimized for attacking US-based scholars, local and transnational communities, and grassroots organizations in the name of safeguarding national security. Such highly politicized circumstances have engendered precariousness for not only ethnographic fieldwork in China but also the ethics of knowledge production about China. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these conditions, with increasing surveillance, control, and restrictions imposed on the general public and scholars alike. How have ethnographers of China navigated such geopolitical conditions in recent years? What are some new possibilities for knowledge production in and about China? How can we reimagine ethnographic commitments amid geopolitically precarious times? What theoretical and empirical frameworks and practices can be engendered to decenter and deimperialize both China and the US? What can we learn from the hauntings of the past to reimagine the future of anthropology amidst precarious China-US relations?

This roundtable brings together ethnographers of China who have investigated complex sociopolitical issues-feminist labor politics, ethics of collaboration, elderly care, trans livability, and grassroots activism-while navigating increasingly constrained fieldwork conditions and tightened regulations in China and the US. Drawing on community-based research with a migrant women's collective in South China, Anzi Dong discusses contestations over transborder feminist knowledge production. Katherine Mason will speak to the role of Covid and geopolitical tensions in breaking down budding partnerships in an engaged project on postpartum mental health in Sichuan. Jianmin Shao will reflect upon experiences with trans young adults in China to rethink the politics of fieldwork and the epistemological divides in anthropological knowledge production. Examining how older adults in China navigate uncertainties surrounding aging and mortality amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Fei Yuan will explore how to form meaningful relationships and generate knowledge "with" rather than merely "about" vulnerable communities. Drawing on experiences as both a fieldwork researcher studying grassroots education in China and a socially engaged anthropologist running the public anthropology platform TyingKnots (结绳志), Yukun Zeng will illustrate how state-centered epistemologies shape the anthropology of China. Ultimately, our collective thought experiment aims to reimagine the response-ability of ethnography and anthropology in politically precarious times and stimulate new questions regarding the future of anthropology under contentious China-US geopolitics.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Jianmin Shao, University of Colorado, Boulder

Presenter(s): Anzi Dong, Rice University, Katherine Mason, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Jianmin Shao, University of Colorado, Boulder, Fei Yuan, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Yukun Zeng, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Discussant: Sara Friedman, Indiana University, Bloomington

5106 Specters of Progress

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Many anthropologists have sought to make the world a better place or at least to show that improvement does not require undoing differences. Anthropology has also rigorously questioned what "better" means and tirelessly identified violence in modern, colonial, and anthropological projects of improvement. Wary of blueprints, in the late 20th century anthropologists moved towards critical rather than prescriptive projects. Nevertheless, even at its most critical (the period that Sherry Ortner calls "dark anthropology"), when anthropology tried to cleanse itself of all traces of normativity and focused on clearing space for otherwise, it held on to the idea that this otherwise might be or enable something better. Exposing the failure of efforts to improve the human condition has at times itself been a modality in which the discipline has tried to make way for betterment.

"Specters of Progress" takes anthropology's orientation towards something better, variously understood as progress, development, equality, justice, diversity, decolonization or else, as a baseline generalization (what Marx called the abstract) from which to move towards historically specific and concrete articulations. We invite reflections from a range of ethnographic, theoretical, and cross-disciplinary perspectives on what has become a permanent crisis of anthropology.

Indeed, it seems impossible to articulate what "better" might mean and for whom beyond taking a variety of "anti" stances in relation to ever proliferating forms of violence and domination. Might it be that anthropology has thought itself into a corner, whereby its only two options are: (1) serve as an amplifier of the voices of the marginalized without critical engagement or prescription, or (2) accumulate criticisms of ever-adapting forms of racism, capitalism, colonialism? In other words, are debates about the end of anthropology essentially manifestations of the disappearance of the goal of living better with difference? Or are the specters of progress still with us?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Dace Dzenovska, University of Oxford, Katherine Lemons

Presenter(s): Catherine Fennell, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Muir , Milad Odabaei , Ruben Andersson , Katherine Lemons , Dace Dzenovska, University of Oxford

Discussant: Alpa Shah, University of Oxford

2841 SLA Gumperz Graduate Student Essay Prize Panel

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM through 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel showcases the four finalists for the 2025 John Gumperz Graduate Student Essay Prize, awarded annually by the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. The award honors John Joseph Gumperz (1922–2013), whose pioneering work in the ethnography of communication and language use in social context has inspired generations of linguistic anthropologists. This year's winning papers concern varied topics and geographic contexts, but what they have in common is careful examination of how people work out aspects of their lived experience through linguistic and semiotic practices. What do people accomplish in "talk about talk," or talk about sound, or talk about landscapes and places? Presenters demonstrate how (post)colonial hierarchies are constituted by mutually reinforcing online and offline practices, how people cross semiotic modalities by means other than lexical semantics, how Indigenous sociolinguistic diversity has been understood before and beyond named languages, and how landscape registers and embodied practices of viewing the land become enactments of knowing. They draw on diverse ethnographic contexts, from violin repair shops in New York City and Boston to pueblos in southern Mesoamerica, and from ridges on the Tibetan plateau to TikTok depictions of Cairo.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Kathryn Graber, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kathryn Graber, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Perry Wong, Juliet Glazer, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Marisa Breathwaite, Xiao Schutte Ke, University of Pennsylvania

Discussant: Steven Black, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology, Marybeth Eleanor Nevins, Middlebury College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Linguistic diversity and talking about "language(s)" in Cunén before and/or beyond "Mayan:" Listening in to the earliest recording, today

Central to this essay is a consideration of explicit talk about "language(s)" in and around Cunén, a sociolinguistically diverse municipality in sociolinguistically diverse southern Mesoamerica, before and/or beyond contemporary projects of properly named "Mayan languages." By listening to an interview conducted in K'iche' with a sexagenarian local man in the mid-1960s, and comparing his explicit talk about "language(s)" to what I have learned in Cunén today, triangulated with a range of sources from the region, I sketch out an ideological horizon when encompassing Indigenous sociolinguistic diversity is imagined in terms of orientation to named pueblos but where distinct local "(Mayan) language(s)" is/are generally not properly named. Throughout, I explore certain facets of linguistic structure/ideology dialectics as they bear on this case of metalinguistic practice as intersects with histories of symbolic diversification.

Presenter(s): Perry Wong

Talking about Sound: Conversation as a Tool for Timbre

Anthropologists and music scholars who research communication about tone or timbre tend to focus on lexical semantics. Timbre lexicons often include cross-modal metaphors such as "warm," "metallic," and "clean" (Harkness 2017; 2013). Scholars note that these lexicons pose problems of vagueness (Barthes 1978; Dudley 2014). For example, "metallic" may refer to a range of timbres, and one person's notion of a "metallic" sound may not match another's. I demonstrate an alternative approach to analyzing timbre by listening beyond lexical semantics (Carruthers 2023). Instead, I observe how people communicate about timbre in practice through extended conversations and non-linguistic interactions. I examine strategies used by New York City and Boston-based violin repairers (also called luthiers) when they collaborate with violinists to alter instrumental acoustics during "sound adjustment sessions." Such sessions are opportunities for luthiers to physically adjust violins to improve their timbres. Luthiers begin by eliciting musicians' descriptions of desired timbres, then work to make them sensorially real through an iterative and improvisational practice of testing, listening, talking, and adjusting. I build on Porcello's typology of metapragmatic strategies for talking about sound (2004; 1994) to show that luthiers co-create violin sound with musicians through strategies for communicating about timbre that unfold not only through lexical semantics, but also through metapragmatics.

Presenter(s): Juliet Glazer

"Egypt" vs. "Masr" (مصر): The Semiotic Making of Two "Egyptys" on TikTok

In this paper, I analyze, via the popular "Egypt vs. Masr" TikTok format, what I take as the semiotic process and ideological work (Gal and Irvine, 2019) of rendering "two Egyptys"—a "colonial recursion" (Reyes, 2017) where "Egypt" and "Masr" are differentiated by contrasting sets of linguistic and non-linguistic signs whose complex sign relations are in constant, relational making and remaking of one another. I approach how semiotic processes as ideological work forge the co-constitution of "two Egyptys" as "things in the world" that are engaged by both a virtual public in TikTok comments and an offline public. In the Cairo of today, rapid commercial and administrative upscaling, increased securitization and surveillance, and the attendant displacement of the city's urban poor takes place concomitantly with the relocation of the city's elites en masse into the upscale suburbs of the city's eastern and western edges, constituting the economic, political and spatial (re)organization that dialectically (re)produce these "two Egyptys." Through the semiotic analysis of a popular format of TikTok, I take a rigorous theoretical approach to the ideological work that undergirds an enduring colonial hierarchy and ongoing urban spatial transformations in the Egyptian postcolony.

Presenter(s): Marisa Breathwaite

"View the Land and View the Area!": Landscape Registers and Terrain Viewing Acts in Amdo Tibet

In this paper, I explore a few complementary ways of viewing, segmenting, and talking about the Tibetan plateau landscape for plateau residents. I look at how Amdo Tibetan (agro)pastoralists describe and characterize their terrain, trekking the terrain through specific social pathways. By

invoking "viewing" the terrain, I draw on Tibetan metapragmatic description for this activity (ལྟ་བུ་ lta ba), as well as the verb's connotations of contemplation, visual discernment or even analysis. I demonstrate my textual, fieldwork-based, and collaborative trajectory of learning to view the terrain from Indigenous Tibetan friends and consultants. I emphasize acts of viewing, through which — and only through which — Tibetan landscape registers become descriptively true to their speakers. I argue that these registers and acts of viewing are further sedimented in certain bodily habits of viewing the plateau landscape, channeling subjects' mobilities as well as pathways across the plateau. Through the metapragmatics of many (agro-)pastoralists, this total lifestyle and its familiar pathways constitute (agro-)pastoral competence as well as an evaluative matrix for different degrees of Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjectivity under colonial conditions.

Presenter(s): Xiao Schutte Ke

Discussion

3996 The Promises and Perils of Unity in Christianity, Islam, and their Anthropologies

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Christianity and Islam, two of the world's most expansive religions, are haunted by unity in multiple ways. Despite their vast internal diversity, both traditions are marked by assertions of oneness: the oneness of God, the unity of their respective faith communities, and shared genealogies rooted in monotheistic biblical traditions. While it is true that anthropologists have grappled with this tension between oneness and variation, their efforts in this regard can be found mostly in their work to define an object to encompass the theological, social, and ritual variety encountered across continents. First, the anthropology of Islam coalesced initially around a sense of Islam as a "discursive tradition" (Asad 1986). Then later, the anthropology of Christianity, despite eschewing an Asadian line, similarly asserted that Christianity was an entity whose practices could be explored comparatively across space and time. Since these first unifying moves, however, both subfields have largely avoided engaging with actual discourses of Christian or Muslim unity.

This elision can be partly explained. For anthropologists, claims to unity often seem less compelling because they paper over divergence and invite accusations of essentialism. Thus, in the anthropology of Protestantism, for example, we have seen an expressive focus on discontinuity and schism, while anthropologists of Catholicism have repeatedly deployed a Schmittian description of Catholicism as a *Complexio Oppositorum*, a complex of opposites, despite "unity" being a key Catholic category. Meanwhile, scholars of Islam have consistently interrogated notions of unity and continuity, whether associated with Asad's framework or with invocations of the global Muslim community, the ummah, noting that both risk obscuring how Muslims variously interpret, contest, or disregard authoritative texts, practices, and institutions.

Drawing on analyses of Christianity and Islam, this panel aims to address the promises and perils of unity more directly. We explore unity as both a theological and social construct, focusing on how claims to "oneness"-whether of God, community, or tradition-are lived out, contested, and enacted. We ask: how do theological concepts like the oneness of God inform broader discourses of religious and political unity? How are these claims to unity mobilized in response to disunity, both within and outside religious communities? And what might an analysis of these two unities, shaped by shared prophetic traditions, theological exchanges, and histories of coexistence and conflict, offer to our understanding of organizing life in the modern world?

Our panelists address these questions, offering valuable insights into the traditions they study, and even into our current political moment. We think our critical engagements with unity can help us think even beyond religion-and especially about solidarity and political action-without reinvoking troubling universalisms.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Ashley Lebner, Wilfrid Laurier University, Mahiye Secil Dagtas, University of Waterloo

Chair: Emrah Yildiz, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Mahiye Secil Dagtas, University of Waterloo, Yunus Doğan Telliel, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, William Calvo-Quiros, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ashley Lebner, Wilfrid Laurier University

Discussant: Elayne Oliphant, New York University, Noah Salomon, University of Virginia

Presentation(s): "Servants of the Same God": The Vernaculars of Unity and Difference in Southern Turkey

This paper examines how the Islamic principle of *tawḥīd* (oneness of God) and broader discourses of religious unity are lived, invoked, and fractured in the historically plural city of Antakya, near Turkey's southern border. Drawing on over a decade of ethnographic research, I explore how Muslim and Christian minority communities engage figures such as al-Khidr and the Antakyan saint Habibi Neccar to negotiate esoteric authority, cross-religious genealogies, and shared sacred landscapes. These encounters often index a unifying divine principle or a capacious spiritual community, yet they rarely erase doctrinal or social distinctions. Instead, unity is refracted through everyday acts of differentiation: gendered ritual authority, informal conversions, and patterned silences between unevenly positioned religious groups. Such practices enact a form of oneness that reveals itself in layered, relational ways rather than through universalist sameness. By tracing how political and theological claims to unity persist amid disunity, this paper contributes to emerging conversations about religious cohabitation and minority politics in contexts where Islam and Christianity are not distinct traditions, but terrains of historical intimacy and rupture.

Presenter(s): Mahiye Secil Dagtas

The Idea of a Nonsecular/Nonreligious Anthropology of Islam: The Contextual, the Extracontextual, and the Metacontextual

The academic exploration of Islam within anthropology is often expected to choose between non-secular and non-religious analytics. Focusing on the Muslim engagement with the Qur'an, this paper repositions anthropological inquiry beyond this dichotomy. I argue that the interplay between the contextual and the extracontextual is always mediated by metacontextual practices among Muslims. Conventional understandings of Islamic unity, often assumed to stem from an extracontextual adherence to the Qur'an and other scriptures, and Islamic diversity, usually attributed to contextual reinterpretations, overlook this metacontext. Drawing attention to this missing theoretical element, the paper challenges the assumption that the contextual is a phenomenological-cultural given and the extracontextual is a textual-theological given. While central to the linking of these two elements, the metacontextual—I argue—is always elusive and never fully contextualized. This quality of the metacontextual (the indeterminate context of context) opens up a new horizon for the anthropology of Islam to craft an analytic that is neither secular nor religious.

Presenter(s): Yunus Doğan Telliel

The Focolare Movement: Chiara Lubich's Vocation to Unity

The Focolare Movement was founded in 1943 in Trento, Italy, by Chiara Lubich and her friends during World War II. Seeking an ideal worth living for amid the turmoil, they found their answer in God. Unlike traditional religious orders, they embraced their faith as laypeople, forming intentional communities known as focolares. This group grew to become one of the most significant lay movements within the Catholic Church, fostering ecumenical dialogue among various Christian denominations and with other religions, including Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. The Focolare Movement offers valuable perspectives on how the Catholic Church addressed the secularization of nation-states in the 20th century.

Chiara articulated the movement's mission as striving for a United World, resonating with the Gospel's call for unity, "They will all be one" (John 17:21-23). This paper explores how Chiara and her companions deepened their understanding of unity—from the nature of God's love to its role as a unifying force for all people and creation. She viewed even Jesus' abandonment on the cross as a pivotal moment to rebuild connections between God and humanity and within society. By promoting unity through a trinitarian model, Chiara engaged with diverse groups, reshaped the Catholic Church, and impacted Vatican II. Today, Focolarini actively advocate for peace and unity globally, whether among indigenous communities in the Amazon or institutions like the United Nations and Wall Street.

Presenter(s): William Calvo-Quiros

The Cry and the Silence of Unity: Liberationist Legacies in Southeast Pará, Brazil

This paper draws from my forthcoming book, which charts how a will to unity and a sense of its precarity, what I call "the mystic of friendship," has been shaped by multiple Catholic theologies and has animated the colonization of a Brazilian Amazonian highway. I focus here on the legacy of one theology mobilized along the highway, Liberation Theology, whose intense focus on unity

echoes as much in today's mystic of friendship, as it has helped shape a simultaneous embrace and rejection of politics among settlers.

I make this argument through an analysis of images that were published in a liberationist newsletter produced by clergy along the highway from 1980. Through these images, especially of crucified individual peasants and of unified peasant collectives retaliating against oppressors, the newsletter promoted a politics of fraternal unity that radicalized post-Vatican II theology. Yet I demonstrate that these images, and liberationism more generally, despite promoting unity, allowed older allegorical associations among disunity, evil, and the devil to persist. In short, liberationism helped divinize friendship, while (an always divisive) politics remained potentially diabolical. I conclude that a theology—or a theologically-attentive anthropology—aiming to support political transformations over time must be able to articulate how differences are integral to unity. Otherwise, both make unity vulnerable to division and its allegories.

Presenter(s): Ashley Lebner

Discussion

6389 Changing Landscapes: Community-Engaged Participatory Methods in Environmental Research

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Environmental and academic landscapes alike are changing rapidly, creating a growing sense of uncertainty. Will the environments we study, along with anthropology itself, become mere ghosts of their former selves in the future? In this panel, we invite participants to imagine such a future and consider the potential and various ways in which participatory methods can help anthropologists, practitioners, and communities alike navigate and address these unique challenges. Community-based and participatory methods are central to anthropological thinking and practice- now more than ever- as they allow us to identify a community's most pressing social and environmental challenges on a relatively short time scale (Radonic et al. 2023), making the most of limited financial resources.

This panel brings together a diverse group of scholars whose work applies innovative participatory methods to a range of environmental subjects, including water insecurity, toxic environments, disaster response, food systems, energy justice, and climate change, to discuss why participatory methods are more critical now than ever before, as well as what new challenges participatory methods are likely to face in this uncertain future. We ask: 1) How can participatory methods enhance anthropology's potential to tackle contemporary environmental challenges?, 2) How might participatory methods serve as a means of resistance within systems that abandon environmental rights and protections?, 3) Which methods may be most useful and in what ways?,

and 4) What specific challenges are participatory efforts expected to face and how can we navigate them to continue pursuing equitable and inclusive environmental futures? This panel aims to answer both the philosophical questions of how and why this work should be done, and to identify some concrete means by which to do it, with panelists drawing on their experiences using a variety of innovative participatory methods to identify and address community needs.

Radonic, Lucero, Cara Jacob, Rowenn Kalman, and E. Yvonne Lewis. 2023. "It's a Sprint, Not a Marathon: A Case for Building Short-Term Partnerships for Community-Based Participatory Research." *Qualitative Research* 23 (2): 380–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211029477>.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Cara Jacob, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Oswaldo Medina-Ramírez

Presenter(s): Laura Castro-Díaz, Elisabeth Ilboudo Nebie, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Carolina De Oliveira Jordao, Arizona State University, Patrick Thomson, Charlayne Mitchell, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Margaret du Bray

3691 Political Subjectivities in a Time of Ontological Threats, Trauma, and Social Turmoil

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

At a time of extraordinary political turmoil and violence, this session probes the way people cope with ontological threats, interpret the personal meanings of political rhetoric, deal with psychic tensions and conflicts fed by collective and individual trauma, and experience collective protests. These papers implicitly or explicitly distinguish subjectivity from the kind of subjectification that is a legacy of an early Foucauldian conception of power as discursive formations that render people governable subjects. Instead, these person-centered accounts explore personal shifts, meaning making, and coping strategies as shaped by unconscious as well as conscious processes and unique life experiences in settings of changing power structures, clashing discourses, and social connections or disconnections. Cases examined include US voters' ways of interpreting immigration and social welfare policies and the current administration of President Trump; affective solidarity among Haitian and Mauritanian refugees and asylum seekers in the American Midwest; the emergence of political awareness among adolescents in the US-Mexico border zone in the context of symbolic and physical violence from peers and politicians; the appeal of radical ideologies of utopian justice; the intergenerational guilt of a Spanish man; and the sensorial experiences of Israelis demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu's conduct of the Gaza war. These are interpreted with theories that include critical phenomenological, feminist, and psychodynamic approaches to bodily orientations and socioemotional atmospheres defined by

political ethos (Jenkins 1991, 2015, forthcoming), theories of cognitive compartmentalization and integration (Strauss 2004, 2012), problematizing embodiment and sensorial experience (Csordas 1990), moral and cultural critique (Keane 2020), and a hauntological analysis of the impossibility of perfect justice. This panel showcases differing ways psychological anthropologists are contributing to a deeper understanding of this perilous moment.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Claudia Strauss, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department, Janis Jenkins, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Janis Jenkins, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Janis Jenkins, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Bridget Haas, Case Western Reserve University, Claudia Strauss, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department, Sadeq Rahimi, Harvard Medical School, Yehuda Goodman

Presentation(s): Political Subjectivity as Orientation and Atmosphere

Political subjectivity is of growing interest within psychological and medical anthropology. In this paper, I argue that within any political ethos the constitution of political subjectivity takes place at the nexus of orientation and atmosphere. In this formulation, orientation defines subjectivity's intentional directionality in terms of value and desire (Ahmed 2006), while atmosphere defines the socioemotional space in which that orientation takes place in terms of power and position. I demonstrate this through research that utilizes an ethnographic, phenomenological and psychodynamic approach for a study with adolescents in the US-Mexico border zone. The political subjectivity of these students is constituted by an orientation toward personal relations and ethnic identity in an atmosphere defined by being students in a "fight school" and in a community where there is constant jeopardy of deportation by immigration authorities. I conclude with the suggestion that fleshing out processes of self, will, and development/socialization at the nexus of orientation and atmosphere offers a means for advancing the theorization of political subjectivity within psychological/medical anthropology and allied fields.

Presenter(s): Janis Jenkins

Encountering Hostility: Shared Affectivity and Emergent Political Subjectivities among Migrants in Trump's America

The heightened immigration enforcement policies of the Trump Administration, alongside widespread racist and xenophobic rhetoric, have created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety within which migrants in the United States—particularly those with precarious legal status—must navigate their everyday lives. Drawing on ethnographic work with Haitian and Mauritanian migrants in the American Midwest, this paper explores the quotidian strategies, both visible and invisible, that these migrants enact as they encounter and maneuver through this hostile landscape. The paper frames emotions and affect—personal and collective—as central to lived experience and as key social and cultural forces that underpin the formation of subjectivities in this context. While recognizing the ways in which the state production of fear and anxiety may inhibit social action and curtail migrants' sense of belonging, this paper focuses instead on the ways in which this political

atmosphere simultaneously catalyzes forms of affective solidarity among these migrants, generating new sociopolitical relations and subjectivities. Ultimately, this paper emphasizes the centrality of affect in theorizing political agency and subjectivity and underscores the irreducibility of people to any fixed identity or subject position, including the figuration of "migrant" or "refugee."

Presenter(s): Bridget Haas

Making Sense of US Public Opinion About Immigration, Social Welfare, and the Trump Administration

In 2000 and 2005 I interviewed a diverse array of North Carolinians about immigration policies and government social welfare programs. I found that few were ideologically consistent. Instead, they constructed opinions on these topics from mixtures of conventional discourses and schemas across the political spectrum. Some of these elements were processed more deeply than others (Strauss 2012). Since that time, political polarization has increased in the US, and immigration policies and government social welfare programs have become more controversial. The paper presents the results of preliminary research with economically, racially, and ethnically diverse Americans about immigration, social welfare policies, and the Trump administration. I will examine the conventional discourses and schemas my participants draw upon now and whether my previous finding of lack of ideological consistency continues.

Presenter(s): Claudia Strauss

Hauntology and Political Subjectivity: Rethinking Power and Meaning with Absence

I have conceptualized political subjectivity as the entanglement of subjectivity with systems of power, meaning, and history. Subjectivity in this sense emerges through collective structures that define and constrain identity, agency, and experience. This paper aims to refine that conceptualization by integrating hauntology as a fundamental dimension of political subjectivity. I argue that subjectivity is conditioned by spectral forces – invisible absences, erased possibilities, silenced desires and unresolved pasts that actively shape the present. The political subject is therefore not only embedded in contemporary structures, but haunted by what those structures exclude – lost futures, foreclosed desires, and histories that persist as silent yet influential forces. Political subjectivity must therefore be understood as both a structured formation and a haunted condition, shaped by the tensions between presence and absence, between what is and what could have been. Rereading political subjectivity through hauntology offers a sharper lens to examine how power, meaning, and history remain haunted by the ghosts of silenced voices. This theoretical framework will be grounded in the case study of Álvaro, a Spanish man whose psychic struggles, rooted in intergenerational guilt, historical silence, and inherited complicity, offer a vivid illustration of how spectral histories and erased narratives become entangled with the sense of self and lived experience.

Presenter(s): Sadeq Rahimi

The Work of Protest: Experiencing the Body, Communitas, and Moral Spectacles in Political Demonstrations

Based on participant observations, I reflect on sensorial experiences, feelings, and thoughts that arose in my and others' bodies in more than two years of demonstrations against Prime Minister Netanyahu and the government in Israel-Palestine. I explore how participants' bodies express, challenge, and form alternatives to the war's traumatic effects and the refusal of the Israeli government to strike a deal with Hamas, return the hostages, and end the war. Protestors' sensorial experiences are embedded in their seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, dancing, chanting, and moving bodies. Some senses take a leading role, especially seeing and creating materials and bodies to be watched and invoking and listening to voices, noises, and moral explorations and debates. Organizers, the police, rivals, and politicians try to impact participants' bodies, and participants respond and create their own interacting individual and collective bodies. I follow a critical and pragmatic psychological anthropology that questions how bodies act not just as "black boxes" or transparent sites of pre-given bio-psycho effects of given political and social powers and shared meanings and symbols. Instead, I explore how politics resonates in participants' diverse bodies and how various participants respond with experiences, feelings, interactions, and movements in the urban and other spaces, actively shaping new political awareness, forms, and meanings.

Presenter(s): Yehuda Goodman

4051 An Ethic of the Ghostly Bureaucracy: Rethinking the Paralysis Care Apparatus in an LA County Hospital

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

People with disabilities are often placed within structures that serve to collapse their personhood into digestible objects for biomedical consumption (Fein 2020). This can result in instances such as that described by Nancy Mairs (2008, 4), who is confronted by her doctor about neither getting pregnant nor taking birth control, noting that he "did not, of course, suggest how I was to accomplish the former without resorting to the latter." Such "veiled judgments" pervade the lives of women with cerebral palsy (Mairs 2008, 7). While the anthropology of bureaucracy has shown that such bureaucratic structures are often laden with paradoxes (Fleming et al. 2021) and instances of institutional obstruction (Mulligan 2017), it is clear that people with disabilities can often experience a "whittling away" of disability rights much more easily (Davis 2002, 2). Bureaucratic detachment can also result in various forms of abandonment. Furthermore, the bifurcated nature of bureaucracy creates moments of policy invisibility that this session refers to as "ghostly," as it continuously and selectively obscures various goals and metrics.

This session brings together a team of anthropologists investigating the various programs and care infrastructures at one large paralysis rehabilitation hospital in Los Angeles County. The ghostly

bureaucracy is brought into full relief as we discuss the dynamics and tensions that emerge between different programs as administrators and medical professionals attempt to deliver the best care for their patients. The team focused on the entire paralysis care apparatus there, drawing our attention to issues such as community integration, overall well-being, mental health, care/giving and rehabilitation, bowel and bladder management, and community violence prevention.

By focusing on the care apparatus, this team-based approach to ethnography will illustrate moments where the ghostly bureaucracy shifts and bends, and the effects of these transitions on patients and staff alike. While seemingly arbitrary, the disaggregated nature of bureaucracy means that different organizations within it can act consonantly within those specific duties that fall under their purview. However, across agencies, they may act in mutually contradictory ways, simultaneously aiding and harming certain individuals (Gupta 2012, 24). Tess Lea's *Wild Policy* (2020) has illustrated how these kinds of bureaucratic rationales can create invisibility and abandonment for those left to navigate them. The goals of this session are to:

- Highlight the workings (and nature) of the entire rehabilitation care apparatus;
- Illuminate the ethics of care at play at a large rehabilitation hospital from a multi-disciplinary (and multi-sited) perspective; and
- Provide guidance on a holistic team-based approach to ethnography.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: William Lucas, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Anthropology Department

Chair: William Lucas, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Gabriela Rodriguez Delgado, Taylor Galuppi, William Lucas, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Anthropology Department, Ingrid Panameno

Discussant: Narelle Warren, Monash University

Presentation(s): Rooted in Absence: Community Gardens as Spaces of Holistic Healing for Physical Rehabilitation

This research examines community gardens as holistic interventions for marginalized communities facing interconnected health challenges, focusing on a rehabilitation center's restorative garden in LA County. Communities disproportionately impacted by economic inequality, health disparities, and environmental injustice live in adverse syndemic conditions that reinforce negative health outcomes and inhibit social support systems. Community gardens emerge as multifaceted healing spaces that address these complex challenges by fostering social interdependence, preserving cultural identity through food systems, and creating supportive environments for mental wellness and physical rehabilitation. This study uses ethnographic fieldwork to explore how community gardens provide healing through inclusive health practices for those with paralysis or mobility impairments. Drawing from frameworks in critical disability studies that question normative assumptions about bodies, minds, and capabilities, this work strengthens the foundation for understanding the inclusion of community-based solutions in disability care programs. Community

gardens serve as therapeutic landscapes and resistance sites where marginalized individuals reclaim agency over their bodies, health narratives, and food systems under bureaucratic environments that have historically limited patients' self-determination. These spaces address the whole health of unseen communities while dismantling barriers to participation.

Presenter(s): Gabriela Rodriguez Delgado

Dispelling the phantasm of independence: A qualitative study on agency in rehabilitative care

Becoming disabled later in life changes not only daily activities, but one's agency. Between in-patient, home, or peer and community led care, how can one mitigate the internal dilemma of chasing the ghost of their able-bodied self; learning new goals and asserting their power in a world that infantilizes and pushes aside the nonstandard? Taking from prior works in medical anthropology and disability studies that highlight anticolonial scholarship when discussing interdependency, and the need to decompartmentalize care from the current care-giver/care-receiver dichotomy, this paper aims to critique commonplace care networks versus more holistic systems. Relying on interviews, focus groups, and participant observation with patients and caregivers at a large rehabilitation hospital in Los Angeles, I detail the benefits of patient-led care, along with highlighting areas where it already takes place. In doing this, my research will call attention to pathways that others can follow in the endeavor to not only thrive while disabled, but to reintegrate into their communities using the concept of interdependence to revive the agency able-bodied society erroneously attributes to living wholly self-sufficient.

Presenter(s): Taylor Galuppi

Paralysis Patients and Biomedical Technoscience: An Ethnographic Oral History Project

This paper is based on oral history, archival, and ethnographic data focused on the relationship between paralysis patients and supportive technologies. This paper takes an approach that centers the process of biomedicalization - the reciprocal transformation of people and technology often mediated by salient cultural signals - which best explores the entire care assemblage implicated within highly institutionalized and bureaucratized settings. Drawing on case studies from diverse paralyzed patients at a rehabilitation hospital in Los Angeles County, this paper explores the techno-personal relationships at play and how various standards (professional, technological, interpersonal, and cultural) shape experience. This paper engages with intersectionality, showing that gender, race, and age are salient factors due to how these broad categories engage disabled personhood in very different ways. Exploring issues of trauma, discrimination, and social abandonment, findings from this study help suggest novel approaches to rehabilitative care that are more interdependent and less institutional.

Presenter(s): William Lucas

Living with Disability: Relationships, Coping, and Community at a National Rehabilitation Hospital

This research investigates how people with disabilities build relationships, cope with challenges, and find support, and how care systems often fall short, particularly when individuals face

intersecting issues like housing insecurity and substance abuse. Through ethnographic research at a national rehabilitation hospital in Los Angeles County, this paper interrogates bureaucratic healthcare spaces and their ability to accommodate the full complexity of disabled lives. To understand these care gaps, I draw on critical medical anthropology and critical disability studies to explore the sociocultural dimensions of illness and disability. Using participant observation and semi-structured interviews with staff, patients, and family members, this investigation reveals how patients, caregivers, and staff navigate extra-institutional systems shaped by policy, inequality, and often ableist social norms. Rather than viewing disability solely as a clinical category, this research emphasizes its social and relational dimensions, especially as many patients develop deep bonds, friendships, romantic relationships, and improvised mutual support systems that help them cope with trauma and marginalization. These connections are revealed through ethnographic moments showing that healing is not only physical, but also emotional and communal.

Presenter(s): Ingrid Panameno

Discussion

3641 Spectral Beings: The Ghosts of Plants Past, Present, and Future in Virginia Nazarea's Botanical Lifeworlds

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Anthropological engagements with plant-human relations have long demonstrated the centrality of plants to world-making projects. As biological allies of empire, settler colonialism, and plantation economies, plants have shaped the contours of land, labor, and law. As kin, they have nourished bodies, linked generations, and carried cultural memory across time and space. Their materiality is undeniable; they are cultivated, consumed, regulated, and resisted. Yet, plants also dwell in the spectral. They haunt and are haunted, embodying loss, longing, and the enduring presence of past relations.

This roundtable honors the work of Virginia Nazarea, whose scholarship has traced the entanglements of plants, people, and memory with striking ethnographic depth. Across decades, her work has prefigured and shaped key movements in anthropology, including the species turn, plant turn, and ontological turn. In doing so, she has drawn attention to plants not only as ecological and economic actors but as spectral beings: carriers of histories, kinships, and futures otherwise foreclosed.

Nazarea's work reveals how plants, much like ghosts of loved ones, refuse to disappear. The dizzying variety of cultivars she documents are refracted spectra of human-plant relations. In her writing, plants are living testaments to adaptation, resilience, and reciprocity. They bring longed-for places and peoples into the present through taste, smell, and embodied practice. Their ghostly presence unsettles the forced forgetting of industrial agriculture, buffering against epistemic and

ecological erasure. If dominant narratives of agricultural modernization center loss, Nazarea's work insists on recuperation. It points to the spectral as not only haunting but generative.

Bringing together mentees, colleagues, and scholars influenced by Nazarea's work, this roundtable explores how plants orient us in the world and seed possibilities for lifeways otherwise. How does memory sustain the botanical lifeworlds she so carefully documented? How do plants carry forward human and more-than-human histories, making themselves felt in kitchens, gardens, and diasporic homes? How might we, following her legacy, remain attuned to the spectral presences that shape our shared futures?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Susannah Chapman, University College Cork, Terese Gagnon, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jenna Andrews-Swann, Emily Ramsey, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Guntra Aistara, Susannah Chapman, University College Cork, Terese Gagnon, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Molly Doane, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Tessa Desmond, Princeton University

Discussant: Tracey Heatherington, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

1544 Engaging the 20th Anniversary of Katrina in the Spirit of Critique (and with soul(s))

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

This roundtable is inspired by our recent collaboration on the 25th anniversary issue of the Black Studies Journal, *Souls*. The central theme of the issue -- Divest/Invest -- has guided our analysis of what it means to memorialize Hurricane Katrina twenty years after the storm. Thinking with this year's AAA theme, we consider the ways in which the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina serves as an opportunity to refuse romantic tales of haunting while allowing ourselves to be possessed by the ghosts of scholars, interlocutors, and struggles past who already told us what time it is. Refusing a reading that renders the man-made disaster and racial violence of Katrina as singular or exceptional, we engage the two decades of material and political change in the region since as dialectical processes constitutive of ongoing local and global struggles through which racial capitalist hegemony revolutionizes. The accumulation of and attendance to political and material crises in these years open on to a historical conjuncture that reveals the dynamic entanglements between late neoliberal multiculturalism and the acceleration of (a more overt and centralized) natalist/techno authoritarianism. What can the shifts in political ecologies and political economies (capital and social investment/divestments) and forms of organized resistance and everyday inhabitation of this region tell us about the struggles of today? By engaging the radical traditions that place the Gulf South in relation to the Global South, we take up the intellectual works of W.E.B. Du Bois, Manning Marable, Walter Rodney and Clyde Woods to frame "post-Katrina" as a site

to elaborate anti-imperialist and anticapitalist critique.

Organizer: Shreya Subramani, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Kaya Williams

Presenter(s): Christien Tompkins, Shreya Subramani, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Kaya Williams, Adrienne Dixson, Jarrett Drake

Discussant: Jafari Sinclair Allen

5065 Living at the Edge of Vanishing Present: Anthropological Reflections on Haunting and Precarious Ecologies

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how precarious ecologies-destabilized by extraction, climate change, militarization, economic diversification, and ethnic conflict-engender temporalities marked by suspension, erosion, fear, and haunting. In such contexts, communities live in what might be called a "vanishing present" (Gallop 2011), where futures are deferred and the past returns not as continuity, but as ghosts. These conditions abandon certain human and non-human lives to death, generating zones where sovereignty itself appears spectral, fragile, and contested.

Drawing on ethnographic investigations from diverse ecological frontiers (Tsing 2003), panelists examine how people live with and against these exceptional temporalities. Following Nugent and Suhail's (2024) notion of "cultures of extinction" and their framing of sacropolitics-where communities are compelled to transform in order to survive-panelists reconsider the political stakes of ecological precarity and the role of anthropology in understanding and unsettling these transformations.

The panel asks: How do communities inhabit and make sense of environments where futures are foreclosed or indefinitely deferred? In what ways do ghosts-whether as memories of the dispossessed, traces of destroyed landscapes, or infrastructures-shape contemporary struggles over land, resources, and belonging? What everyday practices of transformation do people adopt to forge belonging or build new social orders in contexts of loss and exposure?

Panelists offer ethnographic insights from across geographies. One examines how internally displaced Pashtun women in Pakistan inhabit a vanishing present while resisting the crisis imaginary that frames the frontier as a site of cultural extinction. Another explores "Maasainess" in contemporary Kenya through economic diversification strategies, revealing how conservation, land titling, and development reshape identity and territorial claims. A third paper follows the figure of the "zombie fish" - invasive species thriving in warming Arctic waters-to theorize multispecies life and extinction in the Deatnu river system. Another panelist reflects on the Santhal Adivasis of eastern India, whose participation in resource extraction involves bargaining with death, as they are drawn into precarious economies of sacrifice. Finally, a paper from Cotabambas, Peru rethinks

mining's bodily impacts-not through linear toxicologies but through the embodied, multispecies experiences of exposure and resistance.

Rather than framing spectral presences solely as losses to be mourned, the panel considers how haunting reveals alternative ways of living, knowing, and contesting dispossession. Attentive to the interplay between the political, material, and spectral, contributors ask how anthropology might engage ghosts not as residues of the past, but as active agents that unsettle dominant frameworks of governance, sovereignty, value, and knowledge.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: ROSHNI CHATTOPADHYAY

Chair: ROSHNI CHATTOPADHYAY

Presenter(s): Jennifer Coffman, James Madison University, Zainab Najeeb, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, ROSHNI CHATTOPADHYAY, Annikki Herranen-Tabibi, Harvard Medical School, Adela Zhang

Discussant: Jennifer Coffman, James Madison University

Presentation(s): Metal Fences, Concretized Discourse, Shifting Properties: Haunting Ideals of Maasai Pastoralist Mobility in Contemporary Kenya

Rural, self-identifying Maasai living in formerly predominantly pastoralist communities in Kajiado County, Kenya, are adapting to land division and restricted mobility in a variety of ways. Through a case study based on the disaggregation of a group ranch, this paper examines economic practices and justifications, as well as ties to the past, as people respond to shrinking average per capita landholdings and growing financial pressures and desires. Some are selling newly titled parcels to the highest bidders, some are hoarding land and increasingly becoming culturally isolationist, and some are actively promoting and participating in new conservancies and embracing, at least somewhat, a form of green governance. These various economic diversification strategies speak to the pressures of the three interrelated forces of conservation, economic diversification, and land titling, which are overlain with haunting ideas of what it is to claim Maasainess in contemporary Kenya. Political ecology provides a guiding framework to analyze the articulation of local and global forces; the emergence of new forms of political agency; the evolution of identities tethered to constructs of authenticity; the production of knowledge; and the evaluation of resistance, attempts to theorize nature, and discourses of development (Robbins, 2020; Brosius 1999).

Presenter(s): Jennifer Coffman

Crisis as Chronology: Feminist Ethnography from Pakistan's Frontier

This paper examines how internally displaced Pashtun women from Pakistan's former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) inhabit what might be described as a "vanishing present"—a suspended temporal and political condition forged through decades of militarization, frontier exceptionalism, and state neglect. Based on long-term ethnographic and digital fieldwork in the urban centers of Peshawar and Islamabad, this research explores how crisis in Pakistan's frontier regions operates not as a discrete event but as a governing condition. Drawing on Masco's (2017)

notion of "crisis talk" and theories of suspended temporality (Roitman 2014), I analyze how the state frames regions like FATA as perpetual sites of emergency—zones where the future is always deferred and survival is valorized over political inclusion or mobility.

Pashtun women, already marginalized at the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and geography, navigate this vanishing present by refusing state pressure to return "home," and by pursuing higher education, and participating in digital activism. These quiet but strategic actions challenge the crisis imaginary that renders the frontier as a space of cultural extinction and social stasis. Instead, they reframe displacement as a site of transformation—where political agency is practiced not only through protest, but through presence, persistence, and refusal.

Presenter(s): Zainab Najeeb

Between Death and Dying: Adivasi Self-Making in the Vanishing Present of a Resource Frontier in West Bengal, India

This paper explores the entanglements of death, dying, and self-making among Adivasis/indigenous people living in a resource frontier in West Bengal, India. Set against the backdrop of ecological degradation, land dispossession, and the expansion of extractive economies on Adivasi land, the paper examines how Santhal communities navigate the blurred line between life and death—not only as a biological process but as a political and existential condition. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork of an accidental death in the quarries and how customary mediators mediate death as way to restore the order of Capital in the region, this paper highlights how Adivasi practices of dispute mediation produce alternative temporalities and forms of personhood amid the structural violence of the present. The paper asks: What does it mean to live when the future is foreclosed, and how do practices of dying become central to the making of political selves? This inquiry illuminates the vanishing present as both a temporal register and a condition of possibility for Adivasi life.

Presenter(s): ROSHNI CHATTOPADHYAY

Zombie fish: ecosocial future-making at the edges of repair

In Deanuleahki – an Arctic river valley in Sápmi, the transborder Indigenous Sámi homeland – the intergenerational practice of salmon fishing is in flux amidst the decline of Atlantic salmon stocks, their accelerating replacement with high-risk invasive species, and stringent state regulation of traditional and subsistence fishing. In the local striving to reclaim and remake knowledge systems, kin relations, and distributive practices surrounding subsistence fishing and the fluvial ecosystem, quotidian practices intergenerational and interspecies care collide with the planetary process of cryosphere collapse.

In this ethnographic essay, I examine the irruption, into the Deatnu river system, of invasive species that thrive in rapidly warming Arctic waterscapes. I particularly trace it through the figure of the "zombie fish." The humpback salmon biannually rush the river by the hundreds of thousands, slowly decomposing while still alive. Upon its death, it fills the shorelines with decaying fish to be buried to

contain the threat of contamination. I interrogate local efforts to catch and bury the undead humpback en masse, and the narrowly permitted application therein of previously banned traditional fishing methods. In these efforts, the striving to reclaim fishing livelihoods and the attendant collaborative care practices for livable interspecies futures collides with the hard edges of ecosystem collapse amidst the climate crisis.

Presenter(s): Annikki Herranen-Tabibi

Exposure and loss: a bioethnographic approach to mining's impacts in Peru's Southern Andes

In Peru's Southern Andes, industrial copper mining activity has raised serious concerns about possible exposure to heavy metals through water, soil, air, and other sources. Such exposure raises risks of multiple negative impacts on human health. It also prompts inquiry into how environmental degradation brought forth by mining becomes embedded in everyday practices and embodied experiences. This paper is based on a pilot study that draws from a bioethnographic approach (Roberts & Sanz 2017) to evaluating toxic metals exposures and their embodied impacts amongst three indigenous communities in Cotabambas, Apurimac. In this study, an interdisciplinary research team (toxicology, geochemistry, and cultural anthropology) collaborated with residents to identify possible sites and pathways of heavy metals exposure. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, community mapping walks, and elemental analysis, this pilot study takes lived, embodied experiences of exposure as the starting point for scientific inquiry into mining's impacts on bodies, lands, waters, and multispecies companions in Cotabambas. In doing so, this participatory research methodology resists the reducibility of exposure to linear scales of dose-dependent toxicity. Rather, it integrates ethnography and bio-geochemistry to examine exposure as a framework for experiencing and understanding the impacts of mining on bodies and environments in Peru's Southern Andes.

Presenter(s): Adela Zhang

Co-author(s): Joyce Lu

Discussion

3934 Haunted Health: Untaming gloomy prognoses, lingering resonances, and folded temporalities in experiences of health, care, and illness

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Biomedical science aims to tame the unsaid, the uncertainties, the gloomy prognoses, the colonial hauntings, and structural violences that linger behind its diagnoses and hospital rooms. In contrast, anthropology that approaches these experiences as haunted puts ontological focus on the pitches and sensations emerging through circulations of forms, of present and non-present elements. In

this roundtable, we explore how healthcare experiences can embody particular forms of hauntings. We consider how untaming these affective, spectral elements holds promise for approaching the hidden, the absences, the invisible, and what lingers, and their influences on health and illness in and beyond institutional settings. What experiences might we understand better if these elements are untamed? What might anthropology that engages haunting beyond hauntology bring to studies of healthcare experiences?

Health, for instance, always unfolds under the spectral possibilities of disease. Disease, trauma, or health crises conjure particular temporal, spatial, and affective ghosts that healthcare infrastructures and epistemologies struggle to understand and may try to contain. For example, contemporary neurological research emphasizes the brain and its materiality, eliding the role of psychological and social factors in illness. Reverberations of deep-seated notions about mind, agency, and responsibility linger around clinical interactions, as do notions of what is real and unreal with regard to the body and who has the power to claim its knowledge. Attending to how elements from different times and spaces fold into healthcare experiences—and approaching these as untamed hauntings—can help anthropologists engage with interplays of space, place, memory, temporality, and ideation that exist outside the immediately apparent, yet touch and shape people's lives in significant ways.

This roundtable brings together anthropologists working on diverse iterations of healthcare experiences, including transcultural psychiatry, infrastructural hauntings, political and moral economies of pain care, medically unexplained symptoms, memory, and experiences in the wake of crises. We consider how haunting elements connect healthcare experiences and take shape through the materialities of health and care. What specific ghosts are encountered along certain care pathways? How can centering on the hauntings of disease, trauma, and health crises provide epistemological groundings to understand what is absent, invisible, or what lingers behind experiences? How can notions of temporal and spatial folding help us understand the uneven impacts of systemic changes to healthcare provision? Bringing these topics into conversation offers valuable guidance on what untaming haunting elements may reveal to anthropologists studying lived experiences of health, care, and illness.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Cynthia Lazzaroni, McGill University, Department of Anthropology, Anna Horton, McGill University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Rebecca Seligman, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology, Megan Crowley-Matoka, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology, Daisy Couture, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Melis Gemalmaz, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Amy Krauss, Anna Horton, McGill University, Department of Anthropology, Cynthia Lazzaroni, McGill University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sarah Pinto, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology

2959 Contested Grounds: Land, Rent and the Politics of Distribution

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM through 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines the politics of land rent. While rent has been theorized as a structural feature within circuits of capital (Harvey 1982; Ward and Aalbers 2016), comparative studies have revealed diverse regional configurations through which property, land, and value are interrelated.

Anthropologists and others have examined how states enable and control land monetization (Coronil 1996; Shatkin 2017), kin relations mediate flows of revenue from landed property (Shipton 2009, Palomera 2014), and property tenure systems are transformed in relation to emergent moral discourses and economic relations (James 2007; Li 2014).

Taking rent as a broad analytic concept to refer to the "economic form in which landed property is realised" (Marx 1981[1894]:772), this panel considers demands for income from land across social contexts, and specifically, its integration within broader politics of economic distribution. How are different forms of income from landed property - a seasonal share of wheat from the harvest, a monthly housing payment, or a quarterly corporate dividend - produced through particular social and institutional processes? In addition to individualist property models, how are overlapping, collective, or partible rights to land renegotiated through contestation over its income? And what is the distinct role of land rent in relation to broader regional histories, political economies, and forms of governance?

We invite papers which examine the breadth of practices through which income is generated from land, with particular attention to "people's own categories" (Guyer 2004:138) for mapping these processes. Papers might explore a) the institutions and processes through which land is made into rent-producing property, b) the social relations in which rent is embedded (including multiple and overlapping property regimes) and changing forms of social stratification, or c) the political and ethical discourses put to work to legitimize or contest these relations and their distributive politics. We invite papers addressing diverse geographic contexts and economic forms--from urban real estate markets to natural resource concessions.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Amelia Burke , Lukas Vrbka

Chair: Amelia Burke , Lukas Vrbka

Presenter(s): Sarah Besky, Cornell University, rebecca empson, Julio Gutierrez, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Bret Gustafson, Washington University in St. Louis, Lukas Vrbka

Discussant: Deborah James, London School of Economics

Presentation(s): Settlement, Rent, and the Making of the Countryside in the Eastern Himalayas

In British colonial terms, "settlement," or land revenue settlement, was a process of enclosure, rent-setting, and rural governance. As a set of administrative techniques, settlement rendered Indigenous people and migrants alike into rent-paying tenant farmers and rural land into revenue for

the colonial state. Settlement was a process of making and maintaining a legible and governable countryside. Difference was naturalized in neat categories and embedded in discrete plots on the landscape. Settlement, however, was fragile. As a technical-administrative process, settlement had to be regularly recalibrated. This paper is about these recalibrations as they were rolled out in the Kalimpong region of the Indian state of West Bengal. It describes the colonial production of "fair rents" and how colonial administrators experimented on the productivity of peasant land and labor with an eye to increasing land rents, while at the same time maintaining a bucolic countryside that served as a contrast, and a reproductive outside, to the tea plantations that surrounded Kalimpong. The paper also traces the legacies of colonial settlement in the present to understand the fraught relationships between rent, tenancy, and belonging.

Presenter(s): Sarah Besky

Shares and the Proportional Distribution of National Wealth in Mongolia

Erdenes Tavan Tolgoi, state-owned mining company in Mongolia, is the largest coal deposit in the world. Since 2012, the Government has distributed shares of this company to every citizen, depositing dividends from these shares three times into people's bank accounts, generating a sense of collective ownership.

Recently, however, this distribution has been critiqued as a populist policy that masks the need for real investment and development. In December 2024 when dividends were last transferred the country faced electricity shortages and blackouts, heating disruptions, and severe air pollution. Individual profits from allocated shares were too insignificant to meaningfully impact people's lives. Social media posts labelled them an "insult" from an incompetent government.

When the nation state is the ultimate arbitrator of resources, what rewards are granted, for whom, and for what use? This paper explores the way in which lack of individual ownership of land and resources disadvantages people as individuals but secures the immunity and strength of the nation. It asks how already-existing categories and relationships to land can be amplified. In this light, how might the idea of 'share' or 'portion' be mobilised as a more just distributive political model that reconfigures the nation's relation to its people as one of custodian- or steward-ship. Furthermore, what reach does this idea have when structural issues hold certain forms of inequality in place?

Presenter(s): rebecca empson

Building Hype: Libertarian Cities, Fictitious Development, and Coercive Rentier Networks in El Salvador's "Bitcoin City"

In the past decade, Central America has become the target of libertarian city experiments. Adopted by two of the region's governments as a new development scheme, these projects have become frontiers of non-traditional forms of finance capital, such as cryptocurrency. Though emerging analyses highlight the role of libertarian cities as tax havens facilitating the circulation and hiding of capital, their role as spaces for land rent extraction has been less explored. This article examines

the question of land rent extraction and distribution for the case of Bitcoin City, a planned city announced by the government of El Salvador in 2021 which was described as a future financial center for crypto-asset investors.

Drawing on theories of spectacular accumulation (Tsing 2004; Searle 2016), I argue that rent extraction for the case of Bitcoin City is best understood through the project's function as a media spectacle. This spectacle is the result of an emerging ruling elite's attempt to build a development model around financial accumulation that gives meaning to an otherwise chaotic process of land speculation around tourism real estate projects. The latter incentivizes the formation of what Michael Levien (2021) calls "coercive rentier networks," that is, networks of rent-seeking actors engaged in speculative land deals through violent tactics. The emergence of these networks is tied to the postwar transformation of Salvadoran agrarian elites' and their relationship to land.

Presenter(s): Julio Gutierrez

Gas Rents and the Ongoing Struggle over (the) Excess in Bolivia

Bolivia's decline in ('natural') gas exports has led to a corresponding collapse in state distributions of various forms of rent. This follows upon fourteen years of relative growth associated with the left-leaning government of Evo Morales, the country's first Indigenous president. Though ousted in a coup in 2019, Morales' legacy – as with that of the gas boom – is central to the ongoing contestation over rents and redistribution in the country. This paper traces the past and present expressions of claims-making surrounding gas rents, focusing primarily on the tensions and contradictions between gendered circuits of access, revolutionary-nationalist discourse, and racialized stories of abjection, excess, and waste. Disputed ideas about the meaning and content of "excess" – or *excedente* – whether as surplus or waste, animate these stories. Despite the contradictions, stories of Bolivian gas rents reveal the persistence of a particular kind of political subject that adheres stubbornly to what Ferguson and Li have discussed as a claim to a "rightful share" to the public good. Even as gas rents decline, the imagined coming age of lithium energizes these stories once again. This political subjectivity, even when ideologically or socially contradictory, remains a serious challenge to capital's unfettered access to land rents in Bolivia.

Presenter(s): Bret Gustafson

"A Fair Return": Rent Regulation and the Limits of Reform in New York City

In New York City, over two million tenants pay rents set by the Rent Guidelines Board, an appointed body operating within a regulatory system that emerged from early 20th-century rent strikes but is now legally mandated to balance "affordability" for tenants with "fair returns" for owners. In fieldwork in the regulatory bureaucracy, I encountered conflicting responses to the Board's decisions—landlord groups sued the state, claiming rent-setting was unconstitutional seizure of property, while tenants frame the RGB as an extension of real estate power, using that narrative to influence mayoral races and mobilize voters. This paper focuses on the agency's staff, examining how their practices relate to what observers call the "real estate state"—the entanglement of local government and real estate capital defining NYC's post-1980s political economy. Drawing on

hearings, interviews, and voting records, I follow one bureaucrat's decade-long effort crafting a "perfect formula" to balance tenant wages and landlord profits. Tracked through spreadsheets, this off-hours project appears less a technical puzzle than a window onto the tension between the shadow of production and the ascendant claim of real estate—a relation, I argue, that constrains what the state can redistribute, and to whom. I suggest a different angle on distribution in anthropology—not one that sees the state as the origin of redistribution, but as constrained by the distributional patterns it claims to govern.

Presenter(s): Lukas Vrbka

Discussion

3666 Haunted Waters, Virtual Shores: Aquatic Imaginaries and Utopian Ruins

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores water as both medium and metaphor, fluid yet infrastructural, immersive yet elusive. Across digital landscapes, speculative architecture, underwater practices, migrant movements, and historical terrains, we trace how aquatic spaces mediate utopian American Dreams and their disintegration. When filtered through virtual pools, empty aqueducts, submerged wastelands, and surveilled borders, water becomes more than an element: it becomes a site of contradiction, anxiety, and ghostly resonance.

We begin with the Pool Rooms, a sublevel of the collaborative virtual horror mythos *The Backrooms*, where liminal architecture and pristine still water evoke both tranquility and uncanny disquiet. In this space, water is symbolic of a vanished ideal, one drenched in Californian dreams of leisure and futurity but emptied of human presence. Extending outward, we examine California's actual aquatic infrastructures, from postwar aqueducts photographed without water to the techno-utopian aesthetics that framed them. These images, brimming with the promise of modernist control over nature, reveal a sharp dissonance between imagined plenitude and present ecological precarity. We continue into submerged, industrial, and urbanized zones – seascapes shaped by dredging, pollution, extraction, and abandonment. From LA's artificially engineered beaches to toxic underwater zones haunted by the afterlives of industrial tuna canning and pesticide production, we consider how watery environments in urban spaces become sensorially and affectively charged by the uncanny archives of capitalist transformation and environmental degradation. We then investigate how water shapes contemporary migration in the Americas, both physically and metaphorically and at different scales, as it produces individual sensorial experiences and physiological responses, state migration management policy, and conflicting memories of transnational crossings.

Throughout the panel, we attend to how water resists containment, both physically and conceptually. We consider the political and affective work done in "passing through" water: its

liminality, danger, and non-place-ness. Water is at once a threshold, medium, and barrier. It has always functioned differently than land in how it is regulated, traversed, feared, and fantasized, yet continues to be theorized and governed in terrestrial terms. Water holds the potential for connection, separation, immersion, and disappearance alike, and in these submerged or simulated spaces, we glimpse the failure of the American Dream as refracted through its most fluid metaphor. Together, our presentations stage a dialogue between the virtual and the material, the utopian and the dystopian, the sensorial and the speculative. By foregrounding the spatial, affective, and historical dimensions of water across contexts, we ask what it means to live in the ruins of aquatic futurisms and what ghosts remain in the wake of their collapse.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Suraiya Luecke , Robert Penner

Chair: Sienna Ruiz, University of California, Los Angeles, Ryan Jones, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Suraiya Luecke, Robert Penner, Ryan Jones, Harvard University, Department of Anthropology, Sienna Ruiz, University of California, Los Angeles

Discussant: Darcey Evans, SUNY-Stony Brook University

Presentation(s): Underwater Ghost Towns: Tracing Presence and Absence in L.A.'s Urban Ocean

What lies behind and beneath the iconic beaches of sun-kissed Los Angeles? This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork with freediving and spearfishing practitioners in California to investigate the presences and absences that haunt the shores of L.A.

Since the early 1900s, L.A.'s coastline has been fished out, dredged up, dumped into, and built over by various different boom-and-bust industries whose practices and infrastructures still leave ghostly traces on L.A.'s shores, waters, and inhabitants. Today, L.A.'s artificial beaches and overfished seas boast submerged DDT, radioactive medical waste, urchin barrens, toxic algal blooms, dissolved heavy metals, and dystopian dead zones. Nevertheless, marine beings and practices continue to survive – indeed some are even flourishing – in this haunted urban ocean.

How are these ghostly traces felt, sensed, perceived? This paper centers the embodied sensorial experiences of breath-hold divers and spearfishers who submerge themselves in L.A.'s ocean. Building on scholarship across environmental, multimodal, and phenomenological anthropology, I examine various socio-political-ecological processes that make L.A.'s urban ocean – and diving within it – what it is today. Drawing on underwater GoPro footage and interviews with divers, I trace the ways in which 'underwater ghosts' – industries, infrastructures, entities, and processes that are no longer present – nevertheless appear sensorially in L.A.'s underwater seascapes.

Presenter(s): Suraiya Luecke

Liminal Waters: An Anthropological Exploration of the Pool Rooms

The Pool Rooms, a tranquil yet uncanny sublevel of the collaborative online virtual world known as The Backrooms, characterized by endless tile corridors, still water, and artificial lighting, evoke a

sense of resonance that blends nostalgia, serenity, and unease, and which is referred to colloquially as liminality within the community. I argue that the Pool Rooms function as a virtual heterotopia—an imagined space that both mirrors and subverts actual-world environments such as spas, hotels, and public pools—while articulating a broader affective response to late capitalist alienation and digital nostalgia. Drawing on ethnographic observations of online communities, game spaces, and user-generated media, I analyze how participants collectively construct, inhabit, and mythologize the Pool Rooms. These spaces resist traditional narrative structures, instead inviting contemplative exploration that fosters a shared longing for comfort in the sterile and depopulated architecture of the recent past. I explore how digital spaces like the Pool Rooms reveal changing relationships to place, memory, and identity through a discourse of liminality, a concept strangely borrowed from Victor Turner's examination of rites of passage. By foregrounding the practices and aesthetics that give life to the Pool Rooms, this paper contributes to emerging anthropological discussions on digital worldbuilding, affective atmospheres, and the imaginative geographies of online communities of practice.

Presenter(s): Robert Penner

California Water and the Infrastructural Sublime: The Photographic Archive of the State Water Project

At the time of its construction (1961–1968), California's State Water Project (SWP) was the largest water infrastructure project in human history—a behemoth network of aqueducts, dams, and pumps spanning 600 miles. It was heralded as an engineering marvel, and promised to rework the planet's supposed limits through technological mastery. This paper analyzes twenty photographs of the SWP's construction, drawn from the historical archives of the California Department of Water Resources. I theorize the visual logic in these photographs as depicting the infrastructural sublime—a rubric to analyze the overwhelming scale of this project, which produces an uncanny visual experience of infrastructural hope and fear. These images are not records of mere construction zones, but speculative sites of world-building that render a techno-utopian vision of California's future in which water flows endlessly. The empty concrete vessels index aspirational abundance, yet is haunted by the reality of its continued dwindling supply. Today, as climate change and over-extraction undo the future these photos once envisioned, the SWP's construction feels like scenes from science fiction: a Dune-like myth of planetary engineering, built atop the impossibility of perpetual water in the arid West. I argue that water will always be California's greatest ghost, a mysterious presence that flows, humbles, and haunts a state that can't avoid building bigger in spite of its limits.

Presenter(s): Ryan Jones

Bordered Waters: Currents of migratory movement at the Mexico-Guatemala border

Water, and its absence, haunt the histories of transnational migration through images of overfilled boats, mass drownings, and dehydration on nations' edges. This paper uses water as an analytic tool for understanding contemporary migration in the Americas, focusing on how the Rio Grande,

the arid Sonoran desert, and the humid jungles of Chiapas produce embodied vulnerabilities to environments and diseases that are differentially mediated by water. At the Mexico-Guatemala border, the Suchiate river and surrounding forests of Chiapas carries distinct memories of the Guatemalan civil war and mundane, everyday transborder flows between these countries. Under current border externalization policy, these realities meet the deterrent intentions of the U.S. state, transforming the site from one of informal commercial transport to a surveilled frontier like monitored by those that border the U.S and policed by its accomplices. Here, deadly currents, vector-borne diseases, and torrential rains threaten migrants' lives at this border, and the shifting carceral structures of multiple states push people away from and pull them towards predictable, trackable locations like a tide. Water thus shapes migratory movements both physically and metaphorically and at different scales as it produces individual sensorial experiences and physiological responses, state migration management policy, and conflicting memories of transnational crossings.

Presenter(s): Sienna Ruiz

Discussion

4341 Spectral Ecologies: Residues, Reverberations, and More-than-Human Forces

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Feminist and multispecies perspectives-from Anna Tsing's notion of more-than-human socialities to Astrida Neimanis's hydrofeminism and Michelle Murphy's theorization of alterlife and decolonial chemical relations-have offered anthropology powerful tools for rethinking human-environment relations as spatial, temporal, and affective entanglements that exceed the human. Collectively, they illuminate how relations across species, substances, and temporalities are always politically charged, historically situated, and materially uneven.

Extending these insights, the panel turns to spectral ecologies-those phantasmic and often elusive environmental phenomena that resist capture by conventional materialist or anthropocentric logics. From healing energies and harmful algal blooms to extreme weather events, spectral ecologies register environmental presences that flicker at the edge of perception, destabilizing linear notions of time, space, and matter. This panel is an invitation to think with non-humans as lively residues of past ecological actions-actions intricately bound with deep geological and atmospheric processes, colonial and imperial histories, secular regimes of knowledge, and ongoing capitalist extraction.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Zahirah S , Jessica Madison Piskata, Oberlin College and Conservatory, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Eda Tarak, Brown University

Presenter(s): Jessica Madison Piskata, Oberlin College and Conservatory, Department of Anthropology, Moon Pankam, Sasha Tycko, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Natalie Ng, Zahirah S

Discussant: Deirdre De La Cruz

Presentation(s): Provincializing Energy in the Gobi Desert

Viewed by satellite, Sainshand, the capital of Mongolia's Dornogovi (East Gobi) province, appears as a swath of red in the middle of the camel-colored expanse of desert. This red-colored stone marks the location of Shambala Energiin Töv (energy center), one stop on a pilgrimage circuit where groups of pilgrims from the capital renew the vitality of bodies exhausted by the demands of a labor force still reeling from early 1990's neoliberal "shock treatment". The pilgrimage circuit situates particular sites of healing to places where the liveliness of stone can be sensed by the human body. This capacity to sense the liveliness of stone and martial it in service of a relationship of healing is enabled by pre-existing relations with landscape entities that the logic of industrial capital attempts to corral into combustible energy that can be translated into labor power. However, approaching the Energy Center on its own terms allows us to make space for particularities that may not fit within post-industrial, fuel-based understandings of energy. The concept of energi allows particularities to rush in, encompassing local understandings of energy and re-appropriating them into the capitalist framework while nevertheless exceeding it.

Presenter(s): Jessica Madison Piskata

Presentation(s): Haunting, Tourism, and Ecological Futures in Post-Tsunami Southern Thailand

How has the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami impacted provincial lifeways in the Thai provinces of Phang Nga and Phuket, and how has this event also shaped the subsequent development of tourism up to the present day? I approach these questions through a sensitive and culturally-informed theoretical framework that positions the trauma and memories of the past tsunami event at the confluence of physical, environmental, and cultural factors, which include the coastal locations of the sites and the rich tradition of haunting and ghostliness present in Thai folklore. I seek to investigate how memories of the tsunami might present themselves in contemporary tableaux of local and tourist life through mediums such as ghost stories and public memorials, and how responses to the tsunami event may have affected regional economic and infrastructural changes through the present. Critically, I situate this research project against the ongoing global event of anthropogenic climate change and the human-natural disasters it foments, and seek to explore how cultural perspectives on tsunami past and present can shape future responses to climatic events and resilient Thai eco-futurities

Presenter(s): Moon Pankam

Presentation(s): From Prison Farm to Atlanta Forest: Dwelling with the Past in an Abandoned Landscape

From 2021-2023, "forest defenders" occupied a 517-acre woodland in southeast Atlanta to "Defend the Atlanta Forest" and prevent the construction of a privately-run police training center, known as

"Cop City." The forest was a powerful metaphor, orienting an emergent, heterogeneous community toward a common set of values and utopian images that could be regarded as ends in themselves (and in opposition to "cop city")—wilderness, deep ecology, autonomy, the sacred, *communitas*, and so on. It was often said that the struggle wasn't just about this forest but all forests everywhere. Yet, the "forest" was only a few decades old, having been a city prison farm for most of the twentieth century, and an antebellum plantation before that. It was shaped as much by natural processes as by the very social processes—plantation agriculture, slave labor, incarceration, capital accumulation—that the symbol of the forest was meant to oppose.

Based on two years of fieldwork, I examine how the American fixation on wilderness was challenged by the landscape of the Atlanta forest occupation. By attending to how and where people dwelled in the landscape—such as in thickets of invasive Chinese privet and among young pines growing on the abandoned prison farm fields—I sketch alternative images of the society/nature relationship emerging from this forest that confront the reality of human labor and of living with the past.

Presenter(s): Sasha Tycko

Spectral Developments: More-than-human Hauntings in a Special Economic Zone

In the Boten Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Laos, ghostly presences unsettle utopian development narratives. This borderlands' twenty-year transformation from sustenance farming village to violent casino zone to abandoned ghost town to node in China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) reveals how developers manipulate temporality to attract investment, despite material indications of failure. Yet, nonhuman actors continually disrupt these spatial-temporal enclosures. Mold plagues concrete buildings, dust from land clearings ages new constructions, and alleged ghosts of murder victims prevent locals from walking outside at night. Meanwhile, the protective spirits (*pii muang*) of displaced villages transgress boundaries despite ritual relocation, moving through dreams, possession ceremonies, and animal forms—challenging the finality of displacement.

My presentation explores development zones as contested terrains where multiple temporal orders clash. I propose that spectral ecologies are not only outcomes of environmental extraction—colonial border-making, Cold War bombing, and capital (un)development— but actively reshape land's material conditions. *Pii muang* embody ancestral relations to land that predate and outlast the SEZ's spatial and temporal manipulations. As visions of a Chinese world order materialize through BRI infrastructure, spectral ecologies destabilize secular, state-based understandings of land, temporality, and sovereignty.

Presenter(s): Natalie Ng

Data Gaps and Dead Zones in the Johor Straits: Spectral Algae and the Infrastructures of Toxicity

Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are sudden ecological events with devastating, often lethal effects. Caused by overgrowths of microscopic algae, they can kill vast numbers of marine organisms within hours, devastate fisheries, and render seafood inedible through the accumulation of unseen

toxins. Yet the harm of HABs exceeds toxicology: even non-toxic blooms kill through oxygen depletion, while multispecies blooms blur causal lines, making it difficult to identify a single responsible species. Currents and wind can rapidly concentrate or disperse algae, leaving behind only spectral traces—dead fish, disoriented communities, and disrupted ecologies.

This paper theorizes HABs as spectral ecologies: elusive environmental phenomena that defy stable classification and challenge anthropocentric logics of causality and repair. Drawing on ethnographic work with marine scientists and coastal residents in the Johor Straits, it explores how HABs generate explanations not only in scientific terms, but in the lived experiences of those navigating environmental breakdown. In doing so, it highlights problems of sensing, narrating, and surviving environmental disturbance shaped by multispecies entanglements and histories of colonialism and extractive capitalism.

Presenter(s): Zahirah S

Discussion

2886 The Journal's Ghosts: Nonjournal Digital Publishing and the Politics of Adjacency

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Since the early 2010s, sections of the AAA have developed digital publications that feature short-form writing and, increasingly, more-than-textual or multimodal work. Arising in the context of broader trends toward user-generated online content, these publications are sometimes referred to as "journal-adjacent," recognizing both their affinity to and distinction from the peer-reviewed journals that scholarly societies have traditionally used to promote the exchange of knowledge. Inspired by theoretical accounts of adjacency as a space of problems inviting formal innovation, this roundtable takes stock of what is happening in society publishing beyond the journal, at a moment when the journal is being rendered spectral by a constellation of forces including scientific reform movements, commercial dynamics, and changing practices of media consumption.

Structured as a conversation between anthropologists currently or previously engaged in managing nonjournal publications and content channels, this roundtable asks: What are the goals of these publications, as they relate to the wider aims of the sections that sponsor them? Who contributes to them, and what audiences do they address? What infrastructures and labor arrangements are needed to produce, share, find, and preserve these publications? To what extent does this sort of publishing "count," whether in academic systems of reward and recognition or other registers of value? And what other forms could these publications take, as the landscape of anthropological communication continues to evolve at the AAA and beyond? While grounding our discussion in specific, local experiments, this roundtable seeks to explore the shared properties of these emergent media and the claims they stake to both credibility and relevance.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Marcel LaFlamme, Association of Research Libraries

Presenter(s): Kathryn Goldfarb, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Robbins-Panko, Wayne State University, Department of Anthropology, Jennifer Curtis, Anar Parikh

Discussant: Sean Mallin, American Anthropological Association (Guide Listing Only)

2699 Getting the Ghost on the Page: Writing about Spectral Encounters.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts are hard to accept. They lament or accuse, both of which are difficult to bear. While the unquiet dead can be demanding, a greater challenge lies in taking them seriously in a public way, relating disturbing, uncertain personal encounters to potentially incredulous audiences.

Ghosts manifest in various ways for each panelist in this proposal, but we all greet them via writing. We commonly attend to the distinctive circumstances under which specters have appeared to us, while we also chronicle the powerful secular forces that strive to squelch their presences, countervailing against their entreaties for our attention. We emphasize the experiential immediacy and emotional power of personal hauntings, in contrast to metaphorical renditions of ghosts as social figures in "hauntology" (Derrida, Gordon). Our specters do more than 'unsettle'; they seize hold of the living in emotionally visceral and vivid ways. We narrate various direct engagements between spirits and those whom they haunt, the fears and sorrows that these generate, and our subsequent obligations to the departed-to convey these encounters, and yet preserve or respect their ephemerality. Whether by channeling or conjuring, we contend with the powerful moral forces of their manifestations-seeking solace or to alleviate remorse-fearful of the harms they might cause if left ignored or unacknowledged.

Gary Moody will open our session with a spirit medium performance. He will play and explain an instrument called a Monochord, which allows spiritualists to open a multi-sensory communicative channel between souls of the living and spirits in the Afterlife.

John Hartigan will relate a series of personal encounters with ghosts who haunt his department, unquiet spirits that speak both of their tragic fates but also of this perilous moment for anthropology.

Victoria Massie will speak of how she is haunted by the sudden death of her mother from the accumulated stresses of racism. Massie sees in her death the telltale signs of the "afterlife of slavery," which channel historical traumas through multiple generations. But this haunting is quite personal for her as well.

Clint Westman will relate stories from his encounters with the dead during his fieldwork among the Cree in northern Alberta. In funerary rituals, he was prompted to eat, smoke and dance with the dead, his own as well as tribal members.

Jennifer Sime uses ethnographic poetry to bear witness to her encounters with Maruxa and Coralia Fandiño Ricart, sisters in an anarcho-syndicalist family who were brutalized by the Falange during the Spanish Civil War. Their specters appear to her now in fleeting glimpse across her pages as she strives to channel their laments.

Veronica Solis Mora tells stories of nahuales-other-than-human spirits and shapeshifters, beings who haunt the Monarch Biosphere Butterfly Reserves She narrates how these indigenous manifestations resurge from deep time.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: John Hartigan, University of Texas at Austin

Chair: John Hartigan, University of Texas at Austin

Presenter(s): Gary Moody, The University of Queensland, John Hartigan, University of Texas at Austin, Victoria Massie, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Clint Westman, University of Saskatchewan, Jennifer Sime, Veronica Solis Mora, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Jean Langford, University of Minnesota

Presentation(s): Monochord spirit and sound healing demonstration – evoking spiritual specters in the academy

My auto-ethnographic training as a spirit medium places encounters with spirits center stage. I explore how mediums cultivate extraordinary sensory phenomena for wellbeing and how this can inform the field of transcultural psychiatry. I investigate not just the "fixed points" (people and behaviours), but the "sensations that are ignited in and flow" through spirit healing practices. These multi-sensory and emotional phenomena cross embodied space, people, spirits, unconscious forces, and the surrounding environments. However, verbal description does not capture the deeply felt experience of these spectres. They need to be re-created and animated in the academy. I recreate these atmospheres for academics, using a stringed spirit healing instrument called a Monochord. The Monochord creates harmonic overtones that transports people to another place by sounds, using "forces, flows, energies and atmospherics that conventional sociological approaches can find hard to grasp". Listeners can experience multi-sensory phenomena associated with spirit healing practices. I have also delivered Monochord healing experiences in a mental health unit, disability performance group, and for Emergency Department doctors and nurses.

My broader PhD thesis documents how Spiritualist mediums cultivate a new sensory paradigm that delivers emotional awareness and resilience. This sensory strength allows mediums to access a multi-sensory healing language that overcomes limitations of verbal language

Presenter(s): Gary Moody

The Last Cohort: Three Hauntings

My department has a few ghosts. This paper addresses three of them. The most pressing one is a grad who was killed in Mexico last summer. He haunts my dreams, preceded by a flood of images

from a place I don't recognize. Then his face appears, eyes shocked in horror and rage, and a terrible scene of violence unfolds. Some nights he is trailed by other ghosts of unquiet dead of the borderlands. But his pleading is distinct, and I struggle to understand. I believe he left something behind here, something unrecoverable, like his murdered body.

A different ghost haunts the creek that flows through campus and right past our building. She was raped and murdered on the wooded creekside ten years ago. I walk by that spot every workday. People no longer leave her flowers, but on occasion, after dark, I still encounter her. She grows fainter each passing year, and I wonder what impels her to linger. Is she rooted there by the violence that took her life or an unceasing yearning to be among the young on campus?

The third ghost is of a gorilla. His skeleton is displayed in a case outside our main office. The bullet the felled him left a small hole in his cranium. I assure myself that when it seems to rustle that it's just my imagination. Students sometimes ask one of my bio colleagues if our collections of bones are haunted. He tells them no, but I've come to disagree.

Presenter(s): John Hartigan

On Losing My Mother: Repurposing Generation, Re-membling Chronic Stress

In recent years, the afterlife of slavery has taken on a new life in public health studies of chronic stress through generation. For instance, epigenetic trauma theories are increasingly leading to ahistorical explanations of embodied historical stress. Similarly, maternal mortality rates increasingly use comparisons between first and second generation Black immigrant groups; between Black immigrant groups and Black American descendants of the formerly enslaved; and between Black Americans today and their ancestors who survived the Antebellum south. This paper asks what work is generation being made to do in the work of addressing the reproduction of racialized health inequalities. But most importantly, what work can generation be made to do differently for understanding the enduring legacy of racism without conceding a biological "fate"? Drawing on the sudden death of my own mother from the accumulation of stress in 2018, this paper deploys a black feminist poetics of absented presencing to reckon with losing my mother as a genealogical opportunity to re-organize attention toward the way racism is made to endure.

Presenter(s): Victoria Massie

The living and the dead in Cree ritual practice

Cree people in northern Alberta continue to maintain relations with the dead through ritual practices invoking both new forms of Christianity and pre-existing cultural traditions. A key ritual, the wihkohtowin feasting complex, engages directly with spiritual entities including the dead, embodying them through movement (dance), eating, drinking, smoking, singing, drumming, and praying. There is also the question of to which extent the ceremony has been directed at the dead (which seems to be more the case since at least the mid-20th century) versus animals and other entities (who may have been dominant previously), and of the theoretical or mythological point where the souls of ancestors and the spirits of animals might become somewhat indistinguishable.

Echoes of the system of relations upheld in the wihkohtowin can be found in contemporary Cree funerary rituals where people continue to eat (and sometimes smoke) for and with the dead, keeping them company and lighting fires in their honour. Here again a collective feast or meal becomes in part a sacrifice for the deceased. I have published on the wihkohtowin and the Cree funerary wake in the past, but I want to return to this material here given its relevance to the theme of "Ghosts." During my fieldwork I was asked to eat, smoke, and dance for the dead, and to think on my dead loved ones while doing so. Such experiences, among others, caused me to reflect on the existence and scholarly implications of real ghosts.

Presenter(s): Clint Westman

Spectral Encounters: Ethnographic Poetry and the Work of Memory in Spain

The work of memory concerning the Franco dictatorship continues to unsettle the social landscape in Spain. The primary focus of much of this work, and of recent anthropological scholarship in Spain, has been on the exhumations of mass graves and on the surge in support for far-right political parties nostalgic for the dictatorship. But what form does the work of memory take when the Franco regime's specters are glimpsed, not through material traces of the regime or neofascist political movements, but through more ephemeral encounters with the past: stories, memories, and rumors? In this presentation, I read and comment on several of my own poems which center upon my interlocutors' memories of two sisters in post-civil war Santiago de Compostela who were brutalized by the Falange and shunned for their family's politics. The sisters, who appeared on the streets of Santiago in extravagant clothing and makeup, were considered to have been driven mad. They were, and are, a spectral reminder of both the brutality of the Franco regime and of the possibility of living, otherwise. In my poems and commentary, I argue that ethnographic poetry showcases the complexities of ethnographic inquiry on memory, its transparencies and opacities, that often escape the analytic focus of traditional forms of academic writing. Ethnographic poetry, in centering the fleeting image, the palpable detail, and the materiality of language, makes possible encounters with the specters that haunt us.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Sime

"Nahuales"

This presentation conjures beings, voices, and forces from realms and other-than-human. The inspiration for these stories comes from different places and times. Understanding other realms of nahuales (spirits/shapeshifters) is a pre-colonial oral legacy of Nahua (Aztec) culture that remains, which yielded attention to the felt, heard, and unseen, a practice of sensing transcribed in oral stories. The stories in this presentation found inspiration in different latitudes; some in my region of interest in the Monarch Biosphere Butterfly Reserve, and others found inspiration from the frequent manifestation of nahuales in the range I call home: multiple corners in two countries, where spirits oscillate, cohabitating with different life forms.

The voices and shapeshifters in these stories transform everyday spaces, emerging as testimonies of different times. Words become the tool for spirits to decenter human voices and versions of

events, allowing ghosts or spirits to wander between different dimensions. The stories explore and transpose spaces and beings within the earthly realm, the tlaltipac (León Portilla, López Austin, and Maffie), disrupting the everyday dimension of familiar tridimensional space.

The narratives reveal spirits or nahuales, which can sometimes violently vanish in human time through forms of consumption or, at times, resurge from deep time as awakening spirits. These stories challenge and expand our human perception of the world.

Presenter(s): Veronica Solis Mora

Discussion

2502 (De)composing Durability

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

When does durability actually entail decomposition? When does decomposing something—a material, relation, social structure—make it more durable? This panel decomposes the durability of the very dichotomy of durability-decomposition, stability-instability, and related pairings. We explore a diverse range of ethnographic cases in which people, on the one hand, work to stabilize social/material arrangements that may be unstable—from bodies to capitalism. Or, in other contexts, how people, environments, or objects destabilize or deteriorate those processes, structures, or events that seem durable. Through such practices people create the conditions for unexpected, unsettled forms of maintenance, emergence, endurance, and decay. For instance, renewable fuels and materials, often examples of "green capitalism" despite the hopes of sustainability attached to them, offer a path for extractivist modes of production to remain durable even as such modes of production destroy the planet. In a different realm, the social reproduction of the nuclear family in places like the United States decomposes other forms of kin relations even as its own durability is questioned, made shaky and unsustainable. Other papers in this panel also explore the stabilization of neurodegeneration in animal research subjects; techno-futures around cow milk production, such as automated milking systems, that both unsettle and reentrench dairying inherited from the Holocene and from European histories of peasantry; and toxic lead as an inheritance integral to collective composition at the same time it decomposes the biological body.

In this panel, we therefore ask: How are durability and stability variably related to notions of progress and social decay? Who and what does durability and/or decomposition benefit? To what extent do infrastructures and affects rely on durability and/or instability? Are stability and dissolution states or endpoints, and in what ways are they similar or different states or endpoints? How does temporality factor into anthropological understandings of durability and instability? How are temporal lines drawn around phenomena to designate them as changing or unchanging? And what does attention to stability, or efforts to stabilize, as a motivating force in social (re)production help us understand about society—and planetary—scale shifts? We draw on generative retoolings of

scholarship around homeostasis and growth (Murphy 2017, Solomon 2016), shrinkage and loss (Bessire 2021, Parreñas 2018, Brynne Voyles 2021), shifting matter and chemical conversions (Zee 2022, Agard-Jones 2014), and resilience and emergence (Evans & Reid 2014, Cooper 2007) to ultimately theorize durability, decomposition, and their relationship with one another.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Katie Ulrich, Harvard University, Rachel Howard, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Katie Ulrich, Harvard University

Presenter(s): Juno Parrenas, Cornell University, Stefanie Graeter, Katie Ulrich, Harvard University, Bri Matusovsky

Discussant: Jerry Zee, Princeton University

Presentation(s): Enduring Co(w)-Evolution

What kind of human-cow lifeways are possible under contemporary circumstances, knowing that dairying inherited from the Holocene and from European histories of peasantry and self-sufficiency are actively being altered by techno-futures of the Anthropocene in the form of Automated Milking Systems and growth in new food technology seen in local supermarkets all over the world where oat milk is as normal as cow's milk? This paper tracks three contemporary forms of life with cows in Germany and Austria. The paper shows that shared lives between cows and people at these sites give perspective to the question of how temporality over a long *durée* factors into anthropological understandings of durability and instability.

Presenter(s): Juno Parrenas

Life's Durability through Lead in Peru's Metallurgic Capital

The city of La Oroya is laden with lead. Located in Peru's central Andes, heavy metals from the city's polymetallic smelter pervade its ecological surrounds and permeate the bodies of its 33,000 residents. The gravity of the city's toxicity has made it an emblematic site for environmental advocacy to rally against the chemical violence of Peru's neoliberal extractive economy. However, to the chagrin of environmental NGOs, many residents of La Oroya refuse, undermine, or ignore the advocacy done in their names. NGOs diagnosed this resistance to resistance as a "problem of culture," one of economic dependency and false consciousness, but in this paper, I analyze it as a strategy of temporal durability, paradoxically, through corporal de/composition. When asked how they endure the toxicity of their city, some Oroyans respond that their bodies have adapted, that the pollution becomes "a part of you," as a familial "inheritance," or as one woman said, "If you don't have lead, you are not an Oroyan." What does it mean then for lead to be an inheritance integral to collective composition while it simultaneously decomposes the biological body through its toxic presence? In the aftermath of preceding toxic eras of colonial and hacienda extractive violence, this paper argues that "adaption" to chemical toxicities composed hitherto absent arrangements of collective care, sovereignty, and possibility, and their temporal durability, as they became elusive in the neoextractive present.

Presenter(s): Stefanie Graeter

Durable Bioplastic, Durable Petro-Extractivism: The Paradoxes of Sugarcane-based Plastic

Amid fossil-fueled climate change, scientists and engineers have for decades worked to devise solutions to CO2 emissions, fossil energy use, and the warming planet. These include plant-based replacements for a wide range of currently petro-based products and materials, from fuels to plastics to synthetic fabrics, industrial chemicals, and even cosmetics. Drawing on over ten years of ethnographic research with Brazilian scientists, this paper examines a curious paradox of one such plant-based solution: the non-biodegradability of sugarcane-based bioplastic. Considering the durability of (bio)plastic alongside the durability of petro-extractivist structures, the paper argues that sugarcane bioplastics often enable continued (bio)economic expansion and lead to the consolidation of the role of major oil companies within sustainability efforts. To do so, the paper undergoes a heuristical experiment of theorizing bioplasticity as a paradoxical mash-up of the concepts of plasticity (the capacity to change form while maintaining substance/essence) and bio-based substitution (the practice of substituting, or changing substance to maintain form). Analyzing how such opposing substance/form dynamics contradictorily come together in the object of bioplastic, the article makes a broader case for how green technologies and decarbonization efforts often replicate the problems they promise to solve.

Presenter(s): Katie Ulrich

Decomposing Progress: Scientific Experimentation and The Green Monkeys of St. Kitts

The green monkeys (*Chlorocebus Sabaeus*) were introduced to the island of St. Kitts as a by-product of trans-Atlantic slave trade. I conducted 13 months of ethnographic research on St. Kitts at sites of human-monkey encounters, including scientific and behavioral facilities that use animal subjects. Neurodegeneration research is increasingly relying on purposefully inducing analogs of diseases of aging, such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and related dementias, in primates. Scientists selectively damage or decompose parts of monkeys' brains. Disabling monkeys increases their scientific utility, and their monetary value. Neuroscience research on animals has brought valuable translational insights into the function and pathologies of the human brain (Royo 2021, Yao 2021). Neurodegeneration, a form of physiological instability and deterioration, is being rendered an increasingly durable state, as scientists endeavor to stabilize it as a condition reproducible in animal research subjects. Novel methods of disabling monkeys are seen by scientists as forms of progress. Definitions of disability and utility are re-framed by the infrastructures and affects they rely upon. This paper touches on the culling of human elders during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cohen 2020); the culling of wild monkeys considered invasive pests on St. Kitts (Gallagher 2020); and the valuation of scientifically disabled green monkeys as paradoxically super-abled research subjects.

Presenter(s): Bri Matusovsky

Discussion

7273 Responding to Urgent Threats to Democracy, especially Universities: Learning from Haiti

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Conversation/Debate

As is widely and deeply felt, and as forecasted by Project 2025, the Trump administration is undoing the core of what U.S. Americans have come to understand as democratic institutions. In addition to targeting specific "others" that have been dehumanized, such as trans people, immigrants, and activists who defend Palestine, the administration is also taking aim at universities, which have had a fraught and contradictory relationship with democracy and social change. The administration's deep cuts to research and closing the Department of Education take aim at a particular vision of universities as incubators of social change, among the last bastions of free thought, and the hub of what has been vilified as "wokeness." As university communities struggle to respond to these existential threats, what Mwenda Ntarangwi (2010) called the "reversed gaze" is useful, particularly now, enabling a view of US politics from sites long framed as the objects and "others" of intervention and analysis.

An element of an anthropological imagination – seeing the interconnections of particular struggles for justice – is that we in the Imperial center learn from those who have been subjected to our policies. Often used as a laboratory, a "canary in the coal mine," Haiti – and Haitian scholar/activists – offers lessons for navigating authoritarianism and neoliberal racial capitalism for this particular moment. This special Speaking Justice to Power event offers a dialogue with a recently published book, Darlène Dubuisson's *Reclaiming Haiti's Futures*. Dubuisson's ethnography explores how returned Haitian intellectuals sought to reimagine Haiti, even as Haiti was often imagined as a site without any future.

Applying these lessons, this event will also ask how learning from Haiti might inform APLA's work on academic freedom and reimagining the university. APLA has organized a task force with three primary goals: providing information and resources that will empower people to protect themselves and others; documenting attacks; and, eventually we hope, providing active and individualized mentoring and advising.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology, Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh

Presenter(s): Darlene Dubuisson, University of California, Berkeley, Nicole Fabricant, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice, Anand Vaidya, Reed College, Department of Anthropology, Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Georgina Ramsay, University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology, Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews

8901 Art as Offering in a Haunted World

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

On May 26, 2025, in Public Anthropology, Thea Abu El-Haj's "When Words Fail: Painting in a Time of Genocide," appeared in the open access "Forum: Confronting the Genocide of Palestinians and Refusing Repression." In the piece, Thea shares an intimate window into her "felt sense of the terror" and how she paints abstract images because she must, so that she can feel and "move out of the numbing well of despair" (149). Thea wants her art to serve as a connector, to help us experience "deep human suffering", so that we can "imagine, create, and act" (150).

As dancers, film makers, performance artists, visual artists, poets, and photographers, we take up Thea's offering as provocation. We will share how our art moves us through the political barrage of repeated iterations of genocide, flagrant greed, and man-made traumas on one another and our more-than-human worlds. We cannot digest this pain and suffering through our individual and collective bodies; instead, we turn to our art.

Alongside Thea, we will explore her question: "Why paint now?" (149). Why make art now? Together, we will also engage the following inquiries:

- How does your work as an artist and anthropologist nurture your offerings to our fractured world?
- How do ghosts, spirits, hauntings, and the spectral show up in your work as an artist? As an anthropologist? As an artist anthropologist?
- How does your art practice (and/or projects) respond to urgency or urgencies in this moment? And, how does your art rework, resist, or refigure urgency?

Thea ends "When Words Fail" with an offering: photographs of two black and white abstract paintings she made while witnessing the current genocide perpetuated against Palestinians. She asks the viewer: "Look at the work and let yourself feel what you feel" (150).

How does your art feel? How does it move you? How does it move humanity? How does it move our world?

Organizer: Lauren Silver, Rutgers University

Presenter(s): Thea Abu El-Haj, Barnard College, Kathryn Mariner, Deborah Thomas, University of Pennsylvania, Courtney Desiree Morris, University of California, Berkeley, Lauren Silver, Rutgers University

Discussant: Jean Hunleth, Washington University in St. Louis

4362 Haunting Atmospheres

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM through 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Haunting vividly conjures the past-as-present. For minoritarian subjects, the afterlives of structural violence can assume multiple forms. This panel both acknowledges and disorients our attachment to the human implicit in the figure of the ghost, the past/present binary it embodies, and the inner/outer, subject/world oppositions that ground our orthodox conceptions of subjectivity. We can be haunted equally by "vibrations," (Jayna Brown 2021) "toxicities," (Chen 2023), climate, "weather," (Sharpe 2016) environment, and "atmosphere": lingering affective histories that permeate the air, the landscape, our skin, our unconscious.

These histories may envelop us from above, and they may emanate from landscapes and objects that constitute our everyday "affective infrastructures." Objects, spaces, light, colors, sounds, and textures can haunt through their sensorial properties. Humans, too, can become ornamental objects that exude "atmospheres" in cinema, performance, and everyday life. Lethal particles, drones, and landmines can wreak destruction and haunt through the spread of toxic chemicals that never die. Affective/chemical atmospheres can pervade everyday life invisibly, fostering the "weathering" that is "slow death."

Our panel addresses haunting atmospheres that pervade human/more-than-human lives through affective geographies, environmental devastation, settler colonial histories, and geopolitical domination. Integrating Anthropology, critical race and feminist theory, environmental humanities, sound studies and performance studies, we theorize the invisible yet profoundly life-determining operations of atmospheric violence through historically, culturally specific, yet related experiences of BIPOC (Black and Asian/American) women. In the face of state terror as "frequencies" of anti-Blackness (Smith), atmospheric violence (Kondo, Aijaz, Stanley), "hot noise" (Wang), "subhuman" labor (Bowles), "haunting being" (Beras), and "colonial afterlives" (Jones), how do we intervene? Activist organizing, critical scholarship, performance, the arts, community engagement, alternative practices of listening as "ghost archive", and the ritual summoning of ancestors who mobilize communities toward the future, offer strategies to "change the air."

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Dorinne Kondo, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Dorinne Kondo, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology, Christen Smith, University of Texas at Austin, Jasmine Blanks Jones, Johns Hopkins University, Yun Emily Wang, Duke University, Karina Beras, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Laurian Bowles, Davidson College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Elizabeth Chin

Presentation(s): Haunting As Atmospheric Violence: Power/Knowledge, Sexual/Racial Violence, and Asian/American Women

Haunting can exceed the human form, becoming "atmospheric violence" that envelops and permeates landscapes. Like climate and weather (Sharpe 2016), these atmospheres of violence (Aijaz, 2024, Stanley 2021), imbue objects and landscapes with power-laden affects. Sexual and racial predation/ harassment have long created "chilly climates" for BIPOC women. This essay spotlights the Orientalist fetishism directed against Asian/American women and its imbrications in Orientalist geopolitics and the Cold War imperialism of U.S. East Asian Studies and by extension, Anthropology. Integrating memory, interviews with Asian American women, Asian American cultural production, and an interdisciplinary theoretical apparatus, this work reconfigures the human ghost as atmospheric violence. Histories haunt the present. Consider the rise in anti-Asian assaults in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, including spectacular acts such as the 2021 shooting of six Asian/American women in Atlanta. These events and the quotidian violence of slow death recreate spectral atmospheres imbued with power-laden histories: Orientalist geopolitics, misogyny, inter-imperial rivalries, and relations of war, invasion, occupation, colonization, that configure Asia and Asians as economic/ political threats to U.S. empire. What are the theoretical, political, epistemological, and phenomenological implications of our continued haunting by atmospheric violence? How do we mobilize to change the air?

Presenter(s): Dorinne Kondo

Atmospheric Hauntings: Black Women and Violence in the Atlantic

Gail Lewis, in writing about police terror against Black women in Britain, uses the concept of "presence" to think through the temporal dimensions of the presence/absence of Black women in the discourse of state violence.[1] Indeed policing, as a form of state terror, operates on multiple frequencies that are both gendered and raced. This paper considers the atmospheric frequencies of anti-black terror in the Americas as diverse wavelengths that operate according to logics of race, gender and sexuality. Examining Black women's experiences with this terror in Brazil, I explore how the conceptual frame of frequency can provide a methodological template for understanding how gendered and racialized state terror is atmospheric and therefore haunting. I argue that considering anti-black terror in this way provides a map for understanding the vibrations, toxicities, climate and weather of lingering affective stories of violence and survival for Black women in the Atlantic. [1] Specifically, Lewis uses performance theory to think about the temporal in relationship to spectatorship. She writes, "Presence in this frame is also a temporal concept in that the spectator inhabits a dual temporality in the moment of consumption of the performance: the fictional time in the narrative, and the social here-and-now of the performance." Lewis, "Question of Presence," 3.

Presenter(s): Christen Smith

Sankofa, Tuko Pamoja, Yor yor!- Atmospheric conditions of engagement in and through performance

Blackstorytelling is one word. In this African American tradition derived from the practices of African griots, artists interpret life histories through word, song, and dance (Goss, 1989). Distinct from western storytelling and folkloric traditions, Blackstorytellers are not actors; rather, they

channel the very spirit of those they study. Saidiya Hartman (2024) describes such study in the case of archival research as living with her materials and living in the company of her historical Black women interlocutors. In this work, researchers and artists invite such haunting, create the atmospheric conditions to receive from the spirit world, and give themselves over to it. As an extension of African history sharing praxis (vis-à-vis griots) in the former and Black feminist methodology (leaning on ancestral wisdom) in the later, the hauntings in these projects is not separate from longstanding traditions around African ritual practice which engage performance as both methodology and pedagogy for community-based decision making. This paper examines performance-based atmospheres for non-temporal community engagement and presents two cases of contemporary uses of community performance for social change in Liberia and Tanzania, peeling back the layers of colonial afterlives to reveal the enduring spirit of ritual performance which enlivens participatory, collective engagement which channels the past into the an active performance present to set in motion the future.

Presenter(s): Jasmine Blanks Jones

Noise, Silence, and the Ghost Archives in Taiwanese Ears

Everyday life in contemporary Taiwan pulses with cacophony: hawkers and mopeds bustle in the morning markets, migrant laborers' hubbub suffuses the noontime train stations, and karaoke song fragments bring on the night. Sound scholars on Sinophone Asia typically explain the prevalence of such boisterous sociality through the cultural trope of "hot noise" (renao), which sensorially registers human entanglements—with the spirits (Hatfield 2010; Weller 2023) and with each other (Hsieh 2022). In this paper, instead of framing the hot noise as an iconically Taiwanese sonic aesthetic, I analyze it as a sensorial séance for silenced pasts and unspeakable futures. I situate ethnographic scenes (of the market, the train station, and the karaoke suite) in a transpacific framework that understands Taiwan as a tenuous multicultural democracy haunted by multiple authoritarian regimes, overlapping and ongoing forms of colonization, and the lingering Cold War designation of the U.S. as an "empire of liberty" (Yoneyama 2016). I also trace my interlocutors' ways of listening, through which they unfold fractured imaginations of other futures and alternative histories, mediated by politics of class, race, and gender. In the face of Taiwan's profoundly uncertain present, I show how listening to hot noise as atmosphere (Peterson 2021) renders everyday cacophony as what Julietta Singh calls "the ghost archive" (2018): a longing for what has been repeatedly left out, that refuses to be exorcised.

Presenter(s): Yun Emily Wang

THE HAUNTED AS A HAUNTING BEING: THE IMAGINARY OF HAITIANS AS OTHER-THAN-HUMAN

Across the Dominican Republic, Haitian descendant people are situated and imagined as other-than-human, which drives me to examine how antiblackness and anti-Haitianism are articulated through colloquial metaphors that are taken at face value and often dismissed as linguistic and cultural idiosyncrasies of Dominican society. In this paper, I focus on discourse that positions the Black Haitian as an exceptional and incomprehensible subject, therefore transformed into an

object that metamorphosizes across context. This malleability informs imaginaries of the Haitian as a haunting being that at the same time, is haunted by antiblack violence. In Christina Sharpe's words, "...Black people, become the carriers of terror, terror's embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror's multiple enactments" (2016:15). To that end, I draw on the work of scholars whose theorization around the category of the Human and articulations of the black subject/object provides a point of departure for framing and comprehending what unfolds in the Dominican context, wherein racist tropes and stereotypes foment the notion of Haitian incompatibility with Dominican culture. As a reversal of analysis, I attend to expressed desires and uses of mimicry by people of Haitian descent that serve as counteractions against forces aimed at their dehumanization. This paper is contextualized through three particular examples of discourse narrative related to interactions that took place within and outside of the bat

Presenter(s): Karina Beras

"Ghostly" Black Bodies: Aluminum Pans, Antiblackness, and Porter Work in Ghana

This paper considers how the material attributes of aluminum pans suture antiblackness to women's bodies in Accra, Ghana. On any given day, women who work as head porters use aluminum pans to transport goods, carry water, wash clothes, bathe children, cook meals, and keep perishable foods cool. Aluminum pans—often silver-grey, speckled white, or robin's egg blue—have a durability, affordability, and versatility that ensures their indispensability in daily life. In the 19th century discovery narratives of aluminum, the metal was described as "ghostly," to reference the ease with which chemists identified the element's presence and, the difficulty of isolating its pure form. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter's concept of cybernetics to theorize aluminum pans as a site of sociogenesis, this paper demonstrates how head loading labor is a subhuman /superhuman binary of infrastructure that makes visible, the interplay between modernity and survivance—destabilizing notions of the digital economy as a necessity of gig work.

Presenter(s): Laurian Bowles

Discussion

8129 Against familiar ghosts: Political organizing and the defense of life under authoritarianism in El Salvador

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Growing authoritarian governance (from Trump to Bukele to Milei) is spreading across the hemisphere endangering life in all its forms but especially the most marginalized and vulnerable communities in often classed, gendered, and racialized ways. The president of El Salvador has described himself as the "world's coolest dictator." Bukele's self-description reveals his marketing-driven façade, which trivializes human rights violations, lack of due process, and the environmental extractivism on which his authoritarian regime is grounded. For the most vulnerable sectors of

Salvadoran society, the shifts in the political landscape do not represent progress, but the continuation of deeply rooted struggles against state violence, racial liberalism, economic exclusion, and the silencing of dissent. Echoing the conference theme of "Ghosts," this panel examines the resurgence of El Salvador's familiar authoritarian ghosts, exploring how genealogies of resistance shape contemporary political subjectivities and the struggles of social movements against intensified neoliberalism and punitive security models. This panel centers the insights of diverse activists, ranging from liberal, pro-democracy activists in 2011 and long-time rural organizers in sexual education programs to gang family members and family activists for incarcerated people. We ask: how do social movements and grassroots organizing collectively defend human and non-human life under authoritarianism? Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork in El Salvador, the panelists offer genealogies of resistance along the consolidation of authoritarianism in El Salvador, calling for the urgency to center on the political and grassroots organizing that defends life against growing authoritarianism.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: R. Elizabeth Velasquez Estrada, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Chair: Grazzia Grimaldi, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Ellen Moodie, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, R. Elizabeth Velasquez Estrada, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Grazzia Grimaldi, Princeton University, Nicola Chávez Courtright, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Irina Carlota [Lotti] Silber, CUNY, City College, Department of Anthropology, Gender Studies, and International Studies

Presentation(s): Indignant Liberalism: the throughline from democracy activism to dictatorship

In this paper I interrogate pro-democracy activism that preceded the ascendance of Nayib Bukele to the presidency of El Salvador. In the early 2010s, a group of young, urban, largely middle-class protestors just coming of political age began to march against government corruption.

Representing ideologies from left to libertarian to neoliberal, the demands of these "Salvadoran Indignados" nonetheless arose from a classic liberal orientation. They saw their movement as calling for equality for all, as defending life and demanding justice through the integrity of the courts. Most of them did not recognize the "racial liberalism," in Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills' terms, that haunted their country's history from colonial oppression to independence and beyond—especially as notions of racial difference in El Salvador have been buried in mestizaje and massacres. While acknowledging the sincerity of these activists, I draw on their experience to examine how their calls for a return to the liberal ideals Salvadoran leaders claimed from the earliest days of independence, and which were reiterated in the 1992 peace accords, could not overcome the growing disappointment with traditional forms of politics. That frustration led to the election of an authoritarian populist—"the world's coolest dictator"—and the conversion El Salvador into what some global critics now call a gulag, with the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Presenter(s): Ellen Moodie

Women's Politics of Solidarity in El Salvador: Patriarchy, Intersectional Justice, and Peacemaking

This paper explores women's politics of solidarity within the context of El Salvador's war on gangs. This research is based on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork and oral histories with women relatives of men in gangs during the post-1992 Peace Accords era. This period is characterized by social conflict between the Salvadoran state and gangs alongside the implementation of U.S.-inspired neoliberal punitive security policies. Through these policies, the Salvadoran state has racialized and criminalized gangs as a "plague" and internal enemy/terrorist organization that must be incarcerated or eradicated to attain peace, all while state actors blame women for their relatives' gang affiliation. My practice of activist research uniquely positioned me to understand how Salvadoran women's socially constituted and gendered "duties" of care are being challenged, reaffirmed, and transformed under the neoliberal punitive security policies. I examine how women interlocutors make sense of their positionality as relatives of men in gangs. From this positionality, women interlocutors challenge and support their relatives' peacemaking practices that trouble the state's punitive approach to peace. I argue that women's politics of solidarity reveal how patriarchal imaginaries often shape notions of justice in peacemaking efforts across different scales. Salvadoran women's politics of solidarity, instead, urge us to envision an intersectional justice approach to building a life-giving peace.

Presenter(s): R. Elizabeth Velasquez Estrada

"Las Rejas No Callarán la Verdad": Family Organizing, Social Reproduction of Life, and Justice Reimagining under El Salvador's Carceral State

El Salvador's carceral project, which has arrested over 81,000 people without access to due process under a war on gangs, has become central to Nayib Bukele's authoritarian politics. Often erased in this global narrative is the rise of movements of families of the incarcerated, who are organizing to demand a space where "Las Rejas No Callarán la Verdad" (Bars Will Not Silence the Truth). This paper examines family organizing against Nayib Bukele's carceral project. Drawing inspiration from Susana Draper's move to articulate two feminist traditions for the abolition of the prison-industrial complex in the U.S. and against the crisis of social reproduction in Latin America, this paper considers a movement of families of incarcerated people at the intersection of these two feminist traditions. I consider how families of incarcerated people have become unevenly instrumentalized by El Salvador's carceral state in sustaining the lives of inmates and how they reimagine forms of justice in defending life in prisons under El Salvador's carceral state.

Presenter(s): Grazzia Grimaldi

Aquí todos somos hijos de campesinos: Sexual Politics and Rural Activism in El Salvador

This paper draws from an oral history documenting 25 years of a rural, grassroots sexual education project in Santa Marta, Cabañas. The village is a politically active settlement founded by former wartime refugees, and at the time of my research, it had become the target of the Bukele regime

through military blockades and the arrests of prominent environmental activists. As I worked, two questions began to emerge— how did a project foregrounding sex and gender take root while still in the throes of postwar re/construction? And why were community members willing to devote so much time to sharing their memories of this project now, under such an urgent present? My field work begins to address these questions by revealing how community defense in the postwar, and, now, under authoritarianism, continues to be predicated on the protection of a collective subjectivity that encompasses both human and nonhuman bodies. The sexual politics in this small but emblematic community demonstrate how local activism draws from the throughline between mind, body and land, evincing connections between work as dispersed as anti mining activism and women's empowerment circles. While Santa Marta has historically retooled what counts as community defense, issues such as queer rights require that lines be creatively redrawn to demonstrate how, and when, something can become part of the collective body politic, and thus, worthy of attention.

Presenter(s): Nicola Chávez Courtright

Discussion

7012 Shifting Ground: Politics of Eroding, Crumbling, Collapsing, and Burying - Part 2

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel approaches the ways that we might examine the concept of erosion, as both a material process and powerful metaphor for the Anthropocene. Erosion often arises urgently as a problem in places where the land-water interface itself is increasingly blurred and shifting—for example, built shorelines, rivers, wetlands, streams, canals, and other "muddy margins" (McLean 2011)—but just as critically in ecologies of forest, dirt, sand, and dust, where movement might be intensified by the progressive loss, rather than addition, of water. Processes like erosion are variously parsed as natural and unnatural, "problematiz[ing] modernist divides between nature and culture" (Vaughn 2021: 851). This panel considers the temporal and environmental politics of eroding, crumbling, collapsing, burying, and other forms of 'breaking down', asking: Through what forms of knowledge and expertise do people construct the problem of erosion and other land movement? What kinds of politics and practices does erosion bring about? Through what temporalities do these processes unfold, and what does it mean to think with these forms of temporality? At what material, temporal, and political scales might we consider erosion to be operating? How is repair envisioned within such multi-scalar temporalities?

We are interested additionally in the relationship between these material processes and broader ideas of breakdown. 'Crumbling' and/or 'eroding' infrastructures, landscapes, structures, materials, and more are often written alongside other phrases such as collapsing, burying, or breaking. What then becomes of these terms, especially in their various spatio-temporal registers? How is

crumbling related to accumulation—as antonym? as effect? We encourage greater specificity around the language of environmental 'breakdown', recognizing that crumbling and erosion do not only signify ecological loss, but are also a question of how and where material reemerges. What kinds of political imaginaries do they foreclose, and what alternatives might they open?

References

McLean, Stuart. 2011. "BLACK GOO: Forceful Encounters with Matter in Europe's Muddy Margins." *Cultural Anthropology* 26(4): 511-706.

Vaughn, Sarah. 2021. "Erosion by Design: Rethinking Innovation, Sea Defense, and Credibility in Guyana." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64(4): 849-877.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Stephanie Ratte , Antara Chakrabarti

Chair: Antara Chakrabarti

Presenter(s): Pablo Aguilera Del Castillo, Trinity University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Eva Steinberg, Arianna Tae Cimarosti, Princeton University, Gabrielle Robbins, University of Oxford, Sheehan Moore, Columbia University

Discussant: Jason Cons

Presentation(s): Between Geomorphology and Speleology: Exploring the Material and Semiotic Grounds in Modelling Efforts in Yucatán, Mexico

The [i]Yucatec Karst Aquifer System[/i] (197,600 square km) is Mexico's largest aquifer, holding a third of all national groundwater. Thousands of sinkholes, caves, underground currents, and fractures define this Karstic landscape, an extraordinary system in its porosity and dissolubility. Amid the recent agroindustrial growth in the region, the aquifer has become a highly contested political space whose volume, shape, boundaries, and structure are being negotiated by environmental scientists and Indigenous communities in Yucatán. Based on 18 months of fieldwork, this paper explores how geomorphologists and speleologists make sense of the shifting subterranean boundaries between land and water. Through closely examining scientific practices, this paper considers how the production of scientific claims about Karstic dissolution becomes critical in negotiating the limits of the state. By comparing geomorphological and speleological visualizations of land, this paper analyzes how different models of the Karstic landscape produce different views of territorial sovereignty and Indigeneity. Through the analysis of scientific discourses and practices, this ethnographic exploration of Karstic science interrogates the differences between a geomorphological or a speleological understanding of land erosion and accretion, paying particular attention to how Karstic erosion and accretion unsettle traditional understandings of environmental harm in the Yucatec context.

Presenter(s): Pablo Aguilera Del Castillo

Temporalities of Genetic Erosion

The term genetic erosion dates back to the 1960s, coined by FAO to "describe a dramatic loss of 'genetic resources'" (Khoury et al. 2021). Habitat loss, industrialization, and the replacement of local varieties with "improved" ones, combined with more extreme and unpredictable climates has culminated in an overwhelming anxiety about crop biodiversity loss. Collecting seeds for multinational ex situ conservation is posited as a way to "fix" or "mitigate" genetic erosion.

In the logic of the seed bank is a series of translations and transformations: of seeds into genes, genes into resources, and resources into security. Conventional plant breeding uses these collections of "primitive" landraces as fodder for the creation of "elite" cultivars. However, reducing seeds to germplasm and framing these genes as a resource begets a different type of erosion, as relationships, histories, and traditional knowledge are often disregarded. This paper examines these collateral erosions that occur as "genetic resources" are prioritized for salvation, focusing on the temporalities that permeate biodiversity conservation. Through the example of peanut collection, breeding, and saving, I ask: What sort of seed work and seed futures are motivated by the threat of genetic erosion? What happens when we prioritize seeds and crops in their genetic form? Who are they intended as resources for, and who is being impacted by the potential loss in the first place?

Presenter(s): Eva Steinberg

Dialectics of Erosion and Deposition: Recovery Across Temporal Scales in Post-Tsunami Japan

Among the many radical changes imposed by the 2011 Japan tsunami was a massive, time-compressed cycle of erosion and redeposition from the coast inland, which added an unmistakable sand layer to the local geological record. These sediments are crucial to paleotsunami researchers investigating the return period of similarly destructive events. Their analysis privileges rare areas where these and thousands of years of other sediments remained undisturbed, discarding the vast majority of soil samples due to their "stratigraphic unconformities." This paper approaches such disturbed record ethnographically, recognizing in it traces of ongoing recovery as envisioned and practiced by scientists, policymakers, and evacuees. It argues that – by drilling core samples, recycling village remains into defense infrastructures against future tsunamis, or transferring soil and plants to rebuild a familiar landscape in present-day relocated areas – all groups "disturbed" the stratigraphic record of disaster to write their own narratives of recovery. Drawing on fieldwork in Arahama, district of Sendai City, this paper examines the tsunami-driven dialectic of erosion and deposition as both a material process and an analytical device to understand the multiple temporalities of post-disaster recovery.

Presenter(s): Arianna Tae Cimarosti

Tsangy: On Protective Erosion in Central Madagascar

In January and February 2022, four back-to-back cyclones battered Madagascar. Storms Ana, Batsirai, Dumako, and Emnati flattened coastal cities like Mananjary. They also reached further south and inland than previous cyclones, leaving ruined homes and crops in their wake. In the southern-central region of Fianarantsoa, flooding was the storms' worst impact, when extreme

rainfall and unruly drainage inundated the region's fertile valleys. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Fianarantsoa during and after the storms, this paper considers the sedimented effects of these floods: the tsangy, the sands and dirt carried by floods from hillsides to valley floors. Mimicking the fast-moving waters of the cyclone flood and the long, stilted attempts at recovery afterwards, I carry listeners through tsangy's displacements, effects, and potentials. I show how tsangy is feared for its ruinous burial of young rice, a staple food in the region – how it is collectively contended with as villagers shovel out their land and hopefully rescue their crops – and how it is ultimately transformed into sandbags that will hold down roofs when the next storm comes. As tsangy shifts from storm threat to storm savior, I consider how Malagasy communities live with cyclonic erosion by doubly recuperating the rice which floods bury and the tsangy which floods carry. I therefore reconfigure the cyclone flood from singular disaster to a more ambiguous deposit of both danger and security.

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Robbins

Making a Coast: Land Loss and the Geography of Crisis

In 2023, Louisiana's coastal planners released the fourth iteration of their master plan: a rolling fifty-year, \$50 billion proposal to slow the erosion and subsidence reshaping the Gulf Coast. But master plans are not simply the inevitable response of a technocratic state to environmental threat. Figuring land loss as a shared coastal crisis has required almost a century of disparate observations of eroding property lines, mobilization by communities and researchers, and the strategic maneuvers of oil and gas firms. This paper argues that these very processes of sensing, narrating, and defending against erosion have actively produced "the coast" as a coherent object, both of crisis and governance. As the coast takes shape, it crystallizes particular histories of the land while offering a container for imagining the future. I draw on fieldwork with coastal scientists and activists to trace the social and political forms that coalesce around both the loss of land and its apparent defense.

Presenter(s): Sheehan Moore

Discussion

3458 Analyzing the Intangible in Tourism and Beyond: Metaphorical Hauntings and Sensorial Experiences of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The sensory experiences, performances, and emotions of tourism experiences, like ghosts, can seem ephemeral or fleeting, yet also similar to ghosts, their impacts on people continue into the future through memories and lived experiences. In the case of intangible cultural heritage that is featured in tourism or involved in large-scale temporary events, this ephemeral or fleeting nature can seem even more heightened in comparison to monumental tangible cultural heritage. However,

performing arts, oral traditions, handicrafts, cuisines and other forms of cultural knowledge are skills and lived experiences "that are embodied in people" (Logan 2007, 33). Moreover, participants serve not just as mediums or conduits (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Just as ghosts are not merely passive, not without volition, neither are the performers and creators of heritage, which is both transmitted and transformed in response to changing social and physical contexts. Hence in a metaphorical sense, intangible heritage can be spiritual and spectral in nature, creating a sensation within and outside of oneself and, through engagement, individuals can transform the immaterial into a powerful commodity or medium of negotiation, contestation, and power. In addition, literal spirits, ghosts, and ancestors can also play a role in the touristic transformations of intangible heritage, expressing approval and disapproval of new tourism enterprises in a myriad of ways and influencing the transmission of this cultural knowledge.

This two-part panel investigates both the metaphorical and literal ghosts and spirits of tourism. This session, which is part 2 of the panel, focuses on the more metaphorical "ghosts" of tourism, and builds out from part 1's more literal focus on spiritual experiences and spectral presences of intangible heritage tourism production. Drawing on tourism-based studies in Turkey, Brazil, Bolivia, and the United States, this second panel investigates how the metaphorical "haunts" of tourism, such as unequal power dynamics and effects of colonialism, can be traced and challenged as well as the strategies communities and anthropologists use to make meaning from intangible cultural heritage and navigate issues related to representation, belonging, and displacement. Attention is given to the strategies various dominant and marginalized groups employ to construct and contest the multiple meanings associated with cultural heritage tourism. It also investigates approaches anthropologists can use to analyze the impacts of "ghostly" or fleeting experiences of tourism performances, sensory experiences, and emotions.

References: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2004. "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production." *Museum International* 56(1/2):52-65.

Logan, William S. 2007. "Closing Pandora's Box: Human Rights Conundrums in Cultural Heritage Protection." In *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, edited by Helaine Silverman and Fairchild Ruggles, 33-52. NY: Springer.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Audrey Ricke, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology, Celia Tuchman-Rosta, Denison University

Chair: Celia Tuchman-Rosta, Denison University

Presenter(s): Fulya Pinar, Middlebury College, Department of Anthropology, Audrey Ricke, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology, Elizabeth Melville, Teachers College, Columbia University, Michelle Bigenho, Colgate University, Kimberly Marshall, University of Oklahoma, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Haunted Hospitality: Airbnb and the Spectral Economies of Displacement in Istanbul

This paper examines how Syrian refugee neighborhoods in Istanbul have become sites where culinary practices, oral traditions, domestic aesthetics, and everyday socialities are commodified for international tourists through short-term rentals and informal neighborhood tours. Tourists seek not only shelter but sensory and affective encounters with "authentic" refugee life: sharing meals, hearing migration stories, and experiencing the textures of everyday resilience. Refugee homes and communities thus become living exhibitions, staged yet precarious. The very conditions that make these encounters desirable – war, loss, marginalization – are rendered spectral, shaping the tourist experience without ever being fully seen. Drawing on ethnographic research with Syrian hosts and international guests, this paper explores how intangible heritage under displacement is not only performed but haunted: by forced migration, economic exclusion, and the asymmetries of global tourism. Refugees are not passive transmitters of culture but strategic actors negotiating a spectral economy where their histories and homes are made visible and invisible at once. Tracing the afterlives of these encounters, such as the lingering affects, transformed spaces, reconfigured relationships to heritage, this paper contributes to debates on how tourism produces, consumes, and unsettles the intangible, leaving behind more than just memories.

Presenter(s): Fulya Pinar

Economy of Aesthetics: Sensory Experience, Tourism Designs, and the Making of Meaning

Sensory experiences may seem like "ghosts." While the physical experience may disappear, the social meanings and varying impacts can linger on. In the context of tourism where efforts are made to perpetuate certain sensory experiences as part of the tourism experience and brand for extended periods of time, understanding the impacts of such experiences is important as they can result in feelings of exclusion and inclusion. Yet, analysis is complicated by the fact that various sensory experiences can carry multiple meanings given the audience. How can the associated multivariate and multivocal experiences be captured? This paper presents the economy of aesthetics as one analytical framework to help capture the multiple and varied meanings produced within and across various tourism spaces from the biophysical to dance performances to large-scale festivals (Ricke 2023). Through an analysis of the sensescape surrounding one of the largest Oktoberfests in the world in Blumenau, Brazil, it illustrates how these sensescapes are intertwined with the negotiation of ethnic-national identities and senses of belonging. While the economy of aesthetics and anthropological approaches can be useful for tourism design, this presentation also addresses its usefulness in pedagogical design and how to make such sensory "ghosts" and their meanings come alive through scaffolded ethnographic projects related to tourism.

Ricke, A. 2023. Oktoberfest in Brazil. University of Alabama Press.

Presenter(s): Audrey Ricke

Constructing the Babel do Novo Mundo: dissensus, recognition and the social politics of ethnic heritage in southern Brazil

Between December 2021 and October 2022, Ijuí, a small rural city in southern Brazil, received two major heritage titles: Ethnic Capital of Brazil and Ethnic Capital of the World. Rooted in a nostalgic

rendering of the city's multiethnic European colonization, these recognitions reflect an effort by municipal elites to project Ijuí as a model racial democracy. For many residents on the social and spatial margins, however, the titles signify the apex of commodification, exclusion, and corruption, evoking responses ranging from pride and opportunism to confusion and anger. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, this paper utilizes anthropological frameworks that center semiotics and power (Nakassis 2012; Silverstein and Urban 1996) to trace how these heritage titles are strategically performed and reinterpreted in quotidian life. I focus on how different publics revoice these official designations to express critique, call attention to unfulfilled social obligations, and make competing claims to the conditions of belonging in Ijuí. Rather than a tool for heritage officials to erase specters of social dissensus, I show how these heritage titles provide semiotic infrastructures to articulate competing claims to the city.

Nakassis, Constantine V. 2012. "Brand, Citationality, Performativity." *American Anthropologist* 114 (4): 624–38. Silverstein, Michael, and Greg Urban, eds. 1996. *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Anthropology Cultural Studies. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Melville

"Too Soon for Tourism": Anti-Colonial Ghosts, a Heritage Archive, and a Decolonizing State

The early 21st century brought to Bolivia its first Indigenous president, a new constitution, and a profusion of laws that recognized individual music and dance expressions as intangible cultural heritage. As part of a larger book project titled *Heritage Fever* (co-authored with Henry Stobart), we question what motivated Bolivians into a heritage-making frenzy at this politically transformative moment. We pivot away from UNESCO-driven heritage debates to a different set of questions (what we call "heritage otherwise") and focus on how citizens used law to frame expressive culture and to engage their relatively new state. This paper details a La Paz Department heritage law for the *mohoseño* flute, a case which was notable for its decolonizing dimensions and its complex interplay between insurgent traditions and a belief in the emancipatory potential of law. This heritage law referenced "rights of identity" and represented one political tool among others in the region's *longue durée* anti-colonial campaigns. Heritage-making protagonists recognized the potential and lure of tourism--to support livelihoods in this remote area that is imagined to be favored with natural abundance--but also its dangers and the need for local control. In this heritage vision, they assembled an archive of Indigenous insurrectional heroes—ghosts spanning multiple centuries—who were etched into the landscape and activated through performance practices.

Presenter(s): Michelle Bigenho

A Haunted Festival: Multicultural Heritage Production and Native American Erasure at the World Village Festival

Since 2015, Boise's World Village Festival has celebrated Idaho's multicultural heritage through song, dance, and food at the footsteps of the State Capitol. Idaho is better known for its potatoes than its cultural diversity, and is sometimes associated with white nationalism. But it has always had a diverse mix of cultures, diversity that increased recently through explosive population growth

and active refugee resettlement. As a curated staging of intangible multicultural heritage, World Village Festival was created to ease the tensions of demographic change. And yet, this festival is haunted. In this paper, I focus on the festival's staging of "Idaho's Native American Heritage" and discuss the ways that it perpetuates representational erasure. Through the framework of heritage, the festival erases actual histories of removal, and replaces them with creations of the "American Imaginary" (Strong 2013). And through the production of alterity, the World Village Festival reveals itself to be a production of settler systems of cohesion that do not ultimately benefit Native peoples (Povinelli 2002). These frameworks, however, are subverted through actual Native performers using a kind of 'Trickster' activism.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 2002. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke.

Strong, Pauline. 2013. *American Indians and the American Imaginary: Cultural Representation Across the Centuries*. NY: Routledge.

Presenter(s): Kimberly Marshall

7409 The New Reproductive Order: a roundtable on feminist reproductive studies, Part Two

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In 1995, Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp published the landmark anthology *Conceiving the New World Order*, the first major volume to explore the global politics of reproduction from the point of view of both its marginalization within anthropology and related disciplines and its simultaneous centrality to both the social order and political economy. Ginsburg and Rapp's ambition to 'transform traditional anthropological analyses of reproduction and to clarify the importance of making reproduction central to social theory' has succeeded in many ways. Over the past 30 years, the rapid expansion of the anthropology of reproduction has been accompanied by the global spread of the reproductive justice movement, and a new centrality for reproductive politics on the world stage. Increasing concerns about reproduction and fertility now intersect with many of the most important political challenges of our era, including climate change, economic instability, the rise of authoritarian regimes, debate over immigration, battles over national borders, and marginalization of varied minority and LGBTQ+ communities. Part two of this roundtable revisits these themes in the context of the launch at AAA 2025 of a new anthology of ethnographic work on fertility and reproduction edited by Sarah Franklin and Marcia C. Inhorn that builds on the pathbreaking work of Ginsburg and Rapp. *The New Reproductive Order: Technology, Fertility and Social Change around the Globe* argues that despite its new centrality to both politics and scholarship, reproduction and fertility remain haunted by past absences as well as the spectral presence of longstanding stereotypes and misconceptions. In the second part of our roundtable we will extend our focus on what has changed and what has stayed the same from the point of view

of feminist reproductive studies over the past three decades. What can we learn from the narratives, images and tropes – as well as products, practices and politics – through which reproduction and fertility are organized today about their ongoing significance to social and political life? Using specific examples from detailed case studies around the world, we reflect further on these and related questions at a key turning point in global reproductive politics today. The two co-editors as well as four contributors to *The New Reproductive Order* will be joined by Aditya Bharadwaj as our discussant to offer an historic occasion to look back over three decades of feminist reproductive studies at a crucial pivot point for global reproductive politics.

[Note to General Call Reviewers: This is the proposed second part of an Executive Session by the same title, and both roundtables are linked to a launch by NYU of the anthology at AAA 2025.]

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Sarah Franklin, University of Cambridge, Marcia Inhorn, Yale University

Presenter(s): Sarah Franklin, University of Cambridge, Venetia Kantsa , Mwenza Blell, Newcastle University

2723 The Living Dead, the Living Landscape, and Other Nonhuman Agents in the Maya World (Part III)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What a western framework often labels as ghosts, apparitions, spirits, and specters inhabit the world with us, but they are called different names by different cultural groups. As such, how these groups relate to them also varies from western imaginings. In the Maya world, which spans across the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador, these entities still permeate through an imposed reality that stems from the colonial era. Starting in the 16th century, Indigenous groups of Maya descent were subjected to destabilizing colonizing forces in order to assimilate them to a Christianized way of viewing the world. Often, colonizers labeled these nonhuman agents as demons that needed to be purged from Indigenous minds, bodies, and souls. In Maní, Yucatán, Mexico on July 12, 1562, Friar Diego de Landa commissioned an auto da fe, in which "thousands of sculpted deity images and associated ritual paraphernalia," such as hieroglyphic codices, were burned (Christensen 2016, 22).

Yet, neither fire nor time could destroy these nonhuman agents, as they still inhabit the world—for instance, as features in the landscape. In this interdisciplinary session—split into three parts—we examine the myriad of nonhuman agents who populate the Maya world and regularly engage with human communities, as ancestors, deities, earth spirits, guardian angels, and other powerful beings. Using perspectives rooted in all four anthropological subfields and related disciplines, participants will examine how the Maya conceive(d) of, engage(d) with, and depend(ed) upon these beings in the past and present. Part 1 will focus on the living dead. Particularly, how the Maya interacted with their real and imagined ancestors, from regular ritual offerings to incorporating the dead into the foundations of houses and other structures. Part 2 will focus on the living landscape,

from guardian spirits of specific domains to how statues were treated as living humans. Part 3 will focus on a wide range of other beings who populate the Maya landscape, from living mountains to the spirits of unborn children.

Section: Archaeology Division

Organizer: Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Brent Woodfill, Winthrop University

Chair: Crystal Sheedy, University of South Dakota, Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Presenter(s): Olivia Navarro-Farr, The College of Wooster, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Brent Woodfill, Winthrop University, Reece McGee, Texas State University, Jason Yaeger, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Judith Maxwell, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Queenly Power of the Ancestral Maya: An Examination of Birth Magic, Sorcery, and Divination as Political Tools

In recent years, I have focused on the symbolic significance of Classic Maya royal queens of the snake realm (Kaan) and their Late Classic (~AD 550-900) political prominence. I have argued their queenly power was grounded largely from their status as royal women with reproductive power being central to their political cachet. In this talk I explore ethnographic and archaeological data - including material from the ancestral city of Waka' - that concern the potent magic of the womb, fertility, sex, and birth as fundamental to Kaan queens. Specifically, I examine how their capacity for birthing and birth work further legitimized their roles as conjurers and diviners, as sorcery is metaphorically linked to birthing. Following Mesoamerican creation ontologies of gender complementarity, I explore how wielding the sacred power of birthing as conjuring elevated the political legitimacy of royal Maya women of Kaan and beyond for generations.

Presenter(s): Olivia Navarro-Farr

Earth Spirits, Ancestors, and the “Hidden” Economic Costs of Production and Exchange in the Maya World

Contemporary models of ancient Maya production and exchange are rooted in post-Enlightenment perspectives that focus on quantifiable, observable data—raw materials, energetics, etc. Archaeologists often employ least cost pathways and other analyses that prioritize energy conservation above all, with some attention paid to additional obligations to lords and patrons in the form of taxes or tribute. Ritual activities continue to be considered separately in spite of some convincing work by James Brady (2005) and others that caches, tombs, and other ritual deposits formed a major part of ancient consumption practices by removing status goods from circulation. In this paper, the authors examine ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and iconographic sources to argue that ritual activity is an essential and significant part of production and exchange as well. Earth lords, ancestors, and other nonhuman persons were powerful landowners on the ancient landscape who required payment for anyone passing through, building on, taking from, or otherwise working on their land. Classifying the completion of these obligations as "ritual" that is

considered separate from economics is the result of our own biases being imposed onto another ontological system which leads to models of production and exchange that do not accurately reflect Maya thought and practice.

Presenter(s): Brent Woodfill

Co-author(s): Rachael Bogner

Fetal Malevolence in Lacandon Maya Folk Beliefs

Unlike American society where pregnancy and birth are usually a cause for celebration, Lacandon Maya couples expecting a baby are reticent to discuss their pregnancy experiences and do not announce the birth of babies. Newborns are called "possum" and not named for several months. The most common explanation given for this behavior is that with high rates of infant mortality, this is a strategy to lessen the emotional pain of losing infants by minimizing their social existence until parents are sure the infant is likely to survive. More recent information however, indicates that Lacandon parents perceive a fetus as a powerful and potentially malevolent spiritual being who is capable of harming people and breaking objects. To protect themselves, pregnant women wear curing strings (hach k'uch) as a charm to protect themselves. They also give curing strings to people in their households to protect them from harm and to prevent the fetus from spoiling or breaking things that are being manufactured in the house such as wooden implements or clay containers. Care is also taken not to acknowledge the fetus and draw its attention.

Presenter(s): Reece McGee

Royal Jewels and Conjuring Tools: Royal Authority and the Preternatural at Buenavista del Cayo, Belize

One of the foundations of Classic Maya divine kingship was the privileged role of kings and queens as interlocutors and intermediaries with powerful preternatural forces, such as deities, spirits, and ancestors. Mayanists have elucidated this ideological complex through archaeology, iconography, and epigraphy, and one central element is the practice of conjuring forth powerful beings from other domains of the cosmos to be present in this world. This practice is reflected in the iconography of double-headed serpent bars and vision serpents, glyphs for conjuring, and objects such as mirrors and scrying bowls. In this paper, we discuss nine elite burials, including five royal burials, from Buenavista del Cayo, Belize, to argue that the practice of conjuring was central to claims of legitimate royal authority by the polity's divine kings for at least 250 years, beginning around AD 450. We examine sacra buried with important personages, including a marine shell gorget buried with the dynastic founder; pyrite mirrors and ceramic bowls used for scrying and conjuring; and ceramic vessels with imagery of beings conjured from other realms.

Presenter(s): Jason Yaeger

Co-author(s): M. Kathryn Brown, Bernadette Cap, Griselda Perez-Robles

Discussion

8817 From Submission to Publication: Advice for ECRs from AAA Editors.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Workshop

Join us for an insightful panel discussion that will guide you through the lifecycle of a journal article—from submission to peer review, revision, and final publication. Our esteemed panel of editors will share their expertise on what makes a strong submission, how to navigate the peer review process, and tips for successful revisions.

This event is perfect for early career researchers, graduate students, and first-time authors who want to gain confidence in the editorial process. The 60-minute panel discussion will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A session, where you can ask your questions and get valuable insights from the editors.

Key topics include:

- What editors look for in a submission
- Common pitfalls and how to avoid them
- Understanding peer review feedback
- Tips for successful revisions

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the experts and enhance your manuscript submission skills.

7509 Confronting Ghosts in America's Past: Active acts of remembering erased Black cemeteries, communities, and forgotten landscapes hidden in plain sight

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What is it that we must do in these times to remember, to preserve, to build, to listen and learn in the uncanny spaces we navigate daily? This panel discusses memory work or heritage preservation as practice and what it means, looks like, sounds like, and feels like at the level of community to be entrusted with holding space, making spaces to tell stories for the future. We approach this discussion from an intradisciplinary, mixed methods, art and research, local and global perspective. We embrace being in community in New Orleans and see it as the perfect space for bringing our research in conversation.

Panel discussion will range from Black cemetery preservation and memorialization efforts as praxis via the USF Living Heritage Institute; to the work of the African Diaspora Museology Institute in

reclaiming Black memory through museology in the US South; to the power of origin stories in media and political economy in St. Petersburg, Florida; to the archaeology of recovering erased/hidden stories in New Orleans and surrounding communities; to refugee anthropology from Nazi Germany to teaching at a Jim Crow-era HBCU; to the currency of learning from African American elders through stories they share and histories they remember as a means of uplift and power.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Antoinette Jackson, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jacqueline Messing, University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Anthropology, Kaleigh Hoyt, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, D. Ryan Gray, Deborah Johnson-Simon, Alisha Winn, John Pendygraft, Theo Hilton, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Antoinette Jackson, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, D. Ryan Gray

2672 Causal Explanation in Cultural Therapeutic and Health Processes: New Directions in Medical and Psychological Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What can we know when we view cultural processes through lenses of causality? In this panel, presenters discuss how to improve causal reasoning in ethnographic and health-related research. Causal inference is central to medical practices that aim to determine the harms and benefits of therapeutic agents and interventions (Glass et al. 2013), and it has gained new momentum lately in the broader social sciences in what has been called a "causal revolution." Nonetheless, ethnographers and anthropologists have been largely left out of these interdisciplinary causality conversations. By contrast, participants in this panel offer grounded advice on the strategic collection and analysis of field data in order to refine causal inferences (Snodgrass et al. 2024). For example, ritualistic behaviors, such as the Buddhist practices considered here, can have health-related benefits (Sosis and Handwerker 2011; Xygalatas 2022) including stress reduction (Snodgrass, Most, and Upadhyay 2017). Similar buffers against stress are also observed in games and play, particularly role-playing games, which also are considered in the current panel. Moreover, in Asia's largest slum, alcohol consumption is used by men to cope with generational trauma and caste-based exclusions. To clarify possible causal pathways to well-being, presenters unpack these processes with attention to the role of key concepts like confounders, mediators, counterfactual reasoning, and temporality, with the aim of moving beyond establishing mere associations between study factors to causal understanding (Pearl and Mackenzie 2018). Panelists discuss how they incorporate causal reasoning using a variety of field-based (qual-quant) methods involving ethnographic interviews, observations, and surveys. The hope is to illustrate how pathways to health and well-being can be solidified when using causal reasoning in anthropological

research. This panel is of interest to anthropologists researching health outcomes, subjective well-being, religion, games and play, and those interested in advancing mixed anthropological research methods and causal reasoning frameworks.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Xinyi (Katya) Zhao, Colorado State University, Jeffrey Snodgrass, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology and Geography

Chair: Xinyi (Katya) Zhao, Colorado State University, Jeffrey Snodgrass, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology and Geography

Presenter(s): Jeffrey Snodgrass, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology and Geography, Xinyi (Katya) Zhao, Colorado State University, Aimee Wagner, Colorado State University, Department of Anthropology and Geography, Choeeta Chakrabarti, Florida State University, Department of Anthropology, H.J. Francois Dengah, Florida State University, Department of Anthropology, Lawrence Monocello, Texas A&M University, College Station, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Causal Explanation in Ethnographic Research: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

In classic accounts, ethnographers developed causal arguments for how specific sociocultural processes shaped human thought and behavior in particular settings. Nonetheless, many contemporary ethnographers avoid establishing direct causal relationships between key variables in the way quantitative research relying on experimental or longitudinal data might. This contrasts with a vibrant "causal revolution" unfolding in the broader social and behavioral sciences. We argue in the current panel that for ethnographic studies to illuminate causal processes, it is helpful, first, to state the implicit strengths and logic of ethnography and, second, to connect ethnographic practice more fully to well-developed interdisciplinary approaches to causal inference. We highlight, for example, the abductive inferential logic of ethnography and ethnographers' sensitivity to cultural insiders' explanatory models, which shape experience, motivation, and behavior. We also connect the ethnographic logic of abduction to what Judea Pearl has called the ladder of causality, where moving from association to intervention to counterfactual reasoning produces stronger evidence for causal processes. Further, we show how graphical modeling approaches to causal explanation can help ethnographers clarify their thinking. Overall, we offer an alternative vision of ethnography, which contrasts, but nevertheless remains consistent with, currently more dominant interpretive approaches.

Presenter(s): Jeffrey Snodgrass

A Tale of Spirits and Bodies: Temple Involvement, Moral Agency, and Subjective Well-Being among Thai Buddhists in Colorado

This paper discusses the life of Thai Buddhists in Colorado and how temple involvement impacts moral agency and subjective well-being. Based on field research during 2024-25, I focus on how broad temple involvement including donation, praying, conversing with monastics, can impact moral agency—confidence in making good and ethical life decisions—by helping individuals

achieve emotional equanimity, a balanced state indicating culturally recognized well-being. This paper draws from an ongoing project on ritual and health of Buddhist populations in Colorado. Rather than discussing the moral learning of ordained monastics, this paper turns attention to the embodied, daily practice of lay individuals and their community engagement and discusses such participation with references to Buddhism's historical and spiritual roots. Specifically, I examine how felt moral agency might mediate between broader temple involvement and emotional equanimity. Data collection utilizes mixed qualitative and quantitative ethnographic research methods, relying on techniques and perspectives from medical and psychological anthropology. This paper specifically analyzes mechanisms producing health outcomes within a causal framework. This includes attention to the significance of mediation analysis, particularly counterfactuals and potential outcomes considered at an individual level.

Presenter(s): Xinyi (Katya) Zhao

Role-Playing Games, Self-Concept, and Well-Being: Strengthening Causal Explanations with Novel Ethnographic Approaches

We examine how tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs) affect well-being through enhanced self-concept and stress resilience. Here, we focus on three methodological and analytical strategies we used to strengthen our causal inferences. First, we documented in observations and interviews personal explanatory models that players themselves used to explain how gaming shaped their health and well-being. There, we combined thematic analysis with graphical modeling approaches to clarify how respondents understood how third factors—e.g., confounders, mediators, and colliders—might change how gaming impacted their health. Second, we combined reflexive thematic and qualitative comparative analyses of interview transcripts to construct "truth tables" that clarified how confounding factors might produce spurious associations that masked true causal pathways between gaming and well-being. Finally, third, we developed a novel pile sort method where we asked respondents themselves to graphically map causal connections between salient cultural factors (developed from free listing) about what constitutes good and bad gaming sessions. Findings reveal that TTRPGs can positively shape health and well-being, partially through strengthened self-concept via connections with fictional characters and other players. Our methodological approach provides us with greater confidence that these processes are causal ones, which allows us to make stronger recommendations to clinicians and policy makers.

Presenter(s): Aimee Wagner

Co-author(s): Audrey Yarish

Drinking to Endure: Alcohol, Caste, and Structural Determinants of Health in Dharavi

Manual scavenging—still performed overwhelmingly by Dalits in India—remains a site of intergenerational caste-based exclusion, occupational immobility, and embodied suffering. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Dharavi, Mumbai, this paper explores how men engaged in manual scavenging articulate the psychological and physical consequences of their labor, and how alcohol-use functions as a stigmatized yet socially intelligible coping mechanism.

Based on qualitative interviews and standardized assessments—including measures of alcohol use, depression, stress, and loneliness—the study investigates how alcohol consumption is an attempt to manage emotional strain, exhaustion, and social isolation. Interviews reveal narratives of emotional distress, fatigue, social shame, and a pervasive sense of being "stuck"—in labor, in caste, in body. While often perceived as damaging, alcohol use is framed as a necessary form of self-regulation in the absence of institutional care. This paper engages causal reasoning to explore how labor precarity, stigma, and psychological distress intersect to shape health outcomes. In doing so, the paper challenges normative assumptions about resilience and healing by foregrounding how individuals navigate suffering in the context of systemic abandonment.

Presenter(s): Choeeta Chakrabarti

Livin' on the Edge (of Consonance): Causal Pathways of Culture and Health in Brazil

This paper examines the causal mechanisms linking cultural consonance—the degree to which individuals approximate the shared expectations of their cultural group—with health outcomes. Cultural consonance has become one of the most replicated and robust theories in anthropology, with consistent evidence across cultures and domains showing that individuals who align their beliefs and behaviors with salient cultural models experience lower psychosocial stress and better health outcomes. However, the causal pathways underlying this relationship remain underexplored. Drawing on data from an ongoing project in Brazil, we employ a mixed-methods approach to test a theoretical framework in which two key mechanisms mediate this relationship: internalized motivations to maintain a coherent sense of self, and external social pressures to conform. The actualization of internalized beliefs helps individuals avoid cognitive dissonance, while concerns of social sanctions and status-based consequences reinforce group adherence. We present preliminary evidence supporting this causal model and discuss implications for understanding the role of culture in shaping health.

Presenter(s): H.J. Francois Dengah

Co-author(s): William Dressler

Rhizomatic Reasoning: Cultural Consonance, Multiplicities, and Disordered Eating in Korean Masculinities

Recent advances in cultural consonance theory—that the extent to which individuals can approximate a locally valued cultural model in their own lives is associated with better health outcomes—indicate that relevant cultural models through which individuals pursue cultural consonance vary based on structural conditions and the intersubjective norms of the specific time-space in which such actions take place. From this has emerged a new interest in causal reasoning: here, the processes by which individuals engage the right cultural model from the total "pool of information" available to them in response to a given challenge. Following Deleuze & Guattari (1987), I argue that this process less takes the form of "arborescent schemas" (i.e., decision trees) than of "rhizomatic assemblages": the constant initiating and severing of associations between cultural models, following emergent paths of meaning in attempts to align with the dynamic

demands of the interactive time-spaces in which such attempts are performed. As a result, cultural consonance may not always be healthful, or may not have any effect on health at all. In South Korea, the cultural process of becoming a man involves historically constructed expectations constantly challenged by rapidly changing social, increasingly precarious economic, conditions. Young men engage models of male body ideals as one of multiple modes of becoming a man, which leads to disordered eating among many of those who take this pathway.

Presenter(s): Lawrence Monocello

8249 New Ethnographic Approaches in Early Childhood Educational Policy Research.

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This session examines how two complementary ethnographic methods -Comparative Case Study (CCS) and Video-Cued Multivocal (VCM) ethnography -can be applied to conduct systematic cross-cultural policy analysis in early childhood education. Our diverse panel of researchers presents findings from Tanzania, Samoa (a US-occupied Pacific nation), China, as well as ECE programs in US immigrant communities and rural Appalachia, demonstrating the benefits of combining these approaches to yield contextually relevant insights into policy negotiation.

Early childhood education globally has experienced increased regulation and standardization (Swadener, 2023). Organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF have established universal notions of "quality" (Mahon, 2016). While these standards provide guidelines for curriculum, teacher qualifications, and classroom environments, they often overlook culturally specific interpretations of quality and learning (Author, 2019; 2020; 2024).

Our methodological innovation combines CCS design-a multi-site approach comparing policymaking across different settings (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009)-with VCM ethnography-which uses recorded situational cues to facilitate discussions among diverse stakeholders (Tobin et al, 1989; Hseuh & Tobin, 2011). CCS examines flows of activities, concepts, and conversations across spaces from classrooms to government ministries, analyzing policies along both horizontal and vertical axes. VCM complements this by uncovering implicit cultural norms that shape policy interpretation.

A key challenge in policy analysis is balancing broad patterns across diverse contexts with site-specific characteristics of policy negotiations (Ball, 2022; Author, 2024). Our comparative studies provide detailed descriptions that challenge assumptions, identify solutions, and illustrate limitations of national approaches to early childhood education (Tobin et al., 2009).

Policy implementation is dynamic, continuously shifting as it encounters different cultural contexts. A singular methodological approach is limiting in accounting for relationships between macro and micro levels in policymaking. Our two-pronged approach captures these complexities,

illuminating how beliefs, ideologies, regional circumstances, and political dynamics influence policy realization. We envision this as a complex and multifaceted conversation in which each paper explores a distinct facet of this unique methodological approach.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Allison Henward

Chair: Bethany Wilinski, Michigan State University

Presenter(s): Allison Henward, Kiyomi Umezawa, Yue Qi, Pennsylvania State University, Sungryung Lyu, American University

Presentation(s): History and Framing the method

Our session begins by examining critical incidents during fieldwork that led to the development and strengths of our methodological approach. We combine field notes and transcripts from studies conducted in Tanzania and Samoa to discuss how local incidents inspired us to merge video-cued multivocal ethnographic interviews with comparative case study research designs to create a dual, comparative, and multi-site model explicitly designed for ethnographic policy research. In line with Hornberger and Johnson's (2006) approach of "slicing the onion ethnographically," our approach entailed having participants compare implicit policymaking approaches across various geographical, social, and temporal contexts. By emphasizing the benefits of combining vertical and horizontal axes in our model, we will show how it enables participants to fully convey the importance of context and cultural sustainability in configuring policymaking.

Presenter(s): Allison Henward

Co-author(s): Bethany Wilinski

Transversal video-cued approaches in New Immigrant Settlements

In this paper, I present an anthropological comparative study examining Head Start's language policy. Specifically, I conducted a multisite ethnographic study to explore how Head Start educators serving multilingual children in new immigrant settlements (NIS) in Pennsylvania understand and implement the language policy. Enacted in 2007 as part of the Integrated Head Start and School Readiness Act, this policy mandates Head Start educators to incorporate children's home languages into their classroom practices.

My focus is on new immigrant settlement areas in Pennsylvania that have witnessed significant growth in immigrants, primarily from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The central question guiding my study is how educators navigate and negotiate the pressures of policy and school readiness, which may contradict each other, while striving to reflect their language beliefs and ideologies in their everyday practices.

To address this question, I employed a modified version of Video-Cued Multivocal Ethnography (VCM) and Comparative Case Study (CCS) methodologies for data collection and analysis. These methods aim to assist me to have a comprehensive understanding of the broader context and to seek a more equitable approach to serving multilingual children in this dynamic environment.

Presenter(s): Kiyomi Umezawa

Transnational Comparisons using VCM

In this paper, I draw on my doctoral research, a multisite ethnographic study on early childhood teachers' experiences during and after the global pandemic. I delve into how teachers interpret and perform their professional roles in diverse contexts within the U.S. and China. My research centers on how globally circulated and teachers in each country shape national perspectives of professionalism. Considering policy from the Ministry of Education in China and federal Head Start policy, I explore the interplay of gendered, racialized, and ethnicized identities in teachers' understandings and practices. Moreover, I examine how individual agency and resistance to imposed discourses contribute to transforming policy through everyday practices.

To capture a diverse range of voices from early childhood educators in the United States and China, the study modifies Video-cued Multivocal Ethnography, also known as the Preschool in Three Cultures (PSin3C) approach developed by Joseph Tobin and colleagues. This study entails filming in a Head Start preschool class in central Pennsylvania and a kindergarten class in Jiangsu province, complemented by fieldwork and individual and focus group interviews conducted across two countries for this two-year study. In my analysis, I attend to a vertical and horizontal axis of policymaking.

Presenter(s): Yue Qi

Negotiating multiculturalism in Appalachia through CCS and VCM

This ethnographic investigation examines the negotiation of culturally responsive teaching by white Head Start educators in a predominantly white, working-class rural Appalachian community. Employing a vertical case study methodology alongside Video-Cued Multivocal ethnography, the research reveals complex interactions between local cultural practices and federal and state early childhood education policies that mandate diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging. The study illuminates how community-specific pedagogical approaches and values mediate policy implementation, often reducing the intended impact of multicultural initiatives. Through this methodological combination, the research demonstrates the nuanced ways in which whiteness functions within regional socioeconomic contexts, showing how it is negotiated, reconstructed, and reaffirmed through the interplay of race-class hierarchies and local economic factors. These findings contribute to our understanding of how cultural identity and regional specificity influence the implementation of national educational policies in rural communities.

Presenter(s): Sungryung Lyu

6342 Compelling Forms, or, “What kind of instrument am ‘I’?”

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What makes a form compel? What is it to be compelled by form? And what does it mean for anthropological research and writing that some forms compel and address us (or one another) more than others?

These questions originate in the recognition that anthropological encounters with words, images, and sounds, along with formal qualities of worldly things like clouds, fire, wind, water, inter alia, involve elements of fascination, recognition, resonance, even perhaps obsession. Emphasizing the capacity of such forms to undo or critically refashion given understandings or predilections, we privilege forms that are less legible or accountable within existing epistemological frames. These include minor gestures, the almost imperceptible or seemingly inexplicable, the supernatural or surreal, edges and margins, that which remains unclassifiable, forces that give weight or weightlessness, and traces and hauntings of immaterial things.

The panel is inspired by the captivating resonance experienced upon encountering a passage in a text, and the lure or capture of something that might become a subject of inquiry. Drawing our title from William Mazzarella's essay "What Kind of Instrument Am I?" we underscore the capacity of forms to fascinate, thereby interpellating or impelling us in sometimes unexpected ways.

Forms that fascinate raise questions for the epistemological project of anthropology, and for certain underlying assumptions of the discipline. The allure of such forms challenges the possibility of critical distance, foregrounds the variety of attachments that may drive anthropological inquiry, and suggests the impossibility of any position "outside" or beyond such attachments. Rather than restabilizing an extant anthropological project through the refinement of its conceptual tools, however, we focus on the unwieldy or unanticipated possibilities that might emerge in such encounters. These include the destabilization that can accompany the force of compelling forms, for our writing, our research methods, and for how anthropology conceives of its research objects, interlocutors, and itself.

The notion of the figural offers one approach for exploring implications of such encounters with form. Similar to survivals, glitches, and some understandings of the ghostly, the figural is conceptualized as an opening onto a possibility or otherwise, with an emphasis on the ways it "strikes, resists and reverberates," giving "shape to perception" (Largier 8, 9). To suggest that perception emerges in encounters with compelling form is also to put pressure on the stability of the subject, or an anthropological "I." A figure or compelling form may, in this way, displace or otherwise make the perceiving subject recede. In this way, "I" itself might be a compelling form haunting the discipline.

These are ghosts of anthropology. What, though, if anthropology itself is a haunting, the ghost with which we should contend?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Marina Peterson, University of Texas at Austin, Daniel Fisher, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Daniel Fisher, University of California, Berkeley, Marina Peterson, University of Texas at Austin

Presenter(s): Stuart McLean, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Susan Lepselter, Daniel Fisher, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: Marina Peterson, University of Texas at Austin, William Mazzarella, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Winter Pastimes: Otherworld Visitors, Migrations, and Lateral Comparisons

Across the northern hemisphere, midwinter has seen the appearance of masked figures, often bedecked with horns, fur, foliage, or other trappings, and widely identified as visitors from another world. Even observers keenly attentive to local differences have found it hard to resist comparing these and other seasonal visitors across time and space. French photographer Charles Fréger, has recorded such costumed apparitions across Europe and subsequently in Japan, the Caribbean, and, more recently, India. British writer Zoe Gilbert, in her novel *Mischief Acts* (2022) recounts successive spatiotemporal metamorphoses of the horned, folkloric figure of Herne the Hunter against a backdrop of accelerating environmental change. Could it be that the impetus to draw such comparisons derives from the figures themselves? Do they actively compel the making of lateral connections, on the basis both of their otherworldly associations and their patchwork construction, pieced together from fragments of the surrounding landscape? Is the comparative urge that they seem to inspire a matter of carrying forward this practice of patching together? Is this informed less by archetypal synonymity than by a sense of otherworldly difference, infusing the here and now with never fully graspable intimations of other times and places that invite not an analytic response but a receptivity to visitation? How might such receptivity speak to a time of border walls and fences, when not all visitors are welcome?

Presenter(s): Stuart McLean

Forms of Encounter in the Lawns and Skies of Abandonment

This presentation is a video and word collage exploring formless feelings spurred by ecological and social uncertainty. These feelings raise questions. How do we approach increasingly haunted encounters between human and non-human beings? How do we ethnographically engage with an emergent object still in the process of realizing its form? On the verge of explicitly naming traces of centuries of destruction, people experience charged moments of continuity and shift. The presentation suggests incomplete forms of social, industrial and scientific imaginaries accumulating into earthly attachments, shot through with a background sense of the seeming inevitable colonization of other planets. Focusing on dimensions of human engagement with the nonhuman earthly world, the overall scenario presents encounters with nonhuman animals who wander a neighborhood after a woods has been razed and developed, and explores how sensed spirits of trees, grasses, waters, and crops merge into both ghostly and material presences. Earthly solidarity and estrangement manifest in the mundane weirdness of a range of encounters, from an angry raccoon to a fleeting ghost in the author's yard. This collage is a performance meant to invite discussion about a collective felt experience, in its nostalgia, anxiety, outrage, love, and will to act.

Presenter(s): Susan Lepselter

Fire's Image

Drawing on research in northern Australia and southern California, this presentation re-introduces fire's contemporary capacities to fascinate, illuminating the ways these might both compel anthropologists and challenge anthropology. It does so by exploring how fire challenged this research, deranging the sense that one form of interlocutor and set of questions made, while introducing others. At its center are four figures, one the material manifestation of a burnt tree – a cinder; the second a cloud of bushfire ash and smoke, lumbering across the sky; the third a photojournalist's rendering of urban wildfire as it meets a stretch of glass windows; and the fourth, a glass of milk, rendered in an artist's book of images. These entities, a piece of ash, a cloud of smoke, and two photographs, evoke the work of compelling form in interrupting and refashioning sense. As interruptions equally in a broader image ecology, they also participate in remaking fire's image, survivals of a kind that qualify fire's apprehension in a moment of global burning. Taken together, they suggest the ways fire might be understood to author its own conditions of possibility, while affording other questions: What can such images apprehend of the anthropological 'I' captured or otherwise displaced by encounters with fire's compelling forms? And how might they make this 'I' more apparent as itself a compelling form?

Presenter(s): Daniel Fisher

4340 Future Pasts in Digitalization and Datafication Processes

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In an Annual Review article about the politics and poetics of infrastructure, Brian Larkin (2013:335) wrote that "infrastructures operate on multiple levels concurrently," alluding to the idea that infrastructures possess multiple temporalities. In a nutshell, the ghosts of previous infrastructures inhabit and become part of new ones. This affirmation by Larkin drives our panel on digitalization and datafication, as digital technologies bring forth situated images of what the future should look like (Dourish and Bell 2011). Future-oriented promises continue to reorient the resources of the present (Elish & boyd 2018), but a more systematic focus on these sociotechnical practices must be attentive to the multiplicity of temporalities in contemporary technoscientific and capitalist developments (Bear 2014; Burrell 2020; Johnson 2019). In line with Robinow (2008), we need to look at "contemporary" digitalization and datafication "in the present where recent pasts, near future, and emergent forms can be observed."

The papers integrating this panel bridge theoretical and conceptual frameworks from Anthropology and Science, and Technology Studies (STS), featuring contributions from the US and abroad that explore the spectral presence of "ghosts" within various digital systems. These six papers address questions pertinent to data-driven digital technologies in different realms, such as: environmental/agricultural, linguistic, medical, and corporate and legal landscapes in different geographies

While described as future-oriented technologies, our panel, in a nutshell, investigates how the past haunts the present and future through the incorporation of older farmer relationships and knowledge in the formation of "futuristic" digital farming technologies; the creation of digital heritage systems for archiving and accessing human remains through socio technical contexts; competing ideologies and histories of language that haunt AI; the classification of data for AI training; the relationship between the historical timber sector and its digitally mediated, automated management; and the intersection of state sovereignty and emerging surveillance technologies. While addressing the anxieties surrounding the potential for digital technologies to perpetuate or even amplify existing social inequalities (Noble 2018, Benjamin 2019), we hold space for emergent collaborations between data, infrastructures, and humans and non-human relationships in these different temporalities that constitute datafication processes.

Our panel explores the spectral presence of digital "ghosts" within various digital systems, and promotes discussions related to the potential of digital technologies to replicate and amplify pre-existing harms, and to contribute to the creation of more equitable and sustainable futures.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology, Ana Carolina de Assis Nunes, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Tariq Adely, George Washington University, Megan Wiessner, Ziya Kaya, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Anthropology, Ana Carolina de Assis Nunes, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, Bulelani Jili, Harvard University, Valeria Borsotti, University of Copenhagen

Discussant: Xiaowei Wang, University of California, Berkeley

Presentation(s): Embedded Ideologies: Arabic LLMs, Data Work, and the Tashkeela Language Corpus

As large language models (LLMs) have risen in prominence, technology companies across the Arabic-speaking world have turned their attention to collecting, curating, and categorizing text and speech recordings to produce language corpora for Arabic. While corporations regularly frame LLMs through the lens of technological rupture, ushering in the democratization of intelligence, the labor of generating data to animate LLMs is deeply embedded within long-standing processes and infrastructures, whether Arabic's incompatibility with early Internet infrastructures or colonial-era language ideologies about its "primordial" nature.

This paper asks how technological imaginaries of LLMs obscure the ideological, material, and linguistic pasts that shape Arabic-language technologies and technical labor in the present. It does so by drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Amman, Jordan, alongside analysis of technical publications and online forums, to craft a biography of a popular dataset for vowelizing Arabic: the Tashkeela Corpus. The story of Tashkeela, built on text scraped from an Islamic digital library software, reveals the circuitous pathways, controversies, and mediations through which language corpora are brought into being to animate LLMs. Focusing on this dataset and its afterlives, this

paper argues that competing ideologies and histories of language come to haunt the AI technologies that are built with it.

Presenter(s): Tariq Adely

Digital Timber? Resource Pasts and Logistical Futures in the Pacific Northwest

In the past two decades, timber has been rediscovered as a cutting-edge construction material: carbon-sequestering, but also digitally machinable and thus suited to the current wave of automation in construction. Analyzing the cultural politics of mass timber construction in the contemporary Pacific Northwest, I show how its advocates build collective narratives about timber as both old and new, in the process positioning informatic approaches to the built environment and data-enabled logistical optimization as environmentally necessary and even natural. Drawing on fieldwork across the supply chain for digitally-fabricated timber in Oregon and Washington, I argue that this interplay between techno-logics and painful environmental histories constitutes a kind of remediation, in which the lasting infrastructures, cultures, and crises of a resource economy become raw material for digital techniques and promises. Remediation has reverberating meanings in media theory, industrial ecology, and environmental justice movements—referring on the one hand, to the work of repairing landscapes disrupted and abandoned by industry, and on the other, to the incorporation of old modes of mediation into new operative, material, and cultural formations. Thinking these meanings together offers anthropologists of the digital a new analytic for theorizing the overlaps and divergences between recapitulation, repair, and reform.

Presenter(s): Megan Wiessner

Digitalization with the past: (In)justices in digital farming in Turkey

During my ethnographic research on the digitalization of agriculture with farmers, public officials, and technology company representatives in Turkey, I observed that data-driven digital farming technologies are promoted as solutions to address the environmental and socioeconomic challenges of farmers. They include autonomous technologies (e.g., drones for spraying and autosteering tractors) and decision-support tools (e.g., smartphone applications featuring satellite images of farms, automated irrigation, and spraying programs). While often hailed as the "future of agriculture," these technologies are also haunted—and shaped—by the past. Specifically, farmers' older farming practices and socialities are recalled by digital farming technology companies to upgrade their technologies; to maintain their relationships with farmers to collect data; and to overcome the incompatibility between existing infrastructure and new digital technologies. While existing literature highlights how future-oriented anticipations regarding digitalization contribute to power inequalities (Elish & boyd, 2018), this paper explores how the past is integrated into the process and potentially reinforces these inequalities. I will also question whether it is possible to render the past "contemporary" (Rabinow 2008) and allow farmers to publicly express their past, present, and future challenges. In other words, can the ghost of the past be haunted for justice?

Presenter(s): Ziya Kaya

Data Politics and Data Centers: New Factories in Late Capitalism

Anthropologists have long observed how cultural patterns shape what counts as data and how data are used. My presentation provides an overview of the literature on the classification of data for AI training. How does the "artificial" in artificial intelligence relate to nature/culture debates in feminist theory? How does it open up new pathways of thought and action? Drawing upon texts from history of science and statistics, critical data studies, and science ethnography, my presentation will shed light on how machine learning connects to capitalism, eugenics, race/racism, and how it influences the ongoing formation of the surveillance state – or "how the past haunts the present and future" by considering how AI reinforces different systems of oppression. Tying this discussion to my fieldwork in the city of The Dalles, Oregon, where Google has owned and operated a data center since 2006, I present data and data centers as part of an ecosystem of extractive industries. Data centers, as anthropologist Steven Monserrate (2023) describes them, are an iteration of capital's new "factories," where data is the new commodity. In sum, my paper addresses the way capitalism actualizes itself via digital data.

Presenter(s): Ana Carolina de Assis Nunes

The Coded Gaze: Grappling with Kenya's Adoption of Chinese Surveillance Tools

The research conducted to date on digital surveillance in Africa focuses largely on the wide distribution of Chinese technology, drawing attention to the fact that regime type is a poor predictor of the purchase and use of that technology. Much less attention has been given to questions about how they actually work, why they are in great local demand, and how they change, or do not change, state capacities. The existing literature overlooks a crucial paradox: while enhanced digital surveillance is desired as a means to buttress African government power—due to its policing and managerial capacities—it may also actually undermine state sovereignty. Note, in the latter regard, that digital surveillance tools are embedded within processes that result in the privatization of the state; the outsourcing of state functions to Chinese tech giants, like Huawei, has transformed government, in part, into a holding company in the business of franchising out many operations, including police services, and hence much of its sovereignty. Ironically, these digital surveillances aimed at improving governance are inspiring distrust among citizens, which also challenges sovereignty. This is all done within the context of a supposedly weak African state that seeks to ameliorate its incapacities from the colonial encounter. The changing nature of the connection between digital surveillance infrastructure and state sovereignty—and the paradox at its core—is, thus, a key object of study.

Presenter(s): Bulelani Jili

Ghostly matters: Institutional response-ability and the digital life of human remains

This presentation explores the digitization of human remains, which have been discussed in bioarchaeology as "complex categories" of objects – both objects of science and physical manifestations of lived lives (Nilsson Stutz 2023). Drawing on autoethnographic research at a medical museum in Scandinavia, and on interviews with experts working with human remains

worldwide (primarily in anatomical and osteological collections), I present human remains, also referred to as "human material" by conservators in medical museums, as a blur of binary juxtapositions and of object/subject and human/non-human.

Human remains are what is left of the dead, and are also "vibrant matter" (Bennett 2010), as colonialism and scientific racism hauntologically comes through the materialities of the collections and their metadata. Human remains create ethical conundrums on access to records and how to communicate issues of structural violence in scientific production while being overlooked in HCI and CSCW (Albers et al., 2023; Doyle et al., 2024). By looking at the interactions and interdependencies at play when designing (or adapting) digital heritage systems to archive and access human remains, I explore how digital catalogs of human remains are collaboratively produced through situated socio-material practices and shaped by multiple dimensions, and how multiple actors cultivate response-ability (Haraway 2016), sometimes by leveraging collectives and community feedback.

Presenter(s): Valeria Borsotti

Discussion

4593 Real Ghosts?! Not Metaphors, Not Hauntology, Not Derrida (part 3)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In anthropology, ghosts are often understood as cultural symbols, historical residues, or figures of social haunting. Yet, for many, ghosts are also social actors-inhabitants of lifeworlds, interlocutors, and kin. This panel explores what it means to move beyond representing ghosts as metaphors and instead take them seriously as part of the social realities we study and inhabit.

Anthropologists have long walked a fine line between respecting their interlocutors' beliefs in spirits and maintaining analytical distance. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* offers a classic example of this epistemic move, where he first appears to "believe" he has seen a ghostly light, only to later assure the reader that it must have been a lantern. More recent work, such as Jon Bialecki's engagement with Bruno Latour, has called for taking spirits as social actors--without necessarily breaching the wall of methodological atheism. This panel asks: What if we do breach that wall? What happens when anthropologists, too, can see ghosts?

Bringing together scholars who not only study spirits and ghosts but also share lifeworlds with them, this panel examines how such relationships reshape ethnographic writing. It considers the forms of storytelling, voice, and methodology that emerge when spirits are not just objects of analysis but co-authors of our worlds.

The presentations in this panel each navigate the porous threshold between the seen and unseen, the ethnographic and the spectral. Together, they trace how ghosts and spirits appear not just in field sites but in dreams, illnesses, email inboxes, and embodied encounters. From a monk's

apparition in a Spanish pilgrimage ruin to after-death communications in Brittany, from the embodied consequences of entering spirit-filled spaces in Nepal to the reflexive challenges of doing ethnography as a practicing witch, these papers grapple with what it means to take spirits seriously across Catholic, Hindu-Buddhist, and esoteric landscapes. What unites them is a shared commitment to writing ethnography in which spirits not only haunt the margins but actively shape the narrative—forcing us to reconsider the boundaries of belief, presence, and ethnographic authority.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Chair: Arman Yildiz, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG

Presenter(s): Augusta Thomson, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Mary Hamner, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Austin Simoes-Gomes, Ellen Badone

Presentation(s): Apparitions and Amputations: Pilgrimage to El Convento de San Antón on the Camino de Santiago

The ruins of El Convento de San Antón lie along the Camino de Santiago outside Burgos, Spain. In 2002, they were leased by Ovidio Campo, a long-time pilgrim, and renovated into a pilgrim hostel. A site of miraculous healing in the 11th century, the albergue continues to offer care and hospitality to contemporary seekers.

This paper draws from ethnographic fieldwork to examine three apparitional encounters reported by pilgrims at San Antón in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Each claimed to have seen a robed monk near a hole in the altar wall—formerly used for amputations—and later experienced tingling in their right arm. These accounts were not solicited but offered spontaneously, underscoring the site's lingering spiritual potency.

While anthropological literature abounds on ruins and haunting, less has been written about literal ghosts as mediators of heritage. Drawing on the anthropology of Christianity, I explore how this ghostly monk sustains San Antón's Catholic past, materializing an ethics of care and continuity in a time when the Camino is often seen as increasingly secular and touristic. The apparition functions not just as a spectral presence but as a call to preserve and re-enchant the pilgrimage's religious legacy.

Presenter(s): Augusta Thomson

Bad at Magic: Witchcraft, Positionality, and Belief in an Ethnography of the Paranormal

Paranormal investigators overwhelmingly describe their beliefs and practices through the language of secularism, identifying as researchers, scientists, and scholars rather than as either religious or spiritual. Nonetheless, the paranormal landscape is populated with mediums, sensitives, and witches, as well as spiritual technologies and cosmologies that demonstrate a clear lineage with the Spiritualist and Western occult movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Extant ethnographies of these communities tend to focus on this apparent conflict between science and religion, and are performed by scholars well outside of these mystical and magical

traditions. As a result, concerns over scholarly boundary-crossing are less pressing—there is little risk of encountering ghosts and spirits when one does not as a matter of course dwell in a landscape populated by ghosts and spirits. What happens when we lean into our positionality instead of setting it aside? What happens when we not only treat spirits as real, but also consciously develop our ability to interact with them, in partnership with our consultants? In light of questions about scholarly limits raised previously by Edith Turner, Tanya Luhrmann, and others, I reflect on my own positionality as a witch formally trained in a distinct but not-unrelated tradition, and the perils of feigning scholarly disenchantment.

Presenter(s): Mary Hamner

Afflicted by Possession: Catching More Than a Cold in the Field

What happens when the anthropologist, rather than their interlocutors, is the one afflicted by contact with spirits? During fieldwork on spirit possession in the Kathmandu Valley, I visited Rajkumar Shahi—a Newar *dyaḥmām* who regularly becomes possessed by the Buddhist goddess *Hārati* and performs healings and divinations. As we arrived at the door, my friend Mohan unexpectedly began saying goodbye. Until that moment, I had assumed he would be joining me. When I asked, he laughed and admitted he was afraid; he never visited such places. And so, I entered alone. This encounter with the *dyaḥmām* was followed by an unexplained illness lasting nearly two months. A doctor, suspecting dengue, ordered tests; they came back negative. Unlike the doctor and me, my Newar friends had no doubts about the cause: my contact with Rajkumar in a space actively shaped by deities, spirits and mediums. This paper takes seriously the epistemic and ontological stakes of such moments, where methodological atheism falters and alternative explanations assert themselves. Rather than treating spirits as metaphors, I explore what it means to inhabit a world where they are active participants in ethnographic encounters. How does my illness, as both experience and event, reveal the limits of scholarly detachment? And what forms of writing might emerge when spirits are not just objects of analysis but co-authors of our ethnographic realities—acting upon the bodies of ethnographers themselves?

Presenter(s): Austin Simoes-Gomes

Familiar Spirits

This reflexive paper explores the influence of the dead on my life and anthropological career. As a graduate student in the 1980s, I chose to do fieldwork on death, religion, and relationships between the world of the living and that of the dead in Brittany, France. Here I interrogate this choice of subject matter, and why I have continued to be drawn to research on death and the dead over nearly 40 years. I argue that on multiple levels, I have been haunted: by the death of my younger sister, by uncanny experiences after the deaths of other family members, and by a desire to reanimate past worlds through fieldwork with elderly interlocutors in Brittany, the majority of whom are now deceased. In a recent email, a Breton woman I have never met told me she receives messages from the spirits of the people I interviewed who want me to return copies of my interview tapes to the community. It has now become a priority for me to organize this project, and also to

advocate for a French translation of my book. While I cannot say for sure that I "believe" in ghosts, I am also unable to say with certainty that I do not believe. Whether or not I believe, however, is less important than the fact that as social actors the ghosts of my interlocutors and family members have exerted their influence on me, defining the direction of my work and current preoccupations.

Presenter(s): Ellen Badone

7571 Ghosts in the Fieldnotes: Conversations with the Past and the Obligations of Ethnographic Practice

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Within cultural anthropology our fieldnotes, photographs, fieldwork archives, and recordings have been among our primary tools to track our progress, record our observations, and make sense of the complex realities that shape our research experience. Commonly seen as resources that we can refer to throughout the lifetime of a project, some might consider these tools to be static points of data, when in reality they are complex referents that allow us to capture the details of everyday life, reflect on our relationships, and reconsider what we know over time. Our archives spark our memories and allow us to approach our work anew, and even come back to the subjects of our research with fresh questions and ideas. They let fieldwork conversations persist through time. Yet, as ethnographic projects extend through the years, sometimes longer than we ever expected, our fieldnotes often appear to be full of ghosts –our archives hold the voices, ideas, and creative expression of collaborators who may have passed on or moved on. They are crowded with snippets of conversations and fragmentary ideas that we would love to follow-up on, but where reconsideration is limited by the absence of the individuals who helped build our research. Drawing on fieldwork experiences from Chile, Ecuador, and Sri Lanka this panel invites participants to respond to the tensions surrounding how they deal with the ghosts in their field notes, recordings, and archives. What sorts of ethical questions and pragmatic concerns have engaging with these ghosts provoked in your work? How do our conversations with our archives draw out the complexities of on-going and long-term work? The panelists will explore their own efforts to engage these questions and invite the audience to join them as well.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nicholas Welcome, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health

Chair: Camee Maddox-Wingfield, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health

Presenter(s): Nicholas Welcome, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health, Jelena Radovic Fanta, Governors State University, Anthropology and Sociology Program, Julie Gamble, Vanderbilt University, Bambi Chapin

Discussant: Sarah Grant, California State University, Fullerton, Division of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Fault Lines: Creativity and the Poetics of Catastrophic Change in Ecuador and Haiti

In 2010, when news of Haiti's devastating earthquake reached Ecuador, a number of newly unemployed petroleum workers from the afro-descendant community in Esmeraldas identified powerful parallels between this tragedy and recent catastrophic changes in their own lives. Ecuador was reconfiguring key national industries to promote an alternative to neoliberalism. However, as part of the reforms, hundreds of workers were fired without warning, forcing them to find ways to rebuild their lives. One worker in particular – an oilman, lawyer, and culture broker responded by crafting a poem titled "Death in Haiti" that reflected on the tensions of trying to rebuild during an existential disaster, drawing parallels between his dismissal from PetroEcuador, the earthquake in Haiti, and the connected experience of blackness and slavery that linked these two communities. In the disaster's aftermath this petrolero, who was haunted by his own complicity with the corporation that fired him, performed "Death in Haiti" for me during an interview, as he pondered whom do you blame for such events, yourself, the state, the economy, or a higher power? Speaking in 2017 he shared that that was the poem's only performance as it was lost in a robbery before it was completed. However, after his death in 2022 I realized a copy of the poem lived on in my research archive. In this paper I will explore the tensions that surround a piece of creative work that was freely given, but also lost to its author.

Presenter(s): Nicholas Welcome

Live hauntings: lingering spirits, precarious labor, and ethics of care in the Aconcagua Valley, Chile

After completing my fieldwork in Santa Maria, Chile, I returned to California to write my dissertation on the lived experiences of precarity and endurance among female grape pickers. About 10 months after my return, I received an audio message from my campo sister Marina telling me that I had visited her mother in their family home—I was penando. The verb penar, in Chilean colloquialism, is to haunt or to visit in spirit form. When this is carried out by someone who is alive (in this case myself), it means the person being visited is missed, being checked on, or needs to be communicated about something. This is one of many instances during my research where stories of spirits, ghosts, and restless beings arose while I worked in fruit packing plants, interviewed grape workers, and hung out in the field. These narratives explained situations of neighbors' sudden wealth, warned me of jealous co-workers, and in this case, expressed social connection across geographical distances. A closer look reveals that haunting or being haunted on links care and cements social ties. While these examples remained in my fieldnotes and were recounted as "stories of the field," they defy time and place by drawing me back to networks of care in the Aconcagua Valley. This presentation explores the ways in which tales of lingering spirits serve as cautionary tales, critiques of late-stage capitalism, and reminders of care and belonging in precarious times.

Presenter(s): Jelena Radovic Fanta

Unfinished Stories in a photograph: emptiness, abandonment and trust in Quito, Ecuador

What is it like to live in a phantom city? Quito has made cycling an unlikely transport solution amidst human and politically induced crises like COVID-19. When the pandemic hit, the streets became a ghost town defined by emptiness and abandonment, raising the question, how can an ethnographer track mobility at a time when society seems static or stuck? This paper investigates the experience of the feminist cycling collective Carishina en Bici (CEB) or "bad housewives who cycle" and seeks to better apprehend why this mode of transport felt like a safe and healthy alternative for women during a crisis. This paper, draws on data gathered in summer 2020 using WhatsApp for photo-travel diaries and focus group data to capture the travel experiences of ten female cyclists who ride daily and are members of the feminist cycling collective. These low- and middle-class mestiza—women of mixed ethnicity used playful lessons to cultivate kindness in the city. This paper examines how female cyclists navigate the ghostly, insecure city through self-reliance, documenting how they forge daily protection while on the move. Individual self-reliance is actually contingent upon the kind of intimate relationships amongst women cyclists and other urban residents as they try to maintain a safe space.

Presenter(s): Julie Gamble

Whose interview is it? Consent, confidentiality, and the complex intimacies of long term fieldwork

While conducting doctoral research with women and children in a Sinhala village in central Sri Lanka, I interviewed only two men. Each was a husband and father to women I knew well. At the time, it felt a little improper to be talking with adult men alone, but their wives insisted it would be fine. Since I wanted to know about parenting, about how and why people made families, and how they shaped each other over time, it seemed like I should indeed talk to some fathers. In these interviews, the fathers wept as they described the births of their daughters, the hopes they had had for them then, their conflicts and reunions as they had grown into young women, and how they saw them at that time. In keeping with my IRB protocol, I had assured each that I would not share what they had said with their families, and that I would disguise their identities when writing about their experiences, although neither seemed to care much about that. In recent years, both of these men have died, and their families miss them deeply, each family member with their own particular attachments and sorrows and unfinished business. Still working on this project 25 years later, I have kept these audiorecordings securely locked up – and I wonder what, if anything, to do with them. This paper explores who it is that these recordings, these voices, these stories belong to – and what harms and benefits might come from sharing them.

Presenter(s): Bambi Chapin

Discussion

7094 Reflections on the Ethnographic Image

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The movement between expectation and encounter, the theoretical and the empirical, imagination

and experience: these are some of the habitual ways of describing the dialectical movement central to the learning that is fieldwork. We want to explore together the role that images play in this movement. How does the image appear in the relay between the anthropologist's interiority and the ostensible exteriority of the field?

Some images—such as drawings in fieldwork notebooks or photographs—testify to having seen and experienced a scene or an event firsthand. But sometimes the temporal relation between image and fieldwork can be inverted, or recursive. As Rosalind Morris has described of a recent method of painting responsive to the killing of informal miners in the decommissioned gold mines of South Africa where she has conducted fieldwork for over two decades: "I gather images from the mediasphere, look at them together and in assemblages for some time, and repeatedly, and then turn away, re-imagine them, allow other associations to gather. Those associations are ones I've accumulated, or that have accumulated in me over a very long time of doing research in this region. It is that intimate, empirically grounded understanding born of long-term research that permits the abstractions of the paintings." The image may have its origins outside, but it also emerges from within the anthropologist-subject as vision, memory, dream. Lisa Stevenson has written of this as the process of "looking away," or what we see when we close our eyes.

The image, like the dream, can point to the future or to the past: to the future in the mode of prophecy, or to the past, in the psychoanalytic mode of displacement and condensation. We are speaking about the image in a material sense, in the form of drawings or paintings, but we are also talking about images in a more immaterial sense, in connection with imagination and memory, and as they appear in language—as in poetry. The image is also, as Morris has stressed in her recent book, *Unstable Ground: The Lives, Deaths, and Afterlives of Gold in South Africa*, available to metaphorize political experience, and also available for demetaphorization, to brutal effect.

In conversation with Morris's work on the underground, we will speak, too, about the image as it mediates that which is not available to sight: not invisibility or even mere effacement, but a radical negation that forms the conceptual underground of processes of disenfranchisement, denigration, and disappearance. We will speak of an attempt to re-animate the aporia between the visible and the sayable (Foucault).

In this roundtable, we will reflect together, concretely, on the temporality of the image in its relation to ethnographic experience: the prefigurative image, the premature image, the anticipatory image, the image that rears up as a surprise, and the image that discloses itself only in the après-coup.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Emily Hoffman, Columbia University, Jasmine Pisapia, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Presenter(s): Rosalind Morris, Columbia University, Emily Hoffman, Columbia University, Syantani Chatterjee, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Sahar Sadjadi, Valentina Bonifacio

Discussant: Jasmine Pisapia, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

7937 Consumed: Food, Flows, Infrastructures, and Markets

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the complex politics behind the things we put into our bodies-food, supplements, medicines. The production, distribution, and consumption of ingestible items shapes uneven geographies of hunger, dispossession, accumulation and waste, while at the same time structuring notions of identity, belonging, and memory. Our panel considers the ways infrastructures, ideological discourses, geopolitics, representations, and material conditions impact the items we physically consume, as well as the meanings we attach to them.

With a range of geographic locations (Pakistan, Bolivia, Argentina, and Antarctica) the panel explores economic, political, legal, and moral valences of that which we ingest and otherwise consume. The Andes are haunted by stories of humans consumed by greedy figures like the pishtaco, who prowls desolate roads draining people of their life-giving fat. Anthropological accounts of zombification have similarly examined how human labor and bodies are ground up by colonialism, capitalism, and labor exploitation to provision others' wealth. By contrast, here we turn our attention to how foodstuffs and supplements enter the bodies of our interlocutors and do other kinds of work. In Pakistan, the urban food markets offer a foothold for poor migrant laborers, but it also opens up zones of speculation for real estate speculators. In Bolivia, wellness brands have marketed health shakes and supplements to publics consumed by fear--of an overburdened state healthcare system and a global pandemic --further blurring the line between lifesaving prophylactics and snake oil. On these same streets, salteña pastries deliver more than chicken and vegetables to Bolivian consumers and enthralled tourists--they also facilitate the consumption of national narratives related to what makes someone Bolivian and how that positions them on a global scale. In Ushuaia, Argentina, tourists traveling to Antarctica require increased infrastructures to "provision" the growing city with food and other necessary supplies. This demand provides a lens for thinking about how the consumption of food, disposal of waste, housing people, and protecting the environment are enmeshed within global flows and anxieties about consumption.

Understanding the processes related to eating and ingesting as part of larger flows, these papers bring together themes of global circulations, claims to modernity and progress, and failed state efforts to provide those very things. Our papers consider multiple axes of informal markets including food provisioning, criminalization of street vendors, urban infrastructure (real and desired), as well as issues of class identity and consumption. By putting these experiences in conversation, we aim to shed light on the manifold ways that the things humans ingest produce and exacerbate precarity, deepen inequality, drive moral judgements, and feed debates among our interlocutors over how to better provision their-and our-lives.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Nell Haynes, Saint Mary's College

Chair: Susan Ellison, Wellesley College

Presenter(s): Mubbashir Rizvi, American University, Susan Ellison, Wellesley College, Nell Haynes,

Saint Mary's College, Clare Sammells, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Wholesale Food Provisioning and Land Speculation in Karachi Pakistan

Karachi's Subzi Mandi (wholesale produce market) is the first site of employment for upcountry migrants from rural Pakistan, or refugees from as far as Myanmar with few connections in the city. Karachi's municipal government moved the wholesale produce market 30 miles outside the city in 2002 to release congestion, pollution, and to encourage efficient modern distribution systems. The move displayed the (then) military government's resolve to create a modern and efficient food distribution system in the city. However, the move triggered memories of dispossession for the refugee populations of laborers who used their community after being forced out of the city. The merchants pool their own resources to import water tankers and use generators for refrigerators; they installed solar panels and coolers because of a dispute with the city's utility companies over fair billing practices. This paper examines how the making of New Subzi Mandi deepened informal provisioning and land grabbing in the peri-urban sectors of the city.

Presenter(s): Mubbashir Rizvi

The Pandemic Pajpaco: Wellness, Heath, and the Global Flow of Medical Misinformation

The Bolivian character of pajpaco is known for boarding inter-departmental buses or wandering through El Alto's markets to hawk healing potions and other wares. Similar to the figure of the snake oil salesman, the term pajpaco connotes capacity to convince, even if what they are selling is a sham. In the years leading to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bolivia saw a proliferation of global Multilevel Marketing (MLM) companies, whose vendors promised their nutritional shakes and supplements, backed by appeals to modern nutrition science, would be a bulwark against illness—claims that predate the pandemic and often centered around the failures of the Bolivian healthcare system. Yet MLM products have long been haunted by accusations of fraud. This paper analyzes entanglements between public health and the "wellness industry" amid accusations of quackery, fake science, and toxic treatments as Bolivians sought to survive a terrifying global pandemic. In response to the pandemic, Bolivian legislators promoted chlorine dioxide as a protective agent, with German national Andreas Ludwig Kalcker offering workshops on the benefits of chlorine dioxide (before facing criminal charges in Argentina), even as public health officials decried his cures. This paper thinks with the figure of the pajpaco to reckon with the bogus benefits they may shill and the truths they might speak, particularly amid debates about how to decipher counterfeit cures from life-saving prophylactics amidst COVID-19.

Presenter(s): Susan Ellison

"Un Sabor Patrio": The Salteña as Indigenous Nationalist Symbol in 21st century Bolivia

Since the early 2000s, indigeneity in Bolivia increased in status. Now, greater numbers of Bolivians self-consciously identify as Indigenous, along with increased linguistic and aesthetic presentations of indigeneity circulating publicly. This takes place against a backdrop of Indigenous people's greater constitutional rights and representation in government, and increasing discourses of

Indigenous nationalism by leaders. As a result, circulating representations of what is "Bolivian" have become confounded and suffused with representations of indigeneity. This paper explores how pop culture representations of Bolivianness incorporate the specific symbol of the *salteña*—a hand pie that is closely associated with the Bolivian altiplano. Though *salteñas* do not originally hail from Bolivia, their image has popped up on t-shirts, tattoos, and graffiti. Using linguistic and visual analysis related to the concept of indirect indexicality, I consider the flows between rural and urban areas, as well as between national and global circuits, that have transformed the *salteña* into a symbol of Bolivianness. I demonstrate how recent manifestations of Indigenous nationalism work not only through official government discourse, but also quotidian items like this food bought from street carts for the equivalent of \$1. In thinking about these ideological notions becoming embedded in everyday consumption, this paper draws connections between nationalism, food, global flows, and belonging.

Presenter(s): Nell Haynes

Provisioning at the End of the World: Ushuaia, Argentina

This paper will consider how Ushuaia's geographic isolation and uneven integration into national and global infrastructures structures its tourism industry aimed at visiting the Antarctic peninsula. The city of Ushuaia was once an isolated penal colony and naval base located at the "End of the World" ("Fin del Mundo") – on the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego province, on the island of the same name. Now, Ushuaia is a city with a population of nearly 100K. Its port is currently the main point of departure for tourists traveling to Antarctica in the summer months (Oct-March). In winter, it is a hub for ski tourism, and also has an industry of duty-free electronics assembly plants. Provisioning this growing city with food, clothing, and housing is not easy. Supplies of food and other consumable goods either come by sea, or travel overland from the mainland of Argentina by crossing into Chile, taking a ferry to the island, and crossing back into Argentina. Ushuaia is a hub for foodstuffs, waste, and people who are traveling to and from Antarctica, and yet often these infrastructural networks are hidden from those who rely on them. This paper will consider the implications of these networks for the tourism industry.

Presenter(s): Clare Sammells

7153 Social Movements as Agents of Urban Change. Experiences from the Global South

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Since Castells' conception of Urban Social Movements in the 1970s, Marxist scholars conceptualized urban environments as arenas of confrontation and struggle. They argued that meaningful and substantive change in urban life and policy could only emerge through conflict. Urban Social Movements act as a contentious and collective force that legitimizes and represents the needs for which citizens mobilize. Rather than being purely disruptive, conflict oftentimes

becomes a proactive and generative process, fostering alliances and opening negotiation channels with state institutions through policymaking. Beyond critique and demands, civil society advances concrete alternatives for urban planning and change. Urban politics articulate citizens' interests and participation in decision-making through formal institutions, such as participatory mechanisms, partisanship, or electoral processes. Yet, they also encompass relationships and networks that extend across different groups and actors operating beyond formal entities or conventional political fields.

An example of how movements advance demands beyond the political sphere and formal processes is their engagement within the bureaucratic field. As Nicholls (2024) argues, this field is a crucial arena for urban struggles; the relationships between civil society and public administration play a key role in channeling demands by movements. Bradlow (2022) suggests that social mobilization can be translated into local policy under two conditions: "embeddedness" of local governments and civil society (e.g., social movements), and "cohesion" - the capacity of local governments to internally coordinate initiatives to drive policy change. Public servants' actions then function as ongoing mechanisms through which civil society strategically operates, enabling the shaping of policies and influencing structural dynamics.

In effect, urban social movements' successes result from continuous negotiations and struggles with local governments and institutions. It is through daily legal and symbolic practices that social organizations challenge the exclusionary rights associated with private and state-owned property, and assert inclusive rights for all. Although place-based initiatives remain small-scale alternatives, they play a crucial role in fostering participatory landscapes. They enable community-driven social services and care, rooted in local specificities while strengthening social networks and deepening bonds. Moreover, they serve as catalysts for systemic and structural change by enabling movements to challenge existing frameworks through direct action.

This panel explores the continuous negotiations of urban social movements with local governments and institutions and the repertoires of action that advanced their causes. For populations faced with dire poverty and lack of access to services and basic resources, urban social movements play a particularly important role in cities of the Global South.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Magdalena Haakenstad , Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes

Chair: Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes

Presenter(s): Friederike Fleischer, Universidad de los Andes, Federico Perez Fernandez, Solimar Carnavalli Rocha, Elis Borde, Bob Kurik, Magdalena Haakenstad

Discussant: Robert Albrow, American University

Presentation(s): From Brothel to Community Center: Social Movements and the State in a Tolerance Zone in Bogotá

Why are some public policies successful and others are not? This apparently simple question is at the heart of our research project about the public Care Policy in Bogotá. Through multi-method

interdisciplinary research, we identified the main actors behind the policy and established a timeline of how it came about. We found that social movements were key to its conception and fruition, particularly local feminist grassroots movements that continuously lobbied to be heard. In this presentation, we focus on the conversion of El Castillo, a former brothel in Bogotá's tolerance zone (where sex work and drug use are tolerated), into one of the Care Policy's community centers. Examining this transformation, we argue that El Castillo has become a sanctuary space for vulnerable populations due to community involvement in the process. The local population was vital in shaping the site's inclusive character and ensuring its continued functionality beyond state intervention—in interviews described as a "70% community – 30% state" relationship. Grassroots efforts have turned El Castillo into a dynamic arena where local collectives and residents negotiate their relationships and the meaning and future of the space. The case illustrates how grassroots movements engaged with the bureaucratic field to successfully negotiate the project. Safe and empowering urban spaces for marginalized communities are only possible through such sustained partnerships between civil society and the state.

Presenter(s): Friederike Fleischer

Co-author(s): María José Álvarez-Rivadulla, Lorenzo Garcia, Adriana Hurtado-Tarazona

Urban Operators: Gondola Lifts and Social Technicians at the City's Edge

During the past two decades, gondola lift systems have traveled from the ski resorts of the Alps to the urban peripheries of the Andes and beyond. From Medellín to Caracas and Bogotá to La Paz, aerial cable cars have emerged as new transit systems for the "informal city," and as key technologies of urban governance and aesthetic transformation in the city's margins. Consolidating previous frameworks of "slum upgrading," "urban acupuncture," and "social urbanism," cable car urbanism has aimed to harness histories of autoconstruction and community organizing to transform the city's periphery from the inside out. Through ethnographic research in Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá, my paper explores the urban gondola lift and its associated spaces and amenities as ambivalent interfaces between state actors and social movements. I focus on the figure of the urban operator: the firm contracted by the city government to run and maintain Transmicable - the Ciudad Bolívar's cable car. In addition to technical matters related to the mechanical operation of the infrastructure, the urban operator includes a "social management [gestión social]" team in charge of community outreach, social programs, and promoting the social appropriation of the cable car in local communities. I examine how urban operators' work as technicians of social life opens ambiguous political spaces and horizons for urban change in which both cooptation from above and mobilization from below are put into motion.

Presenter(s): Federico Perez Fernandez

Urban Struggles and Food Security: The Case of Solidarity Kitchens in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Solidarity kitchens have emerged in Brazil as a grassroots response to rising hunger and food insecurity, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the dismantling of social policies. These initiatives, coordinated by several social movements, respond to deepening urban inequalities

through collective food provision and political organization. Drawing on reflexive thematic analysis of interviews with activists, volunteers, and organizers, as well as participant observation in solidarity kitchens in Belo Horizonte, the research is grounded in collaborative knowledge production between academic and community-based researchers engaged in these practices. It explores how solidarity kitchens function as everyday arenas of political agency and social reproduction in peripheral urban areas. Recently, the process of institutionalization of these initiatives through the National Program of Solidarity Kitchen has introduced new dynamics in their relation with the state, prompting negotiations around bureaucracy, sanitary regulations, autonomy, legitimacy, and policy integration. This paper situates these processes within broader debates on urban social movements, and food sovereignty in the Global South. By tracing these shifts, the presentation highlights how solidarity kitchens illuminate broader processes of urban political transformation in the Global South.

Presenter(s): Solimar Carnavalli Rocha

Co-author(s): Elis Borde, WALESKA CAIAFFA

Eating Politics: Reframing Urban Food Insecurity Through the Lens of Urban Social Movements in the Global South

This paper explores how urban food insecurity has become integral to the mobilization strategies of social movements in a major Brazilian metropolis. Employing participatory-action research with two significant social movements—the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Movement for Struggle in Neighborhoods, Villages, and Favelas (MLB)—the study identifies food insecurity as a priority agenda amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to a context of federal governmental neglect, these movements implemented both local and national initiatives, including food distribution networks, and the establishment of solidarity kitchens.

Utilizing the concept of framing as an analytical tool, the paper elucidates how the food issue has become central to the identity and practices of these movements. This analytical lens highlights how food security is being reframed not only as a political agenda but also through embodied, everyday practices of movement participants. Consequently, this study broadens the understanding of urban activism by exploring how the boundaries and significance of food security are continuously being redefined.

This redefinition enriches a wider ecosystem of public experience—understood as the network of actors involved in the ongoing construction of food security as a pressing public concern—thereby challenging traditional state-centered approaches and suggesting alternative modes of governance within urban contexts.

Presenter(s): Elis Borde

Co-author(s): Lucas Barbi, WALESKA CAIAFFA

Kiltra Resistance: Doing Autonomous Politics with Street Dogs in Post-uprising Chile

After the 2019 uprising in Chile, kiltros, rioting street dogs, created public controversies—vilified as sources of violence by some, while celebrated as rebels, saints and reincarnations of late protesters by others. Expanding from a focus on direct actions, symbols and headlines, the article targets the everyday life of kiltro resistance over the ethnographic case of an anarchist squat in Chile's capital, Los Pies. Unlike the kiltros from fast and effervescent riots, the kiltro resistance of squatting dogs and humans coalesces around fostering intimate and kin-like relationships of long-term alliance, horizontality and mutuality striving to reach beyond the master/owner subordinate framework. Attuning to each other as such, these squatters, we argue, form a more-than-human variation of an affinity group and recalibrate the focus of their struggle to a more doglike defence of the territory and home. In kiltro resistance, dogs emerge as compañerxs (comrades) rather than mere companions.

Presenter(s): Bob Kurik

Co-author(s): Lucia Roncikova

Reclaiming Public Land and Infrastructure: Social Movements as Drivers of Equitable and Sustainable Urban Change

Radical transitions toward equity require marginalized communities and social movements to directly lead dialog with local urban planners, policymakers, and other decision-makers. Based on three case studies from Bogotá, Belo Horizonte, and Belfast, we critically discuss strategies that social movements and community-based organizations have been using to implement urban changes addressing collective issues such as food insecurity, social housing needs, lack of social cohesion in post-conflict areas, and unfair gender-based care burden. While the described initiatives could be seen as "stable" as they are (or strive to be) written into urban policy, it is the everyday hard work of activists, street-level bureaucrats, academics, and other actors that make these cases of sustainable and equitable urban development resist many neoliberal processes simultaneously happening in the studied cities. The findings presented in this paper are part of an international research project, Change Stories. The project uses ethnographic methods of data collection in case study cities and the constant comparative method for comparisons of the cases. Based on specific spatial manifestations of these dynamic negotiations (El Castillo Care Block in Bogotá, a production unit Vila Pinho in Belo Horizonte, and the community garden Grow in Belfast), we will discuss the important role of local communities and social movements in appropriating, enacting and sustaining public urban policies.

Presenter(s): Magdalena Haakenstad

Co-author(s): Helen Pineo

Discussion

5419 The Ocean Multiple: Spectralities of Oceans Otherwise

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM through 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

At a time when concerns about the planet's habitability and livability are taking on new salience in the face of biodiversity and climate polycrises, as well as security and trade conflicts, the ocean has taken center stage. But what is the ocean? Attending to the myriad ways in which the ocean comes into being, this panel challenges the idea of the ocean as a singular entity with a singular presence in the world. The papers explore how the ocean carries, through ebb and flow, an inherent multiplicity and an ever-existing potential for becoming otherwise. Drawing on work that (re)materializes the ocean while considering how it always exceeds its wet materiality (Steinberg and Peters, 2015; Peters and Steinberg, 2019), this panel explores how the ocean always emerges in people's existences with its own 'otherwise'. In other words, how and under what circumstances does 'the ocean multiple' emerge, and with what effects? How, we wonder then, can we understand the ocean in its multiplicity against our current and future challenges, by attending to the ways it always comes haunted by its past, present and future otherwhises? Approaching the ocean through the spectralities of sea spirits, near-extinct marine mammals, insular coral geomorphologies, toxic underwater sediments, technoscientific infrastructures, and decolonial management practices across diverse geographies, reveals an ocean that exceeds itself in spatio-temporal, material and spiritual ways. As such, the panel is an attempt to ethnographically capture 'the ocean multiple' as a multitemporal heterotopia.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Louis Pille-Schneider , Sadie Hale

Chair: Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme

Presenter(s): Shuhei Tashiro, Marius Palz, University of Oxford, Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies, Paula Uimonen, Stockholm University, Lukas Ley, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Lasse Bech Knudsen, Aarhus University, Department of Anthropology, Rosabelle Boswell

Presentation(s): Living on Dead Coral: Geological Specters of Underwater Pasts on an Uplifted Island

We usually think of the physical ground on which we live as composed of inert, nonliving matter such as rocks and sediments. But what if you walked, every day, on the dead bodies of once-living critters in the ocean? Kikai Island in southern Japan is one of the world's fastest uplifting islands. "Just" 100,000 years ago, a geologically short timescale, there was only water and waves to be found where the island is today. Since then, continuous tectonic activity and seismic events have pushed the shallow-water coral reefs above sea level, forming what is now Kikai Island. The haunting traces of its underwater origins are everywhere: a kaleidoscope of coral skeletal patterns appear on rocks all across the island, while apparitions of ancient giant clam fossils are common inside garden wells. How do the people of Kikai make sense of the manifest specters of past marine life in their everyday? In what ways do dead corals figure as lively agents of the ever-uplifting

terrain? What does this story tell us about the promises and perils of geotemporal imagination at a time when thinking on geological scales is critical yet remains so challenging? In this panel presentation, I will explore the geological ghosts of underwater pasts in Kikai and the islanders' imaginative time travels to rethink the ambiguous continuities of the living and the dead, the land and the ocean, now and then.

Presenter(s): Shuhei Tashiro

“They are still alive in memories”: The absent presence of the nearly-extinct Okinawan dugongs

Dugongs stand on the verge of regional extinction in Okinawan waters, with only a few remaining individuals, whose whereabouts are unknown. Occasionally these survivors leave feeding trails behind in the seagrass beds, traces of their lingering existence. However, no actual sightings have been recorded since 2019. Yet, they remain ever-present in public discourse, most prominently as a symbol against the construction of a new military base in the inshore waters of Henoko, but also in the memory of the post-war generation who remember a seascape full of more-than-human entanglements that have largely become unravelled due to coastal development. The former abundance of dugongs also haunts historical documents in the form of catch-quota and they are referred to in a myriad of legends and songs. They have become ghost-like beings, representative of the current extinction crisis. Gan et al. speak of ghosts as "the traces of more-than-human histories through which ecologies are made and unmade" (Gan et al. 2017: G1). It is these traces that need to be taken seriously, if we want to make sense of anthropogenic extinction in meaningful ways. Based on ten months of ethnographic field work, this paper explores the absence-presence relations of these vanishing creatures and how tracing their former existence tells a story of changing environments. Conflicting perspectives of how to make use and care for changing seascapes and their non-human inhabitants exemplify the ocean multiple.

Presenter(s): Marius Palz

Haunted by Materialist Ghosts and Thinking with Sea Spirits in Swahili Ocean Worlds

This paper thinks through human entanglements with sea spirits in Swahili ocean worlds to probe ghosts of the past that continue to haunt academic understandings of the ocean. Swahili ocean worlds denotes how people live with the ocean on the Swahili coast in Tanzania. Their relationships with the sea include various spirits in invisible underwater worlds, in an ocean understood to be created by God. When considered in terms of ocean ontology, the spiritual relationality of Swahili ocean worlds can challenge the materialist underpinnings of scientific knowledge. It is quite common in social science to focus on the materiality of the ocean, while relegating immaterial beings such as spirits to cultural beliefs. By contrast, in African epistemology, we find an ontological hierarchy that spans from spiritual beings to human beings, with the spiritual realm as the ultimate source of knowledge. This paper discusses materialist ghosts and underwater spirits to account for the multiplicity of the ocean from the East African coast. In so doing, it raises some epistemic questions: How can we think the ocean otherwise? Is it really enough to (re)materialize the ocean through more-than-wet ontologies? Or is materialism itself a ghost of our colonial-

imperialist past, haunting us through epistemological blind spots that deny Other ocean ontologies? And is it possible that uncanny spirits in invisible underwater worlds can help us rethink the ocean multiple?

Presenter(s): Paula Uimonen

The spectrality of “legacy sediments” in the Bay of Marseille, France

Dredging coastal sediment aims at keeping ports functional. While sedimentation alimnts marine ecosystems, it can complicate human navigation and occasionally leads to shipping accidents. Sediments make up an ecological infrastructure that enables and upsets economic enclosures of the ocean (Carse 2022). For decades, strongly polluted port sediments dredged from the Bay of Marseille was stored on a dock of the Mirabeau Basin in downtown Marseille. Trying to redefine the city's relation with the ocean, the urban renewal project Euromediterranée is converting former docks of France's first seaport into offices and condos. Charting efforts to contain toxic sediments, I reflect on how contaminants come to haunt emerging relations with the ocean via the existence and movement of "legacy sediments" (James 2013; Vauclin et al. 2020). Legacy sediments are testimony to human environmental alterations—they indicate the previous character of ocean use and shape present and future trajectories of shore development. Carrying heavy metals or PCBs, port sediments are "material witnesses" (Schuppli 2020) of overlapping histories of resource use and practices of geoengineering. They show the ocean as inherently multiple. A hauntological approach to dredging activities in Marseille will allow to capture the "feral" effects of port infrastructure (Tsing et al. 2024) and the role of the ocean—its depth and geochemical composition—in obscuring and revealing the ecological costs of capitalism.

Presenter(s): Lukas Ley

Water as infrastructure: Re-engineering ocean space in the Dutch hydro-tech elite

In this paper, I investigate how future imaginaries of inhabiting the oceans are haunted by past and present terrestrial ideas of infrastructural control. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork in the Netherlands (2021-2024) to trace how Dutch engineers and architects who aim to build floating cities tap into their national history to shape new stories about seawater – e.g. labelling the ocean a 'new frontier'– in an effort to prime the ocean as a habitable place onto which they can extend a Dutch 'moral geography' (Schama 1987). I stay with the notion of seawater as infrastructure to explore the analytical implications for anthropology. Much literature has discussed how water infrastructure or infrastructures of water serve as a biopolitical means to govern citizens (Strang 2016) or a way to assert nation enterprises as modern (Bakker 2012, Linton 2014). However, the idea of seawater as infrastructure raises new questions: How do developers seek to transform a fluid substance of water into a fixed element by way of science and technology? Which kinds of infrastructural control are at play in such new 'technoceanic imaginaries'? I draw on recent ideas from 'amphibious anthropology' (Gagné and Rasmussen 2016, Jensen 2015) to argue that efforts to narrativize seawater as infrastructure are not only a new form of 'hydrosociality' (Krause 2017), but

a highly political development practice fueled by the spectrality of colonial and modernist notions of infrastructural control.

Presenter(s): Lasse Bech Knudsen

Multitemporal and Multispectral Human-Oceans: The Case of South Africa and Lamu, Kenya

New paradigms of ocean management are becoming more prominent in Africa, as national governments seek to leverage both the ocean economy and inclusive ocean governance. In part, this is a response to the decolonial turn on the continent, a process that includes the restoration of indigenous philosophies and beliefs in a bid to restore dignity, knowledge and power to Africans. I discuss the multitemporal, multisensorial and multispectral nature of ocean heritage and show how (1) local/indigenous engagement is advancing a decolonial turn in African ocean management; (2) in South Africa, environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs) now include ocean cultural heritage assessments to include indigenous ocean philosophies and beliefs; and (3) in Lamu, Kenya the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) continues to advance a multispectral view and experience of the ocean. I show how seafarers in Lamu diversely engage with the sea to master proprioception, respond to buoyancy and read the clouds for impending weather and the stars for navigation. In South Africa, the apartheid regime devastated local coastal communities and marginalized their philosophies and practices of ocean management, while in Lamu, continued access to the sea and deltas means that ancient philosophies and praxes of ocean heritage remain embedded in everyday life. This paper articulates the multispectrality of ocean heritage in two African countries and what this might mean for a more inclusive ocean governance.

Presenter(s): Rosabelle Boswell

5019 Ghosts in the Machine: Reanimating Anthropological Engagement with AI

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Artificial intelligence is haunted-by its past imaginaries, by the politics of its present, and by the futures it promises or threatens to deliver. Anthropology, too, is haunted: by disciplinary forebears, by uneven histories of engagement with technology, and by a legacy of critique that, while essential, is not sufficient. This roundtable calls for a renewed, more balanced anthropological approach to AI-one that reanimates the spirit of earlier ethnographic and theoretical engagements from the 1980s and 1990s, before the long silence that followed.

Between 2000 and 2018, anthropological scholarship on AI was sparse and often shaped by critical distance-important but limited in its reach. Since 2018, we see signs of reawakening: a cautious return to the field, accompanied by methodological and ethical innovation. Yet the discipline still tends to linger in the shadows, watching but not always intervening. If we are to shape more just

and humane AI futures, we must step beyond armchair critique and into active, public, and participatory engagement.

This panel takes seriously the 2025 AAA meeting theme of Ghosts to interrogate how past anthropological engagements-and absences-continue to structure the field's current relationship with AI. We ask: What have we forgotten or refused? What insights from past ethnographies of computation, cognition, and automation might guide us today? And how might anthropology become a more generative presence in contemporary AI development, rather than a ghost at the margins?

We aim to foreground a diversity of perspectives, including those of critics, designers, researchers, and educators, to explore how anthropology might both exorcise and embrace its ghosts in the machine. In doing so, we seek not only to critique AI, but to craft new ways of engaging it-ethically, ethnographically, and with an eye toward shaping the future.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Matt Artz

Presenter(s): Todd Pierce , Adam Gamwell , Kate Sieck , Brooke Ann Coco

Discussant: Matt Artz

5613 Illiberal Compulsion

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Over the past several decades, anthropologists have examined the proliferation of illiberal social forms across diverse political contexts, both in the West and elsewhere. Scholars have analyzed, for instance, how the militarization of borders and racialized management of refugees in the United States and Europe have fostered illiberal subjectivities among displaced populations. Others have shown how practices of liberal-democratic governance can paradoxically generate illiberal forms of religiosity. Conversely, research has also traced how the mainstreaming of illiberal politics-and illiberal forms of governance-emerges not in opposition to, but through engagements with liberal publics.

This panel seeks to theorize illiberal social practices as a form of compulsion. We ask: How do illiberal politics, religiosity, and care become crystallized through deeply embedded, repeated acts? How do liberal political subjects come to enact illiberal political dictums, as human rights activists do when advocating for the rights of those living under authoritarian governance within frameworks that ultimately sustain the very systems they seek to challenge (Allen 2013)? How do illiberal state practices encounter insurgent liberal publics, and how do these publics experience or embody such practices? And, in what ways do compulsory social practices create continuities or ruptures between liberal and illiberal politics? By exploring these questions, this panel aims to develop approaches for anthropological research conducted in an increasingly heterodox political landscape-one in which unconscious, habitual, or obligatory acts often unsettle, contradict, and/or

reinforce dominant ideological formations. Conceived both as the (re)emergence of a repressed past (Freud 1958) and/or the enlightened subject's reactionary, dialectical other (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002), this panel also asks how compulsion allows us to discover the haunted, phantasmic politics lurking behind practices that might otherwise be glossed as innocuous and left otherwise undertheorized.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Julian Aron Ross , Eliza Marks

Chair: Julian Aron Ross

Presenter(s): Julian Aron Ross, Alisha Elizabeth Cherian, Eliza Marks, Eddie Pesante Gonzalez, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Chinonye Otuonye, John Clark

Discussant: Ayala Fader, Fordham University

Presentation(s): Reactionary Politics as Liberal Remembering: Religious Piety and Secular Tolerance as (Il)liberal Compulsion in Germany's Jewish Communities

Since the German state's "reforestation" (Tzuberi 2020) of its Jewish population following reunification in the 1990s—a decision that saw the addition of some 200,000 Soviet refugees of Jewish heritage to its small, aging communities—Jewish life in Germany has re-emerged as a visible social and political force. No longer solely an abstraction tied to Holocaust memory or nostalgic Weimar narratives, Jewish life also indexes increasingly right-wing, ambivalently religious communities that challenge the liberal, multicultural aspirations that underwrote Jewish reforestation. Drawing on a year of ethnographic research within Germany's Jewish communities, this paper details the ways in which my interlocutors' frequent disavowal of liberal tolerance and illiberal religiosity is contradicted by their habitual, embodied enactment of the latter. I conceptualize this generative contradiction of secularism as a form of compulsion—a set of repeated acts that, rather than merely negating liberalism, absorb and retrofit its underlying desires. Through this lens, I explore how illiberal subjects navigate the tensions between secularism and religious commitment, reworking the boundaries of belonging and mainstreaming an exclusionary, reactionary politics in the process. By engaging the literature of political secularism (Asad 2003; Fernando 2014; Mahmood 2015), I ask how this framework contributes to our understanding of the rightwing turn and the afterlives of liberalism.

Presenter(s): Julian Aron Ross

State-Sanctioned Pride: Singapore's Pink Dot and Delegating Illiberal Control

In Singapore, where public protest is illegal and political/politicized gatherings require prior state approval, Pink Dot has emerged as a carefully managed version of Singapore's gay pride. Scholars (Oswin 2014, Ramdas 2021) have detailed how Pink Dot presents an assimilationist vision of LGBTQIA+ inclusion aligning with the state's heteronormative ideal of productive, nuclear families, advocating a homonationalist (Puar 2007) future. Less attention, however, has been paid to how its organizers have had to navigate a state apparatus of "illiberal pragmatism" (Yue & Pow 2012) that paradoxically and simultaneously enables and constrains their activism.

Drawing on twenty-eight months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Singapore and data collected at Pink Dot 2016, 2018, and 2022, I examine how Pink Dot's organizers, in complying with the state's increasingly restrictive requirements – such as barring non-Singaporeans and permanent residents from attending, erecting barricades around the event space, implementing metal detectors and security screenings at all entrances, and ensuring that all signs and chants adhere to pre-approved messaging – effectively policed and disciplined queer practices, demands, and bodies within the event itself. Ultimately, I argue that Pink Dot illustrates how the state delegates regulatory power to the event's organizers, transforming them into de facto agents of illiberal control.

Presenter(s): Alisha Elizabeth Cherian

Atmospheres of suspicion: Navigating encounters with the state in Amman, Jordan

Throughout 2023, seeming small actions—discussing politics through humor and allusion, switching phones to airplane mode when controversial topic arose, anonymizing public facing accounts and commentaries—became increasingly common among informants. Each "new" state campaign to silence dissent (Schwedler 2022) and discipline "deviance" appeared to reaffirm the politics of public space. Resulting encounters with the state—including interrogation, detention, clashes at protests, or bans on media platforms—were understood as contemporary articulations in a longer history of suppression. While proponents of these campaigns argued that they ensure state stability and public morality, those affected and concerned about their implications discussed them as tools of intimidation that targeted individuals, their social circles, and civic space. Whispers and warnings about these encounters contributed to the lingering atmosphere of suspicion in the city, but also (re)activated popular modes to navigate and protect against potential threats.

Drawing on 15-months of ethnographic research, I explore how atmospheres of suspicion manifested in behaviors and habitual practices of informants engaged in interlocking intellectual, creative, and activist spaces. I examine how intimate and collective knowledge about encounters with the state circulated within and beyond social circles, and how this circulation was shaped by their context, temporalities, intensity, and proximity.

Presenter(s): Eliza Marks

The Ghost of an Illiberal Brexit: An Analysis of Northern Irish Farmer's PostBrexit Landscape

This paper analyzes Northern Irish farmer's distinctive position in the United Kingdom (UK) in a postBrexit political landscape. This distinctiveness can be better understood through the Brexit referendum campaign in Northern Ireland and how it differed from the discourses in Great Britain, as issues related to the border with the Republic of Ireland, localized political and economic concerns, and the future of European Union (EU) funding were emphasized, rather than notions of migrant control and British sovereignty (Murphy 2021). These localized political concerns relate to histories of ethnonationalist conflicts between Republican and Unionist sectors, and in the farming community Brexit opened the conversation either about liberal notions of gaining control from the

EU over the future of farming or remaining in the EU as a part of dynamics of Europeanization and closeness to the Republic of Ireland (Wilson 2020). This meant that for farmers, their Brexit vote meant a negotiation between their political beliefs and their economic livelihoods, a critically under-addressed dynamic. The main research question that guides this paper is: In what ways did Brexit, as an illiberal form of governance, complicate Northern Irish farmer's relationship with their economic livelihoods and notions of political sovereignty in the region?

Presenter(s): Eddie Pesante Gonzalez

Practicing Return: Jewish Biafran Postcoloniality

What sense of self can be returned in the "post"-colonial? In the wake of independence, African national discourses sought to establish new personalities grounded on an explicitly African sense of self. These discourses over forms of self-recognition that relied on a vision of the past or Cabralian "return to the source" had grounded newly independent African nationalist politics and became a source of contention over the making of a post-imperial future (Diagne and Amselle 2020). How would the production of a new self, an explicitly African self, restructure the racialized global political paradigm? Over 60 years on, these questions still surface as significant for Igbo peoples who live with the legacy of the Biafra-Nigerian War. They ask: How did postcolonial Nigeria fail to extract itself from the recognitional dialectic, producing a version of self that perpetuated the global racialized power imbalance they thought would be eradicated after independence and how was Biafra foreclosed of that possibility? This paper explores the ways in which contemporary Biafran imaginations that rely on a Jewish conception of self, practice "return" as a method of repairing the past and re-capturing foreclosed futures. Further, I explore the ways in which these liberatory temporalities are linked to notions of territorial sovereignty that provide for alternate understandings of continental political freedom.

Presenter(s): Chinonye Otuonye

The Power of Mass Deception: An Analysis of the Illiberal Dispositions Fostered by Self-Help Books

At the present moment, in which meeting societal standards of success is increasingly difficult, self-help books enjoy massive popularity. Often sitting on display in bookshops, these books call out to consumers, promising actionable methods to solve their problems and achieve their ego ideal, their personal spin on the American dream (Leeb, 2024). Underpinning many of these books is the pseudo-scientific paradigm of positive thinking, according to which thought has the power to determine reality. According to this logic, positive thinking can create a reality the subject desires. In reality, the habits of positive thinking expounded by self-help writers translate into repeated practices of self-deception (Ehrenreich, 2009). The hyperindividualism and conviction that one is master of their own reality that many self-help books advocate are conducive to the formation of a narcissistic personality. Under the hypnotic influence of repeated practices of positive thinking, the self-transformation that the reader enacts may become an unexpected transformation into an illiberal subject (Cherry, 2008). This paper draws on several self-help memoirs and my personal engagements with their readership both on and offline to analyze how, using these seemingly

innocuous self-help books, readers adopt illiberal dispositions to cope with the failures of liberal democracy to alleviate the socio-economic stresses endemic to life under late-capitalism.

Presenter(s): John Clark

Discussion

1985 Capital, Law, and Land: Contemporary Imperial Spatial Projects

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores projects of confinement, war, and capital accumulation across imperial contexts. How are distinctions between public and private, legal and illegal, and policing and war, materialized in specific places and projects? What does attention to space and spatial process tell us about state, capital, and political power? The papers gathered here focus on carceral and martial economies and are grounded in methodologies that draw on (old) materialisms in politically committed research to ask how empire and capitalism are consolidated and reproduced as spatial projects. How do these spatial projects give fixity to law and governance? And how do they produce contexts for social relations and subsequent projects and ideologies?

We engage both the paradigmatic sites of repressive political power (the military base, the secret police archive, the prison and the detention center) and less obvious spaces (the suburb, the rubble, the new development) to investigate how they illuminate the processes that maintain and expand domination. The assembled papers consider detention centers in Louisiana, paramilitarism and planning in the Florida suburbs; the political economy of War on Terror black sites; the planned destruction and reconstruction of Gaza; remote warfare on and through a military base in Pakistan, and police archives after Communism in Poland. Each paper attends to political economy as it binds and materializes state and citizens, law and governance, and policing and war.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Kareem Rabie, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Emma Crane, Stanford University

Chair: Emma Crane, Stanford University

Presenter(s): Lydia Pelot-Hobbs, University of Kentucky, Saygun Gökarıksel, Boğaziçi University, Darryl Li, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Madiha Tahir, Yale University, Kareem Rabie, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Emma Crane, Stanford University

Presentation(s): Detention as Repression: The Development of Louisiana's Deportation Infrastructure from the Cold War to Gaza

On March 8, 2025, ICE agents abducted Mahmoud Khalil, marking a heightened wave of state repression against Palestine solidarity activism. Within a few days, it was reported that Khalil was detained at the LaSalle Detention Facility in Jena, Louisiana over a thousand miles from his family, friends, and attorneys in New York City. Only a few weeks later Rümeyşa Öztürk was targeted by ICE

for capture in the streets of Boston before also being transported to the LaSalle Detention Facility. This paper traces the layered historical geographies that have produced Central Louisiana as an epicenter of US deportation. Focusing on the development of material and ideological carceral infrastructures in relationship to political economic crises from the local to the global, the paper will proceed in four parts. First, I will outline the Cold War origins of Louisiana's development as a deportation hub in the 1980s. Second, I will trace how the rise of detention in Louisiana was shaped by the booms and busts of the state's oil economy and turn to mass incarceration. Next I will situate Louisiana's detention capacities within the national intensification of immigrant policing from Clinton's Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act to the War on Terror to Obama's deportation regime. To conclude, I will consider how the carceral infrastructures of immigration enforcement are now being mobilized as a tool of political repression against Palestine solidarity activists.

Presenter(s): Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

Rethinking International Solidarity and Authoritarian Capitalist Politics of Transitional Justice from the East of Europe

Drawing on ethnographic research in Poland, this paper examines the relationship between law, power, solidarity, and transitional justice at a moment characterized by crises of liberal democracy and international law and solidarity and the surge of far-right populism. I will focus on the transitional justice form called lustration, widely employed in postsocialist Eastern Europe, but also in "postwar" contexts such as the US occupied Iraq in 2000s. Polish lustration refers to the public exposing and banning of people identified as secret communist agents (spies) from public office by using communist secret service archives as its chief source of evidence. Focusing on the case of the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński, my paper shows how lustration generated a space of secrecy and suspicion of betrayal while claiming to create public transparency and trust and how rightwing populist politics of secrecy and security grows out of liberal transitional justice under conditions of uneven and dependent capitalist nation-state making in the Eastern margins of Europe. I conclude with a discussion of how the lustration of Kapuściński, an anti-colonial journalist who reported from Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America from 1950s to the 1980s, invites us to consider possibilities for international anti-racist and anti-imperialist solidarity beyond authoritarian capitalist politics of transitional justice.

Presenter(s): Saygun Gökarıksel

Prisons and the Political Economy of U.S. Imperialism

Critical and abolitionist studies of U.S. prisons have developed a robust literature through the lens of racial capitalism to understand prison expansion in relation to questions of land and financialization. Captivity practices in the U.S.-led War on Terror – from Guantánamo Bay to Kurdish-run detention camps in northeast Syria – however, do not readily conform to these models and require a different configuration of carcerality and racial capitalism, one that takes imperialism as a central analytic. Imperialism foregrounds, among other things, the relationship between cross-

border processes of capital accumulation and geopolitical competition – concerns that are largely occluded when domestic U.S. prisons are considered in isolation. This paper will include a preliminary exploration of these questions through comparing recent attempts by the Trump administration to offshore its captivity practices to El Salvador and to the U.S. military base at Guantánamo and the distinctive challenges (both practical and conceptual) that arise.

Presenter(s): Darryl Li

From Humane War to Domestic Fascism: An Inquiry Into Algorithmic War

Technologies that were yesterday hailed as crucial to a new kind of "humane war" are today the infrastructures for an expansive domestic fascism in the US—a situation that is perhaps unsurprising to those who have lived America's digital war. Using ethnographic research on drone warfare in Pakistan, I unpack the expansive entanglements that produce the fetish of the drone and its algorithmic necropolitics. Specifically, I examine the establishment of a US drone base in a small town in Pakistan called Jacobabad that illuminates how "remote warfare"—imagined as precise, surgical, and minimalist—turned out to be expansive and devastating. But, this is not a story of another Global South region passively victimized by drones. Instead, the US drone war made headway through complicated entanglements with local police, security forces, and politicians who mobilized for a variety of conflicting reasons in effective support of the drone war. I conceptualize this offshoring of the 'dirty work' involved in making the drone operational a manifestation of a distributed empire that, like capital, is born out of multiple infrastructural and logistical assemblages and actors at varying scales. These imperial distributions produce gray zones of legality and spaces of ambiguity as a means to attenuate liability and redistribute risk. The elision of these assemblages, moreover, helps produce the fetish character of the drone and by extension the magic of the US imperial formation.

Presenter(s): Madiha Tahir

Gaza Reconstruction and Palestinian Development: Political Economy of the Day After

In the midst of ongoing genocidal violence on Gaza and the Palestinians there, what do rebuilding plans for the future, for "the day after," tell us about contemporary iterations of state and territorial management? This paper examines the wide arc of planning ideologies for Palestine, emerging from the last two US administrations and the Netanyahu government; and counter-plans from the Arab League, and coalitions of the Palestinian bourgeoisie in the West Bank and diaspora. The former seem to have withdrawn from a kind of liberal or neoliberal development model that was operative until only recently. The latter seek to resuscitate that model even in a potentially new regional geoeconomic order. Drawing on prior research on real estate development and national planning in the West Bank, this paper will argue that such plans emerge from contexts of military accumulation and violence, in profoundly militarized or occupied polities, and are intertwined with local movements to reform state institutions rightward. In all cases, plans and plan-making are iterative, top-down spatial strategies that congeal to stabilize current geographic and social dimensions of conflict as they integrate opportunities for individual accumulation and social disaccumulation.

Thus, such an examination may help demystify present features of, and struggles for, the character of state-scale ideology and practice in Israel, the US, and occupied Palestine.

Presenter(s): Kareem Rabie

Force multiplication: Planning, property, and privacy in the suburb

The southern periphery of Miami, Florida, is a base of military operations for the hemispheric U.S. War on Drugs and a staging ground for the War on Terror and migrant prisons at Guantánamo Bay. The movement of military personnel, weapons, provisions, and advisors through the suburb is made possible through arrangements of property and care that reproduce the social and spatial worlds required to wage war. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with municipal and military officials and planners, pro-military activists, and combatants and their families, this paper develops the idea of a "paramilitary suburb:" a space from which war is sustained and a scale at which it is lived. In the paramilitary suburb, activists and bureaucrats intervene in municipal planning processes to accommodate polluting military land uses, including a base; repurpose private housing enclaves and homeowners' associations as barracks; and remake the soldierly home as a site for the gendered reproduction of warfighting capacities. I argue that planning, property, and privacy in the suburb are organized to reproduce American warfighting across scales. Though generally studied as a site of propertied accumulation, this paper instead attends to the suburb as it is shaped by the imperatives of U.S. imperialism.

Presenter(s): Emma Crane

3687 Living with Dialectical Ruins: The Spectral Presence of Chinese Capital Across East Asia

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the dialectical afterlives of Chinese capital across East Asia - its capacity to build and abandon, promise and betray, appear and vanish. We trace how investment-led development leaves behind not just physical ruins but spectral presences: affective intensities, ecological scars, and suspended social futures that continue to shape everyday life. These are not ruins of the past alone but dialectical ruins - unfinished, contested, and charged with both memory and potential.

The five papers examine how Chinese capital's expansive yet unstable presence produces haunted infrastructures and unresolved geographies. In Jeju Island, South Korea, the collapse of Chinese-funded luxury developments like Shinhwa World leaves behind ecological waste and speculative debris - ruins that testify to the entanglement of transnational capital, nature, and Cold War developmental legacies. In urban China, the phenomenon of "rotten-tail buildings" captures how the temporal disjuncture of real estate speculation materialize in half-built homes and frozen legal identities. In rural northwestern China, a medicinal plant - suo-yang, the "root of hope" - emerges

from the ruins of revoked development, revealing how local actors reclaim speculative failure to imagine new futures. In Guangzhou's urban villages, redevelopment plans awaken the ghost of collective landholding, igniting struggles that resist full incorporation into urban logics. Finally, in Wang Jiuliang's documentaries, plastic waste becomes both material ruin and visual ghost, embodying the spectral excess of capitalist accumulation.

Together, these papers theorize the spectral presence of Chinese capital not as disappearance but as haunting residue - a force that animates ruins, disrupts linear development, and demands reckoning. In confronting these dialectical ruins, we ask how people live with, interpret, and sometimes contest the spectral conditions of East Asia's speculative present.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Yadong Li, Tulane University, June Hee Kwon

Chair: Yadong Li, Tulane University, June Hee Kwon

Presenter(s): Nellie Chu, Mengqi Wang, Duke Kunshan University, Yadong Li, Tulane University, June Hee Kwon, Ka-ming Wu

Discussant: Amy Zhang, New York University

Presentation(s): Ghostly Enclosure: Hauntings of the Rural in Guangzhou's Urban Villages

This paper compares the historical trajectories of urban enclosure and economic development among 3 urban villages in Guangzhou. Urban villages are spaces whereby villagers of former Maoist collectives once held or still hold the user-rights to the land. They are spaces that are not fully urban but also not quite rural. Indeed, they are the results of unbridled urbanization in the past few decades.

For example, since the early 2000s, Zhujiang New Town is held as exemplary of urban gentrification and renewal. As the former site of the 2010 Asian Games, this urban village showcases the municipal government's successes of state-led demolition and redevelopment. Yet not far from the site, the historical redevelopment of Xiancun is mired by mass protest and discontent among former villagers. In turn, the stories of these two urban villages subsequently have shaped the experiences of urban development among villagers in Zhaocun, where negotiations of transfer rights and property ownership remain suspended and unresolved. Through these historical, place-based comparisons, I show how the hauntings of rapid urbanization - precarious livelihoods, and rising inequality - set the stage for grass-roots defiance against full urban incorporation in other urban villages across the city. I then reflect on the impact and significance of these case studies on the transformation of the rural, as it continues to leave its traces upon the projects of demolition and renewal in postsocialist China.

Presenter(s): Nellie Chu

"Rotten-Tail-Buildings" and the Haunting of China's Real Estate Economy

In China, an increasing number of developers abandoned construction of on-going housing projects, leaving apartment buildings unfinished. People call these abandoned constructions

"rotten-tail-buildings." Most apartments were already sold through home presales; and many had been sold as migrant families' first homes in cities. Facing the prospect of losing lifelong savings to the "future homes" they had purchased, some families moved into unfinished apartments. With their property deeds stuck in limbo, their dwelling in the ruined and ruinous homes suspended these families in between being at home and homelessness.

This paper suggests that the "rotten-tail building" is a haunting figure for China's urban real estate economy. It shows how the state of "rotten-tail" has been a temporal possibility enfolded in the debt-financed model of real estate development. While buyers view the purchase of a home as an end in itself; developers are normally in a race to coordinate credit circulation and building constructions. Moreover, developers exploit the temporal disjuncture created in the real estate process and profit by bringing together discrepant visions of real estate temporalities. Signifying a failure in the circulation of credit, the state of "rotten-tail" looms as a dreadful possibility haunting the project, in which the cracks and riggings in the concrete become unresolvable and crumble the development agenda.

Presenter(s): Mengqi Wang

Roots of Hope, Ghosts of Development: Imagining Future(s) on the Ruins of Progress in Northwestern China

Taole, a township in northwestern China, was once a frontier of state-led development initiatives, receiving government funding for environmental governance, ethnic demarcation, and infrastructures over six decades. However, for the locals, the administrative demotion of Taole from a county-level to a township-level unit in 2004 signaled the end of development. This critical event not only left ruins but prompted locals to imagine futures in fresh ways.

Speculative development manifests itself in capital-driven projects designed and implemented based on future-oriented projections of growth. When expectations do not eventuate, capital flows elsewhere, leaving traces behind. Drawing on anthropological literature on ruins and development, I explore how ruins of speculative development form the basis for local communities' future-making practices. My entry point is a local medicinal plant called suo-yang, which some locals dub a "root of hope" due to its potential medical and commercial values and its root-like appearance. Focusing on the interactions of residents with the plant, I examine how local communities envision futures after speculative development has been revoked, and how these imaginations remain haunted by ghosts of development. Here, development is not only a social fact but also a "social haunting"; even where it has ended, its promises, provoked aspirations, and unresolved injustices persist alongside imaginations and actions toward future(s).

Presenter(s): Yadong Li

Specter of the Frontier: When Chinese Capital Meets Jeju's Nature in South Korea

Jeju Island's transformation from South Korea's premier tourist destination into a speculative frontier stems from the recent convergence of policy openness and transnational capital mobility.

Although South Korea's visa-free entry for foreign tourists and liberalized investment regulations did not explicitly target Chinese capital, they created fertile conditions that attracted Chinese outbound investment into Jeju's property markets. In this process, Jeju's natural landscapes were not merely passive attractions but were actively mobilized as productive assets, converting ecological features into speculative value. The development of Jeju Shinhwa World epitomizes this dynamic, intertwining nature, policy incentives, and financial ambition into a vision of luxury and prosperity. Yet, as China capital controls and geopolitical tensions escalated, these speculative flows revealed their volatility, leaving behind haunted landscapes of vacant luxury developments, stalled projects, and ecological strain - specters of an aspirational future turned precarious. This paper argues that Chinese capital, while not intentionally solicited, has become a central force in entangling Jeju within global circuits of speculation. By foregrounding the haunting materiality of landscapes shaped by speculative property regimes, the paper reveals how state-crafted openness, and the commodification of nature have produced frontier geographies marked by seductive promises and enduring precarity.

Presenter(s): June Hee Kwon

Plastic Waste as a Figure of Haunting in Contemporary China

In the book *Ghost Protocol*, it is argued that contemporary China is haunted by the ghost of capital, shades of Mao and spectres of Marx (Rojas and Litzinger 2016). This paper adds another layer of haunting: plastic waste. It examines the visual representation of plastic waste as a spectre that lingers, accumulates and transforms in the margins of Chinese cities through looking closely at the documentary films of Wang Jiuliang. Wang Jiuliang is an award-winning film director whose "Beijing Besieged by Waste" (2012) and "Plastic China" (2016) have radically changed Chinese national policy on plastic waste, import of foreign waste and the public awareness of waste and consumption in general. Much attention on Wang's films has focused on the ways plastic waste is related to the rural migrant as under-class, gender and ethnic inequalities in the country. Less attention is paid to the ways the plastic waste itself has formed a certain kind of figure of ruin or toxic landscape in different parts of China. This paper reflects on the understanding of plastic waste, its ghostly presence and its spectral afterlives in hyper-urban and populated setting. Drawing on new materialist theories and object-oriented philosophy of seeing plastic discards as agentic, ambiguous and hyper-viscous, I attempt to rethink Chinese modern spaces, practices and sociality as changed by the ghostly figure of plastic waste.

Presenter(s): Ka-ming Wu

Discussion

3445 Haunted Gateways: Unseen Barriers to Inclusion for Undergraduates in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/21/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Unseen forces shape the paths of undergraduate students in anthropology, determining who enters the field, who thrives, and who is pushed out. Lack of early exposure to the field, financial barriers, social attitudes, and changing state/federal policies are just a few of the ghosts that may prevent undergraduates, especially those from diverse backgrounds, from engaging in anthropological work. This roundtable of undergraduate students sharing their experiences is meant to foster a dialogue on the obstacles that restrict early access to fieldwork, publishing, and professional development, particularly for those coming from marginalized backgrounds (e.g. people who identify as first generation scholars, immigrants, disabled, and non-gender conforming). A majority of our students presented at the 2024 AAA conference, bringing insights from their experiences.

The roundtable discussion will highlight the importance of dismantling these structural barriers, as without early engagement in these areas, undergraduates struggle to build the academic and professional foundation necessary for future graduate studies or careers in anthropology. Participants will lead discussion on the structural ghosts that have limited their undergraduate participation and discuss how faculty, institutions, and peers can actively dismantle these barriers. They will also discuss strategies for making anthropology more accessible, including paid research positions, community-based fieldwork models, and institutional policies that prioritize undergraduate inclusion. By amplifying undergraduate voices, this panel challenges the discipline to reevaluate its structures and commit to a more inclusive and supportive academic community for emerging scholars.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Alexander Hickman , Alexandria Lagergren

Presenter(s): Emily Henning , Whitham Clark , Maryam Imran , Juan Felipe Armenta , Saturn Vogeley , Shelby Wingo

Discussant: Alexander Hickman , Alexandria Lagergren

8597 Network of Christian Anthropologists: Informal Networking Gathering

Start Date: 11/21/2025 5:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

The Network of Christian Anthropologists connects those who identify as Christians in the field of anthropology. All are welcome. Following an informal time of networking, we will go out for dinner together.

498 Happy Hour Poster Session

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Poster

Presenter(s): Michelle Ramirez, Meng SUN, Anne Schiller, George Mason University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Natalie West, Diana McCutcheon, Texas Tech University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work, Steve Bialostok, University of Wyoming, Leanna Wolfe, Katie Clones, John Baugh, Lydia Saravia, Zoe Blalock, Joseph Petersen, Aliya Godoy, Seamus Klingsporn, Hannah Derouen, Li Tan, Md Rifat Hassan Liju, Pennsylvania State University, Roxanna King, Flora Zemleni, Zane Liston, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Charlotte Jones, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Warner Woodworth, Nicole Dufour, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology, Thuraya Sulaiman, Caitlyn Streseman, Michael Fischer, Human Relations Area Files at Yale University, Hengyi Liu, Lilibeth Tome, California State University, Long Beach, Department of Anthropology, Darlene Garcia, Camille Collins Lovell, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Kamran Saddique, Lillian Vandagriff, Katherine Donahue, Plymouth State University, Social Science Department, Alessandra Turchetti, Rebekka Boysen-Taylor, University of Idaho, Wendi Haugh, St. Lawrence University, Ashlyn Weaver, Shanan Fitts, Appalachian State University, Anisa Yudawanti, Diana Rodriguez Allende, Madeline Nicholson, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Yiyao Sun, University of Chicago, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Sean-Micah Stover, Yuhao Ding, Alex Helm, P. Zitlali Morales, University of Illinois, Chicago, Amanda Fulmer Bressack, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Moutushi Mahreen, Pennsylvania State University, Joanna Abillama, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Karla Hernandez, Maegan Taylor, Mason Ng, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Facundo Pereyra-Kluser, Jericho Tran-Faypon, Sadam Hussain, Bradley Carol, Qianwen Xue, Edgar Valles, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Berkeley Robinson, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, Nicole Auhl, Hope Mason, Kayla Jordan, Qing Zhang, Joshua Jung, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology, Caitlin Worthington, CoCo Massengale, Brittany Marshall Davis, Abigail Ryan, University of Florida, Department of Anthropology, Amanda Harris, Messias lima, Sharon Saffold-Harris, University of Arizona, Renee Arehart, Chapman University, Kristina Dove, Daniel Castillo, University of Utah, Madelyn Flores, Haley Goren

Presentation(s): Board #1: 'God Wants Us to be Prosperous in all Things': Spiritual Capitalism and the Transmodern Logics of Multilevel Marketing among Oaxacan Pentecostals

Part of the appeal of Pentecostalism for many Oaxacans is the promise of economic prosperity. At the Divine Light Church (DLC), where I conducted an eight-year longitudinal ethnographic study, the Lead Pastor devotes specific sermons to empresarios (business people) and instructs the congregation about how true believers can attain economic prosperity despite the difficulty caused by 'Latinos' lacking discipline and purpose. This well-worn trope is often used in Latin America and provides a facile and racialized explanation for Mexico's economic lag. Divinely inspired prosperity is certainly the goal of many DLC congregants, as most Oaxacans struggle economically and employ novel ways to make a living. Becoming a direct seller for a Multilevel Marketer (MLM) is one

such way. While Amway and Herbalife were the first MLM companies to appear in Mexico, dozens of homegrown imitators, such as Omnilife (OM) have also flourished. The late Jorge Vergara, OM's founder created a company infused with a Mexican ethos of caring for los demas (others) that stands in contrast to the imagined purely self-interested 'gringo.' In this poster, I discuss how some OM distributors consider themselves to be a 'kind of social worker', because their capital gain is a result of caring for los demas; thus, also infused with spiritual meaning that aligns with their Pentecostal sensibilities. This self-help-sociorelational capitalism defies racialized logics of anti-prosperity, allowing DLC congregants to perform key cultural tenets of Mexicanidad while becoming prosperous, thus performing the work of transmodern citizenship.

Presenter(s): Michelle Ramirez

Board #2: "I'm Sorry I Can't Give You a Hug": A Foucauldian Analysis of Normalized Different-Gender Teacher-Child Physical Contact in a Chinese Preschool

Physical contact, as a daily practice in preschool, plays an important role in conveying care, building trust, and enhancing the emotional connection between teachers and children. However, one concern that is always difficult for teachers to ignore is how to establish the boundaries of intimate physical contact with young children, especially when the teacher and the child are of different genders. Situated within China's cultural context, where traditional prudence governs gendered interactions, overly intimate cross-gender physical contact between educators and children can be controversial, teachers' behavior is actually subject to the gaze and scrutiny of macro-social culture.

This study critically examines the sociocultural dynamics of different-gender physical contact between teachers and young children in a Chinese preschool, framed through Foucault's conceptualization of normalizing power. By employing an anthropological lens, this study interrogates the tacit boundaries of physical contact, making familiar habits "unfamiliar" in order to reveal tensions that are overlooked in taken-for-granted teacher-child interactions and how teachers negotiate domination and resistance in their everyday practices.

Utilizing an ethnographic methodology, the study draws on about six months of fieldwork (September 2023 - January 2024; March-May 2024) at a Shanghai public preschool, combining participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive field notes. The sample comprises two kindergarten classes (N=51 children aged 5–6 years) with contrasting teacher configurations: Class A (27 children) features an all-female teaching team, while Class B (24 children) includes a female lead teacher alongside a male assistant teacher. This comparative design facilitates a nuanced analysis of how gender mediates physical contact practices between teachers and children. All four teachers (aged 25–33) in these two classes participated in the interviews, enabling the examination of normative negotiations in cross-gender scenarios.

Through the Foucauldian framework, the study reveals how normalized norms of physical contact intersect with moral panics and cultural anxieties in early childhood education. Findings demonstrate how teachers navigate paradoxical expectations-balancing affective pedagogy with

self-surveillance against potential moral censure-while children unconsciously reinforce gendered scripts through differential interaction patterns. This study contributes to discourses on embodied care in education by contextualizing China's distinctive cultural logic surrounding touch, gender, and childhood vulnerability.

Presenter(s): Meng SUN

Co-author(s): Sihan Xiao

Board #3: A Coffee by Any Other Name Would Taste as Sweet: Authenticity and Caffè Leccese

Levi-Strauss suggested that food is good to think. Anthropologists of food have since demonstrated that it is also good to talk about. Food terminology, like food itself, carries cultural and social meaning. The food highlighted in this presentation is a drink associated with the southeastern-most reaches of Italy's Puglia Region, the sub peninsula called Salento. A distinctive geographic, historical and cultural zone, Salento's so-called cultural capital is Lecce, nicknamed "The Lady of the Baroque." Among the most popular beverages there is "caffè con ghiaccio e latte di mandorla" (coffee with ice and almond milk). Its origins may date from centuries of Spanish control. The version enjoyed today, however, is credited to a local family with a coffee roasting firm and the son who, eighty years ago, combined the three ingredients in a novel manner. In recent years this drink has also become known as "caffè Leccese." As its popularity has widened, so, too, has disagreement regarding what to call it. How to refer to the drink was, in fact, the theme of a series of demonstrations held in 2023. Paradoxically, whereas one might expect that the shorter name would be a source of pride, the reality is more complicated. Some residents consider the term "caffè Leccese" to denote local laziness, lack of civic pride, or a truckle to tourism. In this presentation, controversy over how one "should" order coffee in Lecce is a springboard to consideration of broader issues surrounding the revalorization of the local in Leccese identity, in particular in the face of social changes associated with tourism and immigration.

Presenter(s): Anne Schiller

Board #4: "Pushing the Agenda?" How LGBTQIA+ Communities Construct Support Networks in Rural Spaces

In July of 2024, the citizens of the city of Lubbock checked their daily news platforms, only to discover a shocking story. The Lubbock City Council had decided in a 5-2 vote, to cut \$30,000 of grant funding dedicated to the city's art scene due to what they deemed an unspeakable horror. The event that was so terrible it required what many citizens considered an outlandish response? A drag pageant the council assumed was being hosted during one of the city's most popular, and most economically lucrative attractions. First Friday Art Trail is a farmer's market style community event hosted on the first Friday of each month of the year. This event features art showcases ranging from Master's theses paintings to local band performances and hosts vendors that sell everything from jewelry to embroidered pieces to pottery amidst local food trucks. The ghastly truth of the funding being pulled? The drag pageant was hosted separately from First Friday Art Trail, the only connection between the two being their location. Rural cities often garner the reputation of being

haunted by the ideals of America's past, particularly when it comes to the rights and existence of LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, like any good spooky story, there are many layers of nuance to the visibility, presence and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people. This research has been taken up in the wake of increasing censorship towards LGBTQIA+ individuals and rights. My research argues that community events such as the First Friday Art Trail, Pride events, etc. allow LGBTQIA+ individuals in Lubbock to construct support networks through inclusive spaces. These support networks foster the building of community outside of public events, despite the continual haunting presence of Homophobia in the very same support structures.

Presenter(s): Natalie West

Board #5: "The Basque Community of San Antonio, Texas: An Arts-Based Visual Ethnography and Exploration of Basque Immigration, Basque Community, and Identity"

Using Art-based research, I have conducted visual ethnography to study Basque culture, focusing on their artifacts and traditions. My interest lies at the intersection of community and cultural transformation, aligning with the ethnographic turn in the arts. I am integrating theoretical constructs from visual cultural studies and place-based scholarship in my research, extending arts research through interdisciplinary work. From an ethnographic perspective, one of the interesting aspects of this project is how the past, the present, and the future are entangled. Sharing items of material culture can sometimes provide a tangible connection to intangible memories, mythology, and legends regarding culture, place and identity.

I argue that despite the Basque culture and community having a historical presence in San Antonio before the days of the Alamo, the Basque population has been marginalized from the time of the Spanish Missions through today. Although there are persons currently residing in San Antonio that have immigrated from the Basque Country during their lifetime, who self-identify as Basque, or have Basque heritage going back many generations, the Basque culture and community presence has been subverted within the larger Hispanic/Latino culture of San Antonio. Certain individuals with Basque heritage have received recognition, as many in the past held important and prestigious positions throughout the history of the city. However, acknowledgement of the Basque culture has been largely ignored. Much of the early Basque population migrated to San Antonio from northeast Mexico, which was comprised of Basque and Indigenous communities. At one time, this northeast area of Mexico was part of the first original "state" of Texas under the Mexican government. Given the long history of Texas and Mexico, borderland issues, and assimilation over time, many people in the San Antonio area have Basque surnames, but are not aware of their Basque heritage. Presently, even though there have been efforts to raise awareness of the Basque culture and community in San Antonio, the results have not been hugely successful. However, for those who are aware of their Basque heritage and identity in San Antonio, there remains a fierce pride and acknowledgment in the culture and history of place. Basque identity and culture in San Antonio is entangled with the long history of colonialism and post-colonialism. Entanglements and complexities regarding colonialism and post-colonialism continue to be present in this area of Texas, as immigration issues and borderland culture are ongoing. Will the contributions of the Basque culture ever be

officially recognized in San Antonio, Texas? That remains to be seen. However, this project aims to raise awareness about the presence and importance of Basque culture and identity in San Antonio for future researchers, and for those who celebrate Basque culture, identity, and community in San Antonio, Texas today.

Presenter(s): Diana McCutcheon

Board #6: "A Whole Lot of Nothing: An Ethnography of Joy, Play, and Black Placemaking "

This poster presentation examines how play functions as a form of Black placemaking through an ethnographic study of elderly Black men who gather each evening at a Denver city recreation center. Located in a historically Black neighborhood undergoing gentrification, their nightly meetings manifest the spirit of play, expressed through domino games and lively, playful rhetoric. Drawing on five years of fieldwork, I demonstrate that these acts of play transcend mere leisure, emerging as intentional, collective efforts to preserve and reaffirm Black identity and community. These practices foster a sanctuary of joy amid urban change, countering the erasure of cultural spaces and asserting the men's enduring presence and significance.

The Card Room, where the men gather, becomes a haunted space-not in the spectral sense, but as a site where the past echoes into the present. In the face of gentrification, the men's playfulness serves as rituals of resistance, conjuring the memories and legacies of a once-thriving Black community now threatened by erasure. This interplay of past and present makes the space feel both anchored and transient, as if the ghosts of past residents linger within the laughter and domino clacking. Central to the interactions in the Card Room is the practice of 'talking shit,' a playful, assertive form of communication that interweaves with domino games. The men describe it as 'a whole lot of nothing,' yet it serves a crucial function: fostering social bonds and maintaining a sense of continuity within their community. The study demonstrates how talking shit, characterized by its loud, confrontational, yet humor-filled tone, is not an expression of hostility but a deeply rooted cultural practice that reinforces camaraderie. Through these verbal performances, the men transform the Card Room into a vital 'homeplace'-a term borrowed from bell hooks (1990) that denotes a space of belonging and refuge where Black identity is celebrated. This research positions the playful, resilient practices within the Card Room as a form of resistance against the displacement wrought by gentrification. As the surrounding neighborhood transforms, the men's rituals of gathering, playing, and talking shit act as counter-narratives to the dominant forces seeking to displace them. By maintaining this space of Black joy and cultural expression, they challenge the encroaching erasure of their community and preserve the historical significance of their environment. In this way, the men's gatherings function as hauntings, keeping alive the spirit of community that gentrification seeks to overwrite. The playful banter and ritualistic games are not only a defense against displacement but a way of refusing to be forgotten-of refusing to become ghosts themselves. By weaving the past into the present through play, they make visible the persistence of Black identity in a space that others might deem already lost.

Presenter(s): Steve Bialostok

Board #7: A Kiss is NOT Just a Kiss: Beyond Western Cultural Myopia

Depending on context, the kiss can be imbued with meaning. It can be a culturally prescribed greeting, a generator of interpersonal bonding and an escalator of erotic intensity. It can facilitate a grand conversation between lovers that goes beyond words in a dance of co-creativity. Partners may simultaneously penetrate and receive each other. DNA is exchanged potentially improving the other's immunity or becoming a vector for the transmission of illness. Kissing, being a cultural construct, depends of the mean a culture ascribes. A kiss can be perfunctory, pushy, inappropriate, friendly, formal, imbued in romantic value or quickly forgotten. This poster presentation will engage the author's original research where she tests differences in kissing satisfaction amongst subjects who were breast fed vs those who were bottle fed. Considering the potential for greater human interactivity for those who were breast fed, she explores how this is expressed in terms of how adult kissing patterns are experienced. Are kissing subjects regarded as overly wet, aggressive and engaging or as uncomfortably dry, passive and non-exploratory? Is eye-gazing considered valuable? Correlations being considered include age, ethnicity, gender of one's partner(s), participation in alternative lifestyles and the number of lifetime sexual partners. The presence (or lack) of seduction motivation will be explored as well. Presumably this motivation must be present for a kiss to feel potent as well as satisfying, while in its absence a party to a kiss may experience sexual violation.

Presenter(s): Leanna Wolfe

Board #8: An Exploration of Educational Language Ideologies in an Arizona Community

This poster will present a pilot study of community focus groups. This study is designed to explore the educational language ideologies of community members (families of ELD students, families of non-ELD students, as well as community members without active students). This pilot is part of a larger dissertation, a Vertical Case Study of the language ideologies of educational stakeholders involved at various levels of the field.

Presenter(s): Katie Clones

Board #9 Anthropological enhancement for forensic linguistic analyses of adult male African Americans in civil and criminal cases.

This poster presentation examines four legal cases involving African American men-two criminal and two civil-through the lens of forensic and anthropological linguistics. While traditional forensic linguistics often emphasizes author identification using large language models in cases like suicide notes or anonymous threats, this study applies sociolinguistic methods-particularly discourse and conversation analysis-to assess language evidence presented in court.

The two criminal cases involve murder charges supported by wiretap recordings of jailhouse conversations. Phonetic and discourse analyses revealed key transcription errors in prosecutors' exhibits. As the expert linguistic witness in both trials, I demonstrated how inaccurate interpretations of African American English (AAE), particularly references to gang affiliation and

legal strategy, misrepresented the defendants. These findings contributed to avoiding death penalty convictions.

The civil cases address linguistic evidence in workplace discrimination and vehicular liability. One case involved African American workers whose White supervisors allegedly used racial slurs. The African American employees claimed to have experienced workplace discrimination by White supervisors who derisively referred to them (i.e., the Black male workers) as "monkeys." However, the defense claimed that this allegation was false, indicating that the supervisor had no racial malice, but did state that "the job is so easy a monkey could do it." Discourse analysis helped distinguish between racist intent and generalized expressions, supporting a class-action settlement in favor of the plaintiffs. The second civil case analyzed dashcam recordings from a waste truck involved in a collision. The plaintiff claimed the pre-crash dialogue among the Black drivers indicated intent; however, conversation analysis showed the remarks were unrelated to the accident. The case was dismissed based on expert linguistic testimony.

This poster compares forensic linguistic methodologies used in these cases and critiques prevailing author identification techniques, highlighting their empirical and interpretive limitations when applied without anthropological linguistic grounding.

Presenter(s): John Baugh

Board #10 Archives, Technology, and Historical Memory: Learning in the classroom

While teaching a class on Historical Memory and Guatemala, I assigned an article, published by NACLA in 2021, Historical Memory in the Digital Age (Alvarado, Juárez, and Gettleston). The article informs on GAM, Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo, a human rights organization in Guatemala that has recovered thousands of documents from the 36-year armed conflict. During the 36-year armed conflict, activists, scholars, and Indigenous alike were tortured, disappeared, or killed by the military. Recovered material include state documents, posters, news clippings that preserve a history of violence, often silenced in Guatemala. The authors explain how a partnership with Haverford College to digitize the archive is an endeavor to protect the archival material and make them accessible to the larger Guatemalan population.

In class, this NACLA article allowed us to enter into a conversation on the preservation of documents, the role of archives and the role of technology in preserving history and memory. I had not been prepared (but hoped) for the ghost that emerged.

At the start of the course, I shared with the students a personal family history tied to our Historical Memory theme, my father's aunt who was murdered in 1980 in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. In 2014 when I embarked in my doctoral research in Guatemala (unrelated to her murder), I began to meet and interview people who knew her, had met her, and were witnesses to the attempted murder (she was gunned down in front of the school where she was director, later to be killed in the hospital by masked gunmen). Digitally, online, not much was available in 2014 other than a one sentence encyclopedic entry on the date of her murder. Her name was just a name on a long list of students, academics, activists and innocent civilians killed during Guatemala's 36-year

armed conflict. Any information I was able to gather was in the form of stories I collected with those who would speak to me.

As I prepared to teach and enter into dialogue with my students on the NACLA assigned reading, I looked up the GAM Historical Archive. There, on my computer, in the newly released archives, I came across a newspaper article of that fatal day. Sharing it with the class, the conversation on archives and technology took a personal (and maybe) much more urgent conversation. The summer after that class, preparing for a conference, I reentered the archives and found a police ledger with her name on it.

In *The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the Emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology*, citing Langford (2016), Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi (2022) highlight that maybe it might be worthwhile for the ethnographer to allow their work to be haunted. Since 2014, my scholarship and classroom has been haunted. My father's aunt appears and reappears as if to say, "tell my story."

This poster presentation will share the newly found police ledgers and news clippings as a result of the GAM digitized archival project.

Presenter(s): Lydia Saravia

Board #11 Artifacts of Activism: Artistic Expression & Symbolism at the UC Santa Cruz Gaza-Solidarity Encampment

In spring 2024, UC Santa Cruz became a focal point for student protests through the student-led Gaza-Solidarity Encampment, where art and activism intersected powerfully. At the encampment, art was more than decoration—it served as a vital tool for communication and solidarity. Signs, banners, and other visual artifacts expressed resistance and unity, creating a dynamic space for political engagement and personal reflection. This study explores artistic practices at the encampment to better understand its role in shaping identity and fostering a sense of community. A visual-digital ethnographic approach was used to identify emergent themes -- and the resulting analysis revealed a resilient community, grounded in the rich history of the American student protest movement, that boldly explored identity through artistic expression and symbolism.

Presenter(s): Zoe Blalock

Board #12 Assembling Experience: An Archaeological Case Study from the Ancient Andes

Psychoactive substances have been consumed in the Americas for millennia. Some of the first evidence of psychotropic drug use in South America is found in north central Peru, viz., the geographical and historical sphere of influence of the Chavín-Cupisnique (1200-500 BCE) and Moche (200-900 CE) religious traditions. This project is interested in the context of psychotropic drug use in both systems, the explicit references made to these substances in the material cultural record, and the symbolic and practical edifices within which archaeologists believe they were embedded.

The Chavín-Cupisnique phenomenon offers us a window into the development of early (i.e., "formative") Andean social systems that set the stage for societies like the Moche. The utilization of public rituals as a pragmatic and predictive tool in periods of uncertainty (Rick 2017) was an important technological advancement disseminated by the Chavín-Cupisnique and continued by the Moche. This might have involved varying degrees of access to entheogens and, conceivably, the instrumentalization of entheogens in projects of establishing regional authority.

In my project, I utilize computational techniques to analyze the "sets and settings" of artifacts (e.g., ceramic vessels and ritual paraphernalia) both to add an objective metric to the current interpretations and to determine to what extent the differences and/or similarities in political, shamanic, and social structure between the Chavín-Cupisnique and Moche are reflected in material culture.

The research I hope to present at this year's AAA meeting, which draws heavily on ecological approaches to active inference (Pezzulo et al. 2024; Tison and Poirier 2021; Constant et al. 2018; Parr and Friston 2018; Ramstead et al. 2016; Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014), assemblage theory, and extended mind studies (Welshon 2019; Clark 2015; Di Paulo 2009; Di Paulo 2005; Tomasello 2005), investigates psychotropics as technologies or tools that potentially scaffolded the social and cognitive formations of these two systems in vastly different ways, leading to great divergence in the field of cultural affordances.

Presenter(s): Joseph Petersen

Board #13 ATRAPADO EN LIMBO: FRONTERAS, ANTHROPOLOGISTS, AND TRANSLATION IN COTEXTS OF THE MISSING AND UNIDENTIFIED AT THE MEXICO-US BORDER

"...even just talking to families, talking in a Guatemalan accent, or sometimes in Mexican, like more like go to the Mexican accent, has been very helpful for the families to just feel like they're talking to somebody closer to them...But also I think it opened a lot for them to be able to connect with me too back knowing that I can understand a little bit more from the science side but also the human side and to melt that a little bit. (formal interview, 06/03/24)" - Zia

The Missing Migrants Project reports that in the past 11 years, 11,138 missing migrants have been recorded in the Americas, with 6,512 of those migrants situated at the Mexico-United States (US) border (Migration Within the Americas, n.d.). Zia, an anthropologist working at the border, faces this crisis daily, interacting with families of missing migrants, forensic anthropologists, medical examiner's offices, consulates, border patrol, and so many other actors. This research attempts to address the crisis at the border, expanding on the scholarship of family agency and language barriers between Spanish-speaking communities and medicolegal actors by investigating the role of anthropologists, like Zia, in networks of communication (Monge, 2003) at the border, and the forms of translation that they employ. By conceptualizing fronteras (border, frontier, limit) as not just the Mexico-US border itself, but as barriers to communication, this research attempts to understand how anthropologists engage with these fronteras through translation shaped by their particular expertise. Zia forms paths of communication by engaging English and Spanish, different

dialects of Spanish, forensic expertise, and personal experiences that create connections with the different actors in these medicolegal investigations. Within the context of la frontera, language is not only a resource (Gal 1989), but access to a common language can be considered a necessity. The construction of pathways for information flow is complex and requires consideration of all involved stakeholders, the real and various barriers to communication, and how anthropological expertise can be used to navigate these pathways. The formal interviews, casual conversations, and observations with Zia and other anthropologists demonstrated that extensive fronteras to communication exist, including language barriers, inequitable access to funding to ensure migrant representation in databases, need for time, intentional miscommunication, and inconsistent data-sharing practices due to the decentralization of data and/or unshared centralized data. This paper discusses how anthropologists working with migrant communities navigate such fronteras through their expertise and training, forming strategic and holistic relationships, and practicing intentional acts of care, as well as how fronteras can be further exacerbated through the overreliance on specific individual translators and communicators, like Zia.

Presenter(s): Aliya Godoy

Board #14 Bigger and Stronger: An Ethnography of Casual College Weightlifters

Lifting weights is an activity rife with gendered meaning. This poster will engage with lifting to elucidate the ways masculinity is tied up with musculature, what that means, and how we might change it. The poster is developed from my undergraduate honors thesis research, in which I conducted ethnographic research among casual young (18-24) lifters in Boulder, CO. In the thesis I discuss the ideals, aesthetics, and norms which construct the gym as a gendered and engendering space and analyze their relation to broader gendered norms, particularly hegemonic masculinity. I first argue that lifting provides a site for the embodiment and perpetuation of a neoliberal market ethic at an individual embodied level through the valorization of hyper-individualism, antisociality, self-discipline, endless progress, and the accumulation of personal value through gender capital. Then I turn to the themes invoked in the title: size and strength, which represent the primary motivations for why most men lift. Both these values, I argue, link masculinity to power and a capacity for violence, which marks men's muscular bodies as masculine and powerful and women's as the inverse. Lastly, in the end of the thesis I explore the contradictions and fragilities in both of these previous approaches to understanding lifting's relationship to gender roles and power. I posit the term "bro performativity" to describe moments of contradiction and reflection which reveal the arbitrary nature of masculinity's relationship to the values expressed through lifting. These moments, I argue, provide men with the capacity to exert their agency over the gendered frameworks reproduced by lifting and change them through radical discourse and social action.

Presenter(s): Seamus Klingsporn

Board #15 Challenging Gender and Queer Normativity in Collegiate Softball: A Preliminary Study

This poster builds research with a Division III collegiate softball team to consider how softball is a cultural, gendered, and ritualistic performance. Specifically, how softball allows student-athletes to embody resistance against the forced heteronormative feminine gendered binary that has historically been imposed on women athletes. While using Butler (1990; 1993)'s gender performativity, I explore how the ritual of a softball game and how through this ritual, players critique and challenge existing social structures surrounding gender and queer normativity. For example, the strength and aggressiveness that is required for athletes to dominate on the softball field goes against the societal expectations that women are supposed to be weak, passive, and submissive. Additionally, I use feminist phenomenology (Young 1980) and embodiment theory to investigate why these structures and societal expectations are put on to women athletes, particularly softball players, while I also consider how the bodies of softball players are central to the experience of being a student-athlete in the context of a Division III institution.

This discussion draws on interviews and participant observation with a Division III softball team in the Southern United States. If awarded scholarships, student athletes at Division III institutions are only awarded scholarship based on academic merit not athletic ability: thus, facing the pressure to excel not only in the sport, but also in the rigorous course load required by their schools. Additionally, the game of softball requires a distinctive mix of physical and intellectual skills as athletes reflect on the intense physicality and acute mental agility of the sport. Softball teams often welcome a wide range of gender expressions and gender identities; however, softball – especially in the South – often includes overt expressions of Christianity, setting up contradictions in norms and expectations. I explore how athletes perceive the expectations of heteronormative sexuality and feminine gender expression and how softball creates a space for embody resistance to dominant binaries.

Presenter(s): Hannah Derouen

Board #16 Children's Agency and Learning in a Chinese Immersion School: Insights from the Little Tiger Community

This study promotes equity and inclusion by centering children's agency within a culturally and linguistically diverse Chinese immersion preschool. Using video-cued ethnography, it highlights how young children assert agency in collective, relational ways-challenging dominant Western models of early learning. As a Chinese international PhD student, I bring a cross-cultural and reflexive lens to this work, uncovering how power and culture shape both children's experiences and my own interpretations.

Drawing on culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), participatory learning (Genishi & Dyson, 2009), and culturally grounded understandings of agency (Adair, 2014; Colegrove & Adair, 2014), this study challenges dominant discourses that prioritize standardization and individualism. Using video-cued ethnography (Tobin et al., 2009), it examines how children's agency is negotiated within community relationships and shaped by cultural practices, highlighting the value of relational, context-specific learning.

The research process involves ethnographic fieldwork in two preschool classrooms over one semester; video documentation capturing children's agency in structured and unstructured moments; teacher interviews and video reflections to discuss agency and pedagogy; researcher self-reflection using video analysis; and reflection sessions with parents and community members to examine agency across contexts. As a researcher and participant, I documented shifts in my assumptions about agency and early learning. This iterative process deepened engagement with the data and served as a methodological tool to interrogate how cultural background and prior experiences influence interpretations.

Preliminary findings show that children demonstrate agency even within a structured Montessori curriculum, particularly during outdoor activities. Despite the structure of Little Tiger's Montessori approach, children actively make choices and influence their learning. Outdoor activities provide key opportunities for child-directed exploration, collaboration, and decision-making. Additionally, weekly school-wide gatherings foster agency through collective knowledge-sharing and cross-cultural exploration. These gatherings, involving performance, storytelling, and interaction, allow children from a multilingual community to learn from one another. This shows that agency is also relational and rooted in community.

This study pushes back against dominant narratives that equate agency with individualism and detachment from cultural roots. Instead, it argues that agency is contextually negotiated and deeply embedded in children's relationships with peers, families, and traditions. The research urges educators to reconsider what counts as agency and how policy and pedagogy can support community-driven, culturally responsive learning.

Presenter(s): Li Tan

Board #17 Colonial Echoes, Neoliberal Shadows, and Everyday Resistance in a Bangladeshi Preschool

This poster submission examines the hauntings of the colonial past and the shadows of the neoliberal future in an early childhood classroom in Bangladesh, exploring their enduring presence. Through this ethnography-oriented participant observation in a Bangladeshi preschool classroom, I trace the remnants of British colonial schooling and neoliberal desires for competitive futures in everyday classroom interactions. Here, I analyse the classroom as a liminal site (Turner, 1969), where power, memory, mimicry, and aspiration collide, creating a place where the past entangles with the present and the future.

Drawing on an ethnographic approach, my participant observation, conversational interviews with teachers and students, and detailed fieldnotes from a preschool classroom in Northeast Bangladesh enable me to witness and document children's responses, reinterpretations, and sometimes resistance to everyday schooling practices rooted in colonial discipline and neoliberal economic logic. These subtle negotiations by the children situate their lived experiences and embodied practices within the specific cultural and historical contexts. Through vignettes of classroom moments, I demonstrate how children's reappropriation of physical exercises

historically rooted in colonial disciplining of the body (Nandy, 1984) transforms into acts of mimicry (Bhabha, 1994) and refusal.

In the classroom, a state-sanctioned unified curriculum privileges a singular linguistic register, marginalizing regional dialects and oral traditions. In response, children subvert these norms through code-switching, singing local songs, and customizing national anthems, producing potent acts of epistemic resistance. These linguistic performances materialize the hauntings of suppressed local cultures and challenge the homogenizing post-colonial project of nation-building education. Through selective engagement and acts of *flânerie* (Benjamin, 1999), children navigate "borrowed" (Penn, 2011) models of classroom arrangements to make these spaces their own, enacting resistances that question the imposed logics of productivity and developmentalism (Penn, 2011; Rao et al., 2022). These resistances and negotiations represent forms of epistemic disobedience and alternative futurities, where children are the active agents.

By demonstrating classrooms and educational spaces as an assemblage of multiple forces (Latour, 2005), I argue that early childhood spaces in Bangladesh can become sites of multiple possibilities. The paper ultimately tries to explore what it means to foreground the creative, subversive, and haunting practices of young people as they navigate landscapes saturated with colonial and neoliberal ghosts.

Presenter(s): Md Rifat Hassan Liju

Board #18 Community Based Participatory Research and Indigenous Research Methodologies in an Alaskan Tribal Health Setting

Southcentral Foundation (SCF) conducted a community based participatory research (CBPR) program to advance Indigenous health equity in Southcentral Alaska, honoring and uplifting Indigenous Knowledge. We started by conducting a landscape analysis of existing food sovereignty, food security, and diet and health programs in the Tribal health system and broader community. This process allowed SCF to identify the numerous ways food sovereignty initiatives were being implemented and areas where support was needed to uplift and strengthen these efforts. Findings from the landscape analysis informed the development of a food sovereignty-focused community advisory board (CAB). The CAB prioritized the planning and implementing of a conference-style gathering highlighting regional efforts to document, revitalize, and share cultural food knowledge and practices while connecting those efforts to health and wellness. In August 2023, we hosted the SCF Traditional Foods Gathering that celebrated the diverse ways Indigenous food sovereignty, food security, and diet and health related initiatives have been conducted across Alaska. The gathering helped the Indigenous community celebrate all the ways our peoples' have built relationships with plants, animals, the land, sea, and sky. These efforts aimed to support the transmission of knowledge across generations with an Indigenous and decolonized view of food and health. This presentation will describe our project successes, opportunities for improvements, and the next steps.

Presenter(s): Roxanna King

Co-author(s): Kyle Wark, Austen Rogers, John Trainor, Georgia Michlig

Board #19 Constructing the "Good Citizen": Contesting Stances Toward Standard American English in an Adult English-Learner Classroom

Building upon work in educational anthropology on how immigrants learn new languages to access new forms of social capital (Warriner, 2008; Monzó & Rueda, 2009) and to gain state inclusion (Migliarini & Cioè-Peña, 2024), this paper examines the stances toward language learning that immigrant Latinx mothers take up in an ESL class in Southern California. The mothers wanted to learn Standard American English (SAE) to index a social persona of "the good citizen." Yet even as they were constrained by pressures from the state, the mothers exerted their own local agency in shaping the English-language classroom.

The intensifications of state violence and surveillance of U.S. immigrants in recent decades have had material and discursive implications for immigrant social lives (De Genova, 2002, Rosa, 2019). We bring this into conversation with work that documents how immigrants have responded to these pressurized positions (e.g. Abrego & Schmalzbauer, 2017). Building on this, we examine how a group of Latinx immigrant mothers see SAE (in particular accent) as a crucial way to respond to state discourses of illegality, languagelessness, and exclusion.

In this study, we deploy ethnographic methods of participant observation as volunteer ESL teachers to analyze classroom activity. We emphasize methodologically that our own positioning in the class - as teachers and observers, afforded us a unique vantage point at the fulcrum of tensions between our language ideologies and those of the mothers.

We examine moments when the women pushed back on our pedagogical approach, advocating for what they understood to be their, and their peers', language learning needs. As teachers and researchers, we had a pedagogical approach that sought to validate translanguaging, de-center pronunciation, and minimize corrective feedback. Yet, the mothers often pushed for a prescriptivist approach, asking for more correction, more lessons in SAE pronunciation, and more grammar drills. Through classroom discourse analysis, we analyze how hegemonic discourses around citizenship shaped what these women felt they should learn. At the macro-level, the women often felt pressured to strive toward an 'unmarked,' 'unaccented' English as a means of appealing to an idea of the unmarked white, "good" citizen, centering a standard language ideology in their learning. At the meso-level, the mothers' agency within the class allowed them to challenge our teaching approach as an exercise of their own sense of local control at the resource center. They pushed back as a means of taking ownership of resources they wanted to receive and to enact care for one another, by making clear how learning a certain kind of English would help them support each other in the difficult political road ahead.

Presenter(s): Flora Zempleni

Co-author(s): Jackson Gzehoviak

Board #20 Contemporary Nomads in the United States: Community and Self

This project examines contemporary nomadism in the United States, focusing on how individuals construct identity, negotiate agency, and navigate societal exclusion within a culture that privileges settlement. While much research on mobility has centered on either digital nomads or economically precarious vehicle dwellers, this study bridges these perspectives by exploring how nomads actively resist mainstream life scripts while managing structural constraints. Drawing on Victor Turner's concept of liminality, Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality, Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology, and Graham Pruss' theory of settlement bias, this research situates contemporary nomadism within broader discussions of identity formation, spatial politics, and state regulation.

Through a multi-method ethnographic approach-including participant observation in digital and physical nomadic spaces, semi-structured interviews, and survey data-this study captures the lived experiences of nomads who transition from settled life to mobility. Findings reveal that nomads employ a range of strategies to maintain autonomy while forming supportive communities in both virtual and physical spaces. Many frame their choice as a rejection of capitalist labor structures, rigid housing markets, and prescribed social expectations. However, this study also highlights the contradictions within nomadic life: while participants emphasize mobility as a path to freedom, they remain subject to legal barriers, economic precarity, and public stigma.

By examining the narratives of contemporary nomads, this research challenges dominant perceptions that equate stability with success and mobility with deviance. It argues that contemporary nomadism is not simply an alternative lifestyle but a reimagining of selfhood, community, and agency in response to a society structured around permanence and property ownership. Ultimately, this study contributes to anthropological understandings of mobility by illuminating the ways in which nomads balance independence with structural vulnerability, revealing both the liberatory and precarious dimensions of life on the road.

Presenter(s): Zane Liston

Board #21 Crafted in Fire: Cattle Brands as Artifacts of Ethnogenesis in Frontier Louisiana

Brands & Marks, registries better known as cattle brands (pyroglyphics), are often regarded as trivial outliers or anomalies meant to demarcate livestock ownership. This poster briefly surveys how cattle brands registered by diaspora peoples in Frontier Louisiana (1766-1812) became visual texts to record, preserve, and create cultural knowledge upended by colonialism and displacement.

In anthropological studies about 18th and 19th century Louisiana, research around processes of cultural change has historically focused on creolization, syncretism, or transculturation. Research of pyroglyphics suggests that identity formation in Louisiana also emerged as a form of ethnogenesis- a process of cultural adaptation in response to, from, and against, dominant colonial powers. Cultural anthropologist Jonathan D. Hill's definition of ethnogenesis expands on this identity transformation as a "synthesis of people's cultural and political struggles to exist as well as their historical consciousness of these struggles" framed by intentional acts of resistance and preservation (1996, p.2). Pyroglyphics are enmeshed in, capable of, and susceptible to

transformative relationships in networks beyond brand design, creating meaning across time and place that emphasize kinship, agency, mobility, and cultural adaptation.

To properly analyze these pyroglyphics, I cataloged over 1,500 registries from two primary sources and coded them by name, date, and racial designation when noted. I also coded the brands by preliminary style categories based on visual elements such as design anomalies or similarities to other registries. After initial coding, brand registrants by Acadians, gens de couleur libre (free people of color) and Indigenous people were selected for further data collection and cross-examined with other primary sources.

The results emphasize how African, Acadian, and Indigenous people, at the turn of the 19th century, created and reclaimed pyroglyphics as mediators of self-identity and resistance. These findings will aid researchers engaging in historical scholarship to better understand practices around genealogy, diasporas, and power, particularly where traditional written or oral sources are lacking.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Jones

Board #22 Action Research on Empowering Blue Collar Labor Through Worker Ownership

In my academic work over decades, whether at the University of Utah, at Michigan in Ann Arbor, Claremont in LA, at the University of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, etc., I've often sought to understand both economic anthropology and action research. Creating, preserving and strengthening new socio-economic challenges in the USA is increasingly now expanding. An important means for this in my work recently is the use of various social science methodologies to facilitate the establishing of manufacturing cooperatives, democratic Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), and other radical strategies that also build community development.

Traditional corporate Human Resource programs for "controlling" blue collar workers in manufacturing industries generally consist of top-down rules, education, training, team-building, and other methodologies which seek to influence and motivate people. Most are generally designed to have laborers work harder and increase their loyalty to the firm.

In contrast, my research focuses on alternative economics, bottom-up change with substantive enterprise restructuring that not only alters the system of corporate power, but yields heightened work performance, substantive employee empowerment through meaningful and shared ownership, whether ESOPs or co-ops. Done intelligently, both of these strategies facilitate greater worker liberation and function to restructure actual ownership, putting workers in as managers, board members, and/or shop floor team leaders.

My paper will briefly highlight three innovative cases, reported and analyzed as tools for achieving heightened productivity, greater business profits, less turnover, increased job motivation, more genuine team performance, higher incomes, and greater long-term worker commitment in the enterprise. How they succeed or fail, their structures, and implications for not only the USA, but developing nations, are suggested.

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Presenter(s): Warner Woodworth

Board #23 Discourses of Dog Care in the Alaskan Distance Dog Mushing Community of Practice

Distance dog mushing in Alaska represents a unique multispecies context for viewing human-animal interaction and the human-canine bond, as the sport involves humans and dogs working cooperatively to traverse rugged terrain, in extreme weather, with little to no contact with other humans, and limited access to resources. These challenges, and the associated multispecies bond required to overcome them, are saliently marked in discourse throughout the sport of distance mushing. This study uses discourse analysis methods to investigate how discourse is used to construct, reproduce, contest, and negotiate ideas and practices associated with providing world-class dog care to distance sled dogs in Alaska, as these are constructed in the interactions of the distance mushing community of practice. This project aims to clarify the various meanings of dog care, canine wellness, canine health, and related terms associated with the distance mushing community of practice. This will include documenting and analyzing the similarities and differences in how various community of practice subgroups provide and conceptualize dog care and wellness, as displayed through language use in context. Discourses of dog care in such extreme conditions are expected to show that dog care and expectations about dog care are dynamically tied to place and context. It is also expected to show that the meanings of dog care differ based on different environmental, social, and interactional contexts.

Presenter(s): Nicole Dufour

Board #24 Education in Context: Cultural Reasoning and Academic Practices Among Emirati University Students

This paper explores how students in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) navigate higher education within a macro ecosystem shaped by collectivist cultural values, the relatively recent

institutionalization of formal education, and evolving social expectations. Using qualitative methods - in-depth interviews and online ethnography - this research examines how structural forces such as family obligations, social cohesion, and linguistic barriers influence students' perceptions of academic integrity and their everyday academic practices. Through the lens of Boudon's General Theory of Rationality (GTR), the study understands student behavior not as purely instrumental, but as shaped by reasons that are socially and culturally meaningful. By situating these practices within the lived realities of Emirati students, the paper challenges individualistic assumptions around educational conduct and contributes to broader conversations about youth, modernity, and ethical reasoning in post-oil Gulf societies. The findings offer insight into how tradition, structural power, and contemporary educational demands intersect in the shaping of student life.

Presenter(s): Thuraya Sulaiman

Board #25 Echoes That Endure: Analyzing the Impact of Cultural Heritage on Bahamian Interest in a Lucayan Legacy Collection on Grand Bahama

The archaeology of the Bahamas illustrates a long, but incompletely understood settlement history beginning with the earliest inhabitants, the Lucayans (circa AD 700-1530). After the arrival of Europeans, Lucayan populations were forcibly removed, temporarily depopulating the Bahamian Archipelago. The current population of the Bahamas primarily consists of African and European descent, sharing no genetic ties to the Lucayans. Despite the lack of genetic ties, researchers have suggested that modern Bahamian population feel a connection to the Lucayan and wish to learn more. This research examines what the residents of Grand Bahama (The Commonwealth of the Bahamas) know about Lucayan Archaeology and if they wish to learn more, as a part of a larger research project on a Lucayan-aged Legacy Collection on Grand Bahama.

Presenter(s): Caitlyn Streseman

Board #26 Ethnography as Language Model: Speaking Beyond the Text

This poster session explores the use of Large Language Models (LLMs), or Generative Artificial Intelligence, as tools for dynamically evaluating ethnographic writing. Given that LLMs are frequently trained on extensive datasets that include a significant number of ethnographic texts, these offer a unique tool through which to examine and understand cultural representations. Rather than possessing inherent understanding, LLMs function as mediators, connecting myriad authors, voices and perspectives embedded within their training data to the reader. It is essential to recognize the "plural" in authors, as LLMs do not generate responses from a singular perspective but extrapolate from ranked, multiple sources. The generated text is an amalgamation of the diverse cultures and voices present in the training data.

LLMs operate primarily through pattern recognition, identifying relationships within the vast amounts of text processed. Their output is based on statistical correlations and contextual associations, producing text that echoes human language patterns. The meaning attributed to the

LLM's generated text is ultimately derived from the reader's interpretation within their own cultural and cognitive framework. This research proposes utilizing LLMs to evaluate new ethnographic texts, examining the models' ability to capture and reproduce culturally specific language patterns. By doing so, we can better understand the limitations and capabilities of LLMs in representing cultures, and potentially gain fresh perspectives on the practice of ethnographic writing itself. This approach opens up new avenues for using LLMs as tools for anthropological research and cultural analysis.

The capacity of Large Language Models (LLMs) to generate text is fundamentally tied to the inherent structure and usage patterns of human language, as captured within their diverse training datasets. These datasets, acting as comprehensive models of language use, enable LLMs to produce responses that readers perceive as meaningful. This observation carries profound implications. For instance, it suggests that the origins of language may be rooted more deeply in social interactions, cultural transmission, and the accumulation of knowledge within communities, rather than in biological adaptations.

Furthermore, this perspective has significant ramifications for our understanding of language more broadly, and for ethnographic writing specifically. If an LLM can construct a viable working model of language use simply by processing examples of language in practice, and then effectively mediate that model in communication with a person, it indicates that language is not merely a passive encoding of internal cognitive functions. Instead, it suggests that language is a dynamic, adaptive system that conserves and transmits knowledge. Language, in this view, serves as a medium for shared external cognition, playing a crucial role in the very process of cultural transmission.

Presenter(s): Michael Fischer

Co-author(s): Ben Kluga

Board #27 Expanding the Boundaries of Teacher Discourse in Mediating Multiliteracies: An Introduction to a Multimodal Framework

INTRODUCTION: Current research on teacher discourse places excessive emphasis on interactional skills, competencies, and strategies, often grounding discourse studies in a "verbal-centric" orientation within classroom settings. This narrow focus restricts our view to situating discourse within a broader sociocultural framework that can account equally for other non-verbal meanings in communication. Moreover, in afterschool contexts, it overlooks teachers' language use as a system of symbolic tools that play an essential role in mediating multiliteracies and interactions.

PURPOSE: This conceptual paper seeks to reconceptualize teacher discourse by introducing a multimodal framework within a broader sociocultural lens. Its purpose is to expand the recognized boundaries of teacher discourse by highlighting the role of multimodal semiotic modes, as reflected in both human interactions and digital technologies.

METHODS: The proposed framework is grounded in the author's empirical studies which were conducted over the past decade in various afterschool programs across the U.S.

RESULTS: This paper deconstructs the framework to demonstrate how different modes work collectively to represent important meaning.

CONCLUSION: The study highlights the benefits for both pre-service and in-service teachers who need to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills to leverage linguistic resources, various media, and both verbal and non-verbal modes in communication.

Presenter(s): Hengyi Liu

Board #28 Food Narratives: An Ethnographic Analysis of Food Insecurity

This qualitative ethnographic study examines how socioeconomic status and geographic Location influences food insecurity among Latino/a households in the greater Los Angeles area. Food insecurity is defined as limited access to adequate food due to financial constraints or other resource limitations. In U.S. cities, food insecurity is often linked to food deserts-areas with restricted access to nutritious foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables (USDA ERS). This issue disproportionately affects communities of color, including thousands of Los Angeles County residents. Over four months in 2021, thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted with food-insecure residents across Los Angeles County. Findings reveal that participants often face barriers such as limited education, undocumented legal status, and language challenges, preventing them from securing jobs that provide a stable income for a healthy diet. Notably, while not all participants reside in food deserts, all experience food insecurity, highlighting broader structural (e.g., location of markets) and idiosyncratic socioeconomic factors contributing to this crisis.

Presenter(s): Lilibeth Tome

Board #29 Flavorful Encounters: An Exploratory Study Unveiling the Experiences of Night Market Vendors in Los Angeles

Driven by economic survival, street vendors in Los Angeles have transformed public sidewalks into strategic "informal" innovations, with night markets being the latest manifestations. With the presence of cultural delights ranging from aguas frescas to birria tacos, community members can immerse themselves in a culinary paradise that functions as a vital economic space. I employ a mixed methodological approach including ethnography, photo-documentation, and in-depth interviews. It is these approaches that allow me to shed light on how night market vendors operate their businesses, co-create spaces of cultural belonging, and utilize social networks to alleviate economic strain. In this study, I ask the following research questions: (1) How do night markets support vendors in establishing their businesses while also creating a space for cultural expression and community belonging? (2) How do vendors market their products, manage day-to-day business responsibilities, and utilize community networks to expand their operations? (3) What challenges do night market vendors face, both in operating their businesses and maintaining profitability? This

research ultimately seeks to uplift the contributions of vendors, often Latinx immigrants, who play a vital role in the informal economic sector and in nourishing our communities.

Presenter(s): Darlene Garcia

Board #30 From Family Farming to Migrant Families: Farm Owners' Perspectives on Labor, Kinship and Nostalgia on Vermont's Industrializing Dairies

Collapsing wooden barns and abandoned silos are the architectural ghosts of dairy farming in Vermont. Though they still evoke the bucolic landscape tourists expect, they rarely store hay or silage now. On a shrinking number of ever-larger farms, hay is stored out-of-doors, in white plastic-wrapped round bales resembling giant marshmallows, while silage is bulldozed into cement-walled bays, covered with black plastic and old tires. Amid these changes, the social composition of farms has also transformed, though it remains nearly invisible to passersby and dairy consumers. Most current farm owners grew up working alongside family members and a few local hired hands; today's industrialized farms require more labor, provided largely by undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America. These workers live year-round on farms, work 70+ hour weeks, have limited labor protections, and are haunted by the specter of deportation. While my ethnographic research centers on the experiences of the women and families that form a growing proportion of migrants, this final chapter examines farm owners' views on the changing workforce: their memories of family farming, their new relationships with migrant families, and how their notions of kinship shape decisions-such as offering flexible schedules or better housing to women and families to ensure stability and retain skilled workers, or allowing migrant children to play at farmwork in the barn and pretending to pay them for their labor.

Presenter(s): Camille Collins Lovell

Board #31 Ghosts in the Machine: Anthropology's Archives and AI's Gendered Epistemic Violence in Pakistan

Ghosts in the Machine: Anthropology's Archives and AI's Gendered Epistemic Violence in Pakistan

This paper examines how colonial-era anthropological archives on gender in Pakistan influence contemporary artificial intelligence (AI) systems, perpetuating epistemic violence against women through algorithmic governance. Focusing on Pakistan as a case study, this research explores how 19th- and early 20th-century British colonial ethnographies, which constructed Pashtun, Punjabi, and Sindhi women as "oppressed" subjects, continue to shape AI training datasets and automated decision-making in policing, social media moderation, and financial inclusion programs. Through archival research at the British Library and analysis of current AI systems deployed in Pakistan, I trace three key continuities: first of all; the persistence of colonial "civilizing mission" logics in AI-driven gender-targeted development programs; secondly; the silencing of Pakistani women activists through content filters on social media platforms; and lastly, the perpetuation of Victorian anthropological theories in predictive policing algorithms in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. These findings highlight the ways in which

colonial knowledge structures are reactivated in contemporary AI systems, offering a pathway to decolonize AI by incorporating women's oral histories into algorithmic retraining.

Through archival research at the British Library's India Office Collections and analysis of contemporary AI systems deployed in Pakistan, I demonstrate how these technologies reactivate colonial knowledge structures while erasing local feminist resistance. However, I also explore how Pakistani digital activists are creating "counter-archives" of women's oral histories to retrain algorithms-suggesting possibilities for decolonial AI. This research contributes to: Feminist anthropology of technology, Decolonial critiques of algorithmic governance and South Asian digital ethnography.

Presenter(s): Kamran Saddique

Board #32 Ghosts in the Neighborhood: Tracing Memory, Place, and Power Through Youth Perspectives

How might shining a light on the spectral voices of youth-unheard, forgotten, and often excluded-guide us toward more vibrant, just neighborhoods? Launched in 2023 under the leadership of Dr. Alysa Handelsman at Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC, the Youth Perspectives project seeks to understand how young people experience their neighborhoods-and how those experiences can inform more inclusive, responsive decision-making in local planning, funding, and policy. This collaborative, multi-year research project brings together Wofford students in Ethnography and Quantitative Methods courses, who have conducted one-on-one interviews, group listening sessions, and participatory mapping workshops, alongside the creation of GIS visualizations. At the heart of this project are the voices of 3rd and 7th grade students from three Spartanburg public schools. This project has sought to understand what shapes youths' neighborhood life: the buried histories, silenced voices, and power structures that linger in the landscape. It has also sought to explore students' understanding of resources, and their conceptualizations of dream spaces as reflections of lived experiences. By bringing together qualitative and quantitative data, we explore how community planning and development decisions continue to haunt communities, often through racial segregation, socioeconomic divides, and adult-centered decision-making.

In Summer 2025, we will organize and analyze two years of data and launch a multi-modal public website that shares our findings with the broader Spartanburg community. The website will present data and preliminary analysis on a range of topics, including youth definitions of neighborhoods, their understanding of resources, and their conceptualizations of dream spaces as reflections of lived experiences. Additionally, the site will feature a comparative section, analyzing data across neighborhoods and age groups to explore similarities, differences, and the meanings behind them. We will also design components that allow Spartanburg residents to engage in the processes of research design, analysis, and presentation. Furthermore, we will host public presentations to provide additional opportunities for residents to engage with this ongoing research project.

This project invites questions that continue to guide our work: What might we gain when we invite youth into the conversation about the places they call home? How can a mixed method approach,

like ours, showcase youth perspectives more effectively? How can planning be transformed by the insights of a neighborhood's youngest residents? By making visible the often unseen, or ghostly experiences of youth in community planning, Youth Perspectives offers both a framework and a call to action for centering young voices in shaping the future of our cities.

Presenter(s): Lillian Vandagriff

Board #33 Ghosts of Memory: France and Germany Wrestle with the Past and With a United States in Chaos

In 2019 we (Donahue and Heck) published the edited volume *Cycles of Hatred and Rage*. We compared right-wing movements in Europe with the mounting influence of Donald Trump and his MAGA movement on the Republican party, culminating in his election in 2016. We noted that in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index for 2017, of three countries, Germany, France, and the United States, only Germany ranked as a "full democracy", while the US ranked slightly higher than France as a "flawed democracy". In the 2024 Democracy Index, while Germany and France both improved their ranking, the US had fallen to third place.

This poster addresses what, for the moment, has been the complete takeover of the Republican Party by Trump's second term. We analyze how extreme right parties in France and extreme right and left parties in Germany have responded to this takeover, and to his antagonism towards, and the chaotic response of his administration, to Europe.

When Trump returned to the presidency in 2024, right-wing groups in Europe hailed his election. On February 9, 2025, right-wing leaders from Europe met in Madrid at an event titled "Make Europe Great Again". Trump, said Marine Le Pen of the French party Rassemblement National (RN), would make a "real change" for Europe. However, within two weeks the enthusiasm for Trump and his administration was waning. On February 21, 2025, Jordan Bardella, president of the RN, canceled his speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Maryland saying that Steve Bannon had used a "gesture alluding to Nazi ideology" the day before. On February 28, the combative Trump-Zelensky meeting in the Oval Office hit the news. Le Monde reported that Marine Le Pen, who had formerly supported Russia, "timidly distances herself from Donald Trump". On March 4 "she twice disavowed the Trump administration". In late March her five-year ban on running for political office called into question her political future.

Unlike France, the extreme-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the extreme-left Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) continue to be pro-Russian. However, the AfD has embraced, and been embraced by, Trump and his supporters, while Sahra Wagenknecht's position has been more muted. While she believes an alliance between Trump and Putin will bring peace in Ukraine, she mistrusts Trump's support. Yet she failed to pass the 5% hurdle in the February 2025 federal elections. She and her party may have little influence on federal politics.

What lies behind the varying responses of the extreme right parties in France and Germany? We argue that the ghosts of the 1930s play a role in understanding these differences. We use ethnographic and media analysis drawn from decades of fieldwork, and familiarity with the

changing situation in France and Germany, as political parties try to position themselves in a world leaning toward authoritarianism while the ghosts of the past loom over the present.

Presenter(s): Katherine Donahue

Co-author(s): Patricia Heck

Board # 34 "(K)not for Sale: Exploring Tungkulus in the Philippine Commission and Metcalf Sisters Collections"

Behind the intricate design and meticulous craftsmanship of a tungkulu lies a wealth of information, complex relationships, and loud silences. The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition (LPX) in St. Louis featured a Philippine Reservation, where Philippine people and cultural items were displayed, including members of the Bagobo, an indigenous group from southern Mindanao. Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf, unmarried, economically independent, amateur anthropologists, visited this Philippine Reservation and were inspired to move to Mindanao shortly thereafter. The Metcalf sisters employed local women to create products for sale for their store, the Little Home Shop. These products included tungkulus, a special headcloth traditionally produced for and worn by Bagobo maganis (warriors). The collections curated by the Philippine Commission of the LPX and the Metcalf sisters feature tungkulus, which prompts reflections on a) the production practices and characteristics of tungkulus and the cultural beliefs associated with them, b) the relationships the Metcalf sisters had with the local Bagobo community, the women they employed, and their desire to document, collect, reproduce, and sell local crafts, and c) the persisting silences about the craftspeople and their experiences that exist in these spaces. Using objects and archival materials from the Anthropology collection and National Anthropological Archives of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, this project explores these points within the broader scope of what it means to create a representative collection.

Presenter(s): Helen Martin

Board #35 Ghosts of Race across the Mediterranean: Researching Blackness and whiteness between Italy and Morocco

This poster presentation examines the enduring specters of race that shape contemporary perceptions and lived experiences of whiteness and Blackness across the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the socio-cultural and historical entanglements between Italy and Morocco. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, archival research, and postcolonial theory, the study investigates how racial categories are historically produced, negotiated, and contested within everyday practices, media and artistic representations, and migratory trajectories.

Based on these premises, it presents two interrelated phases of my research. The first stems from a doctoral project in Cultural and Social Anthropology focused on the representations and lived realities of Blackness in contemporary Morocco, particularly among Black Moroccans and so-called 'Sub-Saharan migrants'. The second, developed in the context of current postdoctoral

research, investigates the nexus between race and citizenship in Italy, through the biographical narratives of young diasporic Italians of North African origin.

Methodologically, the study adopts a transMediterrAtlantic approach (Zaccaria 2016), inspired by Gilroy's (2020) notion of the Black Atlantic and by recent conceptualizations of the Black Mediterranean (Proglia et al. 2021). This perspective aims to articulate a critical and transnational analytical framework capable of simultaneously engaging with local articulations and broader regional and global configurations of race. Rejecting methodological nationalism, the research also includes a reflexive engagement with the positionality of the researcher-as a white, Italian woman-while problematizing the category of whiteness itself within the Italian context.

Ultimately, this presentation argues for the need to critically examine the Mediterranean not merely as a geographical space, but as a dynamic site of racial formation, shaped by colonial afterlives, migratory flows, and shifting imaginaries of belonging and exclusion.

Presenter(s): Alessandra Turchetti

Board #36 Grappling with our Racialized Past and Present through Participatory Ethnography with Youth

Polarized public debates about whether and how to discuss race and racism at school, centering adult views, dominate U.S. media and policy. During five summer sessions in 2022, a diverse group of twelve youth, ages 14-17, met with a former teacher (that's me) to discuss race. Members of the Rural Youth Research Collaborative set boundaries for race talk, discussed specific ways that race is salient in their everyday lives here in the rural west, and utilized participatory ethnographic methods to analyze and document what was shared. During contentious political times, the space they created for shared, open dialogue was seen as valuable and affirming to youth in this study, and can be a model for future youth collaboratives. Findings from this study center youth stories about race, racialization, and racism alongside urgent youth-generated recommendations for teachers and schools. As Americans continue to grapple with the ways past and present racialization matter today, consultation with youth is a pathway toward creating more relevant, supportive, and just learning environments. The findings from this study offer teachers, schools, and researchers a chance to better understand how young people develop and enact racialized identities in and beyond rural places, alongside ways they can support youth starting tomorrow.

Presenter(s): Rebekka Boysen-Taylor

Board #37 Haunted by the Past, Grounded in the Present, Hoping for the Future:

East African Bird Guides Pursuing Professional Trajectories Through the Pandemic

To do their work well, professional bird guides must spend years learning to identify hundreds of species of birds by sight and sound, mastering the art of finding birds in their habitats, learning to design itineraries for birders with different desires and budgets, honing the logistical, linguistic, and social skills needed to lead successful tours, and building extensive professional networks characterized by significant sociocultural, economic, ethnic, and national diversity. All of their

efforts, all over the world, came to a sudden halt when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, grounding bird guides at every stage of their careers. Over the following months and years, guides had to navigate multiple unpredictable shutdowns and re-openings as they looked back on what they had lost, considered what they could do in the moment, and prepared for the futures they imagined might come to pass.

For this poster, I draw on social media posts, Zoom conversations, and e-mail exchanges as well as in-person interviews conducted in fall 2023 to convey the varied professional trajectories pursued by bird guides in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda through the pandemic. While some guides dropped out of the profession to pursue livelihoods which seemed more secure in unprecedented times, others took up economic activities like chicken farming, charcoal selling, or cake baking to support themselves while simultaneously working to maintain or further develop their professional skills and networks in the hope that they could one day return to guiding. Some young guides-in-training took advantage of the shutdowns to focus on gaining fundamental skills and knowledge, while the most active guide trainer in Uganda aimed to ensure that enough guides would be ready to work again when the time came. Their stories demonstrate the resilience and creative flexibility of people determined to pursue a profession they love through pandemic-related upheavals, qualities they may soon need to draw on again as economies around the world face a significantly heightened risk of recession for very different reasons.

Presenter(s): Wendi Haugh

Board #38 Hawaiian Cowboys: Paniolo Culture, Mexican Vaqueros, and the Untamed Beasts

The Hawaiian Paniolo (cowboy) tradition reflects a distinctive blend of Indigenous Hawaiian culture and the influences of Mexican and Californian ranching practices. This research explores the archaeological and historical accounts surrounding the emergence of the Paniolo, highlighting their cultural significance to the Hawaiian Islands and its connections to broader trans-Pacific and transcontinental ranching systems. Examining primary and secondary data reveals that the arrival of Mexican vaqueros in the 1830s transformed Hawaiian social, economic, and pastoral practices, leading to the development of a distinct Paniolo identity characterized by cultural resilience and adaptability.

Presenter(s): Ashlyn Weaver

Board #40 Ib Tsev Neeg (One Family): In our own voices

We can either tell our stories in our own voices or others will do it for us. There is a power that comes from owning and sharing your journey - a lived experience that only you can give voice to. ~ Workshop Participant

Our poster will introduce conference participants to the Nrhiav Koj Lub Suab/ Roots and Routes project, which created a generative space for Hmong American community members in North Carolina to share and make meaning of their life experiences. Roots and Routes was a series of digital storytelling workshops grounded in principles of popular education, which centralizes

peoples' experience as powerful sources of knowledge for naming and solving problems (Freire, 1993; Highlander Center, 2025). In the summer of 2022, an intergenerational group of Hmong community members came together to share experiences, make connections, build agency, and create digital stories. Participants engaged in theater games, collaborative writing, and dialogues regarding their journeys, challenges, and dreams. Each participant developed a digital story that reflected an aspect of their experience that they wanted to share with the larger community. These digital narratives provide counter-stories to the barrage of dehumanizing discourses that attempt to define who immigrants and refugees are and can be in our communities (Carter, 2014; Chávez, 2013). Our poster explores the questions: 1) What are the affordances of using popular education approaches within the specific context of Hmong participants; and, 2) What aspects of identity (gender, race, class, skin color, language, cultural knowledge) did participants highlight in their digital narratives? Our data sources include fieldnotes, program evaluation responses, and the content of participants' digital stories. Popular education promotes the idea that communities are stronger and more powerful when members share stories and strategies for navigating dominating institutions, which is compatible with Hmong cultural norms that recognize strong in-group networks through a clan social structure (Yang, 2013). The popular education pedagogies we engaged with provided an opportunity for participants to explicitly address some of the tensions they navigated in their community regarding gender roles and language use, especially across generations. In viewing the stories produced by participants, several important themes emerged including maintenance, and loss, of language and cultural practices, access to education, and developing resiliency in the face of economic and social challenges, such as poverty and racism. Older participants' digital stories often highlighted a trajectory towards material success, while younger participants' contributions acknowledged the sacrifices of their elders and grappled with their efforts to learn about Hmong history and culture on a deeper level. The poster presentation will spark reflection and raise awareness of the Hmong people and their history in the U.S.

Presenter(s): Shanan Fitts

Co-author(s): Greg McClure

Board #41 If These Walls Could Talk: Negotiating the Echoes of Carcerality and Coloniality in School Infrastructure

Schools are widely understood as sites of social reproduction: spaces where racialized, gendered, and classed inequalities are maintained through curricula, discipline, and institutional practices (Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1979; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Wun, 2017). Yet comparatively less attention has been paid to the physical infrastructure of schooling: the material environments through which these logics are made tangible, spatial, and affective. This study examines how racially marked youth engage with the often-overlooked architectural and infrastructural dimensions of their schools.

Drawing on data collected at a high school in a mid-sized city in the Midwest, this study engages in three distinct participatory methods: spatial mapping (Futch & Fine, 2013), walk-along interviews (Kusenbach, 2003), and photo voice (Wang & Burris, 1997). These methods attend to the youths'

embodied school navigational practices and illuminate physical manifestations of broader logics of containment and control as youth interact with and experience them.

This project contributes to anthropological and educational conversations by rethinking how space, materiality, and infrastructure participate in the reproduction of inequality. From the hallways and stairwells to the classroom walls and windows, the built environment is not a neutral container for social reproduction; it actively participates in and reinforces these processes of control. This study speaks to the conference theme by examining how the physical infrastructure of schools carries the weight of historical legacies of carcerality and coloniality. Findings highlight youths' understanding of this "haunted" terrain and the many ways they engage in escape and resistance as they maneuver through it.

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Presenter(s): Anisa Yudawanti

Board #42 In/Visible Hope: The Voices of Batey Libertad, Dominican Republic

In summer 2024, Kiskeya Youth, a student-led team from the University of Florida lead a small camp in the Dominican Republic focused on community-building and solidarity between Haitian and Dominican youth. During that time, we also conducted a series of oral histories with Haitian community members residing in Batey Libertad, a small shanty town located in the Valverde province of the Dominican Republic. We documented the testimonies of Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent who live under the threat of deportation, statelessness and are continuously excluded from active roles in Dominican society. These individuals, shrouded by the anti-Haitian legacies left behind by the Trujillo Regime between the 1930s and 60s, had been traversing their lives through the obstacles placed and legitimized by the Dominican government, all while silencing and devaluing their existence in the country. Their oral histories were used to create a short documentary which not only documents historical injustices, but also serve as acts of refusal, empathy, and truth-telling during moments of deep political uncertainty. This poster will present the project's methods, findings, and impacts, while reflecting on how fear, violence, racism

and historical memory continue to shape contemporary attitudes toward Haitian migrants. I consider how storytelling and ethnography can confront erasure, reclaim visibility, and challenge the silences enforced by the state.

Presenter(s): Diana Rodriguez Allende

Board #43 Individual Poster Presentation: Adopting Change: Transnational Adoptee Kinship & Advocacy in Norway

Transnational adoption has been predominantly conceptualized within anthropological and interdisciplinary scholarship as a life-long experiential phenomenon that permeates each developmental stage of an adoptee's existence. Expanding upon this established theoretical framework, this paper argues that transnational adoption constitutes not merely a lifelong but an intergenerational experience—one that fundamentally shapes the identity formation processes, kinship configurations, and political commitments of transnational adoptees. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Oslo, Norway, this paper interrogates how intergenerational dynamics and diverse interpretations of "future generations" inform adoptees' approaches to parenting, advocacy, and hope during a politically contested historical moment regarding the past trajectory and future prospects of international adoption in Norway. This research offers substantial scholarly contributions to understanding the contemporary decline of transnational adoption, its intergenerational ramifications, and the evolving conceptualization of adoptive kinship both within the Norwegian context and global frameworks. The study will substantively enhance anthropological discourse on kinship and adoption, while simultaneously enriching theoretical perspectives on generational studies, hope frameworks, and advocacy mechanisms.

Presenter(s): Madeline Nicholson

Board #44 Inscribing the Spectral: Verses on Walls, Memory Appropriation, and Contested Afterlives of Ghost Voices in 17th Century Chinese Vernacular Fiction

This paper presents an in-depth analysis of spectral poetic expression through the ghost character Zheng Yiniang in Feng Menglong's 17th-century vernacular story collection *Yu Shi Ming Yan* 喻世明言. I examine how her verses—particularly through the medium of *tibishi* (wall inscriptions)—functions as a critical site where tensions between personal memory, historical trauma, and cultural transmission are negotiated within the liminal space between life and death. Situated within the historical context of the fall of the Northern Song dynasty to the Jurchens in 1126, Yiniang's ghostly presence, manifesting through *tibishi*, functions as material anchors for her immaterial existence. The transformation of Yiniang's intimate wall poems from fixed archival inscriptions to fluid public songs reveals compelling insights about the politics of memory and the agency of spectral voices in Chinese literary traditions.

Drawing on Wu Hung's theoretical frameworks of reminiscence and monumentality, I argue that Yiniang's wall inscriptions exist at a complex intersection of these concepts. Her verses initially manifests as what identified as personal monuments—sites where memory crystallizes and

secretes itself in abandoned spaces that resist official historical narratives. The physical specificity of her handwriting on walls within Lady Han's deserted residence creates a memory-image that mediates between materiality and immateriality, anchoring her spectral presence in a carefully constructed sanctuary where time effectively stops. Here, her poems function not merely as aesthetic expressions but as embodied extensions of her spectral self, refusing the separation between creator and creation that characterizes traditional monumentality, in stories of ruins.

This paper traces the radical transformation of Yiniang's poetic expressions across three distinct poems—"Lang Tao Sha," "Haoshi Jin," and "Yi Liangren"—revealing how each represents a different negotiation between archival fixity and repertoire fluidity. When "Haoshi Jin" escapes the confines of Lady Han's residence to circulate as a popular song, it undergoes what Diana Taylor describes as the shift from archive (fixed, authoritative) to repertoire (fluid, participatory). The paper demonstrates how Yiniang's final act of vengeance—dragging her unfaithful husband into death—functions as radical spectral resistance against this transformation, forcefully reclaiming her narrative from abstraction and refusing to allow her intimate expressions to dissolve into generalized nostalgia for a lost past.

By examining how female ghost poems move between private inscription and public circulation, between fixed walls and fluid popular songs, this paper cautions on how hauntings operate within cultural systems of remembrance and forgetting, how cross-cultural societies transform collective remembrance into consumption and exploitation of identities.

Presenter(s): Yiyao Sun

Board #45 L1 Speakers and Their Perspectives of Factors Influencing Spanish Acquisition

The purpose of the research is to identify the perspectives of L1 Spanish speakers in the United States so that others can better understand the unique situations and challenges that L1 speakers face regarding factors influencing their decision to teach their children Spanish. This information can then be used by schools and public programs to better connect with this community.

The study found that there are disconnects in identity between many L1 and L2 speakers. The research found that L1 speakers felt that their children were Latino and thus would take on similar characteristics to them, such as language. While it is true that the L2 speakers are of Latin descent, they have also been born and raised in the United States. Most L2 speakers recognized their Latin roots, but also many of the L2 speakers grew up in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods and associated with these groups. As with most teenagers, "fitting in" was important for the youth. Spanish was seen as a marker that distinguished them from the rest of the group and thus was shunned.

On the part of L1 speakers, this assumption of identity meant that there was an expectation for L2 to speak the language. However, linguistic learning was only encouraged in the home through talking to the child. Children struggled without any formal language learning tools such as books and schooling. It was especially notable that the majority of interviewees brought up grammar. Without the grammatical structure, the children struggled to apply any of the vocabulary that they

had learned from family members. Anxious about making mistakes and possibly sounding "silly" to others while speaking the language only increased social anxiety towards the Spanish language, eventually driving them away from it in their adolescence.

Presenter(s): Sean-Micah Stover

Board #46 Labor Ethics as Meta-ethics: Accountability during (Post)socialist Decline in the Ultimate Model City of China's Socialist Industrialization

Mao's central government officially recognized Daqing as the ultimate model of all industrialization in socialist China. In (post) socialist reform, its role has become problematic for its relative decline. The state's retreat and the Massive Laid-off have created chronic disputes, moral breakdown, and nostalgia for the state power in the local community, especially working-class families. Consequently, they emphasize labor value, contribution, and self-regulation, competing in "hard work and endeavor" to decide who is to blame in dispute mediation. Many critics of neoliberalism view these values as the neoliberal ideology that justifies the irresponsibility of governments and society by putting all the moral burden of failure on privatized individuals. However, workers in Daqing view these values as a "socialist" legacy that offers them flexibility in responsibility assignment, enabling them to blame others when they cannot identify others' misconducts. Equally confusing, many workers support "authoritarian statism" because, according to them, "authoritarianism" enables them to criticize governments rather than be controlled by governments. There seem to be strange, systematic appropriations of narratives and discourses. This paper aims to investigate the mediation of disputes to understand ways of appropriation by which their emphasis on ethics of labor and endeavor empowers natives in dispute resolution.

Presenter(s): Yuhao Ding

Board #47 Landscaped Gardens and Hot Stone Massages: Understanding Americans' use of Mexican Beach cobbles within a symbolic framework of Consumer Identity

Mexican beach cobbles, commonly marketed as Mexican beach pebbles [MBP], are smooth, round stones extracted from the shores of Baja California. Since the early 2000s, the extraction of Mexican beach pebbles has facilitated the rise of a commodity chain composed of Mexican laborers who harvest the material, American retailers and landscaping companies who sell the product to consumers, and mid-level shipping and processing centers between Mexico and the United States. A designated luxury item, Mexican beach pebbles have primarily emerged as landscaping rocks used to adorn gardens, fill swimming pools, and aid in drainage and water conservation efforts on suburban lawns. However, the use of Mexican beach pebbles continues to transform each day, as indicated by the use of MBP in the wellness industry in the form of hot stone massages. This poster builds off Dr. Christian Zolniski's seminal ethnographic work that tracks the commodity chain of MBP from the point of extraction in Mexico to delivery to distribution centers in

the U.S. The construction of this commodity chain illuminates the transformation of these beach pebbles into highly coveted materials enmeshed in an international luxury economy. This transformation has heretofore not been analyzed with a critical sociocultural lens that seeks to understand how the consumption and various uses of MBP reflect consumers' and retailers' identities within a wider socioeconomic and political framework. Through interviews, surveys, and extensive dialogue with retailers and consumers of Mexican beach pebbles, I analyze the discourse surrounding the marketing, sale, use, and distribution of these stones in the Dallas Fort-Worth metroplex. Analysis revealed that Mexican beach pebbles have been integrated into a primarily white, upper-middle class identity as a commodity charged with intense symbolic significance, emerging as signifiers of cultural refinement, elite social status, taste, and even the pursuit of mindfulness. The arduous and exploitative nature of the extraction of Mexican beach pebbles is obscured by rhetoric suggesting that the laborious collection process is quaint, selective, and even humanistic in nature. Ergo, this research demystifies the relationship between American aesthetics and identity politics within an international luxury market, thereby contributing to wider conversations on emergent patterns of resource exploitation in the Global South by American consumer markets.

Presenter(s): Alex Helm

Board #48 Language Pasts and Language Futures: Latine High School Graduates Reflect on Language Loss and Present Enactments

This paper reports on a longitudinal study focused on 3 Latine students who received a dual language education in the same school district in California, from elementary through high school. Dual language (DL) or two-way immersion programs began within the U.S. over 50 years ago as a type of instructional integrative approach to teaching language to language minority and language majority students (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). DL programs were designed to teach students high levels of academic literacy and proficiency in two languages by providing native language instruction for language minority students with non-English-speaking backgrounds, while simultaneously offering language majority students access to non-English languages (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003). Dual immersion programs effectively teach English to emergent bilinguals while also continuing to develop their heritage language to academic proficiency while pursuing an enriched curriculum, rather than prioritizing oral English fluency to the detriment of academic content. As a type of bilingual education program with some of the highest academic achievement scores for emergent bilinguals but with a plethora of critiques levied towards them in the past decade (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Valdes, Freire & Delavan, 2016), what can be learned from the reflections of Latine high school students who participated in this relatively rare form of biliteracy education?

Ideas of bilingualism, biliteracy development, and investment (Norton, 2010) in Spanish-speaking academic identities are explored through the analysis of the interview data and a focus on change or constancy over time. Students who participated in this dual language program were supported in developing their language proficiencies in both Spanish and English, in both oral fluency (including

vocabulary, complexity of usage, and presentation skills) as well as writing. However, these students also use each of these languages outside of school contexts and choose when, how and with whom to use them. Regular use of minoritized languages outside of school settings can align with identity development (González, 2001), as Latine students and/or investment in social practices that usage of the language allows.

Presenter(s): P. Zittali Morales

Board #49 Language Acquisition vs. Language Learning: An Anthropological Perspective

Despite projections that 1 in 4 students in classrooms across the United States will be English Language Learners (National Education Association 2020), recent political discourse-such as the Trump administration's declaration of English as the official language-reveals a persistent monolingual ideology. Given the historical context of the United States, language classrooms continue to exemplify how history repeats itself when pedagogical models fail to evolve-privileging explanation over participation, and acquisition over lived experience. To understand how language is truly learned, we must engage with the social histories of those who use it. This cyclical reliance on outdated teaching models underscores the importance of recognizing the cultural and historical contexts that shape language learners' experiences (Rosaldo 1993; García & Wei 2009; Menken 2008; Valdés 1998; Vásquez 2011). If humans in general-and children in particular-are fully capable of navigating complex linguistic interactions in their daily lives without explicit instruction, then why does education continue to emphasize teaching as a means of transmitting knowledge and prioritizing explanation? (Flores, Conference, March 2019).

This poster presents an exploratory, preliminary study that investigates the historical and sociocultural contexts in which language classrooms have developed in the Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. Following Erving Goffman's (1983) insights into interactional order and Dell Hymes (1974) and Sherzer's (1987) work on language and performance, I explore how the historical "imprints" of language policies and ideologies persist in the everyday routines of classroom life. Specifically, the poster will examine how Spanish immersion classrooms and English as a Second Language classrooms function as sites for theorizing the intersection between second language acquisition (SLA) and anthropological theories of learning (García 2009; Garfinkel & Rawls 2002; Lave & Wenger 1991; Menken 2008; Sacks 1995). By centering language as social action, this research aims to move beyond dominant language dichotomies-such as learning vs. acquisition, native vs. non-native, or academic vs. everyday language-toward a more nuanced understanding of how language, culture, and ideology are co-constructed in educational spaces. Ultimately, this research contributes to conversations on the ethnography of language learning by offering a critical, situated lens on how the past haunts the present in language classrooms-making the immaterial tangible in everyday interaction.

Presenter(s): Amanda Fulmer Bressack

Board #50 Literacy-as-Event and Embodied Meaning-Making: An Ethnographic Study of a Bangladeshi Child's Home Literacies

This study explores the emergent and embodied nature of children's literacy practices through an in-depth, small-scale ethnographic investigation of a young Bangladeshi child within his home environment. Drawing on new materialist, posthumanist, and postcolonial perspectives, it reconceptualizes literacy not as a fixed set of cognitive skills but as fluid, situated events shaped by dynamic interactions among human and non-human entities, material objects, and cultural histories.

Grounded in a qualitative, ethnographic approach inspired by Leander and Boldt's (2012) and Burnett and Merchant's (2018) frameworks of literacy-as-event and embodied meaning-making, the study is sited in a multi-generational home in suburban Dhaka, Bangladesh, chosen for its rich postcolonial histories and cultural hybridity. Data collection involved participant observation, informal conversations, field notes, reflective writing, and informal interviews with the child and his family over a week of immersive engagement to explore (1) how literacy events unfold in the everyday interactions of a child with people, objects, and texts in a family setting (2) the role of materiality, embodiment, and cultural knowledge in shaping meaning-making and (3) how global cultural artifacts and symbols are negotiated within local, postcolonial contexts, producing hybrid identities in a third space.

The researcher participated in daily family life, observing literacy practices in both mundane and eventful moments and negotiating language use and cultural identity within the home. Special attention was paid to the child's embodied interactions with humans and materials, translanguaging, and engagement with religious and cultural rituals. These observations were documented in rich, chronological narratives to capture literacy events' temporal flow and affective texture.

Analysis was informed by poststructuralist and posthumanist theories, particularly the concept of literacy-as-event, which frames literacy as emergent from the relational assemblages of bodies, materials, and affective forces (Burnett & Merchant, 2018; Massumi, 2015). The study also employs Bhabha's (1994) notion of "third space" to interpret how the child's interactions with global symbols are locally reimagined, blending Western pop culture with Bangladeshi religious and familial values to produce hybrid, situated literacies.

Findings reveal that literacy events are deeply embedded in the rhythms of daily life and produced through activity and inactivity, presence and absence, and the unpredictable interplay of people, objects, and environments. The captured moments illustrate the fluid negotiation of identity and the production of new meanings in the liminal "third space" where local and global, tradition and modernity, intersect. It underscores and advocates the importance of recognizing literacy as a dynamic, relational, and embodied process, especially in postcolonial and multilingual contexts.

Presenter(s): Moutushi Mahreen

Board #51 Lived experiences of trans/non-binary late-diagnosed autistic adults

Abstract

There exists a significant overlap between autism and gender divergence although studies have yet to find a causal link. The research on the subject rarely focuses on lived experiences of trans autistic people, especially trans autistic adults. This research, conducted by an autistic researcher, is grounded in critical autism studies as a theoretical approach and methodological approach. A digital ethnography revealed how online communities have become a resource and refuge for trans autistic adults. In addition, seven virtual semi-structured interviews with autistic adults about the potential connection between their gender and neurological divergence yielded several insights. Interlocutors discussed how their autism made them less likely to internalize social norms, thus finding gendered associations arbitrary and the gender binary nonsensical. Their resistance to others' judgment and shaming also gave them a lower threshold to realizing feelings of gender divergence within themselves. This extended to sexuality as well. They were more likely to be non-binary and have fluid sexual orientations. All were high maskers, having learned to perform their assigned gender and neurotypicality for society. They suffered from invalidation, rejection, discrimination, harassment, and violence from those around them, as well as serious lacunas in mental health professionals' understanding of their identities but found greater self-determination after embracing their transness and autism. These findings matter in a political climate where autism can be used to invalidate transness, painting autistic trans people as confused victims of the trans 'ideology'. Additionally, the study reveals a need to acknowledge the richness that trans autistic people add to their communities.

Presenter(s): Joanna Abillama

Board #52 Los Verdes: A Gendered Analysis of the U.S. Border Patrol

In 2023, a new record was set for unauthorized migration into the United States, resulting in the mass hiring of U.S. Border Patrol (BP) agents. In this historically white and male-dominated field, the number of Latina BP agents has increased, making them vulnerable to forms of gendered violence stemming from institutional racism and sexism. More specifically, they work in environments where they experience violence in the workplace, witness it against migrants (often female), and may themselves perpetuate it. As such, my work seeks to understand the day-to-day lives of Latina BP agents and how they conceptualize, experience, and resist various forms of gendered violence in their workplace. Coupled with the fact that more Latina women are migrating and experiencing different forms of gendered violence at the border, understanding this phenomenon from the perspectives of Latina agents provides new and important insights into this process. Drawing on in-depth ethnographic interviews conducted in the summer of 2024 and 2025 with Latina BP agents, my work addresses several questions: How does the intersection of gender and race frame the BP experience? How do Latina BP agents perceive, navigate, and perpetuate gendered violence within the workplace and with female migrants? What can understanding the experiences of Latina agents say about the complicated relationships of gendered violence at the U.S.-Mexico border? This data allows for a deeper understanding of the gendered dynamics of the BP and how these dynamics and the violence within them are reproduced when agents interact with migrants.

Presenter(s): Karla Hernandez

Board #53 Oklahoma City Afghan Community: Material Culture, Belonging and Creating a Sense of Home.

This research explores how Afghan refugees in Oklahoma City create a sense of belonging through material and visual culture. Since the fall of Kabul in 2021, the Afghan community in the city has grown to approximately 1,480 individuals. In response to U.S. political narratives around refugee assimilation, this study examines how Afghan families navigate identity retention while adapting to their new environment. Focusing on homemaking practices, the research investigates how Afghan individuals use clothing, furnishings, food, and religious symbols to foster a connection to family, culture, and spirituality. Through ethnographic methods, including participant observation, photography, and object interviews, the study examines how everyday objects and domestic spaces serve as cultural anchors that sustain Afghan identity despite displacement. By prioritizing women's experiences in the context of material culture, particularly in homemaking activities such as sewing and cooking, this research emphasizes the agency and creativity involved in diasporic life. The findings will highlight how Afghan material culture not only asserts cultural identity but also challenges the notion of assimilation by showing how Afghan communities create home on their own terms. This research contributes to the growing field of Afghan diaspora studies by expanding the understanding of material culture's role in shaping belonging in the U.S. context, thus enriching broader conversations on migration, identity, and cultural retention.

Presenter(s): Maegan Taylor

Board #54 Organizing Against the Algorithm? Organizing Motivations and Strategies Amongst Unionizing Rideshare Drivers in Los Angeles

In the past fifteen years, most urban centers in the U.S. and abroad have seen the proliferation of "gig work" mediated by app-based services such as Uber and Lyft. These app-based services, enabled by robust digital infrastructures and mass data gathering, constitute part of the platform economy, wherein virtual platforms mediate consumer economic activity and group interaction, such as the act of an Uber customer requesting a ride from a driver through the app interface. Rideshare driving is made possible largely by the outsourcing of labor -- drivers are not employees, rather they are classified as independent contractors, and consequently, they do not receive employee protections such as health insurance and minimum wage. Since its inception, Uber has been the topic of legal and cultural controversy regarding its overt efforts to thwart local regulation; its business model, which some argue misclassifies drivers as independent contractors to reduce labor costs; and its extractive labor practices, including that of algorithmically determined wage payment, in which employers use a black box algorithm to assign payment per ride based on aggregated data unknown to the driver.

In response to deteriorating working conditions and driver grievances, many rideshare drivers have turned to labor organizing to challenge the legally-questionable norms of the industry regarding

wages and worker protections. This ethnographic study explores how the experiences of long-time rideshare drivers in the Los Angeles chapter of Rideshare Drivers United (RDU) have motivated them to unionize and their rationale for employing specific organizing tactics. Utilizing participant observation and semi-structured interviews, this project will investigate how unionizing Los Angeles rideshare drivers view their current working conditions, relationship to their employer, and the algorithmically determined payment model. In an era of historically low unionization rates, I seek to understand how worker resistance has evolved as workplaces become increasingly disaggregated and digitized. Fieldwork will be conducted in the summer of 2025, and I hope to present my findings at the AAA conference to receive input from other labor anthropologists as I develop my thesis.

Presenter(s): Mason Ng

Board #55 Riding the Line: Florida's Struggles with Motorcycle Deaths

Motorcyclists are some of the most vulnerable vehicles on the road. Specifically in Florida, motorcycle related deaths have sadly been steadily increasing in recent years. While the statistics and physical numbers are available, how do these motorcyclists who are alive feel about the roads in Tampa today? Given the significant increase in traffic following the pandemic, the infrastructure has been noticeably strained. Interviewing members of the USF motorcycle club and my own firsthand experiences as a motorcycle rider I hope to find out how riders feel about the road and how their experiences potentially reflect the haunting statistics.

Presenter(s): Facundo Pereyra-Kluser

Board #56 Queer(ing) Greek Life: The Experiences and Subjective Identity of Non-Heterosexual Fraternity Brothers in Historically White Fraternities

While homophobia and heterosexism are well-documented in Greek life fraternities on U.S. college campuses, evidence of non-heterosexuality among men in these fraternities (i.e., fraternity brothers) has existed throughout Greek life's history. Of note, expressions of masculinity among fraternity brothers haven't always been characterized by homophobic and heterosexist exclusion. Fraternities' exclusionary practices changed in response to the changing composition of the student body at U.S. colleges. Fraternities first engaged in class-based exclusion in the early 19th century, then race and religion-based exclusion in the late 19th century, and incorporated homophobic and heterosexist exclusion through the 20th century. The term "historically white fraternities" (HWFs) refers to fraternities with this exclusionary history, designating them unique sites of analysis compared to identity-affinity social fraternities. Through person-centered interviews (PCIs) with a small sample of non-heterosexual fraternity brothers in HWFs from multiple fraternity chapters at a public four-year university in Southern California, I seek to explore these men's histories, experiences, and motivations to investigate how agency, personal history, and social context - including historical, cultural, and institutional context, with a particular focus on the hegemony of HWFs - interact in the subjective experience of sexuality and identity formation. Especially considering the assumed tension between non-heterosexual identity and the homophobia and heterosexism of HWFs, why do non-heterosexual men choose to be in HWFs?

How do their non-normative sexual identities shape their experiences in these fraternities, and vice versa? What can their experiences reveal about queer identity in the U.S.? Much of the existing work with this population seeks to make HWFs more inclusive for these men, ignoring the social context in which HWFs and the experiences of non-heterosexual fraternity brothers exist, in turn failing to explore how such context shapes and is shaped by both fraternity life and these men. This work also presupposes universals among non-heterosexual fraternity brothers in HWFs, leading this body of work to deemphasize nuanced explorations of the motivations, identity, and subjective experiences of these men. Data will be collected in Summer 2025 for analysis in Fall 2025 to be presented as a poster at the AAA 2025 annual meeting to receive insight and feedback from other anthropologists before drafting a thesis through Winter and Spring 2026. By exploring the interaction between agency, personal history, subjective experience, and social context through these men's stories, this project will build upon the existing literature with a richer anthropological analysis while serving as an empirical exploration of queer theoretical and anthropological arguments about the interplay between personal history, subjective experience, social structure, identity, and agency.

Presenter(s): Jericho Tran-Faypon

Board # 57 Black Trans Women: Experiences of Incarceration

This dissertation examines how antiblackness, gender, citizenship, and carcerality intersect to shape the lives of Black trans women under conditions of captivity and the afterlife of slavery. Building on the work of Hartman, Spillers, and Wilderson III, the project argues that antiblackness functions as a structuring logic that produces fungibility and social death, while also tracing practices of resistance and care. Grounded in a transnational perspective and informed by prior research on the incarceration of Angolan, Cape Verdean, Guinean, and Brazilian women in Portugal, the study combines ethnography and theory to foreground the epistemologies of Black trans women, whose lived experiences expand how freedom, citizenship, and possibility are imagined.

Presenter(s): Stella Chagas

Board #58 Routes of Ritual: The Sonic Geography of Muharram Processions in Srinagar

This poster maps the spectral geographies of Muharram processions in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir, where ritual sound becomes a medium for the dead to speak and for the living to remember. In a settler colonial landscape that overwrites, displaces, and monitors, Shi'a sonic practices-noha (laments), matam (ritual chest-beating), and majlis (gatherings)-summon what persists: grief, refusal, and embodied memory. These rituals are not only acts of mourning; they are aural archives, movements through a city thick with absence.

Through memory-based cartography and ethnographic fragments, this project traces five overlapping maps that render visible the routes, pauses, and interruptions of Muharram processions-rituals shaped not only by theology but by military presence, spatial restriction, and ambient fear. These processions move through streets marked by past violence and current

surveillance; pasts that cannot be fully spoken yet remain carried in voice and rhythm. In this way, the soundscape of Muharram haunts the city, echoing not just the historical trauma of Karbala but the ongoing condition of Kashmiri life under occupation.

This work draws from and contributes to anthropological engagements with spectrality, sound, and political theology. It is informed by Charles Hirschkind's notion of the "ethical soundscape," in which listening forms not only modes of attunement but conditions of moral and political life. In Kashmir, listening becomes risked proximity. To chant is to remain audible in a system designed to suppress. To listen is to align oneself with what the state seeks to erase. Sound becomes infrastructure: not decorative or ambient, but foundational to how spaces are made livable and histories remain unburied.

Inspired also by Larisa Jašarević's work on eco-eschatology and the temporal weight of Islamic storytelling, this project approaches mapping not as a neutral act of representation but as a way to hold the fragments that resist capture. The maps created are not topographic or bureaucratic; they are affective, relational, and partial. They hold ghost routes-places people avoid, reconfigure, or revisit annually, often without speaking their names. These are spaces where sound gathers and memory leaks out.

In line with the AAA 2025 theme, this project considers what it means to work from within a broken triad-between researcher, field, and academy-where access to the field is severed by political precarity. It asks: what kinds of knowledge are still possible when presence is interrupted? What forms does the field take when it returns through dreams, recordings, or the memory of footsteps? Rather than closure or solution, the poster offers a method of staying with the murmur: mapping what lingers, what aches, what cannot be fully archived-and yet remains.

Presenter(s): Sadam Hussain

Board #59 Shared Wounds, Shifting Bonds: Queer Trauma, Friendship, and Community in Changing Landscapes

The direct effect of collective queer trauma on the friendship-building of queer individuals has widely gone under-researched, leaving a gap in understanding the potential for trauma to be a source of community formation, relationship-building, and the reinforcement of social bonds. This work highlights potential ways for the collective to overcome trauma, resisting its adverse impacts on expressions and personal understandings of queerness. By utilizing ethnographic methods to engage with queer survivors of trauma, this work strays away from psycho-medical models of pathologizing queer identities and instead probe the socio-cultural systems which foreground anti-queer oppression. This project aims to investigate how trauma based on family/cultural rejection, institutional discrimination, and mounting public/legislative homophobic and transphobic discourse and policy creates a basis for collectivizing, social support, and community resistance for queer students in Southern California. This trauma gets carried through hegemonic power structures to create a collective sense of trauma specifically for queer individuals. The duality of the collective will be examined in terms of how it serves as both a challenge and a resource in

creating a sense of self in the community. This study aims to explore how this collective trauma gets understood across the queer community and how the collective informs friendships and queer intimacy on a platonic level. Study participants will be LGBTQ+ undergraduate college students across two universities in Southern California, recruited through their claim as a queer individual who discusses trauma with their peers. Overall, this work aims to illuminate how trauma is both internalized and collectivized through hegemonic power structures, fostering both a shared vulnerability and communal resilience within queer communities. In doing so, this work offers a nuanced understanding of how queer friendships and bonds become sites for healing, solidarity, and resistance.

Presenter(s): Bradley Carol

Board #60 Revealing the Invisible Barrier: How Gender Norms Shape Disparities in Financial Literacy Across China

Gender norms are a key driver of gender inequality, but their impact on the financial literacy gap remains poorly understood. This study utilizes data from the 2018 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) and employs multilevel regression to comprehensively analyze, for the first time, how gender norms (operating at the individual, household, and regional levels) influence disparities in financial literacy and how these norms interact with each other. The findings reveal that the gender gap in financial knowledge is smaller in regions where individuals hold egalitarian attitudes, in households where mothers have a college education (reflecting norms of intergenerational equity), and in areas with progressive gender cultures. The results elucidate the structural causes of financial inequality, challenging previous individual-centric narratives. This research also refines the theory of gender-based financial outcomes and offers actionable policy recommendations for interventions targeting cultural norms to combat systemic inequality.

Presenter(s): Qianwen Xue

Board #61 Social Moments and Interconnected Subjectivities: Ethnographic Methodological Considerations Beyond Rapport and Fieldsite

Anthropological methods are notoriously difficult to teach. Participant observation requires entering into a likely unfamiliar space, building rapport, and becoming embedded in a community. Much is left up to chance. However, rather than throwing our hands up and hoping for the best as we send out generations of "hapless anthropologists" from university to field site, or even sending students to research their local communities, we look to draw the "field" nearer still, into the social science classroom. There, through simple classroom activities, we can build small moments of community reliance, interconnected moments that simulate competition, states of excitement, and anticipation. Students engage in physical and imaginative tasks, mirroring the challenge of fieldwork: to be present in the moment, aware despite unfamiliar circumstances, and analytical in the immediate aftermath. We will present and discuss how our pedagogy draws on visual and symbolic anthropology and how we have applied this approach (the "Murtle Method") in our own teaching and lives.

Presenter(s): Edgar Valles

Co-author(s): Mollie Gossage

Board #62 Subaltern Graves: Identity and Familial Ties to Black Gravesites

This autoethnographic account explores my journey of self-discovery through the physical and symbolic landscapes of family grave sites, both the marked and the unmarked. As a Black American of partial Creole ancestry, my identity is deeply shaped by the historical fractures and continuities of enslavement, colonialism, and indigenous displacement. On my mother's side, I can trace my lineage back to my ancestors' first steps onto the former French colony of Louisiana. In contrast, my father's lineage, descended from Mid-Atlantic early-arrival enslaved Black peoples and first-contact Indigenous communities, exists in a space of historical erasure, where names and records are fragmented or entirely lost.

By engaging with these burial grounds, I confront the ways in which memory, loss, and archival absence shape personal and collective identity. This work interrogates the impact of ancestral visibility and invisibility on my understanding of self, lineage, and belonging, reflecting on how the act of tracing whether through documentation, oral history, or embodied experience becomes a means of reclaiming what was intended to be forgotten

Presenter(s): Berkeley Robinson

Board #63 The ghosts of Nunapitsinghak: Navigating hauntings and conceptions of more-than-human in place-making

Drawing from six years of teaching experience in a rural Yup'ik community in Alaska, I reflect back on my experience as a white educator within and Indigenous community. In this paper, I explore one memory in particular that continues to haunt me: a visit with friends to an abandoned children's home, Nunapitsinghak, that once functioned as a boarding school for Yup'ik children in the Southwestern Alaskan tundra. In this narrative, I challenge my conceptions of the agency of more-than-human entities and explore concepts of place, Indigenous knowledge, colonization, and decolonization.

When I first entered Nunapitsinghak, I did not have a full conception of what this space was or had been. I knew that it was once a school, and that Yup'ik children from the surrounding villages would come here. I knew that it was a good distance from any community, and isolated in the middle of the tundra. Despite my lack of knowledge about this place, there was a heaviness, a sense of grief and an unsettledness that sat at the pit of my stomach. . One of my friends led the way through the ruins, the other waited outside, refusing to enter.

Here, I found Zomo the Rabbit on an empty book cover, laying next to the boardwalk just outside the old schoolhouse. Something about him caught my attention and I ripped the little rabbit free from his binding. My friend who had remained outside of the building for the duration of our stay there, half-jokingly warned me not to take the rabbit with me, or bad luck would follow. Or was she joking? At the time, not thinking much of it I stuffed him into my pocket.

Thinking back now, though, I wonder, was there more going on there? Had I contributed to the re-disturbance of a colonial disturbance, or had I desecrated a sacred object? We had come here by boat, and our party preceded to get stuck out in the tundra not long after that as we drifted aimlessly down the river for several hours before finally getting rescued just before dark. Perhaps bad luck had followed. "See?" my friend jested. That thought, even as I struggled to let myself believe it, haunted me.

In my questioning and contemplation of this, I was directed to the theories of hauntology. Lisa Blackman (2021) describes Hauntology as the presence of absence or an absent presence. Mark Fisher (2012) explains it more as the failure of a future or in terms hauntological landscapes "when a place is stained by time" (p. 19). Sean Eudaily (2004) engages directly with the 'ghost' of colonialism and looks to the ongoing effects of deculturation through forced assimilation as "physical embodiments of the spirit of the past" (p. 24). The colonial specters of what had happened here were quite literally spilling out from the schoolhouse and onto the tundra – what stories were held in these more-than-human materials? Later I would look up Zomo the Rabbit to discover that he was a trickster from an African folktale. A trickster. There was something of irony in that.

Presenter(s): Nicole Auhl

Board #64 The Efficacy of Dog Programs in Women's Prisons

Throughout the United States, many public and private correctional institutions offer dog training programs alongside evidence-based interventions as part of greater rehabilitation efforts. Yet, to date, there has been very little research describing prison dog training programs, much less on their efficacy. What little evidence exists suggests that prison-based dog programs may have the ability to facilitate positive outcomes, including the reduction of internal violence (von Wormer, Kigerl, & Hamilton 2017), community service opportunities (Harbolt & Ward 2001), and providing incarcerated individuals with the space to develop interpersonal skills (Roeneke & Mulligan 1998). The existing research is mainly focused on male or juvenile inmates. The focus of my research is on inmate-led dog training programs in women's correctional facilities. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, this study utilizes data from semi-structured interviews with inmates, corrections officers, and other commissioned individuals involved with the program. This research also involves participant observations of female prisoners interacting with dogs. It is hoped that this research might pave the way for understanding the needs of women in carceral environments with regard to managing behavior and reducing post-release recidivism.

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Presenter(s): Hope Mason

Board #65 The Ghosts We Inherit: Southern Myths and the Rewriting of History

In the Southeastern United States, ghost stories take on diverse forms, yet common narrative themes prevail across these myths. These stories are not merely supernatural tales but socially and politically charged narratives that reflect broader ideological trends, often rewriting historical narratives and providing alternative interpretations of a Southern past (Brundage 2005; Foster 1987). For instance, the "loyal slave" ghost myth was frequently employed by "Lost Cause" storytellers to romanticize slavery and reinforce Southern nostalgia (Pirok 2023; Miles 2015). In contrast, certain African American ghost stories served as acts of resistance, portraying the resilience of the enslaved while exposing the cruelty of their oppressors. Gender dynamics also shape these narratives, where women often appear as scorned lovers or dangerous femme fatales, while men are depicted as either criminal tricksters or loyal figures (Cooper 2018; Steinberg 2013; Roberts 2023). These motifs extend beyond the South, traveling across the United States and evolving in new contexts while maintaining their original social and political undertones. As these myths spread, they continue to reinforce power structures, influencing perceptions of race, gender, and history. Our research seeks to catalog these recurring themes, tracing their collections, transformations, and geographical movements. By examining how these myths persist and adapt over time, we aim to uncover their role in perpetuating structural violence on the bodies of the living and the deceased, ensuring that historical narratives are not merely retold but critically analyzed for their deeper societal implications.

Presenter(s): Kayla Jordan

Co-author(s): Austin Lee

Board #66 The Relationship Between Cultivation and Martial Arts in Daoism: A Study of Wudang Mountain Daoism and Martial Arts as a Medium of Spiritual Practice

This study examines the role of martial arts as a medium of spiritual cultivation within the Wudang Mountain Daoist tradition. While Daoist practices have historically emphasized internal methods such as seated meditation (zuochan), breath regulation (tuna), and guiding exercises (daoyin), martial arts have also developed in close association with religious cultivation. Despite this integration, scholarly attention to martial arts as a component of Daoist cultivation remains limited. This research seeks to elucidate the spiritual, philosophical, and disciplinary functions of Wudang Mountain Martial Arts, which are not merely combat techniques but holistic practices facilitating physical, mental, and spiritual transformation.

Using a mixed-methods approach that integrates textual analysis with ethnographic fieldwork, this study draws upon interviews, participant observation, and the researcher's own embodied experience of martial training. Fieldwork was conducted at key sites including the Wudang Daoist Association, Wudang Martial Arts Association, and major temples such as Taihe and Zixiao Palaces. Informants include long-standing practitioners and lineage holders, notably Master Zhong Yunlong and American Daoist Jack Pinnick.

Wudang Mountain, with its sacred geography and historical role as an imperial Daoist center, provides a unique environmental and cultural context for martial cultivation. The martial arts practiced here are rooted in Daoist cosmology, emphasizing principles such as wuwei (non-action), yin-yang harmony, and the cultivation and circulation of qi. Techniques favor fluid, circular movements synchronized with breathing to unify body and mind. Training methods integrate repetition, meditative focus, and internal energy regulation to promote self-awareness, emotional stability, and spiritual insight.

This study explores three analytical dimensions: (1) the philosophical foundations of martial arts within Wudang Daoism; (2) their practical functions and methods as cultivation tools; and (3) their relationship to broader Daoist cultivation systems. It highlights how martial training complements static practices like meditation, creating a dialectical unity of movement and stillness. The integrated approach fosters xing yi he yi (unity of form and intent), enabling practitioners to transcend ego, regulate internal energy, and achieve spiritual transformation.

In conclusion, Wudang Mountain Martial Arts constitute a dynamic and embodied form of Daoist cultivation that integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary relevance. Their continued adaptation in modern contexts-particularly in the realms of health promotion, stress management, and holistic wellness-underscores their enduring spiritual value. This study contributes to religious studies, martial arts scholarship, and the anthropology of embodied practice, while offering a foundation for future comparative and interdisciplinary research.

Presenter(s): Qing Zhang

Co-author(s): YI XUAN ZHANG

Board #67 The Sound of a Digital City: Neo-Cru R&B

The "sound of a city" once streamlined the creation of popular music genres. But the physical notion of the city has digitized, birthing spatiotemporally independent music scenes such as "Neo-Cru R&B." This project illustrates how digital spaces mirror the function of cities in creating genre. Drawing from one year of hybrid ethnographic fieldwork, this project explores how a particular R&B scene manifests a post-pandemic condition: "anemoia", or the nostalgia for a time one has never known. This poster illustrates the collaboration between an undergraduate anthropology student and a hybrid community of emerging R&B musicians to produce an ethnographic documentary.

Presenter(s): Joshua Jung

Board #68 The South Up North: Experiences in and Perceptions of the South in New England

What does it mean to be Southern in a space where "the South" is often decided for you or worse, dismissed entirely? This poster explores the tension between lived identity and social expectation, drawing from the experiences of a Southern student navigating life in Massachusetts. In both classrooms and casual conversations, regional origin often prompts assumptions about politics, culture, and values that rarely align with reality. Sometimes, these assumptions are strong and vocal. Other times, they're replaced with apathy, a quiet disinterest that renders the South irrelevant or undeserving of complexity.

This project uses personal narrative, informal peer dialogue, and reflexive observation to explore how those expectations are not only confronted but actively unraveled. The intersection of Southern roots with queerness, leftist politics, spiritual nonconformity, and veteran experience challenges dominant regional scripts and reveals how identity is continuously negotiated between perception and truth. Ultimately, the poster asks what regionalism means in contemporary U.S. life and who gets to define it.

Presenter(s): Caitlin Worthington

Board #69 "Seeing is Believing" - Expertise vs Community Understanding of the Benefits in Dam Removal

"You see the river with your ears, and hear the river with your soul," said the man who was giving me a tour of the former dam locations in Taunton, Massachusetts. I closed my eyes, and I could visualize the river in my mind by hearing the sound of water. But what did it mean to hear it with your soul?

Tens of thousands of years ago, the indigenous Wampanoag tribes stood on these banks, and listened to the river during the annual spring herring runs. When the European colonists arrived in 1637, they listened to the river as they declared this location the city of Taunton. Farmers heard the waters as they witnessed the herring slowly disappear, as well as the workers who put dams on the river in the 1820s. The water slowed, but the river was still there.

In 1886, residents heard the water overflowing the Whittenton dam, and in 1968, they heard the rains making the river swell, as the army corps of engineers rushed to make sure the dam wouldn't breach. And in 2005, evacuees heard the same sounds again as heavy rains caused the same problems. And today in 2025, you can hear the fully restored Mill River dam free as it once was. However, a sound that is notably absent is the falling of water spilling over the old dams, now gone. A sound that some Taunton residents weren't even aware came from dams, they just knew them as "the falls".

In October of 2005, New England experienced heavy storms. This resulted in extremely heavy rainfall that threatened several areas: One of which was the town of Taunton, Massachusetts. 2,000 residents were evacuated from their homes downtown because the heavy rain was straining one of the city's historical dams on the Mill River and looked as if it was about to break and flood the town

Fortunately, the dam held, and residents were able to safely return. This event sparked a several year-long project to remove and restore dams on the Mill River. We now have 20 years of data to look back on detailing the entire process: our team set out to interview both decision-makers on the project, and interviews with the residents of Taunton, concentrated mostly on homeowners of abutting properties on the river.

Since November 2024, our team has been interviewing decision makers involved on the project (n=21), and Taunton residents since June 2025 (n=18). The decision makers bring detailed knowledge of the technical aspects and processes of the project, and residents give insight into understanding what it is like to live with not just a restored Mill River, but the process of the project and how it has affected their daily lives. While billed as a "green dream" from the perspective of decision makers, around more than half of the interviewed residents expressed some sort of discontent with the project – ranging from recognition of remaining gaps in the restoration efforts, to complete disapproval of the outcomes.

Presenter(s): Madelyn Flores

Board #70 Toward Ethnographic Fabulation as a Theory and Method for the Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Black Life

This poster introduces ethnographic fabulation, a transdisciplinary methodology emerging from my dissertation research on Black literacies across archival and ethnographic contexts. Responding to the epistemic violence of traditional qualitative research and archival representation, ethnographic fabulation blends rigorous archival analysis with participant-centered ethnography to imagine the lived experiences and literate worlds of Black people across generations. The method takes seriously Saidiya Hartman's call for critical fabulation (2008)-an engagement with archival silence that embraces speculative storytelling-and extends it by integrating ethnographic data from a contemporary Black children's enrichment group in the California Bay Area.

This study engages two data sets: narratives from the Federal Writers' Project slave narrative archive and 18 months of ethnographic research with twenty Black children aged 4–12 in a community-based, racially affirming learning space. Working across time, I develop transtemporal synthesis as an analytic strategy that brings these sources into critical dialogue. My analysis centers themes of learning conditions, community literacies, and educative storytelling. Across both data sets, I trace how Black subjects-then and now-negotiate, challenge, and reimagine dominant narratives about literacy, intelligence, and belonging.

Ethnographic fabulation emerges from this work as a method rooted in radical imagination, Black epistemology, and ethical representational practice. I introduce two signature practices: retranscription, a method for correcting the raciolinguistic (Rosa & Flores, 2017) distortions of Black speech in archival texts; and transtemporal synthesis, which defies linear temporality to connect past and present forms of literate world-building. This work is inspired by McKittrick's assertion that "wonder is study" (2021) and Pandian's definition of ethnography as "a practice of critical observation and imagination, an endeavor to trace the outlines of a possible world within the

seams of this one" (2019, p. 4). I position Black children's imaginative inquiry as methodologically and theoretically generative.

This work contributes to anthropological conversations about history, temporality, and method by offering an approach that is both critically reflexive and future-oriented. Ethnographic fabulation challenges traditional empiricist norms and invites anthropologists to consider how imagination and care might be methodologically necessary in research with and about marginalized communities. As Escobar observes, "realities are plural and always in the making" (2020, p. ix), and as such engaging with multiple realities within an ethnographic context opens up limitless possibilities. In centering the lived and imagined realities of Black people-across centuries and contexts-this work offers a hopeful, rigorous mode of engagement for scholars committed to reparative and liberatory research.

Presenter(s): CoCo Massengale

Board #71 Towards Decolonizing Archival Collections: Promoting Access & Dialogue Through Online Subject Guides

The National Anthropological Archives (NAA) and the Human Studies Film Archives (HSFA) are home to a vast and diverse array of collections that serve as important historical records of cross-cultural interactions spanning decades. This project delves into the imperative need for a subject guide for the NAA and the HSFA Central African collections to improve accessibility for Central African researchers. A subject guide enhances the discoverability of collections by organizing and sorting information into a cohesive document. It achieves this through the implementation of Indigenous geographical and cultural terminology in the index, thereby facilitating a more intuitive search process. Furthermore, the guide contextualizes historically offensive terms that are present in some collections, acknowledging their existence while actively rejecting their use. This method promotes a nuanced understanding of historical contexts while fostering sensitivity to the implications of language. This study aims to challenge colonial narratives and stereotypes, highlighting the significance of integrating diverse voices and community perspectives. To support this effort, contact information is strategically placed throughout the guide to encourage individuals to report any inaccuracies or omissions. This inclusive approach is essential for enhancing the accessibility of the collections. Through this exploration, the project aims to create more accessibility through a culturally sensitive museum subject guide for the Central African collections, fostering greater engagement and understanding.

Presenter(s): Brittany Marshall Davis

Co-author(s): Joshua Bell, Katy Christensen

Board #72 Traditional Cultural Knowledge and Livelihood Diversification Among Pastoralists in Northern Tanzania

Traditional Cultural Knowledge (TCK), defined as the shared practices, skills, innovations, and values produced and reproduced by indigenous communities to understand themselves in relation

to their environment and the organization of their social, political, ecological, and economic structures, is a key aspect in the development of sustainable livelihood diversification efforts (Hodgson, 2017; McCabe 2010; PINGO's, 2022; Semali and Kincheloe 1999). In northern Tanzania livelihood diversification projects are supported by numerous community-based organizations. Despite the increasing recognition of cultural knowledge in sustainable development, understandings of Maasai cultural knowledge's role in livelihood development projects remains limited. Conventional development approaches often prioritize external, modern methodologies that may overlook the valuable insights embedded in Maasai traditions, leading to interventions that are less effective, culturally misaligned, and unsustainable in the long run.

Using semi-structured interviews, survey data, and participant observation, this research examines how cultural knowledge and practices engage with income-generating projects in Monduli district in Arusha. Generally, the projects in Monduli district focus on cattle grazing rotations, beekeeping, crafting, and cultivation. Within these projects There is also a gender divide within these projects; men are the main participants in many labor-based and cattle grazing projects, while women engage more with the beekeeping and handicraft projects. This research aims to explore Maasai cultural knowledge's current role in livelihood development initiatives and identify how Maasai communities ensure that projects are both culturally relevant and sustainable. By examining traditional Maasai practices in livestock management, natural resource management, and gender roles within Maasai communities, this study seeks to bridge the gap between Maasai traditional cultural knowledge and modern development strategies. The findings will contribute to creating inclusive, community-driven approaches that enhance economic opportunities while preserving cultural heritage and ecological balance.

Presenter(s): Abigail Ryan

Board: #73 Mortuary Revelations Recorded in Bone: an osteohistological assessment of the British Beaker People to investigate burial treatments using Micro-CT

This paper examines the mortuary practices of British Early Bronze Age 'Beaker' people (c.2450-1850 BCE) using micro-computed tomography (MCT) and an enhanced Oxford Histological Index (OHI) quantification method to assess bone diagenesis. Previous studies indicate postmortem manipulations of Beaker bodies often took place, including disarticulation, secondary burial, and possible 'mummification', though their extent and complexity remain uncertain. The objective of this study is to gain a fuller understanding of these practices by analyzing for the first time a large sample of Beaker individuals using MCT data. Key aims include: (1) determine postmortem treatment observable in bone microstructure; (2) identify variation in corpse management practices relating to age/sex categories, grave types and mortuary environments; (3) assess the effectiveness of MCT for the investigation of ancient bone diagenesis.

MCT scans of humeri and femora from 52 individuals from 19 sites across southern England have been analyzed. Preliminary results indicate: (1) variable levels of diagenesis both in the overall sample and among individuals interred at the same site, demonstrating variation in corpse management practices and possible applications of preservation techniques that arrested

decomposition; (2) variation in some cases between upper and lower limbs of the same individual, which has significant implications for evaluating the results of previous histological analyses of ancient human skeletons based only on single bone thin sections; and (3) preservational differences between young and mature adult individuals, suggesting application of differential burial treatments was based on age.

Presenter(s): Haley Goren

Board #74 When One's Voice Is Not Alone: Heteroglossic Hauntings in Queer Youth's Dramatic Monologues

This paper explores how queer undergraduates in a theatre-based sexual health education course at a large public university in Southern California negotiate the tensions surrounding their sexual identities through the process of creating, workshopping, and performing a dramatic monologue. Storytelling has long been considered a significant tool for meaning making and self-understanding (De Fina, 2015; Holland, 2001; Ochs & Capps, 2001). As a form of storytelling, the monologue is a dramatized tale of self-construction where the students actively acknowledge (listen to) and address (question/respond to) the – sometimes painful – ghosts from their pasts while summoning visions for their futures. Thus, we should not misinterpret the personal monologue as just the voice of the speaker. Rather, it is heteroglossic in nature – consisting of multiple, competing discourses – and saturated with historical, sociocultural meanings (Bakhtin, 1981; Waring, 2017).

I assumed the dual role of participant-observer/performer-ethnographer (Conquergood, 1985) by enrolling in this theatre-based sexual health course alongside 11 undergraduate students. Throughout the winter quarter, we developed various creative assignments inspired by our lived experiences. Together, we workshopped and expanded on our material to devise a cohesive performance piece, which we delivered in the spring for high schoolers across a large metropolitan area. Data for this paper come from 20 weeks of ethnographic participant observation I conducted during our class rehearsals, written drafts and public recordings of performances, and ethnographic, person-centered interviews (Levy & Hollan, 2015) with three queer students from the course. Our interview space acted as an extension of our class rehearsals where we could collaboratively construct meaning around our creative assignments and experience in the course overall (Vossoughi & Zavala, 2020; Seidman, 2019). I met with each of my focal participants at two distinct periods during the course. The first phase took place while we were developing our monologues; the second phase took place concurrently with our performances.

I draw from Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia as a framework of inquiry and performance as an epistemic lens (Bauman, 2000). Preliminary analysis demonstrates the dialogic nature of the creative process of monologuing, particularly through the evolution from inscription to performance. The desire to save face resulted in acts of self-censorship during the writing process (Goffman, 1990). Ensuing group rehearsals introduced heteroglossia through healthy, affirming discourses, enabling us to challenge our inner dialogue (Hermans, 2003) in later drafts and live performances.

Presenter(s): Amanda Harris

Board #75 "Assombrações do Racismo Médico: Corpos Negros e os Fantasmas da Saúde Pública no Brasil"

Este trabalho parte da premissa de que o racismo estrutural no Brasil se manifesta como um fantasma persistente na saúde pública, assombrando os corpos negros - vivos e mortos - que circulam por hospitais, centros de pesquisa e arquivos médicos. Inspirado pela paisagem espectral de Nova Orleans, exploro como, no contexto brasileiro, ruínas coloniais, práticas médicas violentas e epistemologias biomédicas excludentes continuam a produzir assombrações materiais e simbólicas nas comunidades quilombolas. A partir de entrevistas com médicos negros e lideranças quilombolas, bem como análises de arquivos hospitalares e memoriais urbanos, investigo como os vestígios de práticas eugenistas, as negligências institucionais e os silêncios médicos constituem uma paisagem fantasmagórica na qual a saúde é constantemente negociada. Ao mesmo tempo, proponho que esses fantasmas também falam: eles aparecem como testemunhos da resistência e como fontes de memória ancestral, abrindo caminhos para políticas públicas mais inclusivas, para a produção de conhecimento contra-hegemônico e para novas formas de cuidado territorializado. O fantasmagórico aqui não é apenas um lembrete do que foi, mas uma provocação sobre o que ainda precisa ser descolonizado.

Presenter(s): Messias lima

Board #76 "BLIND SPOT OR NOT: MINING GETS BETTER WHEN WE ARE BETTER"

Are the statistics of mining employment as a gender-based-dominated field becoming a trend of the past? With jobs and collegiate student interest in mining trending downward for over a decade, how can mining experience a resurgence of talent with the assurance of continuous growth and systemic change along gender lines? Where are women situated in mining? How does adhering to gender norms impact employment and retention? From 2023 to 2024, we asked over 50 women working in mine operations, technical service, and administration within the United States about their experiences as women in mining. The poster will present the selected data trends shown publicly in this format for the first time. The audience will visually witness the employment data collected and audibly hear selected testimonies from anonymous data sets, including focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and surveys. This presentation aims to provide participants with empirical data and compelling critical insight into employment trends and to inspire ways to attract women to work in mining and retain their talent.

Presenter(s): Sharon Saffold-Harris

Board #77 "Closeted in the Classroom? Queer Navigation in Cisheteronormative Academia"

This study aims to explore queerness among students at Chapman University and to understand its impact on how students conduct themselves within cisheteronormative academic spaces. The research focuses on understanding how the cisheteronormative structure of academia affects queer students' expression, well-being, academic success, and overall life experiences. This was

accomplished through participant observation, interviews, and photography. Finally, this study may help raise awareness of microaggressions, discrimination, and self-policing among queer students in higher education and contribute to future initiatives aimed at alleviating the problem.

Presenter(s): Renee Arehart

Board #78 "On the Razors Edge:" Women's Sex Work, Roles of Advocacy, and the Law

Amid ongoing debates surrounding morality, legalization, and human rights, the landscape of sex work in the United States has significantly shifted due to legal changes, particularly with the 2018 passage of the FOSTA (Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act) and SESTA (Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act). As a result, sex workers find themselves increasingly exposed to legal precarity and social stigma. This study examines how women engaged in sex work navigate shifting legal terrains while simultaneously advocating for their rights and building networks of care. Drawing on ethnographic research that includes interviews with 37 current and former sex workers, as well as participant observation at a sex worker-led advocacy organization in Los Angeles, I highlight the complexities, resilience, and political engagement embedded in their labor, as well as their processes of self-recognition. This research contributes to critical conversations on sex work by centering the voices of those directly impacted, challenging state narratives of victimhood and criminality, and underscoring the necessity of policies that prioritize safety, autonomy, and labor rights for sex workers.

Keywords: Sex Work, Survival, Community Resilience, Precarity, Legislation

Presenter(s): Kristina Dove

Board #79 Global Resonances of Shipibo Amazonian Art: An Anthropological Analysis of Its Impact in Europe and North America Since 2000

Since the early 2000s, Shipibo indigenous art from Peru has captivated international audiences in the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Austria, Spain, and Norway, despite limited recognition in its home regions and Peru's capital, with works valued on par with established global artists and surpassing prominent non-indigenous Peruvian artists. This study applies Alfred Gell's anthropological theory of art to explore the role of institutions-galleries, festivals, exhibition centers, funding agencies, museums, and universities-in shaping artistic discourses, political contexts, and indigenous authenticity, while analyzing the impact of Shipibo art in Europe and North America through concepts like hybridization, appropriation, and transculturation. Using classic and modern ethnographic methods, including fieldwork in exhibition spaces, interviews with artists and specialists, and digital platform analysis, the research reveals an exponential increase in Shipibo exhibitions, artists, and artworks since 2000, interrupted only by the pandemic. Though modest, their global impact is significant, introducing new anthropological concepts to understand contemporary Amazonian art and highlighting its economic, political, and emancipatory success in global art markets.

Presenter(s): Daniel Castillo

8571 Archaeology Division Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Archaeology Division Business Meeting

8768 "Freedom to Grow: Cocurating Movement Archives with Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated People"- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

"Cocurating Movement Archives with Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated People" convenes three New Orleans-based organizations that center the experiences and leadership of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to shine a light on the lives of those who endure "life without parole" sentences. Anthropologists will gather at the John Thompson Legacy Center, 1212 St Bernard Ave, New Orleans, LA 70116, to learn from and be in conversation with leaders from Freedom to Grow and The Visiting Room about their archival projects. This conversation will serve as the material to amplify awareness of Louisiana's particular carceral histories, including as a site of longstanding activism and solidarities against human rights abuses such as the use of solitary confinement / Closed Cell Restriction and radical sentencing measures. As practitioners skilled in holistic and comparative approaches to social problems, and with an appreciation for the nuances of narrative in cultivating connection and belonging, anthropologists are invited to learn about and support this work.

8846 CAE Community Event- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

The Krewe of Red Beans is a movement dedicated to sustaining cultural traditions, addressing pressing community challenges, and promoting sustainable tourism. Its permanent headquarters, Beanlandia, serves as a community hub, museum, and cultural incubator where they host mural festivals, educational events, and music initiatives. This event will feature a 60 minute panel discussion by Krewe of Red Beans leaders, followed by a musical performance and food (red beans and rice). The event will be held at Beanlandia, 3300 Royal Street, in New Orleans. Meet in the lobby of the Marriott at 5:30 PM on Fri., Nov. 21, 2025, to take a van to the event.

8705 Council for Museum Anthropology and Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism Joint Reception and Awards Ceremony- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Council for Museum Anthropology section members and Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism section members are invited to the annual joint CMA/CHAT Reception and Awards Ceremony. The reception will be held at The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (818 Howard Avenue, New Orleans; <https://msje.org/>). Galleries are free and open to attendees during the event, preview starting at 6:00 PM. The reception begins at 6:30 PM, with open bar and light appetizers served until 8:30 PM. Details also will be shared on CMA's and CHAT's member channels (Linked In <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cma-council-for-museum-anthropology-80301a2b5/>; AAA Communities page, go to Member Login to the Communities/Groups/My Groups/CMA Membership page via <https://my.americananthro.org/community/s/>; the CHAT section website <https://chat.americananthro.org/>).

8736 SAFN, SEA, C&A Joint Reception- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 6:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

All are welcome! Friday Nov 21, 6:30pm to 9:30pm at Disappear Here, 301 N. Peters Street. Join Culture & Agriculture, AND the Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition, AND the Society for Economic Anthropology for a joint reception!

8572 Archaeology Division Patty Jo Watson Distinguished Lecture

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 8:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

The Archaeology Division's Patty Jo Watson Distinguished Lecture will be given by Shannon Lee Dawdy, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago. The Title: Recruiting Ghosts for the Revolution. Abstract: Archaeology loves revolutions. We have embraced the Neolithic Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Radiocarbon Revolution. So why don't we have a coherent subfield that focuses on political revolution? Surely the forces that result in revolts, rebellions, and foundation-shaking revolutions are just as important to political formation as the concentration of authority that fuels the building of monuments and empires, the grist for so many archaeological mills. What would an archaeology of revolution look like? What potentials could it release? Walter Benjamin turned to the dead for political hope during an extraordinarily bleak time in human history. There he found victories ignored by history, paths not taken, and struggles not yet over. He found the fighters. I argue that archaeology, as a practice built on resurrecting the dead, is uniquely suited to documenting revolutionary forces in political life. I offer a survey of what archaeologists

have said about past revolts and revolutions (there is some work if you hunt for it) and reflect on the close encounters I have had with rebellious ghosts in New Orleans.

8786 SAE Douglass Book Prize Award

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Special Event

SAE Douglass Book Prize Award

8759 GAD Awards Dinner- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Please join the General Anthropology Division as we celebrate this year's prize winners whose works cross multiple sub-fields and extend the reach of anthropology. RSVP with the GAD president by emailing parrenas@cornell.edu with the subject, "GAD Awards Dinner." The event will be at Chartres House, 543 Chartres Street in the French Quarter on Friday, 7:30pm to 10pm. The event is open to GAD members and friends, however capacity is limited to 30 people. Presentation of awards will begin at 8pm.

8851 Musica y Comunidad as Tools of Resistance, Resiliency, and Transformation- offsite

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Musica y Comunidad as Tools of Resistance, Resiliency, and Transformation

Event Sponsored by ALLA, Familias Unidas en Accion, Fermin Ceballos, and Dominican NOLAfest

The Association of Latina/o & Latinx Antropologists invites members of the American Anthropological Association to meet with Familias Unidas en Accion, a non-profit organization working with immigrant communities and the community at large in New Orleans. This presentation and cultural exchange will inform participants of current issues impacting the Latinx and Carribean diasporas in NOLA and efforts to build resilient communities. This cultural exchange will be followed by music of consciousness and belonging presented by Fermin Ceballos, music writer, performer, producer, and organizer of the Dominican NOLAfest. This evening event will provide participants with an opportunity to connect with community through dialogue, music, dance, and cultural exchange in New Orleans .

8562 The Anthropology of Childhood and Youth Special Interest Group (ACYIG) Reception

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Special Event

The Anthropology of Childhood and Youth Special Interest Group (ACYIG) is pleased to invite scholars of childhood and youth to attend our ACYIG Reception at the 2025 AAA Conference. We will have light refreshments, and encourage those interested in young people's lives to attend. This will be a space to build our academic community, share our research interests, and create new partnerships. We will also be offering scholars a chance to share their book details, so please bring your publication flyers and advertisements and we will display them!

8771 Association for Africanist Anthropology - Reception, Awards Ceremony, Business Meeting, Distinguished Lecture

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Association for Africanist Anthropology will hold an exciting combined business meeting, awards ceremony, and reception to celebrate our accomplishments and organize for the next year. This year, our event will feature a distinguished lecture by Professor Louisa Lombard.

Members, award nominees, friends, and colleagues are welcome to attend and learn more about how to participate in AfAA.

8577 Society for Anthropology of Religion Section Business Meeting (welcome all -- finger food and drinks available)

Start Date: 11/21/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Special Event

Awarding of the Clifford Geertz Book Prize for 2025, and Honorable Mentions

Awarding of the SAR Student Paper Prize

Announcement and presentation of newly elected Board Members

Solicit suggestions from members for new initiatives, activities, and theme for the next Biennial Conference in 2027

Other Business to be announced.

8824 Biological Anthropology Section Distinguished Speaker Award & Reception

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Special Event

The annual Biological Anthropology Section distinguished speaker award and reception

8626 Society for the Anthropology of Europe William A. Douglass Lecture and SAE RECEPTION:

Lea Ypi, Ralph Miliband Professor, LSE

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 10:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Special Event

Society for the Anthropology of Europe

William A. Douglass Lecture followed by SAE reception :

WILLIAM A. DOUGLASS LECTURE

Lea Ypi,

Ralph Miliband Professor of Politics and Philosophy, London School of Economics and Political Science

Dignity and Historical Injustice: The History of an Albanian Family

Professor Lea Ypi will discuss the themes of her new book entitled Indignity, tracing the journey of a woman from Ottoman Salonica to a life under surveillance in post-war communist Albania. The book explores the moral and political meanings of individual and collective dignity, in connection to questions of truth and reconciliation, historical injustice and the relationship between fact and fiction.

SAE RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW

9090 Reception for Graduates and Friends of the Yale University Department of Anthropology

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Cocktail hour for Graduates and Friends of the Yale University Department of Anthropology

8838 SVA Business Meeting, Award Ceremony & Reception

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside C (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Society for Visual Anthropology Business Meeting & Award Ceremony

8547 Donor Reception

Start Date: 11/21/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/21/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Special Event

We are going to host the donor reception onsite (Sheraton) on Friday 11/21 from 8pm-10pm. The Sheraton included a complimentary 100-person reception in our contract so we will utilize those funds for this event. We can include the EB, section leadership and

awardees to get to 100 people.

Saturday, November 22, 2025

8650 Department Services Program Chairs Breakfast

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 9:30 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Special Event

Department Services Program Chairs Breakfast - RSVP only

8591 Executive Board Orientation

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 9:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

A meeting of new executive board members to review an orientation of board responsibilities.

8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival-- Day 4

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Bayside A (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology screens the best of ethnographic film at the annual SVA Film & Media Festival. The Festival is held as part of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, giving filmmakers and distributors broad access to an audience of thousands of anthropologists, educators, and other attendees.

Ethnographic film and media can be defined broadly as works that emerge through ethnographic fieldwork or that use, are informed by, illustrate, or evoke concepts and principles of anthropological theory, methods, or practice.

2025 SVA Film & Media Festival Directors:

Dr. Anna Neumann

Dr. Mariam Abazeri

8637 Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA) - Mentoring Event

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 9:15 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

This is a mentoring event for members (and aspiring members) of the Association of Black Anthropologists. Information about the theme and details of the workshop is sent separately to ABA members.

8991 The Brown Joy Project

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Late-Breaking Oral Presentation Session

This Late-Breaking session brings together four new ethnographic and creative works emerging from the Brown Joy Project, a collaborative initiative that centers joy in the lives of people of color—not as erasure of harm, but as its counterpoint and refusal. Against dominant anthropological narratives that render marginalized communities legible primarily through trauma, suffering, and precarity, this session foregrounds joy as a critical, embodied, and worldmaking practice. It asks: what does joy look like, sound like, and feel like in the aftermath of displacement, surveillance, grief, and survival?

Each paper draws on new research conducted since April 2025 and speaks to urgent questions about how people of color are remaking the textures of everyday life within a global context marked by escalating precarity, burnout, and backlash. Through personal narrative, sensory ethnography, and critical reflection, the papers trace how joy emerges in intimate domains—childhood play, intergenerational storytelling, migration, faith, language, kinship, and beauty and care work. Collectively, they illuminate how small rituals and fleeting moments—braiding hair, choosing a song, telling a family story, smelling cardamom or attar—become vessels of survival, desire, and collective memory.

Methodologically, this session experiments with ethnography as attunement rather than extraction, integrating autoethnography, collaborative storytelling, visual and sensory methods, and archival fragments. By foregrounding embodiment and lived experience, the contributors challenge disciplinary conventions that privilege textual authority over relational knowledge. The session also

reflects on our own positionalities as women of color and diasporic scholars navigating the academy, asking how joy might be cultivated as an intergenerational practice of care within and beyond our institutions.

Theoretically, the Brown Joy Project builds on Black and decolonial feminist scholarship (Ahmed, Sharpe, Benjamin, Hartman) to argue that joy is not antithetical to critique but integral to it: a fugitive sociality that refuses to be fully consumed by the logics of racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and the medical/academic-industrial complex. By bringing joy, beauty, and care into the anthropological archive as serious sites of knowledge-making, this session offers timely, field-based insights into how people of color are making life livable, and beautiful, against the odds.

Organizer: Lalaie Ameeriar, York University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Lalaie Ameeriar, York University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ramah McKay, Lalaie Ameeriar, York University, Department of Anthropology, Christen Smith, University of Texas at Austin

Discussant: Kevin O'Neill

Presentation(s): Life and grief in the Zoom room

Intensely missing my grandmother a few years ago I enrolled in online Arabic language classes with a group of women. This piece reflects on how my experiences and my classmates - mostly diasporic subjects living in the UK - have brought home to me the beauty of non-traditional classrooms and the value of learning spaces outside the repressive, hierarchical, anxiety-driven spaces of the US academy. As the politics of higher education in the US intensify pressures on what classrooms can be and do, the practices of learning and relating that I find as a student in this Zoom classroom are precious to me.

Presenter(s): Ramah McKay

Lali: On Names, Memory, and the Inheritance of Joy

This paper traces how joy can be carried inside a single word. All my life, my mother called me Lali. I thought it was just a nickname, a soft sound folded into the hum of our home. The hiss of the pressure cooker. The smell of cumin rising in hot oil. The murmur of Indian serials on TV. After she died, Lali disappeared. I became Lalaie to the world. On forms. On prescriptions. In waiting rooms. Even my grief felt bureaucratic.

This paper places that moment inside the Brown Joy Project, a collaborative archive that centers joy as an embodied and intergenerational practice among people of color. Drawing on autoethnography and memory work, it shows how small gestures—combing hair, peeling oranges, saying a name—can hold whole emotional worlds that outlast their makers. Building on Black and decolonial feminist thought, I argue that joy is not the opposite of grief. It is its quiet companion, carried in sound, touch, and memory.

Presenter(s): Lalaie Ameeriar

Cite Black Women

This paper examines the Cite Black Women movement as both a call to action and a methodology of refusal. It explores how the project reframes citation as care, accountability, and memory work, and argues for citation as an embodied practice of justice that makes Black women's intellectual labor visible and enduring.

Presenter(s): Christen Smith

Discussion

9003 Immigration Court Watching, Pedagogy, and Resistance in a Time of Crisis

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

In this moment, immigration courts stand as critical yet opaque sites where law and due process are under attack. While these courts are haunted by the ghosts of past exclusions, they are also sites where nightmares are made real: masked agents apprehend people with pending hearings, families are torn apart in hallways, people are ordered deported in absentia.

Formally "administrative," immigration courts fall under the Department of Justice. They operate with far fewer protections than criminal courts, despite adjudicating life-or-death matters. Grant and denial rates vary dramatically across courts nationwide, and even within the same courthouse. With a record 2.5 million cases in backlog, judges face crushing caseloads and political pressure, producing systemic arbitrariness. Courtrooms are formally public, but transcripts are rarely produced unless appealed, leaving these spaces both visible and invisible.

Ethnography allows us to make these dynamics legible. This session introduces several faculty-led initiatives that engage undergraduate students and community members in court watching. Presenters will reflect upon and offer findings from recent pilot research where students were trained and then spent time in immigration court to record judicial behavior, interpretation practices, tone, and off-the-record exchanges—details that never enter official records. Presenters highlight training models, preliminary findings, and frontline advocacy, while reflecting on the dangers and possibilities of innovating collaborative methodologies in a decentralized federal system. Their work generates urgently needed data while raising questions about the role of witnessing, neutrality, and solidarity in ethnography.

Conducting this work is urgent yet fraught. Being present in immigration court – as observer, as accompanier – allows us to witness, document, and communicate the ever-changing conditions and emergent iterations of legal violence introduced into the courts. Under authoritarian conditions, however, risks extend beyond respondents and their families to community members, students, and faculty researchers. The jailing of professors, revocation of visas, repression of student movements, and surveillance of campus spaces have become commonplace.

Ethnographic court-watching brings vicarious trauma, ethical dilemmas, and questions of complicity: What does it mean to document silently, docket after docket, without reacting? Who can safely participate? How should researchers respond to risks that extend from the courtroom into the university itself?

Together, panelists probe how ghosts of past injustices and nightmares of present enforcement haunt immigration courts, while asking how anthropology can illuminate opaque institutions, safeguard due process, and resist systemic violence. The session closes with an invitation to join a growing network committed to documenting, safeguarding due process, and resisting systemic violence.

Organizer: Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University, Lauren Heidbrink, California State University, Long Beach

Presenter(s): Gabriella Sanchez , Whitney Duncan, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Anthropology, Lauren Heidbrink, California State University, Long Beach, Rebecca Galemba, University of Denver, Amelia Frank-Vitale, Princeton University

Discussant: William Lopez

499 Morning Coffee Poster Session

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Poster

Presenter(s): Meghan Banton, Tylar Campbell, Simon Fraser University, Rokia Doumbia, Brown University, Isabelle Perreault, Li Hayes, Kelsey Cook, Danae Ayra-Barboza, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology, Skyler Yakes, Julia McCuaig, KayLee Blum, Molly Zuckerman, Kelvin Asare, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Yueqi Cheng, Franckel MOREAU, Heather McKillop, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Victoria Gutierrez, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Corrina Ophelia, Caty DuDevoir, Micah Phoenix, Missouri State University, Elizabeth Bingham Thomas, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Sydney Worrall, Erin Nelson, Kaylee Hinds, Robert Tague, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Morenike Samuel, Sarah Miller, Michael Hale, Alex Broussard, Augusta Herman, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Victoria Sherwood, Kara Larson, Daniel Garner, Riya Prabhakar, Alana Alexander, Nicole Smith, University of California, Los Angeles, Aishwarya Mukhopadhyay, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Oluwabunmi Bernard, Maria Moreno Parra, Samantha Allen, Christine Chepkorir, Sharon Young, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies, Adam Netzer Zimmer, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Ernestine Whitaker, Syracuse University | AnthroClub, Bowen Wu, Angela Storey, University of Louisville, Department of Anthropology, Josie Cohen, Vaty Raina, David Chicoine, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Jennavieve Lambeth, Clay Sharp, Alicia Carr, University of Nevada,

Las Vegas, Taylor Recuero, Jonatan Naranjo Lugo, Mila Mucic, Elizabeth Sills, Alexandra Jefferies, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Laura Allen, Benjamin Moss, Louisiana State University, Chloe Hale, University of Louisville, Micaela Candia, Emma Gruesbeck, Clover Smith, Hannah Giberti, Averil Jones, Jones Forensic Anthropology Laboratory, Kezia Abraham, Kathryn Oths, University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology, Stanley Nwosu, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Larson, Navid Ghadimi, Christine Mazzello, Joshua Rubin, Isabella Paras, Subreen Dhiwal, Blake McCabe, Mayne Benedetto

Presentation(s): Board#1 "Examining Occupational Disease Through a Paleopathological Lens: Phossy Jaw, Radium Jaw, and their Modern Equivalents"

Occupational medicine is a field that is inherently concerned with history, as identifying occupational diseases is often reliant on close examination of symptomatology and patterns of patient demographics over time. Given this discipline's connection to history, pathology, and medicine, the holistic and interdisciplinary approach of paleopathology (a sub-discipline of bioarchaeology) is an ideal lens for examining this discipline and its influence. Working under the paleopathological understanding of 'One Paleopathology' (the deep time understanding that disease is the product of interaction between numerous interconnected factors), two historical occupational diseases causing jaw necrosis ('Phossy Jaw' and 'Radium Jaw') were examined to gain a holistic understanding of their determinants and effects. This approach utilized examination of primary documentation (hospital records, court records, autopsy reports), medical journals and reports, examination and analysis of extant pathological remains, and side exploration relevant to various disciplines (chemistry, physics, sociology, and cultural anthropology). This holistic analysis of these historic conditions was then used to identify the widespread impact these events had through history into our present; changes to industries, public influence, political/legal influence, understanding of modern diseases (radium osteonecrosis and bisphosphonate-related osteonecrosis of the jaw), and influence on the discipline of occupational medicine. This study clearly illustrates the value of a holistic approach to understanding disease.

Presenter(s): Meghan Banton

Board#2 "Soundcestral Remembrance: Fugitive Memory, Congo Square, and the Struggle Against Historical Erasure"

This late-breaking submission explores the urgency of memory work at Congo Square, a landmark of Black cultural history in New Orleans that continues to embody both resistance and erasure. Building on theories of Black fugitivity and Black geographies, I advance the framework of soundcestral remembrance-the practice of sustaining cultural memory and ancestral presence through sound, rhythm, and gathering.

Drawing on multimodal narrative anthropology and ongoing fieldwork, this research interrogates how Congo Square operates simultaneously as a site of remembrance and a battleground against systemic erasure. The November 2025 AAA conference coincides with the anniversary of November 23, 1997, when the Congo Square plaque was installed following decades of advocacy by the Congo Square Preservation Society. Today, the preservation of such spaces faces renewed threats

amid political efforts to dismantle Black historical recognition and weaken national memory infrastructures.

Through attention to sound, embodied memory, and community space-making, this project connects the historical struggle to preserve Congo Square with emerging discussions in fugitive anthropology and multimodal narrative practice. It demonstrates how African diasporic memory traditions endure despite erasure, foregrounding rhythm as a vehicle of cultural continuity, resistance, and survival.

By situating Congo Square within the current wave of attacks on Black history in the United States, this presentation highlights the critical role of anthropology in documenting, safeguarding, and amplifying cultural memory in contested landscapes or what Katherine McKittrick calls "terrains of struggle". The findings urge anthropologists to engage with questions of preservation, erasure, and resistance as live, urgent issues rather than historical inevitabilities.

Presenter(s): Tylar Campbell

Board#3 "Yeah, that's when it needs to transition to be normal": Exploring Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Disability Caregivers' Conceptions of Normal

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, disability caregivers faced distinct and varying challenges shaped by familial ties, financial constraints, and compassion fatigue. Some non-professional caregivers suddenly transitioned from tertiary or secondary care to become primary caregivers in the wake of international uncertainty. Drawing on journal entries contributed to the Pandemic Journaling Project (PJP) and follow-up interviews with disability caregivers, this study explores changing understandings of the "normal" among caregivers in the years since COVID-19 was first declared an epidemic. Changes in caregiving statuses were largely impacted by widespread isolation measures. We show how conceptions of normalcy changed over time, and how current conceptions of a "post-pandemic normal" are inextricably tied to earlier conceptions of a "pandemic normal." In exploring what the "future normal" might look like, we examine participants' varied views of their obligations to the people for whom they provide care. For some, their perceived obligation to the person receiving care would involve placing them in a professional care facility. Other caregivers integrated future living arrangements into their plan to remain the primary caregiver. This research examines the critical impact of the pandemic redefining relationships between non-professional disability caregivers and those who are cared-for, providing valuable insight into how disability and caregiving are impacted by changing temporal dynamics and, moreover, how they are co-created with ideas of the normal.

Presenter(s): Rokia Doumbia

Co-author(s): Sarah Willen, Katherine Mason

Board#4 (Re)thinking non-places and unspoken ghosts through archives.

In *No Archive Will Restore You*, Julietta Singh writes "The stories that comprise us have left us both wanting more, wishing we had access to a fuller narrative frame. I call this wishing-wanting desire

"the ghost archive." Everything we need to know but cannot know as we keep circling and sniffing around the edges. Everything that keeps affecting us and affecting others through us. Everything that remains right there, but just out of reach". (2018: 96)

This presentation explores ways to reflect on the archives: it underlines how ghosts of the past represent an incessant search for meaning through fragmented traces but always charged with spectral meanings. Rather than seeking to reveal the story of present-absent character, or hidden meaning of unspoken events in a narrative, why can't we turn our attention to the wider issues of twists and turns, interpretations and backflows? We propose that to engage with the ghosts of the past is to give them a voice ; we believe that death is a revealer of those small, "noiseless" deaths that guide the Grim Reaper : not only physiological death, but also social, political, moral, spiritual, symbolic and even existential death. This infra-ordinary of death that can be read on, and through, archives. Is that proofs, like historians say? Or just snippets of yesterday that lay out there? Flat in folders, in boxes? Here they are, take what you like. Write lines, transcribe words, sentences, paragraphs to feed, swallow and evacuate them into oblivion.

History, as the study of the past, should remind us of death everywhere and everytime. Like Michelet once said, we are "condemned to haunt the dead, or to be haunted by them" (Crouzet, 1976). In this presentation, we will draw from the suicide letters within the archives, fragments of words and pictures left by incarcerated people, those who linger and haunt the prisons long after their departure. To accomplish this, we had to encounter them: blows of the heart, blows of hatred, blows of desperation, or blows that dissolve like ripples in water. The archive may remain silent, yet it reverberates, it is spectral. Knots in the bars, the crumpled fabric of prison uniforms, a metallic silence, a life evaporating into the void leaving behind only a thread. The prison fabrics take shape and dissolve, as do the prisoners who have taken their own lives, leaving behind only their shadows. These deaths that overflow. "It's the event itself; a first time is a last time. All other. Staged for the end of history. Let's call it hauntology. [...] the spirit comes back; it figures both a dead man who returns and a ghost whose expected return is repeated, again and again". (Derrida, 1993: 29).

Presenter(s): Isabelle Perreault

Co-author(s): Lucrezia Selva Curreri

Board#5 A Precolumbian Mesoamerican Medical Manual: Reading Folios 29-32 of the Codex Borgia through Medical Metaphor

I use the conceptual lens of a "medical imaginary" to guide an analysis of the corporeal imagery found on the first four pages of the ritual sequence of the pre-Columbian Central Mexican codex (suspected to originate from Puebla-Tlaxcala) commonly called the "Borgia". Thinking with this lens encourages us to pay particular attention the affective and metaphysical contexts within which anatomical and medical imagery operated in order to generate potentially illuminating readings of paleographic documents such as the Borgia. The 18 folios of the 'ritual sequence' (from folio 29-45) of the codex are oriented 90 degrees askew from the rest of the corpus, and have been subject to disparate interpretations. The polysemic nature of the Mexica calendrical codices means that there

are likely multiple diverse layers of meaning embedded within these same pages. These first four folios are, even among this enigmatic sequence, unusual – I interpret them as representations of systems or layers of the body.

In my analysis, folio 29 depicts "the empty vessel" – the corporeal system which the *teyolía* animates; folio 30 depicts "bone and muscle" – which is nourished and supported by the *tōnalli*; folio 31a shows the dark fluids, bile, and winds which the *ihiyōtl* fills and moves through; folio 31b shows the blood and excrement which course through and out of all of the other internal systems; and folio 32 depicts two different views of "the outer shell" – the hair, teeth, skin, and nails that enclose and obscure the other layers. The five enclosures on the first four pages of the ritual sequence, seen this way, can be understood as different medicinal, ritual, and/or spiritual layers of the body encountered by an indigenous *ticitl* during medical consultation and anatomical study.

This system of layers may resemble the biomedical conceptions of the

nervous, musculoskeletal, nutritional, circulatory, and immunological systems, but this kind of conceptual translation is counter-productive for the purpose of engaging with diverse medical ontologies on their own grounds. I prefer to situate these layers within the temporal and cosmological patterns that have traditionally been used to narrativize the Borgia's ritual sequence. These frames mirror grand cosmological narratives of the world being made and/or Venus travelling through the underworld; relating aspects of a medical (or bodily) imaginary with the cosmogony of the world and with divine narratives. For medical eyes reading these pages, the bodily materials of blood, excrement, water, tendon, and bone can serve to take us from the flesh to the calendar, and from the earthly body to the celestial.

Presenter(s): Li Hayes

Board#6 The Influence of Age on Pain Care Practices in Tanzanian Hospitals

The lack of essential pain medications in lower-income countries is a persisting issue impacting healthcare services. Pain management disparities in lower-income countries disproportionately affect older adults. In Tanzania, geriatric pain is often undertreated due to misconceptions that pain is a natural part of aging, communication barriers, side effect concerns, and patients underreporting pain. The older population in Tanzania forms a significant percentage of people seeking care for chronic illnesses, and the majority of older Tanzanians reside in rural areas, decreasing access to sufficient health management. As the aging population grows, understanding these challenges is crucial for health, anthropology, and aging studies.

This medical anthropology research project, conducted in Iringa, Tanzania, as part of Dr. Adrienne Strong's NSF-funded project on pain care practices, took place at Tosamaganga District Hospital over nine weeks in the summer of 2025. Using ethnographic methods such as semi-structured interviews, rank-ordering, focus groups, and participant-observation, I explored how age influences pain treatment. Interviews with healthcare professionals, patients, and patients' family members revealed key themes: the normalization of pain in aging, structural and social barriers to seeking care, and the link between emotional distress and physical pain. Specifically, how loneliness is a

prominent experience among elders and shapes experiences within and outside of the hospital. Additional core themes discovered include the way support networks, residence, and daily responsibilities impact not only the perception of pain, but also the care received. These findings highlight age as a critical factor in the allocation of pain medication and in shaping patient experiences within biomedical health settings. By examining the intersection of aging and pain management in a low-resource healthcare system, this study contributes to a broader understanding of challenges in geriatrics.

Presenter(s): Kelsey Cook

Co-author(s): Adrienne Strong

Board#7 Access and Care in the Florida Heartland

Communities of color in the Florida Heartland suffer from inadequate economic structures stressed by compounding natural and political disasters. My project examines kidney disease as a socio-political problem created by poverty and insufficient access to healthcare in rural communities. Poverty and health are inversely related to disease risks and patient outcomes. Interviewing members of patient care circles (family, friends, providers) expands lived experience analysis to a community rather than just the patient. Analyzing the alliances in a patient's care network through the anthropological frameworks of structural violence, suffering, and care will highlight central experiences and themes. These experiences and themes can reframe current policies and ongoing healthcare reform to address gaps in healthcare access and socio-economic inequalities. This project is a multi-sited ethnographical study of lived kidney disease experiences.

Presenter(s): Danae Ayra-Barboza

Board#8 Aging Out: Transformation of the Gymnastics Bodymind and the Shifting Structures of Support in College Athletics

"My body feels older. Like when I get out of bed in the morning I can feel it. I have different injuries that bother me in my daily life. Not even just at the gym" – Sasha. In early 2024, I spoke with Sasha, who was one of the two collegiate gymnasts I interviewed to explore the reasons why gymnasts choose to compete at the college level. Unlike many other sports, gymnastics does not offer a professional path where participation in college athletics is required for drafting. Over three separate interviews per gymnast, we conversed about topics such as structures of the sport, bodily changes, concepts of health and injury, identity, and personal histories. Gymnastics produces women who transition from simply doing gymnastics to being a gymnast. Sport transforms bodies and minds (Besnier, 2018), and areas of transformation include the physical (e.g., 'gymnastics' body type and aging out) and mental/emotional (e.g., making "adult" decisions as a child and body awareness). The transition begins in club gymnastics, which is a highly individualistic sport with intensive training and repetitive, large number assignments in practices. When the girls reach college gymnastics, their bodies are aging out, or the accumulation of injuries and daily aches and pains that make doing the sport more difficult with age. The structure of college gymnastics shifts from club by prioritizing rehabilitation, quality versus quantity of practice assignments, and

becoming team orientated. This paper discusses how college gymnastics changes to support bodymind transformations from participation in sport.

Presenter(s): Skyler Yakes

Board#9 Agro-Politics and the Moche: A Stable Isotope Analysis of Moche Agricultural Management During the Early Intermediate Period, Moche Valley, Peru

Stable isotope analysis of macrobotanical remains from archaeological sites in the Americas has often been overlooked, with most analyses of this nature occurring in Eurasia. Analyzing $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ of macrobotanical remains, especially domesticated crops, provides insight into past agricultural practices and management, such as the use and application of irrigation canals and fertilization techniques. Utilizing $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ of macrobotanical remains from three Moche Valley sites spanning AD 100-800 (West Cerro León [MV224], Cerro León [MV225], and Ciudad de Dios [MV83]), temporal changes in agricultural practices were examined. These sites date just prior to and during the period of Moche state formation on the north coast of Peru. The Moche are among the first archaic states in Peru, known for their construction of irrigation canals, mould-made ceramics, and expanding rule into various river valleys along the north coast. However, little is known about how Moche cities were fed and what impact agriculture had on the ability to expand influence in the region. Through the isotopic analysis of macrobotanical remains from sites dated to various periods of Moche rule, this study addresses changes in agricultural practices associated with the development of the Moche state.

Presenter(s): Julia McCuaig

Co-author(s): Dana Bardolph, Brian Billman, Paul Szpak

Board#10 An Analysis of Phase II Facets Among European Neanderthals via ISO Standard 25178

The following study analyzes the relationship between dental microwear texture data and

ISO Standard 25178 on European Neanderthal molar Phase II facets. This study explores ISO

25178's ability to distinguish Neanderthal populations and supplement DMTA data from various Neanderthal sites including Krapina, Vindija, Hortus, Spy, Kůlna, Švédův stůl, Engis, El Sidrón, La Quina, Arcy-sur-Cure, and Pech-de-l'Azé. In an effort to understand the efficacy of ISO 25178 in dental microwear studies, the priority objectives were to observe correlations within the dataset and see if the ISO standards are useful in regard to distinguishing populations. The results demonstrate that dietary reconstruction can be achieved with more precision; therefore, ISO 25178 standards should be included in future DMTA studies.

Presenter(s): KayLee Blum

Board#11 Ancient pathogens and microbes and responses to contemporary disease risks

Combined, skeletal evidence from deceased humans, as well as biomolecules (e.g., ancient DNA (aDNA)) recovered from their substrates can capture otherwise historically and archaeologically

invisible interactions between human hosts, environments, non-human animals, plants, and pathogens or HEAPP interactions. Further, when ancient -omics tools (e.g., paleogenomics) and data are combined with broad collaborations, perspectives, data, and knowledge (e.g., historical, Indigenous, oral history) from diverse groups and disciplines and funneled into translation science, findings can also have direct relevance to contemporary societies. Staying within ethical parameters, such research can uncover the transmission, virulence, burden, and resistance mechanisms of past pathogens relative to specific biosocial (e.g., ecological, political-economic) conditions in past societies. In turn, these can be used to directly inform our understanding of contemporary and potentially future diseases and disease risks with diverse benefits. These include tailored and thus more efficient pandemic preparedness and public health responses, and even generating novel therapies. Relevant research includes genome-phenome approaches and reconstruction of human immune responses in differential vulnerability to past pandemics via integrated data from ancient biomolecules and skeletal material (e., 1918 influenza, 14th c. plague); paleogenomics fused with synthetic biology to generate novel paleobiotechnology and reconstruct ancient microbiomes (e.g., ancient oral microbiomes); and emerging infectious disease (EID) origins, including zoonoses, origins and spread within One Health/ One Paleopathology. Nevertheless, practical and ethical considerations challenge these promises. Amongst others, these include engaging with descendant communities and communities of practice and diverse rights holders, as well as issues of disproportionate destructive sampling, funding and policy decisions, data re-purposing, and concerns over descendant community genetic privacy and authority over biomolecular heritage. Amongst other recommendations made, further collaboration will ensure that ancient pathogens and microbes research ethically contributes to deeper understandings of health, disease, and HEAPP interactions in the past and their practical implications for contemporary societies.

Presenter(s): Molly Zuckerman

Co-author(s): Courtney Hofman

Board#12 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF NSAKYE THROUGH CO-CREATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

Ghana faces a significant developmental challenge due to the disconnect between the present and the archaeological past. This poster reports on archaeological research at Nsakyé, an understudied and endangered region in the Eastern Region of Ghana (West Africa). Ivor Wilks (2001) suggests the town is one of three capital towns linked to the Akwamu Empire in the 18th century. The Akwamu was the most powerful Akan kingdom in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, stretching about 250 miles along the Gold and Slave Coasts (the coast of present-day Ghana to Benin). Nsakyé was also a site of conflict that contributed to the decline of Akwamu and played a role in trade with Danish merchants. In the 19th century, a Basel missionary station was established in Nsakyé, marking a significant Christian presence, although the extent of its influence remains unclear. By adopting a co-creative approach, I leverage the potential of Public archaeology to shed light on the historical significance of Ghana's past. Through mapping, surveys, and preliminary interviews, I investigate

Nsakyé's past and contribute to a literature that remains scant. Nsakyé holds historical significance; however, it remains under-researched archaeologically, and its settlement history is unclear, with varying accounts of its establishment. My research reflects on Nsakyé's historical narrative within the broader historiography of Ghana.

Presenter(s): Kelvin Asare

Board#13 Between Bedsides: Nursing Assistants in the Margins of Medicine in China's Public Hospitals

This paper examines the experiences of elder-care nursing assistants (hu gong) working in public hospitals in Hunan, China. These women, primarily middle-aged and from rural backgrounds, occupy a precarious and often invisible space within China's urban medical system. Highly mobile and positioned at the social and economic margins, they perform labor that is emotionally intensive, physically demanding, and symbolically fraught.

While their work is officially categorized as non-medical support, nursing assistants are deeply embedded in the intimate rhythms of hospital life and of medicine. Within the confined, emotionally charged space of the ward, they not only tend to the daily needs of elderly patients but also forge complex relationships with nurses, patients' families, and fellow caregivers. Their care work blurs the lines between employment and kinship, duty and affection-often extending into the terrain of grief, dying, and death, which remain culturally taboo in China.

Despite being underpaid and overlooked, these women exercise moral agency and emotional tact in navigating class differences, institutional hierarchies, and the moral weight of end-of-life care. Through ethnographic attention to their everyday practices and relationships, this paper explores how nursing assistants subtly reshape employer-employee dynamics, challenge the binary between center and periphery, and reimagine what it means to care in an era of capitalist healthcare.

Ultimately, this work seeks to illuminate the layered moral, affective, and social worlds that rural women inhabit as they labor at the threshold between life and death-between marginality and intimate centrality.

Presenter(s): Yueqi Cheng

Board#14 Body and identity in the digital age: a bioanthropological analysis of aesthetic norms of young adults in Brazil

This research aims to examine the impact of digital technologies on the perception and body identity of young adults in Brazil, focusing on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Adopting a bioanthropological approach to one that integrates both biological and cultural dimensions combined with a netnographic methodology, the study explores how these social networks shape aesthetic norms and influence body representations. Young adults, constantly exposed to retouched images and idealized content, often experience pressure to modify or "reconstruct" their bodies, leading in some cases to aesthetic interventions such as liposuction or

breast augmentation. The findings reveal that the body is perceived both as a form of social capital and as a personal project, influenced by global standards (the impact of influencers and international beauty ideals) as well as local specificities (such as Brazil's cultural history of racial mixing and the fetishization of certain body types). Preliminary observations indicate that this ongoing exposure to idealized beauty standards contributes to a redefinition of body identity, heightening insecurities and intensifying social comparison. In response, many young people are developing coping strategies, including active participation in body positivity movements that promote self-acceptance and challenge dominant norms. These counter-narratives are particularly significant in Brazil, where affirmations of Afro-Brazilian identity and the visibility of "non-normative" bodies are gaining cultural momentum. Through a literature review and critical analysis of digital content and participant narratives, this poster aims to provide an understanding of contemporary issues related to body image and identity. By integrating historical and cultural perspectives, this research highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding modern challenges related to body perception and identity, while also shedding light on the sociocultural implications for the psychological well-being of young adults in the digital age.

Key-words: Aesthetic norms, corporal identity, digital technologies, bioanthropology, netnography

Presenter(s): Franckel MOREAU

Co-author(s): Yves Roldyne Duvillage

Board#15 Ch'oc Ayin: Salt Cakes and Dried Fish at an Ancient Maya Household Group, Belize

Excavations in 2025 at the submerged Maya site of Ch'oc Ayin at the Paynes Creek Salt Works, Belize were placed according to results from previous sea floor mapping. The wooden posts from four pole and thatch buildings preserved below the sea floor in mangrove peat were mapped in 2008. Systematic sea floor mapping of artifacts in 2023 revealed patterns of artifacts associated with different activities. The diversity of different pottery shapes and types, as well as stone and wood objects associated with Building A suggested it was a residence. The abundance of briquetage--salt pottery used to boil brine in pots over fires to make salt cakes--associated with Building B suggested that it was a salt kitchen for the resident salt workers. Building C was more enigmatic due to the limited sea floor mapping but the presence of clay funnel fragments from the brine enrichment process suggests it was also involved in salt making. Chert stone tools associated with Building B, particularly in the overhang of the west wall, suggested tool refurbishing or perhaps processing fish or animal meat. Use-wear analysis of chert from other Paynes Creek Salt sites indicated most chert tools were used for processing fish or meat and not woodworking. The excavations and artifact analyses supported our evidence from sea floor mapping.

Presenter(s): Heather McKillop

Co-author(s): Elizabeth Sills

Board#16 Civic Engagement and Community Organizing in Slab City and Bombay Beach

Located in inland southern California, the Salton Sea is a man-made landlocked lake best known for its high salinity and extreme pollution, owing to decades of agricultural runoff. I focus on residents in two unincorporated communities on the north Salton Sea: Slab City and Bombay Beach. Here, residents often turn to atypical forms of government and political structures to fulfill basic needs, as well as establish a sense of community; they do this out of a sense of belonging that they cannot find or foster anywhere else. This study is an interdisciplinary inquiry on political engagement, environmental justice, poverty, and community. This research was primarily conducted through participant observation and interviews in these areas during the spring and summer of 2024. I highlight how residents deal with ecological ruin, poverty, and poor health conditions, which are exacerbated by the perceived lack of government support and intervention. Ultimately, they cope with their struggles through community-based organizing, nonprofits, and other nontraditional means of problem-solving. These tactics, however, frequently fail because of the region's poverty and lack of infrastructure. Despite this, residents keep going because they believe in the possibility of a better world. This study adds to the dialogue around the Salton Sea by highlighting how residents in these communities exercise their agency in counteracting the obstacles they face, albeit within limited means.

Presenter(s): Victoria Gutierrez

Board#17 Community-Building in Veterans Through Psychedelic Use

This research project qualitatively explores the motivations and perceptions of U.S. veterans who engage with psychedelics post-service through a systematic content analysis and in-depth interviews with veterans. In popular news, media, and political advocacy, many veterans are raising awareness around their successes with psychedelic treatments, aiming to improve access to these highly restricted, or illicit, treatments within the U.S. Aiding veterans' anecdotal accounts of psychedelic use, a resurgence of research explores the promising effects of psychedelics in reducing symptoms of PTSD, TBIs, addiction, and more, bolstering their appeal as a therapeutic agent. The VA is now funding studies and despite stigma, policy makers in several states already have decriminalized certain psychedelic substances and advocacy groups are pushing for further legislative reforms.

While emerging studies focus on the quantitative and clinical effects of psychedelic treatments, there is a gap of qualitative research available on veterans' accounts of their psychedelic experiences. Veterans, who are a main focus in current psychedelic discourse, are biopolitical subjects both during and after their military service, and their positionality within American culture and medical and military institutions raise interesting questions about their use of psychedelics as a form of treatment, even healing. How do veterans perceive and understand psychedelic use as a form of healing? What role does community play in their psychedelic use? Why are veterans, who have access to low-cost, comprehensive care under the VA, seeking out potentially expensive, illicit, and hard-to-access psychedelic treatments?

I approach these questions by engaging anthropological theory on biopolitics, healing, and the role of community and care in the lives of U.S. soldiers and veterans in the post-9/11 wars, drawing on

works from Wool (2020), Chua (2020), MacLeish (2019), and Lutz and Millar (2012). Soldiers, who are strictly controlled political subjects under the military, are re-organizing themselves as veterans outside of the realm of military biopower and supporting one another to receive treatments that otherwise remain inaccessible to them. Investigating this phenomena may aid future research in support of the veteran community and health care at large.

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Presenter(s): Corrina Ophelia

Board#18 Connecting Past and Present: Supporting Indigenous Food Sovereignty through Archaeological Education

La Via Campesina (1996) defines food sovereignty as the right of peoples to define their own food systems through ecologically sound, culturally appropriate, and sustainable practices. While the movement has gained global traction, Indigenous thinkers like Charlotte Côté (Tseshah/Nuu-chah-nulth) advocate for the "Indigenizing" of food sovereignty and challenge the conventional rights-based discourse. Côté (2016) asserts that food sovereignty must be rooted in Indigenous self-determination, where revitalizing ecological knowledge systems and foods is central to communal and personal well-being. Similarly, Winona LaDuke (2019) frames food sovereignty as an affirmation of Indigenous identity and a vital pathway for restoring relationships to the world around us. This poster explores how archaeological education can serve as a powerful tool for Indigenous food sovereignty, examining a collaborative pilot program that braids ancestral food knowledge and archaeological research through hands-on learning experiences that connect past practices with present needs.

The "Indigenous Foodscapes and Climate Resilience in Willapa Bay" Family Educational Pilot Program was developed by the U.S. National Science Foundation Center for Braiding Indigenous Knowledges and Science (NSF CBIKS), in collaboration with the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe (SBIT) and the Chinook Indian Nation (CIN) to engage community members in exploring archaeological and traditional knowledge of their food systems. The program serves as a model for future CBIKS-sponsored youth initiatives that integrate braiding methodologies into STEM education through hands-on learning, grounded in community-led approaches that honor specific needs and cultural interests. Activities were designed for learners of all ages to explore archaeological concepts of

traditional food systems and connect that learning with traditional knowledge and present-day food sovereignty in SBIT and CIN. These include introducing learners to archaeological concepts by creating a stratified site through a transparent shoebox dig, designing and building a model fish weir, testing atlatls, and a community food event.

Three questions serve as an educational guide for the program:

How can we learn about past food systems on this land?

How can that knowledge impact present-day food sovereignty?

How does learning about sustainable food systems impact culture, community, and livelihood?

This poster examines both the successes and challenges of developing this pilot program, with the aim of providing models for others looking to braid archaeological methodologies with Indigenous knowledge systems in ways that strengthen community-driven STEM education. By reflecting on our achievements alongside lessons learned, we offer practical tips for researchers and educators seeking to create similar programs that honor cultural contexts, build scientific literacy, and support Indigenous food sovereignty goals.

Presenter(s): Caty DuDevoir

Co-author(s): Anna Antoniou, Kallie Carnevale, Caty DuDevoir

Board#19 Controlling Cahokia: Implications of site placement and regional visibility for elite surveillance.

Flourishing roughly 1,000 years ago, the city of Cahokia, located on a floodplain across the Mississippi River from modern day St. Louis, Missouri, was a thriving city with well over ten thousand of residents. The large region around Cahokia, once filled with a mix of farmers, craftspeople, and village leaders, is today known as Greater Cahokia. Yet, after decades of archaeological research, questions remain regarding the spatial organization at Cahokia. Detailed excavations at the site have been largely limited to either the central core or to periodic salvage operations prior to federal infrastructure projects. Such work gives an incomplete picture of the site's extent, thereby influencing how we understand Cahokia's urbanism. This research empirically analyzes the organization of residential and ritual areas, as well as the visible interconnections, to clarify the city and regions spatial arrangement and thus design preferences of Greater Cahokia's builders. To accomplish this, archaeological data are compared to random points across the landscape. First-order spatial properties are assessed using average nearest neighbor and kernel density estimates. LiDAR data of the region is also used to create a bare earth DTM raster for Line-of-Sight analyses. A random points visibility analysis is conducted for key study areas as a source for comparison. Overall, the use of these remote sensing tools allows for an empirical, large-scale analysis of Greater Cahokia's spatial design, giving critical insight into the cultural complexity of the region. Results demonstrate elites preferred locations for structures and mound groups that were visible from the seat of power at Monks Mound while providing a connection to the Mississippi River

waterway. These results support a hierarchical political structure that favored elite visual influence and surveillance, suggesting a centralized decision-making process at Cahokia.

Presenter(s): Micah Phoenix

Co-author(s): Christopher Bodine, Daniel Pierce

Board#20 Cultural Consonance and Hair Cortisol Concentrations: A Case Study of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Latter-day Saints' Social Support

Migrants rely upon both formal and informal networks of support. These networks can both assist and constrict migrants (Rosales 2014). Migrant religion, which has been documented to provide support to migrants throughout the migration process (Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016), merits further examination because of its potential influence on migrant health and wellbeing. This research addresses this need by comparing cultural consonance in social support and its association with stress among Latinx Latter-day Saint (LDS, Mormon) migrants and non- Latinx non-immigrants in Texas (n=51). I find that these two groups share a cultural model of social support. However, based on psychological and biological measurements of stress and depression (hair cortisol concentrations, perceived psychological well-being scores) explored on this poster, there is a difference in the relationship between the perceived availability of support and health outcomes for immigrants and non-immigrants in this sample. Specifically, while there is an inverse relationship between the perceived availability of support and depression levels for non-immigrants, this same relationship does not exist for immigrants. Based on ethnographic data, I argue that this difference may be due to immigrants encountering racism and anti-immigrant stereotypes, including within religious spaces. Thus, for immigrants, perceiving an availability of support is not necessarily associated with psychologically beneficial outcomes.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Bingham Thomas

Board#21 Dead in the Digital Age: An Analysis of Contextualization within Digital Bioarchaeological Archives

Digital Bioarchaeological Data can be defined as any images, whether 2D or 3D, and text that represents human remains. One form of such data includes digital 3D models of human skeletal remains, which can then be published onto digital archives. The creation and publication of the digital models is an interdisciplinary process. Even though each field involved has different standards, they all promote the idea of contextualizing the digital models. For this project contextualization means that any 3D models of human skeletal remains within digital archives should have a notation connected to the model that explains why it is being shared, and any background information that is relevant. Contextualization is an important factor in promoting a more ethical bioarchaeology by reminding the audience to view the body as holistic and multiple, lowering the chances of the remains being dehumanized on the internet. This project analyzes the amount of contextualization within 3D digital models of human skeletal remains housed on two digital archives: SketchFab and MorphoSource. The relationship between factors such as fragmentation, in-situ status and contextualization is also assessed.

Presenter(s): Sydney Worrall

Board#22 Death Imagery and Communities of Practice Among Indigenous Potters of the Northern Gulf of Mexico Coast, ca. 1300-1700 CE

Indigenous potters living along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico ca. 1300-1700 CE decorated certain pottery vessels with incised imagery emphasizing themes related to death and the afterlife journey, including skull, hand-eye, and raptor motifs, among others. Designated by the type name "Pensacola Incised," most published examples come from funerary contexts excavated beginning in the early 20th century. However, Pensacola Incised vessels bearing death iconography circulated widely within and among living communities, and potters deliberately chose iconographic motifs that referenced broadly-shared Mississippian religious symbolism, linking coastal people with a broader cultural phenomenon. Our ongoing research in the Pensacola culture area explores the choices potters made regarding clay source, temper material, form and style, and iconography, drawing on these attributes to better understand communities and constellations of practice among Pensacola potters. High visibility attributes such as iconography are likely to express cultural affiliations extending beyond face-to-face interactions, including diasporic communities and affiliative communities linked by boundary objects. However, fine details in the production of the pottery vessels signal closer-knit networks based in relationships of face-to-face teaching and learning, while also reflecting the preferences and creativity of individual artists. Thus, we understand iconographic subject matter, composition, and execution to reflect communities of practice operating at different scales. While previous attempts to characterize Pensacola iconography have focused on a limited number of sites in the Pensacola heartland (centered around Mobile Bay in southwest Alabama) and prominently feature pottery from funerary contexts, we compile examples of Pensacola iconography from non-funerary (midden and domestic) contexts across the entire Pensacola culture area, including coastal portions of present-day Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, as well as interior riverine sites north of Mobile Bay. Here, we characterize variation in Pensacola iconographic subject matter, design execution, and pottery recipes to illuminate relationships among potters, and compare it with elemental data to better understand how these meaningful images were shared and reproduced.

Presenter(s): Erin Nelson

Co-author(s): Lindsay Bloch, Ashley Rutkoski, Neill Wallis

Board #23 Caricatures of Whiteness and the Ethics of "Do No Harm": Haunted by Privilege

This paper extends Brazilian scholar Cida Bento's concept of the "narcissistic pact of Whiteness" into anthropological ethics, centering the foundational principle of do no harm. Drawing on my own field experiences as a Latin American researcher with a disability, I identify three caricatures of Whiteness: the Ignorant, the Bad Faith Actor, and the Coward. Each operates in a distinct sphere (epistemological, relational, and institutional) and enacts behaviors that reproduce harm against marginalized scholars and communities. The Ignorant sustains privilege through rigid Eurocentric or academic logics, unintentionally delegitimizing alternative knowledge. The Bad Faith Actor

consciously manipulates, gaslights, or invalidates experiences under the guise of ethical authority, enacting harm directly. The Coward perceives injustice but remains silent or complicit, perpetuating exclusion through fear of institutional or social consequences. These figures act as ethical "ghosts": invisible yet structurally potent, haunting institutions, interactions, and the enactment of ethics itself. The emergence of this typology highlights how Whiteness operates not only structurally but also spectrally, shaping practices, authority, and relational dynamics in real time. By situating myself within the research, this paper underscores how ethnographic positionality, disability, and Latin American perspectives illuminate the ongoing reproduction of racialized harm in academia. Addressing these dynamics requires moving beyond formal ethical codes to confront the spectral presence of privilege and the subtle mechanisms that sustain inequity. Ultimately, this analysis contributes to global conversations on racialized power, knowledge production, and the responsibilities of anthropology today, emphasizing that ethical reflection must include recognition and active engagement with the ghosts that continue to shape academic life.

Presenter(s): Mayne Souza Benedetto

Board #24 Tradition and Technology: The Covid-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst for Lasting Transformation in American Jewish Communal Practice

This research examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Jewish communities in the United States, focusing on technology use, membership patterns, and communal engagement, including-but not limited to-major denominations such as Reform, Reconstructionist, Humanistic, Conservative, Orthodox, and Chabad. Based on digital surveys and interviews conducted from 2024 through early 2025, the research captures developments before, during, and after the pandemic, identifying a longstanding gap in national data on minority religious groups-a concern later echoed by the Pew Research Center in its 2024 Religious Landscape Study. Drawing on Geertz's theory of religion as a cultural system (1973), along with recent anthropological work on digital religion and mediated ritual (e.g., Campbell 2012; Miller et al. 2021; Postill 2017) and studies of religious adaptation and performativity (e.g., Eisenlohr 2018; Hirschkind 2020), this research explores how Jewish communities negotiated halachic (Jewish Law) tensions around technology use. These tensions varied widely: liberal denominations often embraced digital platforms as extensions of communal life, while more traditional groups faced complex halachic debates over livestreaming services, digital prayer, and Sabbath observance. Chabad and segments of Modern Orthodoxy adopted selective technological solutions, while others maintained strict prohibitions, creating internal debates about authenticity and adaptation. Preliminary findings show that many technological accommodations-once considered temporary-have become embedded in practice, reshaping communal norms and expectations. The pandemic served as a turning point, accelerating conversations about halachic flexibility and the role of digital mediation in sustaining religious life. Respondents described how virtual prayer spaces, online Torah study, and remote lifecycle events became not only necessary but spiritually meaningful, prompting reevaluations of what constitutes legitimate religious experience. While concerns about antisemitism and geopolitical tensions surfaced in some interviews, they were typically framed in relation to

communal resilience rather than external threat. Participants emphasized how technology enabled new forms of connection, challenged traditional authority structures, and redefined the rhythms of Jewish communal life. The data suggest that American Judaism has entered a new phase of engagement with technology—one that reflects denominational diversity, evolving interpretations of Jewish law, and a growing willingness to adapt ritual practice to meet contemporary needs. This study contributes to ongoing anthropological discussions on religious change, digital mediation, and minority resilience, offering insight into how Jewish communities are reimagining tradition in a post-pandemic world.

Presenter(s): Blake McCabe

Board#25 Echoes in Bone: Tracing the Lives of Historic Missoula Remains

In 1973, the skeletal remains of an adult and subadult were uncovered during residential construction in the southeast Rattlesnake area of Missoula, Montana. Archival and spatial evidence suggests the burials were located between the sites of a historic poor house and a former sanitarium, raising questions about the social and medical histories of those interred. Initially documented as historic remains and stored as teaching specimens for over five decades, these individuals remained largely unstudied beyond an early case report that speculated on their biological relationship, pathology, and potential origins.

Archival reports describe the presence of coffin hardware and professional casket construction, suggesting a formal burial of the juvenile placed above or beside the adult. While originally speculated to be of Chinese ancestry based on casket style and burial orientation, the location was also broadly referred to as a "Chinese cemetery," a term often used historically to denote a burial ground for impoverished or marginalized individuals (Smits, 2008).

This study reexamines the individuals using updated bioarchaeological, molecular, and historical methodologies to assess kinship, biological profiles, and potential pathological conditions. A comprehensive skeletal reassessment confirms the young adult as a probable biological female aged 17 to 30 years, and the subadult as a child aged 2 to 4 years. Bone samples from both individuals were analyzed for genetic markers of ancestry, sex, and maternal relatedness based on mitochondrial DNA sequencing. Additionally, molecular techniques were applied to investigate the presence of ancient pathogens.

The adult exhibits cranial lesions potentially indicative of tuberculosis. Molecular analysis is underway to confirm the presence of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex DNA, with a focus on unusual perforations in the temporal and frontal bones that may suggest cranial TB. These lesions appear to result from taphonomic changes rather than trauma, supported by the absence of fracture patterns consistent with blunt force or ballistic injuries. Observations from earlier reports also support a pathological origin for these cranial lesions, noting premortem deterioration and localized bone defects consistent with chronic disease (Nadolny, 2003).

To enhance detection in degraded samples, two sets of primers were selected: IS6110, a highly sensitive marker specific to the MTB complex (~123 bp), and 16S rRNA, which offers broader

bacterial detection (~150 bp) though with reduced specificity. Sequence results will confirm the presence of TB, or potentially if another pathogen is present to cause the lesions. Findings may reveal patterns of co-infection and potential pathogen evolution. This approach aims to clarify the etiology of the observed pathology and expand diagnostic frameworks for identifying infectious disease in archaeological remains, while solving a local Montana mystery.

Presenter(s): Kaylee Hinds

Co-author(s): Meradeth Snow, Lacy Hazelwood

Board#26 "Individual Submission: Homeotic Transformation of Vertebrae, Assimilation of Coccyx with the Sacrum, and Evolution of Birthing Big Babies"

Number of sacral vertebrae, defined as the block of fused vertebrae that includes the auricular surface that articulates with the ilium, is highly variable in humans. This study considers the association between homeotic transformation of the thoracic-lumbar (T-L), lumbar-sacral (L-S), and sacral-coccygeal (S-Cx) boundaries, number of sacral vertebrae, and obstetrical implications of variation in that number. Sample is of modern humans who died in the United States whose ages at death range from 20 to 39 years. Results show that the number of sacral vertebrae ranges from 4 to 9; females and males do not differ significantly in that number. Both anterior and posterior homeotic transformations of vertebrae at regional boundaries are significantly associated with number of sacral vertebrae (anterior transformation is the situation in which a vertebra has the morphological trait of its anteriorly-neighboring vertebra, and vice versa for a posterior transformation). Anterior transformation of the T-L and L-S boundaries account for 25% of the anterior transformations of the S-Cx boundary. The latter is colloquially referred to as coccygeal fusion to the sacrum. This fusion confines the pelvic outlet and can be a constraint to successful delivery. Evolution of sexual dimorphism of angulation of the sacrum (visually evident as dimorphism of the greater sciatic notch) may have been a response to pelvic outlet confinement associated with assimilation of the coccyx with the sacrum and the birthing of big babies.

Presenter(s): Robert Tague

Board#27 Coaches' perspectives on football, health, and well-being among Title 1 Athletes

Sport participation during adolescence is associated with improved health outcomes later in life. This is particularly significant in areas like Alabama's Black Belt, where both health and economic resources are scarce, and chronic disease is prevalent. Despite the well-documented benefits of physical activity, the voices of those best positioned to inspire and motivate sport participation in these communities remain underrepresented in existing literature.

As an extension of our ongoing community partnerships, we conducted interviews with 16 coaches and administrators from six Title 1 high schools in Central and South Alabama to better understand their perspectives on the role of sport in promoting adolescent health and well-being. Our results indicate that these educators see significant benefits of sports, not only in terms of physical health,

but also in improving health behaviors, health knowledge, academic motivation, and social development.

Specifically, sports are viewed as a gateway to success in life after high school due to their role in helping students build confidence, discipline, communication skills, personal accountability, and more. Coaches and administrators also recognize the multifaceted roles they play in the lives of student-athletes, often as mentors and emotional supporters. They highlight essential needs such as logistical support from schools, emotional support from parents, and donations from the broader community to promote and sustain participation. However, participants noted that financial constraints are a key barrier to engagement.

To reduce the chronic disease burden in Alabama and improve adolescent health, it is important to increase monetary investments in sport accessibility for underserved communities.

Presenter(s): Morenike Samuel

Co-author(s): Courtney Helfrecht

Boar#28 Excavating an Ancient Maya Salt Kitchen at Ch'oc Ayin, Belize

The submerged Classic Maya (A.D. 250-800) salt work Chok Ayin is part of a large salt making industry in Paynes Creek National Park, Belize. The site consists of at least four wooden buildings with posts preserved in anaerobic mangrove peat. One of the buildings, Building B, consists of a cluster of wooden posts with a northeast to southeast alignment. The salt produced at the Paynes Creek Salt Works was traded to inland cities. Excavations were undertaken in March and April 2025 inside and outside of Building B to determine if the building was a salt kitchen, a residence, or had a different function. An additional objective was to investigate other activities taking place in addition to salt making. We report on excavation techniques used at Building B including setting up a transect, excavating mangrove peat sediment, and preliminary analysis of the artifacts. The results of excavations show variation of cultural deposits inside and outside of Building B. Most of the artifacts are briquetage-the broken pieces of pottery used in boiling brine over fires to make salt. Building B was a salt kitchen dedicated to boiling brine over fires to produced salt cakes. The salt makers did not live in the salt kitchen but likely in a nearby residence.

Presenter(s): Sarah Miller

Co-author(s): Heather McKillop, Elizabeth Sills

Board#29 Empires Override Local Diet: Imperial Periods in The Central Andes Show Subsistence Homogenization

Empires have a strong influence, and practiced subsistence is one way their effect may be expressed within local communities. To explore how empires affect diet in the Central Andes, we compare the statistical variance in $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ values between individuals from the Central Andes Isotope Database clustered based upon whether they lived during a time of an expansive empire or greater balkanization. The results indicate that dietary isotopes are significantly more

homogenous during periods of expansive empires, suggesting empires overruled local subsistence. During times of balkanization, diets express more widespread heterogeneity. The pattern is more strongly expressed in $\delta^{15}\text{N}$, suggesting that protein sources are most influenced by the homogenizing effect, possibly an effect of highland empires such as the Inca transporting marine resources far inland and/or social and environmental pressures resulting in more universal reliance on maize as a protein source during such periods.

Presenter(s): Michael Hale

Co-author(s): Kurt Wilson

Board#30 Excavating Open Spaces and Buildings to Discover Ancient Activities at the Ancient Maya Salt Works of Chok Ayin, Belize

Chok Ayin is part of over 100 known ancient Maya salt works surveyed and mapped in Paynes Creek National Park, Belize. The salt works are associated with wooden architecture preserved below the sea floor and submerged due to sea level rise. The purpose of the excavations Chok Ayin Building C and Plaza A was to determine the function of the space based on recovered material remains. An eleven meter transect was placed in Building C to extend inside and outside of the building to capture activity areas associated with the building. A 2 x 2 meter excavation was placed north of Building C, located between Buildings A and B, in order to investigate 'open areas'. The results of excavations indicate different functions between Building C and Plaza A. Building C is likely a salt kitchen dedicated to boiling brine over fires. Comparatively, Plaza A had more diversity of artifacts. The spatial distribution of artifacts reveals a variety of activities took place at this ancient Maya household group, both for family subsistence and for participating in the broader Classic Maya economy by supplying salt cakes to the inland Maya.

Presenter(s): Alex Broussard

Co-author(s): Heather McKillop, Elizabeth Sills

Board#31 Facing uncertainty: how Haitian TPS recipients in Tampa Bay experience liminal legal status

Impacts of immigration policy and legal status on health and wellbeing have been widely treated by migration and mobility scholars. However, these issues have become even more acute and theoretically compelling amidst rapidly changing policy. This project will contribute to understanding how drastic policy changes and subsequent legal challenges affect the well-being of people with temporary legal status in a country, specifically people with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Humanitarian Parole (HP) from Haiti residing in Tampa Bay, Florida. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, our project describes the experiences of Haitians who now occupy this liminal immigration status. Despite the humanitarian premises upon which TPS is granted, the temporary nature of these designations makes them highly detrimental to individual wellbeing. This timely and urgent research sheds light upon the varying impacts of

changing legal designations for Haitian non-residents at a time of heightened sociopolitical dynamics and negative rhetoric toward immigrants.

Presenter(s): Augusta Herman

Co-author(s): Kiran C. Jayaram, Audrey Antoine

Board#32 Florida Public Archaeology Network's Free Field School

The Southeast Region Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) has run a field school at the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area (JILONA), funded by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the past two springs. FPAN is a statewide program of the University of West Florida. The Southeast Region is hosted by Florida Atlantic University. The field school program is a semester-long free program that meets every Monday, providing credits for college students and a learning experience for lifelong learners. Field schools are essential for getting a job in archaeology, but are often cost-prohibitive. The program is an effort to increase accessibility for those who can't afford traditional field schools, offering a more local option for students in south Florida. The field school focuses on professional development and teaches students about standard archaeological techniques in cultural resource management, and brings in scientists and scholars from local schools to discuss and perform other aspects of archaeology and related fields such as marine archaeology and soil analysis. This year, we were working with the Bureau of Land Management to create an informational display around its primary excavation unit which features a cistern from the 1800s, which will function to inform the hundreds of weekly visitors to the site about its past. The site is also located on a heavily eroding shoreline with over 5,000 years of human history, and provides the opportunity for students to learn about conservation techniques on Florida's rapidly changing shores while helping inform the greater archaeological record about the past of this unique part of Florida history. Every year, we host a public day run by the students of the field school, inviting local families and interested individuals for a free day at the site to learn about different archaeological techniques. The students design activities based on what they learned, creating family-friendly stations to show adults and children alike what real archaeology is all about. This year, some of the activities involved mapping, creating mock stratigraphic layers with colored sand, and explaining the kinds of artifacts found at the site using a timeline and fabricated miniature soil cores. The students learn how to translate their work to the public, and get the chance to help plan a big event as a group with the help of FPAN.

This poster will present the work done by the field school, highlighting the findings made by students, the importance of public archaeology as a whole, and the contributions to conservation information that can be used to protect the future of our beautiful Florida sites.

Presenter(s): Victoria Sherwood

Board#33 Friend, Not Food? The Degradation of Domestic-Focused Diet in the Face of Collapse at an Urban Settlement in the Northern Negev Desert

Tell el-Hesi, a short-lived Early Bronze Age II-III (2900–2500 B.C.E.) urban settlement in the marginal zone of the Northern Negev Desert, presents a unique opportunity to examine how food systems reflect broader social, ecological, and political dynamics. Unlike other contemporaneous urban sites in the Southern Levant, recent isotopic evidence suggests that Tell el-Hesi pursued a self-provisioning model of meat production rather than relying on redistribution from rural hinterlands. This research draws on political ecology and resilience theory to explore whether this locally focused subsistence strategy, while initially adaptive, ultimately contributed to the site's rapid collapse. Intensive faunal analysis, including cut mark and species identification across multiple occupational phases, reveals a progressive broadening of dietary breadth in response to environmental and social stress. In its final phase, the site's inhabitants consumed animals typically considered outside the normative food spectrum, including cats and dogs, raising questions about the symbolic thresholds crossed during crisis. This research argues that the breakdown of a domestic-focused diet not only marks the failure of a provisioning strategy but also reflects the erosion of key cultural boundaries. By tracing the entanglement of food, identity, and collapse, this study contributes to broader anthropological debates on sustainability, urbanism, and the political dimensions of consumption.

Presenter(s): Kara Larson

Board#34 Gastro-Politics: Renegotiating Relationships Between Communities, Animals, and Food on the Early Bronze Age Steppe

The Early Bronze Age (EBA) was a period of significant transformation in steppe foodways, marked by a shift from foraging-based subsistence to forms of animal husbandry and pastoral production. These changes reconfigured relationships between communities, animals, and food, as evidenced by material traces found in kurgan (burial mound) contexts. This research explores dimensions of food in mortuary contexts on the EBA Eurasian steppe through the lens of gastro-politics, the ways food is used to express, negotiate, and contest power and social relationships. Drawing on prior publications and incorporating data from a forthcoming excavation of Kumsay, an EBA cemetery in western Kazakhstan (planned for summer 2025), this research examines how funerary food practices such as provisioning graves with animal offerings, operated as mechanisms of hierarchy, kinship, and political identity within steppe communities. Through analysis of burial architecture, faunal assemblages, and grave goods, this project contributes to an emerging framework for understanding gastro-politics in pastoral societies.

Presenter(s): Daniel Garner

Co-author(s): Arman Bissembaev, Alicia Ventresca-Miller, Kara Larson

Board#35 From Ragas to Instrumentation: Experiences and Influences of Indian Music on Health and Healing in Bengaluru

India has had a long-standing tradition of musical healing. Music has been incorporated into people's lives as a method of restoring balance to the mind and body, and to aid individuals in various ailments. Western research has been learning more about the importance music can play

in the healthcare system by examining the neurological effects of components of music, such as rhythm and tonality (Bowling 2023). Indian research has explored the physiological and energetic impacts of Indian music through lenses including Vedic scriptures, sacred music therapy (Cook 1997), and modern music healing in conjunction with traditional knowledge (Sundar, 2007). These papers have corroborated the value music has played in Indian societies and cultures and have explored the neurological, physiological, and psychological benefits of music for health and healing. Within the urban city of Bengaluru, located in the Indian state of Karnataka, there are several music healing centers; some have incorporated music into their Ayurvedic treatments, others have created retreats that blend yoga with music, and other centers are solely focused on classical music therapy (Chauhan et al, 2024). The objective of this research project will be to increase understanding of contemporary Indian musical healing within the context of its medical and cultural importance in this region.

While the tangible centers and the literature have provided quantitative data for the wide range of interest placed on Indian music healing, there are no anthropological perspectives regarding the experiences, narratives, and sonic choices made within music healing in present-day India. This project will work towards bridging this gap through qualitative data analysis (Graue 2015, 8) of the opinions, experiences, and impacts of Indian music healing among music healing practitioners and individuals who choose to integrate music into their or their family members' lives.

The research will focus on opinions of how individuals feel after musical healing practices, along with why participants choose to incorporate healing music into their lives. These perspectives will focus on emotional and physical influences to portray the effects that music has had on each person's well-being. This project is also oriented around the narratives of music healing, specifically focusing on how various methods of healing, such as the Western medical system or the traditional Ayurvedic system, have impacted the framework under which contemporary musical healing is practiced in these centers. This will be achieved by asking practitioners where their theoretical views of musical healing stem from, why the specific techniques of musical healing are used, how the music should be used, and other technologies incorporated into these practices. Overall, these focuses will allow for a deeper understanding of why musical healing is valued in these centers and how the ideologies behind music healing have impacted its practice.

Presenter(s): Riya Prabhakar

Board#36 Haunted by the Bar: Substance Use, Grief, and Meaning-Making

This paper engages with the ghosts that linger in the aftermath of substance-related death-ghosts not only of the deceased, but of the rituals, places, and cultural narratives that continue to animate life for the living. Anchored in my embodied experience of losing a brother to a fatal mixture of alcohol and cocaine, this work interrogates how grief, memory, and addiction are culturally constructed and emotionally navigated within specific geographies of meaning.

The central ethnographic scene unfolds at a memorial held in a bar-both a literal site of communal gathering and a symbolic space implicated in my brother's patterns of use and eventual death.

Initially perceived as an affront to the pain of loss, the bar comes to be understood as a locus of belonging, where alternative kinship networks gather not to condemn, but to commemorate. Haunted by trauma, pleasure, loyalty, and silence, this space embodies the complex contradictions that make us human.

Drawing on the social construction of addiction (Fraser et al. 2014), the cultural theory of risk (Douglas 1992), and narrative theory (Saint Arnault & Sinko 2021), the paper explores how memorials serve as meaning-making rituals through which communities re-narrate loss, reclaim agency, and maintain social realities. Grief becomes a narrative act, and addiction is a contested terrain shaped not only by medical models but also by collective memory and cultural symbolism.

Through tattoos, storytelling, acts of altruism, and symbolic rituals, the deceased's community constructs a legacy that transforms pain into purpose. Yet, beneath these gestures lies an unresolved tension: the simultaneous honoring and normalization of the very practices that led to death. The memorial becomes a site where ghosts are not exorcised, but accommodated.

This paper contributes to anthropological conversations on mourning, substance use, and the affective dimensions of place. It argues for a more nuanced, culturally grounded understanding of addiction and bereavement—one that recognizes how people live with the ghosts of those they've lost, and the ghosts of selves they once were. Ultimately, it asks: how do we carry forward the dead when their absence is entangled with our social identities, our rituals of remembrance, and our most intimate spaces of meaning?

Presenter(s): Alana Alexander

Board#37 Haunted Corridors: A Comparative Study of the Materiality of Undocumented Migration and the Violent Remains of Routes Once Taken

For over 17 years, the Undocumented Migration Project (UMP) has utilized a mixed-methods approach to study clandestine border crossings between Latin America and the United States, focusing on the 1994 immigration enforcement policy Prevention Through Deterrence (PTD). PTD is a strategy that increased security in unauthorized crossing areas surrounding urban ports of entry which shifted undocumented migration towards remote, harsh environments such as the Sonoran Desert of Arizona, under the assumption that the physical dangers would deter future crossings. Much research has shown that PTD has failed to deter migration, but has succeeded in shaping border crossing into a well-organized and violent social process with a unique set of material culture and technologies. Since PTD's implementation, the US has increasingly externalized its borders to Mexico and parts of Central America in an attempt to intercept undocumented migrants before they reach US soil. Similarly, Europe has adopted a range of externalization policies aimed at preventing migrants—primarily from Africa and the Middle East—from reaching EU territory. These strategies include the closure of borders and pushback operations that divert migration routes towards riskier and more remote terrain. Here too, the material afterlives of movement reveal a comparably spectral geography: corridors haunted by the presence of those who have passed through, disappeared, or been forcibly immobilized. This poster presents a comparative

archaeological study that examines the material traces of undocumented migration across two geographically and politically distinct border regimes. Drawing on the UMP's work in Arizona, and new preliminary research conducted in the Balkans (particularly near the borders of Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia), this project investigates how material traces-discarded belongings, makeshift shelters, ruins of infrastructure, and landscapes of suffering-function as witnesses to the enduring impacts of state violence on migrant lives. By placing these two regions into critical dialogue, this poster explores the globalized logics of border enforcement strategies while attending to the local textures of migrant experiences. We ask: What role does landscape play in shaping the material strategies of undocumented migrants in different geographic regions? How do the material remains of migration act as both evidence and memory and how does the environment influence what stories these artifacts can tell? What might a comparative approach offer to migration discourse especially as it relates to archaeologies of the contemporary?

Presenter(s): Nicole Smith

Co-author(s): Nicole Fentzke, Elizabeth Petrick, Jason De Leon

Board#38 Haunting Materialities: Waste as Temporal Crisis in a Small Indian City

Waste does not vanish- it lingers, stains, and returns. Based on PhD ethnographic research and a visual arts practice, this poster traces how waste disturbs temporal and infrastructural rhythms across landscapes of a small Indian city. Haunting here is not metaphorical; it is material, administrative, and affective. Waste unsettles aesthetic regimes, exposes infrastructural breakdown, and resists the fantasy of circular renewal. If the Anthropocene is the epoch of planetary crisis, then waste is its daily, intimate remainder.

By haunting, I refer to the ways waste persists and reappears, disturbing linear notions of progress and resolution. Haunting is the material and political excess that refuses disappearance. Materiality, here, includes not only the physical presence of waste but its temporal and affective properties: its capacity to stain the present, disrupt infrastructures, and shape social life.

The poster explores three interlinked landscapes: the municipal office, a migrant slum, and the city's dumping ground and beyond. These spaces mark different stages in the life of waste - from policy papers and bureaucratic visions of cleanliness, to street-level collection and negotiation, and finally to the afterlives of discarded matter in dumping grounds and homes. Specific objects- dustbins, broken machinery, and suspended files- anchor the analysis. Through them, the poster examines how waste infrastructures mediate urban time: stalling, leaking, looping, and resisting closure.

In the municipal office, waste is imagined alongside dreams of a world-class city. Files pile up, suspended in bureaucratic time. Haunting here is administrative- policy circulates on paper but rarely materialises in the world. The poster then moves on to the streets. In a migrant slum, daily waste collection reveals how waste moves through caste-based, informal, and politically charged systems. Often used in protest or sabotage, waste becomes a visible tactic. Haunting takes the

form of deliberate excess- a material presence that refuses to disappear and disrupts official ideas of order.

The final vignette shifts to the city's dumping ground and the homes of ordinary people. Here, haunting is slow and embodied: waste pickers navigate decay, risks, and uncertain futures, while residents quietly subvert state recycling schemes. Materials resist reuse, outlast value, or transform entirely. Waste here is not a linear input or output- it is a temporal agent that delays, reactivates, and lingers. This framing challenges dominant circular economy narratives by foregrounding waste's unruliness- its refusal to be absorbed into technocratic visions of seamless renewal.

As a visual artist and anthropologist, I approach the poster as a visual tapestry: layering hand-drawn illustrations, theoretical interventions and ethnographic fragments. I invite viewers to dwell in the leaks, stains, and returns of waste- to follow its haunting materialities across time and space.

Presenter(s): Aishwarya Mukhopadhyay

Board#39 Haunting Wastes: Religion and the Perception of Bodily Wastes among the Yorùbá

The belief among the Yorùbá of Southwest Nigeria is that whatever has been inside of or has touched the body even when it leaves those spaces, must not be treated with levity, and must be properly disposed of. They believe that such things have become an extension of the body they once inhabited or touched even now that they have become wastes. These wastes carry the person's essence, vital life force (*àṣẹ*), and improper disposal of bodily wastes may haunt them if people with bad intentions take possession of them. These wastes become magical and dangerous. This is why the Yorùbá are wary of disposing of their used clothes by giving, donating them to strangers or even family members, because their sweat, bodily fluid, bodily waste have touched them. For example, their sweat is believed to contain their essence, their *àṣẹ* (life force), their being, selfhood, part of their *orí inú* "inner head, fate, destiny" which is transferred to any piece of clothing it touches. There are stories among the Yorùbá about people whose essence was stolen, (good) destinies were destroyed, exchanged, or replaced with a bad, useless one because they didn't dispose of such bodily waste properly or that those who wished them ill got a hold of it. This belief is also performed by Nigerian Christians, particularly Pentecostals, and Muslims. Therefore, even though hair has left the head, eyelids, and pubic areas, old clothes have been discarded, excreta and urine, have left the body, saliva has left the mouth, menstrual blood and placenta have left a woman's womb, vaginal and seminal fluids have left the bodies, a baby's umbilical cord has fallen off, have left their original order, and have become bodily wastes, they are still connected to the essence of the owner and because of that have acquired new (haunting) power in their new order.

Against this backdrop and using an ethnographic lens, this study points out that what is considered sacred or dirt/trash is not just an order that may be acquired or lost because of movement within, from, or to it. The end of an order may be the beginning of another, their wasteful condition starts, activates their ritual powers. I claim that even waste, especially bodily wastes, may become

powerful again in their new order. To achieve what I set out to do, I will attempt a tripartite approach. 1) I will interrogate Mary Douglas, Mircea Eliade, and Nimi Wariboko's idea of sacred, profane, and uncleanness to explain, reflect the religious and political interpretation of bodily wastes in postcolonial societies; 2) I will make use of ethnographical narratives to expound perception and treatment of bodily wastes among the Yorùbá; 3) I will explore Yorùbá orature and some selected literary works to demonstrate how bodily wastes are treated within sacred environments. This was done with the intent to argue that there is a common thread of understanding (regarding bodily wastes) among these three streams of interpretation.

Presenter(s): Oluwabunmi Bernard

Board#40 Is it worth taking the anti-racist struggle to the courts? Reflections on the first hate crime conviction in Ecuador

In recent decades, several Latin American countries have adopted laws criminalizing racism and racial discrimination. However, those who decide to bring racism cases to court face multiple obstacles. Moreover, these cases rarely result in convictions. Research on anti-discrimination laws argues that such laws end up reproducing the racial status-quo because they do not address the structural and systemic nature of this racism. Through an analysis of the first hate crime conviction in Ecuador, in this article I assess the possibilities and limits of bringing anti-racist struggles to the courts. Despite its limitations, I argue for not abandoning legal anti-racist strategies.

Presenter(s): Maria Moreno Parra

Board#41 New Weaving with Old Patterns: The Use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Indigenous Coastal Resilience

Within the neighboring Terrebonne and Barataria Basins on Louisiana's coast, communities are facing the most acute effects of coastal degradation. This region of the coast is losing land at among the most rapid rates in the world, so much so that it now holds the dubious distinction of being home to the United States' first climate change refugees. In only the last century, Louisiana's coast has been subject to manifold, anthropogenic changes ranging from manipulation of waterways through dams and levees, rampant pollution, saltwater intrusion, and degradation of buffering wetlands paired with the increased rate and severity of tropical storms and hurricanes.

With plans to work in collaboration with the United Houma Nation, this research explores ways in which traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) helps these communities weather the current and incoming effects of coastal degradation and climate change. Employing ethnographic and indigenous-based methods, this research empowers coastal indigenous communities to develop TEK-informed resilience strategies. These strategies would address specific local concerns, as well as act in complement to larger scale coastal restoration efforts, thus strengthening coastal restoration efforts as a whole. Additionally, the development of such localized strategies serves to strengthen coastal communities' relationship with their environment. Increasingly alienated from these landscapes once known by these communities' previous generations, as the landscape is increasingly at risk, so too are the living TEK that these communities possess.

Presenter(s): Samantha Allen

Board#42 PASTORALIST LIFEWAYS FROM NAKWAPERIT 2; A MID-HOLOCENE SITE, WEST TURKANA KENYA

Pastoralism, a way of life centered on herding domesticated animals, is highly adaptive in arid ecosystems with limited alternative land utilization options. In Africa, pastoralism was the first mode of food production and it remains an important economic strategy and cultural identity today. After emerging in northern Africa by 8000 BP, pastoralism spread to eastern Africa's Turkana Basin ~5000BP, with the earliest pastoralists practicing fishing and herding. However, these groups are primarily known for the megalithic "pillar site" cemeteries they constructed around the lake. Until now, Dongodien on the east side of Lake Turkana has been the only pastoralist habitation site securely affiliated culturally and chronologically with the pillar sites through Nderit pottery, microlithic artifacts, domestic fauna, and parallel radiocarbon dates. Because most archaeological evidence comes from mortuary sites, there is limited knowledge about the daily life of the early pastoralists in the Turkana Basin. To expand knowledge on early pastoralist practices during the mid-Holocene, we excavated at Nakwaperit 2, a newly documented habitation site west of Lake Turkana. Situated on the south bank of the Turkwel River near Lake Turkana's receding paleo shorelines, Nakwaperit 2 saw mid-Holocene occupation based on the presence of Nderit pottery. This paper presents archeological data from two excavation units (N669-671 and N671-673) analyzed to understand the lifestyle of the early pastoralists. For analysis, the artifacts were divided based on material densities from the excavated levels. Based on this, different horizons of occupations were observed, indicating that the site had different phases of use. Preliminary observations of the artifacts, such as pottery, lithics, and animal bones from Nakwaperit 2, show similarities to Dongodien. Further surveys and excavations are needed at Nakwaperit 2 to expand the sample size, understand

Presenter(s): Christine Chepkorir

Co-author(s): Katherine Grillo, Elizabeth Sawchuk, Elizabeth Hildebrand, Anneke Janzen Janzen

Board#43 Ghosts of Reproductive Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Pregnancy Advice in the Probability Sample Files

Across cultures, pregnancy is a period marked by close attention, concern, and advice. In high-income countries, reproductive guidance increasingly comes from physicians, online resources, and social networks. In contrast, ethnographic accounts from small-scale societies often highlight the role of experienced women, especially elders, as primary sources of support and instruction. To explore cross-cultural variation in pregnancy advice, we analyzed entries categorized under "Pregnancy" in the Probability Sample Files of the electronic Human Relations Area Files (eHRAF). We documented the types of advice recorded, their intended targets, and the identified sources when available.

Preliminary findings show that the most common form of advice involved behavioral guidance, such as what actions to take or avoid, followed by ritual or ceremonial practices, dietary

recommendations, and medical advice. While most advice was oriented toward fetal or infant wellness, there was no strong association between the type of advice and its target. When the source of advice was specified, older women were cited most frequently.

These results highlight the persistence of intergenerational knowledge transmission in small-scale societies and raise questions about how sources of reproductive guidance have shifted in more recent contexts. In keeping with the conference theme of ghosts, these findings suggest that elders' voices, once central to navigating pregnancy, linger as traces in the archive. Our data suggests experience-based knowledge continues to surface across cultural settings and how these sources both shape and reflect reproductive practices in a rapidly changing world.

Presenter(s): Sharon Young

Co-author(s): Chimene Gecewicz, Michelle Escasa-Dorne

Board#44 Peripheral Bodies, Hidden Identities: Tracing the Lives Behind Iceland's Historical Cadaver Trade

Dissection has long been central to Western medical education, with bodies often acquired through exploitative means, including grave robbing and colonial networks targeting marginalized groups. While much of this history focuses on major European powers and the United States, less attention has been given to peripheral colonial nations like Iceland, which, despite its geographic isolation, participated in these global networks through its ties with Denmark.

This research examines the history of Icelandic cadaver collection through the documentation of the Læknagarður Anatomical Skeletal Collection at the University of Iceland. Iceland's early medical education relied on locally sourced human remains, including those retained opportunistically from surgeries and archaeological bodies excavated by medical students. As demand grew, the focus shifted to the bodies of marginalized social groups, such as water carriers ("vatnsberar"), the poor and infirm, and foreign residents - reflecting evolving views on who was considered an "acceptable" subject for anatomical study. As Icelandic physicians expanded their training abroad in the early 20th century, they began sourcing remains through international trade networks in places where they had received their education. This shift highlights Iceland's increasing involvement in international scientific discourse and ever-evolving perspectives on race and identity in the early 20th century. After World War II, Iceland's medical practices were further influenced by its growing ties with the United States, with more contemporary bodies procured from mass-market anatomical supply companies that targeted regions, especially in India, where U.S. and European colonial networks had significant influence.

By documenting the ancestral remains in the Læknagarður Collection alongside historical records and oral histories, this research reveals how Iceland's participation in global medical networks shaped its anatomical practices. It highlights the colonial dynamics underlying the circulation of human remains in peripheral colonial nations and emphasizes the changing views on whose bodies were deemed acceptable for study. This work also contributes to understanding how these

practices intersected with Iceland's own cultural and medical development, illustrating how the nation benefitted from larger colonial networks to advance its medical education.

Presenter(s): Adam Netzer Zimmer

Co-author(s): Joe W. Walser III

Board#45 Placemaking without Belonging: Migration, Labor, and Uncertainty in Northern Italy

The project examines how migrants and long-term residents live together under conditions of fragmentation, labor precarity, and institutional neglect in Northern Italy. Focusing on informal labor in a rural town and the urban center of Bologna in Emilia-Romagna, it analyzes how people inscribe themselves into landscapes in ways that sometimes coincide with and sometimes disrupt the spatial divisions created by internal borders. The research investigates how everyday routines, particularly those organized around precarious work, structure uneven forms of inclusion and co-presence in public space. The project addresses the following topics: how migrants and long-term residents inhabit shared spaces under conditions of economic precarity, racialized surveillance, and institutional decay; how informal labor practices, including agricultural work and gig-based food delivery, structure routine co-presence in the absence of stable belonging; and which kinds of relationships emerge across internal borders and under differentiated regimes of legitimacy and recognition.

Presenter(s): Ernestine Whitaker

Board#46 Pseudo-Recovery: Informal Leadership, Moral Practice, and the Politics of Ward Governance

This article presents the long-term hospitalization experience of an inpatient named "Ming Gu" in a psychiatric hospital in mainland China. He took on the role of Dazuzhang in the ward, a position similar to that of a patient leader, responsible for assisting the medical staff. However, this role is informal and derived from abolished ward-level policies that had once established positions such as the art group leader and cleaning team leader. In order to present this case, the article adopts the elements of recovery orientation and uses them as a structural dialogue with the individual's lived experience. From this, the concept of Pseudo-Recovery is constructed, which refers to Ming Gu's patient/non-patient identity, and is also used to describe the intertwined process of recovery and rehabilitation. In this process, discharge is not the ultimate goal. This article attempts to answer the changes in recovery orientation and the conditions for maintaining this process. This article employs ethnographically informed qualitative research. Through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of diaries and field notes, the personal story, as well as the relational and cultural dimensions behind it, is structured in time and theme. The case shows, as an important feature of the governance of psychiatric institutions in history, morality still occupies an important position in the formation and performance of the self. What is a good patient? Who defines it? This case illustrates Ming Gu's answers in thought and action: individual collectivist vision, repaying hostility with kindness, flattery, display of authority, and the performances entangled in them. The patient leader is not the role of speaking for patients, but the intermediary of

ward governance. Here, there is acquiescence, reminder, avoidance, and control from the medical staff. The moral self, seemingly the presentation of individual agency, is affected by the power structure in institutional interaction, and is also deeply embedded in interpersonal emotions, thus having the characteristics of expediency. This is a politics where moral identity is invoked, adjusted, and hidden, an ambiguous world of Us/Them. Through the intersection of personal experience, institutions and culture, this article calls for greater attention to the emergence and retreat of non-normative and non-institutional subjectivities, as well as the holistic relational world.

Presenter(s): Bowen Wu

Board#47 Refuting ghost stories: The possibilities of public scholarship for shaping respectful narratives about Eastern Cemetery

This poster explores the public-facing outcomes of a multi-year research collaboration between archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and biological anthropologists about Eastern Cemetery. Located in Louisville, KY, Eastern's history of massive over burial, mismanagement, and abandonment has long been a topic of public discussion, including rumors of hauntings and other eerie associations, as well as use of the site to mark supposed burials of "witches," hold zombie-themed photo shoots, and other uses that emphasize a dark and spectral interpretation of the cemetery. Working alongside the community group that now voluntarily manages the 29-acre site, our research utilized mixed methods – including participant observation, interviews, Ground Penetrating Radar, magnetometry, and GIS mapping – to non-invasively document past practices and to examine the perceptions and experiences of those closely connected to Eastern today. With our 2-year NEH-funded project conceptually focused on necroviolence (De León 2015; Wahbe 2020) and structural violence (Farmer 2004; Seidemann & Halling 2019), in this poster we highlight the ways we chose to present our academic and applied findings for public audiences. Through an intentional selection of the topics, narratives, and designs of a report, and through the presentation of findings at community meetings, we explore the importance of crafting public scholarship that respectfully acknowledges the violences of the past and present but does not sensationalize Eastern's history or stigmatize those for whom it is their final resting place.

Presenter(s): Angela Storey

Board#48 Religiously-Motivated Refugee-Migrant Care: Social Nonmovement in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

In this poster, I engage data from previous field work with refugee-migrant care providers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas with arguments and examples provided by Asef Bayat (2010) in his book *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. I discuss Bayat's concerns with prevailing perspectives on the poor and how his alternate framework– "social nonmovements"– helps to bypass rigid dichotomies of 'active'/'passive,' 'individual'/'collective,' and 'civil'/'political,' resistance that have often muddled my own ability to understand and articulate the practices, groups, and spaces I study. By employing Bayat's conception of social nonmovements, I analyze interview data collected in 2023 to understand the refugee-migrant care network of the Lower Rio

Grande Valley as participating in both "quiet encroachment" and "art of presence" (Bayat 2010), with the potential to be or develop into more "unnoticed social practices that may in fact be harbinger of significant social change" (Bayat 2010, 26).

Specifically, my poster draws from a paper I wrote that asks: 1) What are the limitations of prevailing perspectives on "the poor" and "resistance"? 2) What is social nonmovement according to Bayat? 3) How is this framework helpful for understanding the role and development of refugee–migrant care practices in the Lower Rio Grande Valley? I rely on Bayat's social nonmovement framework to better understand participant observations at various shelters/service sites as well as interviews with volunteers and employees of organizations providing care that I collected when living in Texas in 2023. The particular care network I study operates right on the line (if there is one) between religion and politics, between civil society and the state, between everyday volunteerism and collective action. Many of the prevailing frameworks around "the poor" and "resistance" are insufficient for understanding activism and care practice of this sort. The dichotomy between active and passive and between civil and political lead ultimately to a critique of service providers for not being more politically and publicly active, but may miss the ways in which seemingly passive everyday volunteerism has the potential to transform the state's governmentality by weaving religious logic (welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the orphan, protecting human dignity) into the very "fabric of society, into norms, rules, institutions, and relations of power" (Bayat 2010, 25). Bayat argues that social nonmovements really can have this sort of impact when they operate in a society for a long period of time. Even if the state attempts to offset their subversive practices by submerging them in the the state's logic of power, a social nonmovement can achieve notable reform and diminish the state's ability to neutralize their effects if the nonmovement continue to practice its "incremental disposition of claim making" (Bayat 2010, 25).

Presenter(s): Josie Cohen

Board#49 Returning to Displacement: Kashmiri Pandit Homelands

My poster presentation examines the theoretical and methodological dimensions of return migration among displaced Kashmiri Pandits, an upper-caste Hindu minority community, to government-established settlements in Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Drawing on spatial-political theory and critical security studies, this research interrogates how state-sponsored "return" initiatives may paradoxically reinforce experiences of exile rather than facilitate genuine homecoming.

Methodologically, my study aims to employ multi-sited ethnography within securitized Pandit colonies in the cities of Kashmir, conceptualizing these spaces as sites of contested belonging. The analytical framework centers on three interconnected dimensions: spatial confinement within security architectures, temporal liminality of "perpetual return," and the political reconfiguration of minority identity within conflict zones.

My research contributes to theoretical discussions on forced migration by proposing that traditional binary conceptions of displacement/return are insufficient when analyzing populations in securitized resettlement contexts. Instead, this work introduces the concept of securitized return to theorize how state security imperatives transform the phenomenological experience of homecoming, creating spaces where communities exist in a condition of simultaneous return and exile. This framework offers new analytical pathways for understanding return migration in contested territories where security concerns fundamentally restructure notions of home, belonging, and identity.

Presenter(s): Vatya Raina

Board#50 Ruins-as-Ghosts, Ruins-as-Cemeteries: Placemaking and Necropolitics in Late Horizon Samanco, Nepeña Valley, North-Central Coast of Peru

Anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have long recognized the agency of ancestors, spirits, ghosts, and other metapersons in shaping politics, especially burial practices and other forms of necropolitics. In imperial and other colonial contexts, where political legitimacy is often tied to placemaking, new relationships with the past, especially with memories, places, and ruins, have the potential to emerge. In the Central Andes, the Tawantinsuyu (aka Inca Empire) expanded from its heartland in Cuzco to incorporate vast swaths of the Andean region during the 15-16th centuries CE. On the north-central coast of Peru, despite robust ethnohistorical accounts, archaeological evidence for the Inca presence is scant and the relationships between imperial Cuzco and local Chimú leadership are still poorly understood. Recent archaeological research in Nepeña, a small coastal valley located 800 km from Cuzco in the southern portion of the Kingdom of Chimor, brings new empirical light on Inca expansionism and its engagement with local ruins, including the construction of mortuary chambers. This poster reports on the archaeological discovery of an incomplete Late Horizon (1470-1532 CE) mortuary context within the ruins of Samanco. We describe the grave context, including the construction of funerary chambers, the placement of the deceased, and the presence of a variety of grave goods. We analyze the assemblage considering the hybridized identities and artistic practices that emerged at the time and pay particular attention to the location of the tomb within the ruins and the surrounding landscape, including nearby hills and the Pacific Ocean. We frame our analysis to shed light on the materiality and agency of ancestral places in shaping Late Horizon necropolitics in a region far removed from the Inca heartland. We evaluate imperial strategies of placemaking in light of the Nepeña case and offer a broader reflection on the role of abandoned places and other "ghosts" in imagining and building more-than-human worlds in the Andean past.

Presenter(s): David Chicoine

Co-author(s): Matthew Helmer, Jeisen Navarr

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Board#51 Health and Wealth: A Microhistory of an Elite White Male in the Plantation South

Osteobiographies have recently become common in social bioarchaeology and paleopathology for direct reconstructions of biosocial lived experiences in past populations. Here, we present an osteobiography of a known-named individual, Josiah Gale, exhumed through salvage bioarchaeology in central Mississippi. Gale was a member of Mississippi's elite plantation class and participated in the 19th-century migration of European American and Black and/or African American individuals from the Carolinas into Mississippi Territory. Following established methods for paleopathological and osteological analysis of Gale's skeletal material (70% present for observation), mortuary assemblage (i.e., clothing fastenings, cast iron coffin), and associated archival evidence, we will explore the health history, exposure to stressors, activity, diet, behavior patterns, and general social ecology of a wealthy, elite White male within a deeply hierarchical and structurally violent social and economic system. Despite poor preservation, preliminary analysis shows evidence of limited-to-absent early life exposure to stressors, but later life negative health outcomes, including periodontal disease, indicative of local-to-systemic inflammation; osteoarthritis, indicative of systemic inflammation; and mandibular exostoses, often associated with bruxism and typically caused by psychosocial stress. With the obtained permission of lineal descendants, we intend to provide a microhistorical narrative on the association between health and wealth, exploring the complexities of constructing differential diagnosis in the context of poor preservation.

Presenter(s): Jennavieve Lambeth

Co-author(s): Rachel Coppock

Board#52 Mortality During 19th Century Yellow Fever Outbreaks in New Orleans: Exploring the Potential Role of Health Boards and Institutions.

Yellow Fever is a viral infectious disease commonly transmitted by mosquitoes. Most scientific evidence points to an African origin, and due to the slave trade, it arrived in America around the 1600s. In the United States, it started causing significant outbreaks and high death tolls in the late 1700s and, during the 1800s, caused major catastrophic outbreaks in different cities, where New Orleans was one of the most affected places. During the 1800s, in New Orleans, the mortality rate in each outbreak did not always show a clear pattern and trend, and different factors (biological and non-biological) could have played a distinct role in various historical and environmental contexts. In this study, we analyze human mortality during three major Yellow Fever outbreaks in New Orleans during the 19th century (1847, 1853, and 1867) and explore how the existence, structure, and policy changes of different city and state boards and health institutions could have had an impact on mortality risk in these three outbreaks. The outbreak of 1847 generated more than 2,200 deaths, with a peak on September 5th (435 deaths). The following outbreak in 1853 was the deadliest one, with more than 7,800 deaths, with a peak on August 27th (1,365 deaths). Interestingly, the trend of increasing mortality changed and reverted in 1867, with more than 3,000 deaths and a peak on September 23rd (489 deaths). The first version of the City Board of Health was established in New Orleans in 1804, following the Louisiana Purchase. This would not be the only iteration. In 1816, the City Health Committee was reorganized by the New Orleans City Council,

only to be dismantled and changed again, this time by the state legislature in 1818. Several more iterations and dissolutions of the City Board of Health would occur in 1821, 1837, 1841, and 1846. Contagionists and non-contagionists (sanitationists) disagreed on a plan for implementing any long-lasting plan of action against Yellow Fever. The first-ever State Board of Health was established in Louisiana following the passing of the Quarantine Act of 1855. This created a permanent institution and provided the infrastructure to build and maintain quarantine stations surrounding New Orleans. Our preliminary analysis showed institutional changes in each outbreak, with a clear shift after the one with the most significant death toll in 1853, where the State control of health policies could have helped to generate more centralized sanitary actions. Our next steps will focus on specific political and economic decisions that, beyond outbreak mortality, could help us explain institutional changes that could have exacerbated mortality as observed in 1853.

Presenter(s): Clay Sharp

Co-author(s): Fabian Crespo

Board#53 Jamaican University Women's Mate Choices in a Context of Mate Scarcity

Women's enrollment in higher education has reached a level that surpasses male enrollment in many universities. With the tendency of women to prefer partners with the same or higher level as themselves, this raises questions about how heterosexual identifying women in female-biased institutions are able to find romantic partners. Previous research suggests that when women perceive being in a mate-scarce environment, they may modify their behaviors to find a partner. The present study takes place in Jamaica, an island nation for which approximately 70% of enrollment in higher education is women. This study draws on evolutionary theory and sociosexuality frameworks to examine how Jamaican university women perceive mate availability, and how those perceptions shape their preferences and behaviors.

The survey data (n=108) collected from UWI-M students revealed that women reported significantly higher perceptions of mate scarcity-especially for short-term relationships-compared to men. However, perceived scarcity of long-term mates did not differ by sex. Results also suggest that perceived mate availability among women is positively correlated with a more permissive sociosexual attitude, but not with behavior or desire. Contrary to predictions, perceived scarcity was not associated with increased intrasexual competition. Exploratory findings show that women in mate-scarce environments expressed greater behavioral flexibility and were more willing to compromise on mate attributes like income and education-especially for long-term relationships.

This poster highlights the nuanced ways in which education, culture, and mating market dynamics intersect to shape mate preferences among young Caribbean women. The findings offer valuable insight into human mating strategies in gender-imbalanced institutional contexts.

Presenter(s): Alicia Carr

Co-author(s): Peter Gray

Board#54 Lived Experiences in highland Ecuador: two case studies from Urcuquí (AD 500-1500)

Osteobiographies are an innovative technique in bioarchaeology that allow for close examination of an individual in order to explore unique life trajectories. In this poster, we will present the osteobiographies of two individuals excavated from Urcuquí, Ecuador (AD 500-1500). As part of the Otavalo chiefdom in the Carnqui polity, Urcuquí has been the focus of excavation in Ecuador for many years. However, despite this archaeological attention, little is yet known about daily life for individuals living at Urcuquí. Bioarchaeological analysis begun in 2021 has started to explore the patterns of health, activity, and trauma across this community; here, we focus on two case studies in order to highlight the varied life experiences of people who lived there. The first individual (163A) was a possible female adult between 25 and 50 years old at the time of death. This individual had signs of wear from labor across their body, mainly focused on the joint surfaces. This individual was a part of a double burial. The second individual (218) is a probable female of middle age (35 - 50 years of age at the time of death) who had signs of lumbarization of the first sacral vertebra, osteoarthritis of many vertebrae, as well as potentially severe mandible dislocation. This poster will address how their lives might have been affected by their pathologies over time. We also emphasize the utility of consulting medical specialists in the context of ancient human remains as a way to understand the impact beyond the skeleton of pathology and disease. The focus will be on the day-to-day lives that they might have lived based on the known symptoms associated with their pathologies and bodily changes and what is known about the diet and activity of the people at the time.

Presenter(s): Taylor Recuero

Co-author(s): Sara Juengst, María Ordoñez Alvarez

Board#55 Maya Perspectives on Archaeology: Palenque Vendor's Contribution to the Material Culture

Archaeological projects invariably affect the local communities where they are conducted. Attention from these projects is often followed shortly after by tourism, particularly in the Mesoamerican region since the inception of the Maya World Project. The mix of academic, commercial, and political interests in the area shapes the locals' economic prospects and relationship with their cultural heritage. Examining how archaeology can become an economic and political tool that shapes the local community's perception of archaeology has become a matter of increased importance to the subfield and has been brought to the forefront of conversation with the development of the Maya Train project.

Mexico's Tren Maya Project is an intercity railway connecting historic Maya sites across the Yucatán Peninsula for tourism. Since construction began in June of 2020, over 25,000 new archaeological sites have been uncovered, and a significant portion of the train is already in operation, with the latest stop situated in Palenque. This is an incredibly pertinent time to examine what local Maya communities perceive to be the value of archaeology as it is being undertaken around them at a rapid pace and underlies the development of their communities. Considering the complex role Maya culture plays in Mexican identity and the debatable extent to which archaeology in Mexico

serves as a state apparatus, their insights are crucial for answering larger theoretical questions on who owns the past and what the focus of archaeological projects should be.

Developing an understanding of the Maya perspective is achieved through ethnographic fieldwork in the archaeological tourist site of Palenque, Mexico. Close examination of how the cultural landscape of Palenque is constructed and consumed every day through the interactions between Maya (workmen, vendors, etc.) and non-Maya stakeholders (archaeologists, tourists, etc.) elucidates how the Maya perspective on archaeology is formed. Maya vendors situated outside the entrance of the archaeological park of Palenque are of emphasis in fieldwork due to their function as a crossroads for interaction between all local stakeholders of Palenque's archaeological tourism economy. How Maya communities have been responding to archaeological tourism in Palenque, which has been an archaeological tourist site for decades, serves as a basis for how Maya communities newly exposed to the archaeological tourism onset by the Maya Train Project will respond. Findings are based on preliminary data analysis.

Presenter(s): Jonatan Naranjo Lugo

Board#56 Motivations for Conservation: Exploring Citizen Responsibility for the Marine Protected Areas of Los Angeles County

The Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) of Los Angeles county are co-managed by both the state government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as California legislature has acknowledged the fact that these prized coastal resources must receive local aid in order to be successful public projects. Heal the Bay (HtB) is a non-profit research aquarium based in Santa Monica (although the Los Angeles MPAs are in Malibu, Palos Verdes, and the Channel Islands). HtB retains a vast number of both paid employees and volunteers who participate in maintenance, scientific, and educational programs at and for MPAs. Through my work with HtB as an MPA human use data collector, many who also perform work for MPAs through the nonprofit have been contacted in order to understand their lived experiences. Using theories of socio-natural cultural construction and use/definition MPA guidelines put forward by environmental scientists, anthropologists, and politicians, the related beliefs and opinions of the working members of HtB will be gathered ethnographically via semi-structured interviews at MPA sites or aquarium headquarters. Guiding questions are: What life events and/or personal-social ideologies do people cite as motivating them to work or volunteer in their respective forms of management of Los Angeles's Marine Protected Areas, and how can more people be inspired to participate in these efforts? What are challenges paid workers and volunteers report upon entering and/or participating in NGO Marine Protected Area management? How does each individual that works with MPAs in Los Angeles county define environmental conservation and successfully achieve it, both at the NGO and state level? The appearance of patterns in open-ended responses to these questions between employees and volunteers will be recorded and transcribed while cultural theories of human relationships with nature as governed by policy (especially in the new conservative presidential era) can be expanded upon in relation to oceans specifically. Fieldwork data collected in summer 2025 will be presented at the AAA conference for other anthropologists to view and

comment on in order to build a thesis with diverse professional input. The non-government persons that care for MPAs are integral to their success - they must be supported in their endeavors, especially because Heal the Bay brings communities together to achieve "good" or "important" deeds the government may fail in carrying out. A critical way to achieve that is through investigation into what prompts the care of ocean and intertidal ecosystems so that key factors brought up by one or both groups can continue to be promoted while challenges can be identified for reduction. As our climate becomes more vulnerable and environmental anthropology expands as a discipline, this work must be done in order to grasp and compare patterns presented by MPA collaborators so that successful environmental management can be achieved.

Presenter(s): Mila Mucic

Board#57 Multi-crafting Revealed by Sediment Chemistry at The Ta'ab Nuk Na Salt Work, Belize

A record of activities is preserved in mangrove peat at the Classic period (A.D. 250-800) Maya salt work, Ta'ab Nuk Na. The anerobic peat has preserved wooden architecture and botanical remains at many underwater salt works in Paynes Creek National Park, Belize. However, the peat is not favorable to the preservation of remains from meals and other organic material. Survey of the sea floor found posts that formed the outlines of at least ten buildings. Analysis of the artifacts revealed the buildings were associated with a residence and salt kitchens. Activities included boiling brine over fires to make salt, brine enrichment, and salting fish. Questions remained about if salt production was organized as a workshop engaged in multi-crafting or the production of a single good. Sediment chemistry using Inductively Coupled Plasma-Atomic Emission Spectrometry was undertaken to identify additional activities occurring at the salt works. Sediment was collected at one-meter intervals in Building B identified as a residence and along transects to capture the inside and outside of buildings. The results show variation in trace elements around the buildings related to human activity including potassium (K), manganese (Mn), aluminum (Al), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), Zinc (Zn), and phosphorus (P). Spatial analysis indicates a hearth inside in the residence, an expansion of salt production related activities such as brine enrichment and provides additional support for salting fish. The results show that the Maya salt makers at Paynes Creek engaged in multi-crafting for workshop production of subsistence goods of both salt and fish.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Sills

Co-author(s): Heather McKillop

Board#58 Seon Buddhist practitioners physiological and psychological narratives

I will examine how Korean Seon Buddhist lay practitioners experience Buddhist practices in monastic settings, paying particular attention to both their bodily responses as well as their narratives about these experiences. Korean Seon Buddhism distinguishes itself by its focus on meditation and the idea that immanence is experienced in the quotidian. However, the ways lay practitioners engage with its rituals within monastic settings have, as yet, been little studied (Sŏngch'öl Sŏnsa, Myŏng Wŏn, and Tek Wŏn. *Echoes from Mt. Kaya: Selections on Korean buddhism* by Ven. song-chol; edited by Ven. won-tek; 1988.). In my research on lay practitioners

engagements with Buddhist practices, I will focus in particular on how lay practitioners incorporate prostrations and meditation into their lives while also exploring the personal and symbolic meanings these practices hold for them. I will focus my observations on Seon Buddhist temples from the Jogye order. In this work, I employ Empatica bracelets to document biomarkers of heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and electrodermal conductance – all of which provide indicators of stress (and relaxation) levels. Through ethnographic fieldwork in Seoul, including participant observation in temples and semi formal interviews with lay practitioners and monks, this research explores the embodied experience of prostration and meditation as acts of devotion and humility for some, while for others, they may offer therapeutic benefits, such as emotional regulation and stress relief.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Jefferies

Board#59 Reclaiming Names, Restoring Identity: Reassociation in a Historic New Orleans Cemetery

Most bioarcheological studies-even with historical records and context-cannot reassociate skeletal remains with their names and individual identities. The historic Cypress Grove Cemetery #1 in New Orleans, Louisiana, presents the rare opportunity to attempt this. A portion of the wall vaults in this cemetery, which date from the mid-1840s to the 1930s, that housed hundreds of people, were recently demolished by the cemetery operator. Members of the descendant community operate the cemetery to this day. For decades, the wall vaults decayed, became overgrown, and the nameplates were lost over time. These decaying vaults had become a public safety risk and were intentionally demolished. From 2022 to 2024, all human remains and associated materials from vaults in the worst state of repair were disinterred for reburial elsewhere in the cemetery. Many interments were commingled in their vaults and exhibited varying preservation. Initial bioarchaeological analyses conducted with the permission from the descendant community estimate the minimum number of individuals totaling over 1000. This work attempts name reassociation of the 36 people in individualized burials. Using the Tombstone Index, which the Works Progress Administration completed in 1934, publicly available burial data, obituaries, and records from the cemetery, this research presents the feasibility and challenges of name reassociations. To determine potential matches, data collected from their skeletal remains, such as estimations of both age-at-death and osteological sex, are compared to the various records. Despite dying in the recent past, their identities were quickly lost to time. This work aims to remedy this, and by using the individualized burials as a starting point, it determines the feasibility of reassociating the identities of the others buried and disinterred at Cypress.

Presenter(s): Laura Allen

Co-author(s): Ryan Seidemann, Alex Garcia-Putnam, Christine L. Halling, Kathryn Baustian, Amy Michael, Samantha Blatt, Kerry Boutte, Erin Fox, Adam Wilson, Siobhain Murphy, Hudson Marcel, Aimee Holland, Jose Sanchez, Samantha Unwin

Board#60 Skull Taphonomy of Burials in England

This study classified the taphonomy and preservation of cranial elements from burials in medieval and post medieval England. Examining demographic characteristics of individuals and their areas of burial in relation to states of cranial preservation may provide insights into taphonomic processes that differentially affect individuals' cranial state of preservation. Approximately 1100 individuals excavated from seven different sites were surveyed, and the state of cranial preservation for each individual was documented using a categorical system of classification that used observations of relative cranial completeness. The results showed that approximately 42% of all recovered individuals lacked evidence of a cranium, 43% of individuals had a partial or fragmentary cranium, and 15% had a mostly complete cranium. Results of Chi-Square tests exhibited significant relationships of cranial preservation with estimated sex and burial site. Though sex may have had a significant influence on the state of cranial preservation, cranial preservation may have influenced sex estimates. This is exhibited by the large percentage of individuals with indeterminate sex estimations (~34%) and cranial preservation of less than mostly complete. The correlation between burial site and preservation may be influenced by a multitude of factors such as date of burial, earth composition, and excavation techniques. This study provides information on preservation of the cranium and potential taphonomic biases that may result from burial location and demography.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Moss

Board#61 "Martin County is the Forgotten County": The Haunting of Water Insecurity in an Appalachian Hair Salon

Martin County, located in eastern Kentucky, has been battling water insecurity since the 1970s when the water supply was contaminated by the coal industry. Today, residents still experience shut-offs, boil water advisories, burst pipes, and significant bills for water they cannot drink. Women working at a hair salon in Inez, KY, rely on running water for a stable income and the water crisis drastically determines their success. Through interviews and photo-voice, this poster reveals the ways in which their experiences with the water crisis haunt their daily lives by forcing them to anticipate water outages that lead to the loss of income, thus creating a constant feeling of worry. I use the concept of haunting to think beyond paranormal experiences and instead explore daily occurrences that affect those who must navigate them. A focus on haunting emphasizes collective trauma from the initial contamination in the 1970s, and links this to the challenges that the hair stylists have had in present times. The concept of agency is also used to think through responses, as women at the salon feel powerless and do not have access to resources that could help them during water shut offs. Consideration of agency helps to examine the lasting structures that perpetuate powerlessness and domination in Appalachian spaces.

Presenter(s): Chloe Hale

Board#62 Storage Raiders: Database Design and Artifact Curation for Future Research and Public Engagement with the Riviera Archaeological Collection

Rivieras' cultural material-currently housed at Florida Atlantic University (FAU)-has seen limited curation or analysis in recent decades. This situation reflects a broader issue, the Curation Crisis, in which accumulated archaeological materials remain inadequately stored, cataloged, or preserved due to institutional constraints.

My goal is to address the Curation Crisis at a local level by developing a centralized digital database for FAU's archaeological collections, beginning with those from the Riviera Site and using existing institutional resources that aid in cataloging, digitizing, and 3D printing a representative sample of the collection. The 3D models will be used to create a teaching collection to increase educational access for students K-12. Demonstrating how curation and digitization can be achieved without external funding, contributing to academic research infrastructure and public outreach. It highlights the importance of low-cost, scalable strategies in preserving cultural heritage and promoting inclusive, community-based scholarship.

Presenter(s): Micaela Candia

Board#63 Tackling Contemporary Community Issues Using Local, Place-Based Heritage

The continued practice of cultural heritage is dependent on a community's ability to adapt the sites and performances specific to their historical narratives. Social cohesion is essential to mitigating complex, contemporary issues like climate change and migration. Building from my experience with the National Park Service's History and Hope Interpretive Toolkit for Climate Change, I present strategies to uphold community's stewardship of their heritage through education which relies on place-based history. Connecting past anecdotes of change, collaboration, and loss to current issues can help present data to communities in a way which prompts constructive hope. In addition to providing narratives of resilience and errors, the toolkit can introduce ways in which cultural groups have adapted to danger and change. Hyde Park, in Burkeville, Virginia, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in connection with Jewish German immigration and agricultural efforts during WWII. This case study will further articulate connections between agriculture, climate change, and migration, as well as the Toolkit's potential in politically conservative regions of America where global warming and other contemporary issues are likely to have significant impact.

Presenter(s): Emma Gruesbeck

Board#64 The Commodification of Death: An Exploration of the American Funerary Industry

Title: The Commodification of Death: An Exploration of the American Funerary Industry

Objective:

This research aims to show how the industrial revolution transformed the environment, human societies, and cultural practices with emphasis on death practices. Industrialization and capitalist ideology have completely changed death practices in American society. Death has become a distant, disconnected concept enshrouded with fear for the average person, largely due to capitalist influence on funerary traditions, transforming them from a social and culturally significant practice into an industry to be exploited. Through historical analysis and literary review, I

will examine the rise of the funeral industry in the United States following the Civil War, the environmental consequences of modern death practices such as embalming, casket burials, and cremation, and how these practices are changing in the modern era through concepts such as green burials, and the Positive Death movement.

Historical Background:

Early American funerary traditions were heavily influenced by Christian religious ideology and Victorian superstition; themes of the afterlife, spirits, and God are found throughout the funerary art styles and social traditions of the time. American society gradually lost its personal connection with death as Victorian-style funerary practices were left behind. The Civil War ushered in a new era of funeral traditions with the introduction of chemical embalming as popular practice, slowing decomposition and turning death into slumber.

Advancements in medical technology in the early 1900s would further serve to transform social and cultural thought about death and dying in America. The rise of funeral services as an industry introduced another layer of separation from death as an exercise in humanity, with multi-billion dollar companies controlling contemporary Western death practices. Traditional funeral practices in the United States have been overtaken by a profit-driven industry that charges exorbitant fees for management of the deceased, and perpetual care costs to maintain their gravesites. As well, many of the embalming, cremation and burial practices that are now standard in the Western funeral industry are also sources of chemical contamination in the soil and water sources near cemeteries.

The cultural obsession with prolonged, sanitized death has given rise to the Death Positivity and Green Death movements. The "Death with Dignity" movement began in the 1970s, aiming to generate public discussion and understanding of contemporary issues of death and dying in the United States. This movement caused a shift in federal funding for in-home end of life care, and culminated in the "rite to die" 1976 Quinlan case in New Jersey, which resulted in the creation of the Uniform Determination of Death Act.

References:

Merchant, Carolyn. (1980) 1980. *The Death of Nature : Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. San Fr

Presenter(s): Clover Smith

Board#65 The Needs of the Few and the Many: Exploring the Evolutionary Origins of Healthcare using Agent Based Modeling

The evolutionary development of healthcare behaviors in humans is a relatively neglected area of inquiry, in part due to the limited preservation of care-related behaviors in the fossil record. Yet understanding how and why such behaviors emerged is crucial for anthropological approaches to health, cooperation, and sociality. This paper draws on primate behavioral research and evolutionary psychology-specifically the Hominin Pathogen Control Hypothesis (Kessler 2020)-to explore the adaptive significance of early caregiving in the genus *Homo*. The hypothesis suggests

that individual-level care (e.g., self-sanitation) and community-level care (e.g., provisioning sick group members) could have interacted synergistically, reinforcing positive selective pressures and giving rise to more complex healthcare behaviors over time.

To test this hypothesis, we develop an agent-based model simulating Mid-Pleistocene Homo populations. The model incorporates observed care behaviors from non-human primates and other species—such as food provisioning and hygienic maintenance—as proxies for early healthcare actions. We examine how these behaviors affect individual and population-level mortality under varying ecological and social conditions.

We hypothesize that the combined presence of self-beneficial and group-beneficial care behaviors buffers mortality and enhances population resilience, creating a feedback loop that supports the long-term evolution of caregiving practices. Our findings offer a novel lens through which to consider the evolutionary foundations of human health-related behavior, demonstrating how seemingly altruistic practices may have become embedded in the human lineage through co-evolutionary dynamics.

This interdisciplinary project contributes to ongoing conversations in biological anthropology, evolutionary theory, and medical anthropology by providing a computational framework for exploring the deep roots of human care.

Presenter(s): Hannah Giberti

Co-author(s): Miriam Kopels

Board#66 The Outlaws That Never Left: Haunting Tales of Rattlesnake Jake and Longhaired Owens

On July 4, 1884, two outlaws, Rattlesnake Jake and Longhaired Owens, rode into Lewistown, Montana, and ignited a shootout that left a deep-rooted impact on the town's history. In the aftermath, ghost stories and folklore quickly developed, shaping public memory through reenactments, parades, and haunted happenings, but how much of the legend is true? With only seventeen eyewitness accounts, this project turns to anthropology to confront the ghosts of Lewistown's past. Drawing on ethnohistorical research, ethnographic interviews, osteological and aDNA analysis of two human crania, and digital facial reconstruction, this study seeks to recover the true identities of the outlaws behind the legend and to piece together what really unfolded that Fourth of July. In tracing the line between folklore and fact, this research gives voice to the long-silent dead and breathes new life into the stories that refuse to rest.

Presenter(s): Averil Jones

Board#67 The Specter of Antimicrobial Resistance: Pharmacists' Role in Community-based Antibiotic Use

The role of pharmacists in the global challenge of antimicrobial resistance is understudied and undervalued. Pharmacists are significant participants in the network exchanges of antibiotics, existing in the community as moderators between physicians and patients. Based on long-term, in-

depth observation (N=104 hours) of patient-pharmacist behavior at three private pharmacies in Palm Beach County, Florida, U.S.A., the researcher took handwritten field notes on patient-pharmacist behavior over the course of six months. Handwritten field notes included timestamps for each patient, recording patient demographics and details surrounding antibiotic dispensing, pharmacist-patient interactions, and patient education. Patients were observed disclosing pertinent information to their pharmacists, who were observed relating to the patients to create a well-rounded prescription and dosing regimen. Subsequent semi-structured interviews (N=5) were conducted with pharmacists to further understand pharmacy-based encounters between pharmacists and patients. The interviews were recorded with a handheld device, and notes were transcribed. Supported by the Ethnography Lab at Florida Atlantic University (ELFA), the researcher qualitatively coded the transcribed documents using Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, Los Angeles, California) to elicit dynamics of patient education encounters. Discerning these socio-professional interactions in healthcare settings is pertinent to understanding processes and behaviors surrounding the prescription and use of antibiotic medicines that could impact global health issues like antimicrobial resistance.

Presenter(s): Kezia Abraham

Co-author(s): Katharina Rynkiewicz

Board#68 To See Again: Failing Vision and a Simple Remedy in the Northern Peruvian Andes

Mirroring US Health Care in general, vision is a neglected area of focus in anthropology. While doing survey research in the northern Peruvian highlands in 2019 as part of the NSF-funded multi-site ENDOW Project (Economic Network Dynamics of Wealth and Inequality), we noticed the difficulty participants had in seeing to sign their consent forms. During the 2024 wave of data collection, we assessed people for their ability to read and fitted the majority of those over 50 with over-the-counter readers. To a fault, everyone was astonished and overjoyed that there was a solution to their 'cloudy' and failing ability to see. While they have recently become available elsewhere in Latin American, off-the-shelf reading glasses are unknown in Peru, while a prescription pair would cost several months of income. We intend to present our evidence to the Peruvian Ministry of Health and petition for a similar change in optical regulations.

Presenter(s): Kathryn Oths

Co-author(s): Olivia Radcliffe

Board#69 Transatlantic Encounters, Trade and Wealth in Early Igbo Societies: The Case of Arochukwu

Scholars of West Africa in recent years have combined oral history and archaeology to provide valuable information and corroborate historical narratives about the past. Historical documents are limited and problematic in West Africa: they often have Eurocentric bias and colonial views, and mostly lack information on gender, power, and agency within African polities. With methods from oral history and archaeology, this paper presents preliminary results from investigations on how

trade led to wealth and status differences in Arochukwu, a town in present day Nigeria, which became a key actor during the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 17th century. Understanding the dynamics of early trade in Arochukwu not only advances regional discussions by illuminating the region's history and involvement in trans-Atlantic trade, but it can also bring perspectives on "African prehistory" into broader dialogue with a global literature about wealth, status, gender and power, enslavement, state formation, and exchange systems.

Presenter(s): Stanley Nwosu

Board#70 Typologies: A Case Study of Petra Jordan Tomb Façades

Typologies are a commonly used tool in archaeology and across other disciplines. This method is often used without a full understanding of the inherent limitations and biases within typologies. Despite scholars' awareness of these problems, typologies pervade archaeological research and are powerful tools for classification. This research examines and describes the process of creating a typology to uncover the subjectivities and logical strengths and weaknesses of the method. After a logical analysis of typology creation, Rae Larson analyzes the application of the Petra tomb façade typology with an outlier found at Site 6A in Petra, Jordan. This site is found in the Wadi Mataha and was excavated under the direction of David Johnson in 2005 by Brigham Young University's archaeology department. Through an attempted application of the typology's iterations, with the most recent adjustments to the typology from Josie Newbold (2021), this analysis unveils the limitations of typologies when interpreting outliers. Typologies are not perfect systems, but they still have their uses. Larson argues the importance of having an awareness of the variables prioritized in a typology to make accurate assertions and arguments about a dataset.

Presenter(s): Rachel Larson

Board#71 Unseeing the Prison, Seeing the Ghost:

Counter Visual narrative on Epistemic Violence

Applying a politically contextualized ethnographic sample of third-country immigrants within a legal-academic-therapeutic framework, I examine how institutional attitudes convert noncompliance into narratives of low-qualification and pathology (Foucault 1978; Smith 2005; Salehi 2020). This concept encompasses the academic network of knowledge production, which, rather than functioning as the neutral domain of inquiry, can operate under implicit political considerations and geopolitical limitations.

Particularly in times of international crisis or asymmetrical war, such institutions not only fail to produce reconciliatory or pluralistic knowledge but also exacerbate epistemic polarization, leading to the silencing, defamation, and institutional pathologization of dissent.

This thesis presents a framework of counter-visual ethnography to observe how institutions generate ghosts-subjects made hyper-visible as dangers yet muted by indirect epistemic violence (Spivak 1988; Gordon 2008; Mirzoeff 2011).

Instead of rendering the invisible apparent, I advocate for a technique of unseeing the prison-subverting the prevailing visual syntax that legitimizes surveillance, diagnosis, and absorption yet presents the audio-visual writing of knowledge uncourtly (Azoulay 2008; Camp 2017; Mirzoeff 2011).

Expanding upon Spivak's (1988) theory of subalternity and Gordon's (2008) concept of ghost logic, I demonstrate that institutional vision not only marginalizes the subaltern but also characterizes their resistance for knowledge making as illogical, so obliterating their epistemic authority. Here, ghosting is not an act of vanishing but rather a form of containment: the individual is rendered visible just in manners that invalidate their discourse (Berlant 2011; Halberstam 2011; Mignolo 2009).

I conceptualize this phenomenon as network-system haunting, wherein the rejection of normative roles (such as the asylum seeker, thankful migrant, the obedient thinker, or the recovered patient) leads to spectralization instead of expulsion. These institutions exert control through biopolitical and necropolitical mechanisms (Foucault 1978; Mbembe 2003), employing affective surveillance, care (Ticktin 2011), and performative inclusion (Butler 1997; Puar 2007).

Presenter(s): Navid Ghadimi

Board#72 "Bones and Charm Stones: The Stories of Native American Artifacts in Lost Hills, California"

Artifacts are one of the most significant storytellers in history; they are where memory and mystery intertwine, and the Pelicans Jaw Hybrid Solar Project in the Lost Hills area of the Central Valley in California is unearthing some of the rich history of Native American tribes there. Charm stones, beautiful shell fragments, shell beads, bone (both human and faunal), obsidian, modified tool flakes, and other lithics have been discovered during shovel pit testing (STPs), as well as on the surface during surveys and construction monitoring. Since it is known that the area contains at least four burial sites, within the project site, every precaution has been taken to ensure the stories of the artifacts and their people are kept safe and do not lose their cultural and historical significance.

Tribal monitors from the Tejon Tribe and the Rancheria: Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi-Yokut Tribe, along with Archaeologists, Paleontologists, and Biologists from Sapphos Environmental Inc. in Pasadena, California, have been meticulously working together on the treatment plan for the solar project to ensure the actual land and the spirit of the land are being handled with great respect. Archaeologists conducted a thorough pedestrian-level survey of the entire 4,000+ acres of the project site between May and October of 2022, and in an added section of the area in February of 2023. Six previously unidentified prehistoric and historic era resources were identified and recorded, which included four prehistoric lithic scatters with groundstone and shell artifacts, and two historic water conveyer features. Shovel pit testing began in July 2024 and is ongoing, producing a great many more artifacts. Since December 2024, construction has been a part of the Pelicans Jaw site, including trenching, which has unearthed at least one human tooth and a decent amount

of daub (Native American building material), some covered in a rusty, orange-colored ash-remnants from huts that may have been burned during burials. As the project continues over the next year or two, it is assumed many more culturally significant artifacts will be uncovered. All artifacts and resources discovered on the site will be catalogued by the cultural resource department at Sapphos Environmental Inc., and either returned to the tribes at the end of the project for proper housing or reburial on site or remain with Sapphos Environmental Inc. for curation and housing using proper curatorial procedures.

Presenter(s): Christine Mazzello

Co-author(s): Lilibeth Tome

Board#74 Anthropology's Lost Library

"Anthropology's Lost Library" is a newly launched digital archive (accessible at www.lost-library.net) that will feature the unpublished and abandoned works produced by researchers in the discipline of anthropology. Though the field has generated a vast and unruly compendium of texts that crisscrosses continents and disciplinary lines, the field has also been marked by countless absences: books never finished, fieldwork never completed, dissertations abandoned, conference papers never ultimately published. This lost scholarship is significant not just for its own sake but also because it traces the structural conditions that inform the production of anthropological research--mentorship relationships gone wrong, safety in fieldsites, illnesses and geopolitics, funding and time constraints, and more.

This poster session will announce the launch of this archive, outline its mission, and invite engagement from conference attendees about its design. How should the archive be organized? Given the nature of the project's focus on the excluded and absent works in the field, what should be the conditions of a work's inclusion in this particular archive? As a repository for lost and abandoned ideas (no matter how unfinished, no matter how small), the archive that emerges from this poster session promises to offer a virtual home for the casualties of intellectual circumstance in anthropology.

Presenter(s): Joshua Rubin

Board #75 Water, heat, and near-death experiences in Arizona: Insights into social, medical, and economic dynamics of navigating AZ water loss and heat illness

In Phoenix, Arizona, one of the world's hottest metropolitan areas, heat stress is a critical public health concern with annual headlines made over the state's summertime heat deaths numbering over the hundreds since 2016; so too is water security. However, heat vulnerability's intimate coupling with water-insecure groups is understudied. This study explores the role of water access and security in instances of heat-related illness among heat-vulnerable and highly-exposed subgroups: occupational and residential exposures alongside medical vulnerability to heat. Interviews depict different sketches of water's role in exacerbating instances of heat illness in cases of its lack and as a mitigating factor in instances of severe heat exposure, with different social

dynamics, protective factors, and risk amplifying factors across different groups, situations, and environments. Lack of respite from the heat, lack of hydration, and loss of electrolytes biologically cascade into extreme effects of heat illness. Among medically vulnerable individuals, further pathophysiological complications than acute heat illness may take effect - cardiovascular problems most frequently mentioned. However, findings from this study thus far indicate that mere hydration has shown to help mitigate the immediate severity and intermediate-term effects of heat illness. Uniquely and deeply concerning, lack of access to water in heat-exposed work (construction, plumbing, food work) has contributed to more extreme experiences of heat stress, even in cases where shade was accessible. In instances of homelessness, findings thus far indicate stigma to be a leading point of water inaccess and lack of assistance from strangers in cases of heat-illness, highlighting the protective factor of social networks in protecting homeless populations from extreme heat illness. In cases of medical vulnerability, socioeconomic factors and social networks are shown to be critically protective in cases of heat illness, especially outdoors. For those medically vulnerable who work in hot conditions and are frequently denied access to water or breaks by work load or employers, intervention by coworkers have been critical to mitigate symptom progression and hospitalization.

Presenter(s): Dylan Diaz-Infante

Board #76 Narratives of Darkness and Survival: A Southern Gothic Approach to Diabetes in the South Carolina Lowcountry

Nationally, diabetes lurks as the 8th leading cause of death, a snake in the weeds awaiting opportunity to strike. In South Carolina, we face a burden much more grave, ranking 6th in adult diabetes prevalence. The crisis deepens throughout rural counties, where surreptitious illness runs rampant. In this landscape, stories matter. Storytelling is crucial to understanding the weight these communities bear, a candle to part the mist and illuminate culturally bound experiences that contribute to this insidious epidemic. To understand one of the South's most pervasive haunts, this qualitative study carefully examined the experiences of diabetes through the lens of Southern Gothic. Nineteen African Americans, marked by diabetes in their rural hometown, offered their perspectives. Their testimonies stitched a heritage quilt with spectres strewn throughout the hems, illustrating narratives painted by shock, dread, isolation, and sacrifice. One that tells us this is more than research, painting a picture that ghosts never left the South; they merely changed form. We're reminded that the oft-overlooked crevices of the Black Belt contain stories capable of shaping the landscape of research in public health, nursing, and community wellness to improve diabetes outcomes where the wound cuts deepest.

Presenter(s): Isabella Paras

Co-author(s): Bridget Hamilton

Board # 78 A Forensic Approach to the Identification and Interpretation of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Human Skeletal Remains

Intimate partner violence (IPV), which encompasses physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological abuse that occurs in intimate and romantic relationships, is a global issue that disproportionately affects women and is the leading cause of femicide worldwide (Gujrathi et al., 2022, Saenz & Tallman, 2024). Clinical researchers have established and published IPV physical trauma patterns by documenting associated injuries including lacerations, contusions, and fractures to better aid in identification of IPV victims (Loder & Momper, 2020). While IPV physical injury screening is now common-practice in many hospitals, less information is known about the possibility of expanding the application of these injury patterns to identify IPV victims postmortem, specifically in cases where individuals are skeletonized. This study investigates the translatability and potential value of applying IPV clinical data to human skeletal remains by developing a weighted scoring system based on IPV-associated fracture frequencies that are reported in the clinical literature. This system was used to score 43 female donor skeletons of reproductive age at the Texas State Donated Skeletal Collection in San Marcos, Texas in July 2025 for evidence of IPV-associated fractures. Additionally, the reliability of this system was evaluated through interobserver statistical analysis on a subset of the sample. By comparing the fracture and abuse prevalence rates in the sample with those presented in the clinical literature, this study will illustrate that clear IPV skeletal injury patterns exist, and will present a method with the potential to improve our ability to identify skeletonized IPV victims in forensic contexts.

Presenter(s): Catarina Vazquez

Board # 79 Disappearance in the Carandiru Massacre: new approaches to an old problem

In October 1992, military police invaded the House of Detention in São Paulo, Brazil, and the Government officially reported the killing of 111 unarmed prisoners. This number, repeated for decades, has never been questioned in court or by state institutions. Yet survivors' testimonies consistently contest this figure, describing higher death tolls and missing bodies. I propose to analyze this gap as a form of "disappearance of the disappearance": the systematic erasure of uncertainties in the production of official numbers.

This research combines forensic archaeology, material culture analysis, and survivor testimony to reopen a long-standing problem. By examining artifacts such as improvised knives and alcohol still preserved in institutional collections, I argue that the daily life of the Carandiru prison was marked by systemic violations, disorganization, and porous boundaries between legality and illegality. These conditions are inseparable from the massacre itself and provide technical grounds to challenge the official figure.

Thirty-three years later, with little accountability for victims' families, the case remains open and urgent. This late-breaking presentation brings new archaeological evidence and analytical frameworks to ongoing debates on state violence, human rights, and enforced disappearance in Latin America.

Presenter(s): Marilia Oliveira Calazans

Board #80 Collectivist Resilience in an Individualistic Society: Experiences of Mental Distress and Community-Based Support in Southall, London

The experiences of mental health among immigrant communities in the Western world are often shaped by cultural expectations, societal pressures, and structural inequalities. Yet, existing research tends to overlook how collectivist cultural frameworks influence how immigrant groups experience and respond to mental distress in predominantly individualistic societies. This study focuses on the Asian immigrant communities of Southall, London, an area where collectivist traditions and communal values persist within the broader individualistic context of the city. It explores how these communities collectively engage with mental distress, the role of stigma and tradition in shaping responses, and the communal forms of care and resilience that emerge. Using qualitative ethnographic methods, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the research seeks to highlight how collectivist approaches to support and healing differ from dominant Western models of individual care. The findings will aim to contribute to a culturally sensitive understanding of mental health, emphasizing the importance of community-based practices and offering insights for interventions better attuned to immigrant populations navigating life in the West.

Presenter(s): Subreen Dhaliwal

8732 Diagramming Worlds: A digital projection installation

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Jackson

Type: Installations

We propose an installation that draws on multimedia work connecting immersive art practices and visual anthropological approaches, focusing on different forms of 'diagramming' as both a methodological and philosophical undertaking.

Our goal is to share and engage with multiple creative and analytical practices of visualization and visual translation – presenting a range of modes of practice for bringing social relations, events, concepts, and diverse modes of existence into the visual realm.

A pair of digital projectors will display a looped series of video clips and images drawing on previous, thematically-linked exhibition work by artist-practitioners Allison Leigh Holt, Robert Nideffer, and mediamaker Tristan Partridge in collaboration with Mexican artist, Santiago Borja. All participants in this installation have experience in sociocultural and ethnographic research and fieldwork, applying insights from those processes within creative work and public-facing projects.

Allison Leigh Holt has exhibited widely, for example at The Ford Foundation Gallery, Stanford University, and SFMOMA. Holt is currently pursuing Ph.D. studies at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Projections to be included in the proposed installation at AAA 2025 are the works "Stitching the Future with Clues" (Black and white and color, sound; runtime: 14:30) <<https://vimeo.com/oillyoowen/stitching>> and "The Cloud Model" (Color, silent, looping) <<https://vimeo.com/1055014843?ts=0&share=copy>>.

Robert Nideffer is Professor in Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He has exhibited widely, for example at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte in Spain, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the 2002 Whitney Biennial. For the proposed installation at AAA 2025, Nideffer will show looped visuals from "12 Years in Azeroth: A Case Study," a hybrid work of digital ethnography, autobiographical narrative, and interactive game design. 12 Years in Azeroth operates as a mode of diagramming -- not as reductive visualization, but as the dynamic staging of experience, tracing affective and relational arcs of identity, labor, love, and loss.

Tristan Partridge is Lecturer in Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he also co-founded the CREW Center for Restorative Environmental Work. His fieldwork photography and visual works have been exhibited and published widely, including in the recent books "Mingas+Solidarity" (T&G/Pazmaen 2024) and "Burning Diagrams in Anthropology: An Inverse Museum" (punctum 2024). Projections to be included in the proposed installation at AAA 2025 build on a series of images (made with Santiago Borja) that remix and re-adapt canonical anthropological diagrams as a means for questioning the linearity and assumed teleological trajectory of intellectual histories, including those of sociocultural anthropology.

We see this proposed installation as a contribution to current debates around data visualization, the ethics and politics of collaboration, and anthropological engagement with creative endeavors.

Space requirements are flexible (though ideally the two projection environments will be away from direct sunlight, to maximize daytime visibility).

Equipment requirements include power for two digital projectors (which we can arrange, if necessary).

Organizer(s): Tristan Partridge, Allison Holt

8829 HAMPI: An "Anthropological" Project by an Andean Artist-Scholar

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Marriott

Type: Installations

See this at the Marriott on the third floor, all day Saturday and Sunday morning.

HAMPI is a multilingual, multimedia, autobiographical, and autoethnographic project by River Coello. In its book form, it chronicles the author's journey of reconnection to the Andean cosmovision.

The AAA installation is an abridged version of the project's forthcoming gallery exhibition. The New Orleans installation will bring together various elements. Digitally, it will include photographs taken throughout the Andes, illustrations of the region's sacred animals, and audio samples of the text (accessible via headphones). In person, there will be physical copies of the award-winning book, small textile samples from its special edition, and replicas of Ecuadorian artifacts from pre-colonization sourced from the Cuenca Museum of Aboriginal Cultures.

HAMPI is published by For the Birds Trapped in Airports in Los Angeles and features illustrations from Kiki Lechuga-Dupont. Its special-edition hardcover will feature a custom textile from LMRM in Chicago. The project was concocted between the United States, Ecuador, and Peru. Its writing and performance are in English, Spanish, and Quechua.

Since its launch, HAMPI has also been widely recognized, earning a Florida Book Award, an International Latino Book Award, an Independent Publisher Book Award, and a Nautilus Book Award, in addition to fellowships from Lambda Literary, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Jack Straw Cultural Center.

Organizer(s): River Coello

8590 Annual Meeting - Second Executive Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Second of two sessions of Executive Board meetings to be hosted at the Annual Meeting. This will be a hybrid meeting with some board members virtually attending but most attending in person. It starts with a breakfast.

8804 AFA Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

The AFA (Association for Feminist Anthropology) Business Meeting

8909 Ghostly Energies: Infrastructures, Renewables, and Social Science in the Contemporary “Energy Emergency”

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

In early 2025, President Trump issued an executive order declaring a national "energy emergency". He promised to "unleash American energy" (White House 2025) while making federal permitting for new solar and wind projects far more onerous. This order, alongside cuts to research and infrastructure funding, inculcated new senses of uncertainty about meeting state and federal climate goals. The passage of the "big beautiful bill" in July 2025, the continued clawback of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to promote renewable developments, and a cross-departmental war on the wind and solar industries have all intensified.

We are living in a contemporary moment haunted by the ghosts of renewable energy infrastructures and the stillborn renewable future the IRA promised. This late breaking roundtable steps into the fray of the energy emergency to ask: what is happening to the communities that we work with, and

what is the role of social science in speaking back to the politics of crisis unfolding at this moment? How can we cultivate an ethos of persistence in spite of the regressive turn in contemporary energy policy and what energy related issues are ripe for more scholarly attention moving forward?

Bringing together a variety of early career scholars, we will discuss how the politics of the energy emergency intersect with issues of, labor, settler-politics, indigeneity, and the contemporary politics of energy access, regulation, and infrastructure. Our panel will build on the longstanding history of anthropology's engagement with energy, exploring the multi-faceted entanglements energy systems have with contemporary global life (see Phillips 2025). We will build on work which explores the political dimensions of renewable energy development and energy justice efforts (Sovacool et. al 2023). Departing from insights in political theory and environmental studies which remind us that the politics of (climate) crisis more often lead to regressive than progressive outcomes (Hulme 2011; Masco 2017), we posit that all hope is not lost. The persistence of ghosts—the reminder of what was—can also show us what can be.

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Organizer: Scott Schnur

Presenter(s): Scott Schnur , AYDA DONNE , Rin Ball , Rafael Lembi, Michigan State University, Jorge Morales Guerrero, Arizona State University Library, Brendan Davidson

Discussant: Scott Schnur

8535 A Tkaronto Rhapsody: A Multi-Medium Experience of Neurodivergent Students in a Neoliberal Age

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

On display Saturday all day, in the Lianappe Foyer.

This installation emerges from a design anthropology project exploring the lived experiences of neurodivergent international students at the University of Toronto. Through multimedia and interactive elements, it invites participants to engage with the everyday challenges faced by neurodivergent students in higher education. Rooted in both personal and collective narratives, the project brings to light hidden burdens, emotional landscapes, and systemic barriers-inviting participants to step into these perspectives with empathy and reflection. The installation consists 2 parts: an interactive exhibition that artistically presents the 'masked' lived experiences of neurodivergent students, and a roleplay game that simulates the embodied experience of navigating university life through neurodivergent modalities. By addressing issues that resonate with many educators, particularly those working with GenZ students with neurodivergence, this project may offer a meaningful contribution to current anthropological practice.

The small-scale exhibition unfolds across modular stations, each linked by poetic metaphors inspired by affect theory. It has 4 parts: 1)Dual Realities: Participants wear red-blue filter glasses to reveal layered visuals. Through naked eye, the material presents a socially acceptable version of student life. But with the glasses, a chaotic and emotionally drained reality emerges -- highlighting the contrast between public perception and lived experience. 2)Masked Portraits: This features double-layered portraits representing the dual realities of students. The front layer displays a 'normal' student image, but a hidden layer, revealed through backlighting, contains diary excerpts and visual breakdowns. Viewers must move around the portraits to uncover these hidden elements which symbolizes the effort required to understand neurodivergent experiences. 3)Haunting: An augmented reality experience activated via QR codes. Scanning the code reveals fragments of failed accommodation requests, poetic reflections, and interactions with a neurodivergent chatbot (ghost in the system). The digital encounters evoke the institutional fractured attention often felt by neurodivergent students. 4)Quiet Reckoning: Visitors receive a takeaway zine that contrasts masked and unmasked narratives through fieldwork quotes, illustrations, and reflective prompts. A nearby mirror poses the question: "What do you carry that others don't see?" encouraging deeper reflection. Visitors can also anonymously write about their masked selves in a hidden notebook. These may be published on our website, according to each participant's preferences.

The second part of the installation is a guided role-play game. Each participant receives three randomized cards: a character card (detailing public perception and private reality), a skill card (reframing neurodivergent traits as cognitive/sensory strengths), and a task card (simulating an academic/administrative challenge). Players need to role-play this character and use the skills to complete the task. To reconstruct the feeling of being inside a neurodivergent body, special items will also be used alongside the skill cards (e.g., when players receive the skill of Dyslexia, all the text presented to them will visually imitate how dyslexia student see in real life, and they will need to complete the task under such conditions). Such embodied experience then will foster empathy and understanding from participant.

Organizer(s): Lukey Lu, Duofei Liu, Yihang Xu

8679 Haunted by the Gaze: Fluid Identities and Spectral Encounters in Medellín's Parque Lleras

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located in the Sheraton on the 4th floor on Saturday.

This ethnographic installation invites participants into an immersive experience exploring the shifting, gendered identities of women who inhabit Parque Lleras—a central nightlife zone in Medellín, popular among international tourists for its accessibility, perceived safety, and concentration of entertainment and sex-related services. Based on fieldwork, the piece centers on how women—public employees, private service providers, informal vendors, and sex workers—move through this space in pursuit of income, negotiating visibility, safety, and self-definition under the weight of multiple gazes.

The installation uses a circular visual display: projected or printed images of male figures (tourists, police officers, and private security guards) are positioned around the perimeter. These figures act as spectral presences—ghosts—whose gaze frames and constrains women's movements, choices, and possibilities. Standing at the center, the viewer is invited to rotate slowly on their own axis, physically embodying the experience of being surrounded and seen. As they turn, the visitor experiences shifts in perspective and positionality, echoing the ways identity flows between self-perception and the projections imposed by others.

The piece incorporates photographs and short ethnographic texts drawn from field notes and interviews. Together, these elements create a layered environment that blurs the line between the visible and the invisible, the intimate and the institutional. It invites participants to consider: Who has the power to define identity? How are gendered bodies made legible in space? What remains unseen, disallowed, or ghosted?

Organizer(s): Valentina Revollo Támara

8820 Postal Incantations & other spells to ward off catastrophe

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton in the Grand Ballroom Foyer, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Look for a post office box.

Discourses of climate change are necessarily discourses about future haunting: The spectral threat implicit in the loss narratives of global warming. From extinction and ruined landscapes to abandoned homes due to sea level rise or wildfires. The scale of the anticipated haunting is unprecedented, it is global, it touches everyone even if unevenly.

Reports on the effects of global warming have reached a velocity that summons haunting experiences such as Atmosfears, Infowhelm, and Ecodepression. The rapidity of clashing narratives and affective repercussions asks for a cautious and decelerated converse with the spectral excrescences of climate change.

So, we use slow media and human networks to explore the climate change's future specters. The postcard is a powerful affective medium. It has space for image and text and an invitation to authorship and re-appropriation. Unlike a book or essay, which doesn't anticipate a response (at least not an immediate one). The postcard is an invitation to a plurality of voices and interpretations. The epistemic flexibility as well as the ontological stability of the card invite its senders and receivers, as well as the intermediaries, to envision their blueprints of future hauntings.

While the spectral threats of future extinction seem rapid and final, the slowness and ambiguity of the postcard emanate a notion of care and circumspection that creates networks of shared affects, visions, and hopes countering the ephemerality of the news flash. By enfolding future threats and postcards, we signpost the urgency of dealing with future hauntings while providing an on-site platform for critical exchange and engagement among peers.

Organizer(s): Florian Grundmüller, Craig Campbell

8636 Sound portraits of workers in the hypermodern era

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Installations

Located at the Sheraton on the second floor all day Saturday.

The sound installation requires minimal technical equipment. A computer on which the various audio files are stored. One or two headphones, which I can also provide, are available to listen to the soundtrack, which plays a series of portraits of French workers. The portraits last between seven and nine minutes. The computer allows the written English transcription of the various portraits to be read in sync with the original language. The ideal location is a quiet corner with comfortable seating for two listeners. The soundtrack and subtitles are played on a loop. The audio portraits tell the stories of employees; it is not so much the job itself that matters, but what each person does in it.

Taking the opposite tack to the question of the crisis of meaning in work that is the subject of my first book (Wiley ed.), the subjects here show what they get out of work, not just employment and activity. Navigating between anthropology of the self and radio reporting, the narrator steps aside, as does the analysis, to make way for the idiolectic function of the audio documentary, which recounts what work is, drawing on the daily routine of work and its function in the daily life of the worker, as an anchor.

Organizer(s): Anais DJOUAD

8993 Resilience in Research & Teaching : Addressing the Impact of Political Climate on Biological Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

In a highly politically-charged moment where executive orders and policies are being driven by a general mistrust of expertise and evidence-based information about the nature and state of human variation, we ask what it means to be a biological anthropologist; what is the future of biological anthropology? We bring together experts in the field to address both theoretical and practical issues such as (1) confronting the challenges to teaching and learning in the classroom, (2) navigating precarious times as a domestic/ international graduate student, and (3) grappling with obstacles to conventional research activities and funding (i.e., use of secondary data). The goal of the roundtable is to discuss how the current federal administration is impacting our discipline and to exchange ideas on how to adapt to these novel circumstances while also maintaining institutional demands for research productivity and teaching excellence. The intention of this workshop is to address current challenges collectively and to work toward ensuring the sustainability of our discipline that is both mindful of its past, but proactive in shaping its future.

Organizer: Jada Benn Torres, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Kristine Joy Chua, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jada Benn Torres, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Monica Keith , Agustin Fuentes, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Sharon DeWitte, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Ulises Espinoza, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Kristine Joy Chua, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology

8625 AA Editorial Board Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 9:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 10:30 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

AA Editorial Board Meeting with a breakfast

8728 Environmental Injustice and Place Keeping Tour: Claiborne Corridor and Treme- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:00 AM **through** 11/22/2025 1:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This offsite event builds off of the Anthropology and Environment Society's successful 2024 Environmental Injustice and Place Keeping Walking Tour in Tampa, FL, in which we partnered with

Lena Young Green and the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association (THJCA) to experience the realities, injustices, and joys of life in Tampa Heights with members of the community. This year (2025) we are partnering with Amy Stelly and the Claiborne Corridor Alliance on the ground in the Treme/7th Ward neighborhood of NOLA. This event continues to expand both local community and anthropological partnerships to combat environmental injustice as the AAA meetings travel around the country.

This event will include a bus tour of the Claiborne Corridor from Treme to the highway, featuring local advocates and site experts like Amy Stelly, who will speak to area history, present injustices, and goals for the future. The bus tour will be followed by a lunch with additional speakers, community organizers, and advocates at the Treme Market Branch.

Please register for this event here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc35zLjQhDfp3yyCfKyuMBpuIT4701LRwDiqckls_I-JnvhQ/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=112190325499759260590

1901 Predatory Politics: The Wily Animal-Human Relationships of Hunting and Fishing, Part One—Sea

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Experiences of hunting and fishing across diverse cultural contexts have been central to the analysis of human environmental relationships in environmental anthropology. Hunting and fishing have been investigated as generative social spaces of place-making, environmental perception, and relationship formation. But these practices have also been critical sites of colonial and state interventions that aim to shape and regulate relationships between humans and their material environment. These efforts to regulate hunting and fishing-and the embodied relational practices that join the lives, and deaths, of humans and non-humans- also work to reshape the relational worlds of indigenous and socially marginalized communities in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Yet the complex socioecological life of hunting and fishing seems to consistently exceed, and often undermine, efforts of state control or regulation. These two linked panels explore ethnographic accounts of human relationships with animals that are cunning, wily, or tricky-relationships that challenge notions of human agency and that resist the bounded categories of colonial and postcolonial life. Part one explores unruly relationships in watery contexts, ranging from spectral forces in fishing worlds in Bangladesh, to vigorous tarpon in the Caribbean Sea, the relationship between ancestor spirits and marine prey in Indonesia's Savu Sea, and the networks that connect salmon, killer whales and humans in Southeast Alaska. In each of these contexts, panelists foreground the ways in which fishing and hunting in the sea creates human-nonhuman social assemblages that unsettle the boundaries of fundamental anthropological categories: the human, gender, race and citizenship, among others.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Melissa Johnson, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Patrick Gallagher, University of Texas at San Antonio

Chair: Melissa Johnson, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Presenter(s): Anabelle Sutor, Brown University, Department of Anthropology, Florence Durney, University of Oslo, Danielle Dinovelli-Lang, Carleton University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Michael Hathaway, Simon Fraser University

Presentation(s): A Predatory Politics of Serpentine Beings in Chittagong's Fishery Economy

Surrounding Bangladesh's 1971 independence, many members of the Hindu minority community grappled with the choice to flee or stay. In Chittagong—Bangladesh's major port city—Duhita, a woman from a Hindu fishing-caste community, describes how her family chose to stay because her mother was recovering from an attack by a serpentine nature spirit. I place this attack within a history of violent claims that serpentine more-than-human beings snakes, spectres, and a snake goddess—continue to make upon Duhita's family and community. Sea fishing communities of the Bay of Bengal work in a context where the unintended capture of venomous sea snakes is routine. Far at sea or on fish-drying islands without medical facilities, these attacks can be fatal. These fishing communities live around water bodies and as historically non-settled "out-caste" communities, have lived in places associated with wildness—where one would expect to find snakes. In this paper, I follow how a relationship to the spectral and divine non-human is framed by the experience of living and working in a coastal ecology with

venomous snakes. As these fishing communities become dispossessed from riverine and coastal land and work in the fishery—I explore how more-than-human beings make violent claims on this family and how these claims are part of a politics of land and work.

Presenter(s): Anabelle Sutor

Hunting in the Savu Sea: Relationality, Conservation and Struggle in a Marine Hunting Community.

Lamalera is a coastal community of about two thousand people gathered around a small, south-facing cove of Lembata island, looking into Indonesia's Savu Sea. It's also the last traditional marine hunting community in Indonesia and the community's cosmology and livelihood system is tied to hunting a diversity of large marine prey,

including rays and toothed whales, by hand, from small wooden boats. Because of this, Lamalera is also a site of long-term marine conservation conflict, international media fantasy, and a struggle over customary or traditional identity. Missionized in the 1800's by German Catholics, Lamalera is a wholly Catholic community, but it

remains committed to previous belief practices based on the veneration of ancestors and animal spirits. At its core, is the understanding that ancestors are responsible for bringing marine prey to

the waters off Lamalera's shores for crews to hunt, and for the community to share. Over the years, a series of regulatory interventions, by a

range of state and ngo bodies, have attempted to stop, or to limit, Lamaleran hunting. In this paper I explore how Lamalerans have resisted various attempts at control and underscore a fundamental misalignment between the community and most regulatory efforts: the central importance of maintained relationality, between humans and animals, between community members, and between the living and the dead.

Presenter(s): Florence Durney

Killer Whales and King Salmon: Political Paradoxes in North Pacific Fisheries Conservation

Tahlequah has another dead baby. We know this because she belongs to a pod of killer whales who live uniquely near dry land and its hordes of humans, and because she is again bearing the corpse around on her head, haunting surface dwellers with the bad news. The story makes headlines. The headlines demand a response. Her gesture is political. Indeed it has already complicated international politics, throwing a wrench into long standing but fragile agreements between the US and Canada over the management of Tahlequah's favorite, and increasingly scarce, food: king salmon. King (or Chinook) salmon were never easy to manage, even when Alaskan stocks were healthy enough to sustain fisheries in every major river. Stocks have plummeted in recent years; openings for the small commercial harvest in Southeast Alaska have shrunk to a few days a year. Yet this fishery has been targeted for legal action on behalf of Tahlequah and her hungry pod. This may be because it is seemingly the only piece of the vast web determining king salmon and killer whale health that can be affected by a court order—the State of Alaska can cancel the Southeast fishery while it cannot combat Russian fleets in the Bering Sea or the absorption of CO2 in seawater—or it may be because the time is ripe for another rift in US-Canada relations. This paper considers the possibilities and perils of human and nonhuman political action across increasingly unmanageable borders between political and ecological regimes.

Presenter(s): Danielle Dinovelli-Lang

Co-author(s): Karen E Hebert

Discussion

319 Society for Anthropology of Religion Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Ulil Amri, Creighton University, Ronald Lukens-Bull , Tierra McMahon, IE UNIVERSIDAD, Sophia Walters, University of British Columbia, Paul Melas, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Xiaoying Lin , Michael Amoroso, Occidental College

Presenter(s): Ulil Amri, Creighton University, Ronald Lukens-Bull, Tierra McMahon, IE UNIVERSIDAD, Sophia Walters, University of British Columbia, Paul Melas, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Xiaoying Lin, Michael Amoruso, Occidental College

Presentation(s): Can spirit be decolonial and neoliberal?

This study explores the complex role of nonhuman spirit from the past in shaping the decolonial and neoliberal transformations within a local pesantren (traditional religious educational institution) community in Indonesia today. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, it examines how spiritual practices (religious teachings), economic programs (goods and service trades), and environmental (such as renewable energy production) initiatives are mobilized in ways that both resist and align with development discourses. The pesantren, traditionally a site of Islamic learning and spiritual formation, has become a hybrid space where spiritual forces (and entities) intersect with entrepreneurial training and decolonial environmental actions. Rather than framing neoliberalism and decoloniality as mutually exclusive, this study highlights the entanglement of these forces in everyday life of community. Spirit-understood not merely as belief, but as embodied, affective force-is central to how the community navigates shifting power relations, moral economies, and environmental pressures. While community actors invoke spirituality to critique Western epistemologies and assert a decolonial move, they also use the same spiritual vocabulary to justify participation market driven initiatives. This presentation aims to reveal a nuanced development practice in which spiritual values, economic programs, and environmental actions mediate contradictions, open possibilities, and reshapes what development means in the local context.

Presenter(s): Ulil Amri

Ghosts of a Massacre: The Legacy of the 1965-66 Killings for an Indonesian Youth Movement

Banser is the paramilitary wing of Ansor, the young men's organization for Nahdlatul Ulama (Renaissance of the Scholars; NU). NU is the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, and because Indonesia is so large, the largest in the world. It has been long committed to Indonesia as a non-shariah state as well as multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation (Barton 2002, Bush 2009). Nahdlatul Ulama's young men's organization Ansor, seeks to train non-radical Muslim leaders with a range of expertise and foci. Ansor has a sub-organization called Banser which regularly guards Christian churches, liberal Muslims, and businesses from being targeted by extremists like the Islamic Defenders Front. If the present, or even recent, history of Banser and Ansor is that of protecting religious minorities and pluralism, this has not always been the case. Ansor/Banser was an important auxiliary force in the Revolution (1945-1949) and in the 1965-1966 national bloodletting that left 500,000 alleged communists dead. It is even more telling and interesting if we explore the ways in which the newer socially progressive actions are based on conservative, traditional understandings of Islam and not liberal or progressive religious understandings. It is in the content we will use an analysis of how the perpetrators of historical violence negotiate their current role in society as defenders of social justice and diversity.

Presenter(s): Ronald Lukens-Bull

Haunted by (His) Choice: Spectral Rejection and Disguise in a Moroccan Sacrifice Forsaken

This paper presents the case of Professor Zayd, who has forsaken the act of (sheep) sacrifice for the annual Muslim Feast of Sacrifice, Eid al-Adha, yet is unable to communicate his choice publicly with his Moroccan peers in the Casablanca region. Haunted by a specter of extreme social rejection that becomes especially acute in the annual lead-up to the event, this paper elaborates the struggles Zayd faces to conceal his choice each year in the decade since he stopped sacrificing as well as the logics he privately draws on to uphold such a locally unpopular position. In doing so, I demonstrate how the choice to not sacrifice for this event is a loaded one, under-acknowledged in the sacrifice literature, and--given expectations for male heads of household to sacrifice--experienced viscerally and painfully. Introducing spectral rejection as a generative force, both 'projected' and 'real', this paper explores its role in Zayd's experience of not sacrificing, where the risk of exposure involves innovative means of disguising such a choice. It also explores how spectral rejection limits competing logics--especially those that draw on ideas of development, progress, and science--in the celebration of this event. This work contributes to the anthropologies of sacrifice, religion, and Islam, and draws on recent work on publics and future-making.

Presenter(s): Tierra McMahon

K'in Altsilal: Tojol-ab'al Mayan Day of the Dead

The Tojol-ab'al Mayan festivity of k'in altsilal is often translated into Spanish as Todos Santos or All Saints' Day. Also known in Tojol-ab'al as k'in santo, this festivity marks the annual return of ancestors' souls to be venerated and celebrated by the living. This paper provides a brief explanation of this celebration in two different communities and details some of the changes elders in these communities have noted over the years. While k'in altsilal shares many traditions with mestizo Day of the Dead celebrations in wider Mexican society, like the preparation of altars, offerings, and visiting cemeteries, its historical and current manifestations exhibit notable differences. These practices include the ceremonial sacrifice of chickens, fireworks, and the collective purchase of a cow to divide up among families to prepare a traditional beef stew. The Tojol-ab'al conceptualization of altsil (soul), central to this celebration, also differs significantly from mestizo understanding and is reflected in both philosophy and language. Elders note that, in parallel with social changes in the community, k'in altsilal festivities have shifted over the last century and certain traditions are no longer practiced with the same vigor, despite increased access to economic resources. However, k'in altsilal remains an important religious event in Tojol-ab'al communities and this paper will also discuss youth perspectives on how it continues to be celebrated and what young community members envision for its future.

Presenter(s): Sophia Walters

Mediated Connections Across A Gender Restrictive Border: The Case of Mount Athos, Greece

The Orthodox Christian monastic community of Mount Athos, Greece was established more than one thousand years ago, that it may serve as a space of withdrawal and renunciation for male monastics. To this day, the community's twenty monasteries pursue ascetic gender isolation by maintaining a rigid prohibition against 'women' entering Mount Athos' peninsular territory. This prohibition is legitimized by social convention and by the Greek constitution (Article 105), and enforced by a physical border. Based on eighteen months of ethnographic research on Mount Athos, this paper examines gender and gender relations in the context of contemporary Athonite monasticism and spirituality in Greece. Lying at the intersection of the anthropology of religion and gender studies, it specifically illustrates the ways in which the community's monastic proscriptions and border do not so much foreclose, but rather mediate, connections between male monks on Mount Athos and devout women in Greece. It argues that these mediated connections are in turn facilitated by both the devotion and labor of women and the religious vocation of male monastics.

The monasteries of Mount Athos have undergone an important demographic, economic and infrastructural revival over the past sixty years. In this period, the community has hosted hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and wage workers, welcomed reporters, researchers and writers, and established vibrant dependency parishes in Greek urban centers. Each of these developments broadened Mount Athos' relational network and brought monks into increased contact with groups that have been historically understood as belonging to a 'world' that exists outside the boundaries of monastic exile. For most of these groups (pilgrims, workers, researchers) contact came as a result of the male publics' increased access to the Athonite territory. On the other hand, for women, it was the consequence of the increased mobility of monks outside the peninsula and the actions of particular devout Orthodox women who facilitated it.

For monks on Mount Athos, inter-gender relations take place most commonly in the dependency parishes of their monasteries. My research in the community focused on one such parish in a working class neighborhood of Athens that has been functioning since 2016. The property on which the parish church stands, was donated to the Athonite monastery of St. Demetrios by a woman, Eleni, who had known its Abbot for several decades. The consequence of this votive act has been to bring the monastic brotherhood of St. Demetrios-which sends a different priest-monk to the dependency every week-closer to the devout Orthodox Christians of Athens. It has thus provided women and monks in particular, the opportunity to meet, form relationships, co-labor and inflect each other's religious lives. Importantly, the dependency parish exists and functions uniquely in relation to monastic withdrawal,

Presenter(s): Paul Melas

Specters of Resistance: Ghostly Narratives in Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives

This paper explores the ghostly narratives in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), arguing that the spectral figures function as a form of resistance against authoritarianism, historical amnesia, and cultural erasure in Thailand. Drawing on theories from S. Brent Plate's *Religion and Film*, Birgit Meyer's *Religious Sensations*, and Donovan Schaefer's *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power*, the analysis examines how

the film's portrayal of ghosts critiques state violence, marginalization, and the loss of rural identity. The ghostly narrative, rooted in Thai animism and Buddhist cosmology, disrupts linear temporality and spatial boundaries, creating a liminal space where past traumas and suppressed histories resurface.

Methodologically, the paper employs close textual analysis of the film's cinematography, sound design, *mise-en-scène*, and narrative structure to demonstrate how Apichatpong crafts a haunted atmosphere that challenges dominant historical narratives. The study highlights the film's use of lighting techniques, such as the "day for night" effect, and its immersive soundscapes to evoke a multi-sensory engagement with memory and affect. By juxtaposing surreal elements with documentary-like realism, the film resists exoticized representations of Thai culture and instead foregrounds the marginalized voices of Northern Thai villages.

The thesis posits that the ghosts in *Uncle Boonmee* symbolize the unresolved traumas of Thailand's political past, particularly the anti-communist purges and military repression in the Isaan region. The jungle, as a key setting, becomes a site of resistance and remembrance, where human and non-human entities coexist, challenging anthropocentric hierarchies. The film's ritualistic structure, informed by Buddhist concepts of reincarnation and karma, transforms the cinematic experience into a sacred act of witnessing. Through its ghostly narrative, *Uncle Boonmee* not only resists state-enforced silence but also reasserts the agency of the oppressed, offering a counter-memory to official histories. Ultimately, the paper contends that Apichatpong's film transcends traditional storytelling to create a space where the spectral and the real converge, inviting viewers to confront the lingering specters of violence and displacement in contemporary Thailand.

Presenter(s): Xiaoying Lin

The Afflicted City: Haunting and Devotion in São Paulo, Brazil

São Paulo is a city of ghosts. So is every city; after all, "haunted places are the only ones people can live in" (Certeau, 1988). Scholars sometimes speak of haunting as something that happens to nations and ages—the New World as haunted by the ghosts of colonialism, or late capitalism as haunted by its "lost futures" (Fisher, 2014). But the ghost is also an object of experience. What makes a ghost powerful is its immediacy, the fact that "it demands its due" (Gordon, 1997). More than just metaphor, the revenant dead bring us down to earth.

This talk draws on twenty-six months of fieldwork carried out over a decade in São Paulo, this flash talk explores a popular Catholic devotion to the souls of the suffering dead (known in Portuguese as *devolução às almas* or *culto das almas*). Today, this centuries-old practice of purgatorial devotion thrives at sites of haunting and erasure, where past social violence has been obscured through successive waves of urban development.

This talk focuses on two of São Paulo's most popular sites for the devotion to souls: the Chapel of Our Lady of the Afflicted and the Church of the Holy Cross of the Souls of the Hanged. These Catholic churches, situated down the street from one another, index the neighborhood's history as a site of social and physical death. Once known as the Hanging Field, this neighborhood was

rechristened Liberdade (Liberty or Freedom) in the late nineteenth century and transformed into a "Japanese" ethnic enclave in the 1970s. But when human remains from an old paupers' cemetery were discovered in a lot adjacent to the Chapel of the Afflicted in 2018, an activist movement emerged to memorialize the site.

In this talk, I suggest we can do social theory without being squeamish about the supernatural. Social analysis and spectral phenomenology are hardly at odds. If anything, São Paulo's ghosts suggest one way that otherwise abstract social forces can impinge upon lived experience. In the case of the devotion to souls, I argue, the practice connects devotees' personal afflictions with the memory of social violence in São Paulo. It points to the times and places where São Paulo's frenetic process of modernization haunts the city. And it shows how the suffering dead have motivated devotees and activists to advocate for official recognition of historical injustice-especially, but not exclusively, as related to slavery and its afterlives-through interventions in São Paulo's built landscape.

Presenter(s): Michael Amoruso

8376 "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday": New Orleans Brass Bands, Grief Work, and the Afterlives of Sound

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

New Orleans knows how to process death, how to grieve communally. When a beloved community member transitions, it's not long before brass band musicians take to the streets to celebrate their lives and turn their absence into a resounding presence. T-shirt shops work quickly to design and print shirts and life-sized cardboard cutouts that visibly honor the dead. Musicians make calls to check in on each other and coordinate a sonic response to grief. From the first thuds of a bass drum at a jazz funeral, brass bands are integral in choreographing the mourning process. The musicians who channel this communal grief into sound often harbor complicated feelings about these gigs. Like any other gig, a jazz funeral is a money-maker, but it is one where business is conducted in a moment of intense vulnerability for grieving families and where musicians must navigate challenging moral and ethical terrain in mounting a collective response. Through conversation with brass band musicians who work in the Stooges Brass Band, Rebirth Brass Band, Big 6 Brass Band, and Free Agents Brass Band, this roundtable attends to (1) the ethical challenges of profiting from loss and (2) the role of sound in collectively responding to death.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Kyle DeCoste, Tulane University

Presenter(s): Ellis Joseph , Walter Ramsey , Clifton Smith , Kyle DeCoste, Tulane University

Discussant: Kyle DeCoste, Tulane University

534 Combined Flash Session #12

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Leianna Kunz, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Linfei Yi, University of Arizona, Lauren Georgiana Koutlias, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Anthropology, SREEMOYEE PAUL, Rutgers University, Carrie Zaremba, Asha Devi, Rutgers University, Yuan Gu, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Leianna Kunz, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Linfei Yi, University of Arizona, Lauren Georgiana Koutlias, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Anthropology, SREEMOYEE PAUL, Rutgers University, Carrie Zaremba, Asha Devi, Rutgers University, Yuan Gu, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Chinese American Transnational Adoptees: Unveiling Our Stories and Experiences

In this multimodal ethnographic research, I am bringing the voices of Chinese American adoptees to the center of knowledge production-first, by my own positionality as a Chinese American adoptee myself, and second, through feminist collaborative ethnographic research methods. Historically, global North academia remains overshadowed by Eurocentric knowledge production, praxis, and methodologies. In these spaces, the stories and experiences of people who speak from the margins, such as Chinese American adoptees are intentionally erased. My research project is a multimodal ethnography of transnational adoptions with a focus on adoptees from China that have been raised in the United States as Chinese Americans. In addition to contributing to ethnographic studies of transnational adoption at large, my research will also have a public scholarship component in that it will provide a platform for Chinese American adoptees to share our unfiltered adoption experiences, combat the existing harmful stigmas that have been assigned to adoption and adoptees in the United States, and challenge past and existing policies surrounding adoption and social services. I am conducting ethnographic research to collect and record these rare and crucial adoptee experiences by engaging in a mix of formal and informal collaborative interviews with 10 Chinese American adoptees as well as surveying a larger sample of adoptees on social media platforms. Through the practice of multimodal approaches, I am producing an experimental ethnographic film to expand my storytelling of the transnational Chinese American adoptee experience.

Presenter(s): Leianna Kunz

Claiming Chineseness in the Borderlands: Sense of Belonging within the Youth Lion Dance Troupe

The lion dance, originated in China, is an art form performed by two individuals who synchronize their movements to imitate those of lions. The lion dance culture was carried by migrating Chinese groups to various countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and North America, during their emigration (Walden 2019; Austin, Penney, and McGuire 2017; Feltham 2010; Avaunt 2022). The lion dance performance serves as a symbol of global Chinese diaspora identity (Feltham 2007). This

project analyzes the Chinese lion dance performed by Chinese American adolescents in Tucson, drawing on the literatures of Chineseness within the Chinese diaspora and border studies. Using data gathered from my fieldwork, I examine how young performers conceptualize their Chineseness through participation in lion dance. This paper highlights the importance of cultural connections for Chinese American youth residing in multicultural borderlands. This study aims to document cultural practices that enhance ethnic identity and pride, contributing to the existing literature on the Chinese diaspora.

Presenter(s): Linfei Yi

Cultural Genocide and the Politics of Forgetting: Reclaiming Specters of Armenian and Greek Histories in Türkiye

Armenians and Greeks, ancient and once prominent communities integral to the multicultural fabric of the former Ottoman Empire, have left a haunting imprint on the landscapes of contemporary Türkiye. Following their violent expulsion and genocide by the Ottoman state between 1913 and 1923, villages and sacred spaces were left vacant only to be appropriated and reconfigured under new ideological mandates. State-curated tourism narratives now condition visitors of these spaces to prioritize exoticized consumption of the vanished 'Other' rather than an ethical engagement with traumatic histories. This state-sanctioned systematic erasure of Armenian and Greek heritage in the modern nation state of Türkiye epitomizes cultural genocide and extends historical violence into the present through institutionalized forgetting.

Derrida's concept of hauntology illuminates these landscapes and sites as spaces of absent-presence, where people are gone but their traces persist. The concept of dark tourism has been used to refer to sites that memorialize and acknowledge genocidal violence. However, Türkiye's denialism creates voids where historical violence is actively ignored. We documented sacred sites stripped of ethno-religious symbols and iconography, villages rebranded as "ancient ruins" or "symbols of peace," and the looting and appropriation of architecture and artifacts as "Ottoman," which exemplify Lemkin's vandalism, the "second act" of genocide.

Although appropriated by the Turkish state, these sites are permeated by spectral traces that demand us to bear witness; the people's absent-presence defies state narratives, asserting a counter-memory that resists institutionalized forgetting. Counter-memorialization efforts reclaim these spectral traces through digital counter-archives, grassroots preservation campaigns, and subversive pilgrimages, all of which promote a more ethical witnessing of history. By addressing Armenian and Greek erasure in tandem, this work not only challenges their historical separation but also exposes the ongoing process of cultural genocide in Türkiye.

Presenter(s): Lauren Georgiana Koutlias

Co-author(s): Larra Diboyan

Grief in Limbo: The Haunting Absence of Ritual and Closure in COVID-19 Deaths in Kolkata, India

My paper focuses on the haunting aftermath of the COVID-19 deaths in India, particularly Kolkata, the pandemic's epicenter in the state of West Bengal. In Kolkata, the COVID-19-infected dead bodies, irrespective of religion or caste, were wrapped up in plastic and non-ritually disposed of by the state in landfills, disrupting both ritual practices and the closure typically afforded to the dead. As a then Kolkata resident, I witnessed the media circulate images of these piled-up bodies in trash bags, yet whether these bodies were cremated or buried was left to the assumptions of the public. Moreover, families of the deceased were denied the right to identify their loved ones, leading to a haunting ambiguity about whether a person was truly dead or still lost in limbo. In many cases, families were forced to wait months for death certificates, leaving them in a perpetual state of grief without closure, unsure whether their mourning was legitimate or premature.

Focusing on Hindu and Muslim populations that are majoritarian in Bengal, this paper explores how these non-ritualized deaths have become spectral presences that haunt the living. I ask, in situations like epidemics or pandemics, when there is no proper closure about the deaths and when bodies end up in wastelands, how do the families and the larger communities to which the dead(s) belonged perceive and grieve the loss? How do they symbolize the exclusionary rites on the inanimate bodies? In India, which still practices caste-based and religion-based untouchability, how is the mixing of bodies in the garbage pile seen by the respective religious communities? Through in-depth interviews conducted over five months in the summer of 2024 with Hindu and Muslim individuals who lost loved ones to COVID-19, this paper explores how the absence of customary rites has reshaped the way the afterlives of the deceased are imagined and memorialized. In doing so, I offer new insights into how grief is redefined and experienced in the wake of societal ruptures, highlighting the enduring impact of crises on collective memory and mourning practices.

Presenter(s): SREEMOYEE PAUL

Re-inscribing Heritage on the Mojave Road: Motorized Backcountry Exploration in the California Desert

This thesis examines how overlanding - motorized backcountry exploration in off-road vehicles - functions as a mode of settler heritage-making on the Mojave Road, a 130-mile trail traversing the California desert. Through ethnographic fieldwork with members of the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association (MDHCA) and participation in the annual Mojave Road Rendezvous, I analyze how overlanding re-inscribes settler colonial narratives onto desert geographies while engaging with military and recreational imaginaries of the Western frontier. Drawing on frameworks from settler colonial studies, cultural geography, and anthropology, I argue that overlanding contributes to what scholars term "settler amnesia" - the selective forgetting of Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and resistance - by romanticizing historical exploration and obscuring the region's colonial past and ongoing dispossession.

I trace the trail's transformation from Indigenous footpath to wagon route, military road, and now recreational site, revealing how heritage narratives mediate contemporary relationships to land, history, and identity. Overlanders reproduce cultural capital through slow travel, environmentalist

distinction, and vehicle preference, while invoking idioms of authenticity, endurance, and rugged individualism. These practices are deeply entangled with the militarized and infrastructural history of the desert - a landscape shaped by World War II training sites, Cold War testing grounds, and postwar recreational development.

Through a methodology of patchwork ethnography, I explore how overlanders perceive themselves as heirs to the frontier ethos, drawing on settler nostalgia and environmental stewardship discourses. Yet these narratives often align with exclusionary conservation ideologies that marginalize Indigenous land relations and uphold settler territorial claims under the guise of preservation. I foreground how the Mojave Road's popularization reproduces colonial place-naming practices and materializes through rock cairns, guidebooks, interpretive signage, and other mechanisms that privilege settler histories. This thesis ultimately challenges dominant narratives of outdoor recreation and conservation as neutral or apolitical, and calls for deeper critical engagement with how mobility, infrastructure, and leisure reinforce systems of power, militarization, and Indigenous erasure in public lands and protected areas. By interrogating the cultural politics of overlanding, this work exposes how settler cultural memory is enacted and sustained through seemingly benign acts of travel and preservation.

Presenter(s): Carrie Zaremba

Resisting Specters: Resistance against Modernity and Developmentalism in Assam

In recent years, Assam in India's northeast has experienced a massive saffron wave, bringing in the promises of a new India. This promise of development also created a category of marginalization that furthered the historical oppression of certain social groups, particularly the Adivasi/Indigenous communities inhabiting resource frontiers, and subsumes the Adivasi movements of resistance and change, overshadowing efforts that were already underway. However, the Adivasi/Indigenous youth of Assam have adopted different modalities to resist exclusionary state policies of developmentalism and modernity amid the rise of Hindu nationalism and its saffron wave that poses a threat to their Adivasi identity, religion, and culture. Hence, through the student led organizations, the youth are resisting the ghost of modernity, colonialism, and developmentalism. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic research over the course of three years in the Udalguri district of Assam (India), this paper explores how the Adivasi youth are challenging the ghosts of modernity and developmentalism and asserting their Adivasi identity through the integration of symbolism and semiotics function in political movements to disseminate knowledge about their communities and movement. This paper unpacks the ghosts in the ethnographic context providing an alternative mode of communication, resisting the normative narrative of the Adivasi communities rooted in a deficit-based rhetoric. By doing so, the paper challenges the normative epistemologies used to understand the marginalized communities in the periphery bringing in the stories of resistance from borders and frontiers.

Presenter(s): Asha Devi

When Incarceration Becomes Entertainment: A Reflection on Prison-Themed Leisure Spaces

This project examines how prison experience is repackaged as leisure, marketed either as "educational" or straight-up entertainment. My preliminary findings draw on first-hand visits to a few sites: the Alcatraz prison-themed bar in London; two former U.S. prisons now operating as "museums" (Alcatraz in San Francisco and Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia); and several prison-break escape rooms. Each site sells its own "prison experience" as leisure: Alcatraz puts visitors in orange jumpsuits with cocktails in mock cells; Eastern State Penitentiary runs haunted night tours every Halloween; escape rooms turn jailbreak into a timed game. Even attractions that claim to "raise awareness" of mass incarceration rely on haunted tours, souvenir photos, and gift shops to keep visitors engaged.

This study explores the following questions: Why is prison considered an acceptable and profitable theme for leisure? What does it mean when real suffering becomes part of an entertainment experience? Using a mix of personal observation, brief visitor interviews, and analysis of promotional materials, I argue that both the "educational" and straight-up entertainment sites soften the cruelty of incarceration and help normalize it. By turning punishment into a product, these venues encourage the public to consume, and ultimately overlook, the harsh realities of the carceral state.

Presenter(s): Yuan Gu

522 Combined Flash Session #8

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Lorena La Fortezza , Malthe Sebastian Rye Thomsen , Katarzyna Górka , Florian Zhang , Gabi Huff , Mustafa Baqai , Rea Antoniou , Ivana Polonijo

Presenter(s): Lorena La Fortezza, Malthe Sebastian Rye Thomsen, Katarzyna Górka, Florian Zhang, Gabi Huff, Mustafa Baqai, Rea Antoniou, Ivana Polonijo

Presentation(s): Embodied Hauntings: Colonial Ghosts, Urban Exclusion, and the Defiant Presence of Peripheral Youth in a City of Northern Italy.

To be a young offender in a major city of Northern Italy means to possess an intimate knowledge of the socio-economic and symbolic geography that dictates where one is allowed to move-and where the rest of the city prefers to exclude and confine.

The streets, squares, and parks these youth inhabit are part of a «compartmentalized world» (Fanon 1961: 7), where they learn early on which spaces are permitted and which must be internalized, even devoured. In the peripheries, daily life feels like home: time is spent with friends in small parks, smoking on benches, navigating concrete alleys and polluted parking lots-every wall, shop, and street corner is intimately known. This fractured fragment of the city has its own border: not impenetrable, but clearly drawn. Those defined as «excluded» are in fact included in the space designed precisely for them (Benasayag & Del Rey 2008: 182). On that threshold, a complex

relationship forms with the city center-a treasure island (Taussig, 2005) - the object of a «gaze of lust» (Fanon, 1961: 7). These youth know how to cross into its gray zones, often through inventive means. The city center is where their gaze reaches out, seeking what is desired but withheld: a place of expectations and conquest, where they imagine a stolen future.

To seize these central spaces-by making noise, breaking rules, disturbing indifferent passersby-is an attempt to inscribe a suspended presence, to reclaim the meanings on which exclusion rests.

Drawing from the experiences of four adolescents who participated in my fieldwork between 2022 and 2024, I invite my colleagues to reflect on the colonial hauntings that surface in the bodies, gestures, language, clothing, and music of so-called second, third, and fourth generations in Europe, resonating with youth cultures in the U.S.

If violence is the mark most visibly etched into the lives of youth in the margins, reading its postcolonial messages is a task that implicates us both as anthropologists and as citizens.

These youth express contradictory political claims and lay bare the crises of contemporary democracies: dis-integration, institutional and police violence, the flow of wealth and consumer goods, external and internal wars, substance use, and the failure of care services.

These "barbarians" of the peripheries, in Louisa Yousfi's sense, terrify and invade spaces from which they are systematically excluded-exposing the cruelty at the heart of the so-called civilization. Barbarism becomes a longing for what never was: the haunting question of what might have been, had colonialism not happened. To remain barbarian is to resist the Western Empire and its poisoned promises of integration: to resist becoming like the White Man. In the face of threats to existence, history, and the body, young offenders become vessel and voice of a rage that defies labels and constraints. They offer a privileged perspective on a world in decline - one they traverse with fierce clarity.

Presenter(s): Lorena La Fortezza

Haunting Repetitions: Dating Fatigue and the Ghosts in the Dating Lives of Young Danish Adults

In recent years, dating apps have reshaped how people meet, communicate, and imagine romantic futures across diverse contexts (Broeker & Spector 2024; Rye Thomsen & Poder 2022). Based on 15 months of digital and in-person ethnographic fieldwork in Denmark, this presentation examines how users navigate repetitive cycles of hopeful anticipation, rejection and disappointment, and withdrawal - with particular attention to the experience of repeated disappointments. For the male participants, repetitions most often occur when others "ghost" them - either by suddenly stopping communication or deleting them - typically after exchanging 15–20 messages or on the day of a planned date. For the female interlocutors, it most often happens the day after having sex, or when their male partner suddenly withdraws after having shown strong interest and even imagined a shared future together after dating for a couple of months.

Informed by Byron Good et al.'s (2022) article "The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the Emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology" and Tine Gammeltoft's (2013) theorization in

"Potentiality and human temporality: haunting futures in Vietnamese pregnancy care", I develop the concept of haunting repetitions. Individuals who disappear or disengage do not simply vanish - they become spectral presences, not easily forgotten, but carried forward as reminders of past rejection and future uncertainty. These affective residues shape users' expectations and interpretations of new encounters, they question their desirability and self-worth, and doubt the possibility of future relationships and love. I argue that these haunting repetitions contribute to what has been termed dating fatigue (Degen & Kleeberg-Niepage 2025), which I understand as a mooded background (Throop 2024) characterized by exhaustion, ambivalence, and disillusionment that pervades contemporary dating culture. Further, acts such as ghosting or sudden withdrawal are not merely individual choices but are embedded in a broader techno-social system that normalizes emotional disposability and operates as a haunted infrastructure - where the past continually informs the present and shapes users' orientation toward the future.

This presentation offers two contributions: First, it contributes to an anthropological hauntology (Good et al. 2022) by illustrating how haunting is not only central in postcolonial or historical contexts, but also in the very different setting of Western, everyday digital life, where absence, loss, and unfulfilled possibility become ghostly forces in the pursuit of romantic love. Second, it adds to anthropological debates on technology and media studies discussions by showing in ethnographic detail how dating app users are entangled in cycles of repetition and emotional uncertainty, thereby advancing our understanding of the contemporary dating experience.

Presenter(s): Malthe Sebastian Rye Thomsen

Health in Decline: The Xavante Struggle Against Socioeconomic and Cultural Impacts. Systematic Review.

From a biocultural perspective, health is shaped not only by biomedical factors but also by social, cultural, political, and economic forces. In Indigenous contexts, health is a particularly vulnerable aspect, influenced by external socioeconomic and cultural changes often imposed by national society. The Xavante Indigenous community, located in the Central-Western region of Brazil, is one of the most extensively studied groups in the country regarding health. Despite a rich body of literature, comprehensive studies tracing the historical evolution of their health status through bibliographic analysis are notably absent. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the historical transformation of Xavante health, positioning it within the broader discourse of Indigenous health as a public health concern, while applying a decolonial perspective. I conducted a systematic bibliographic analysis to trace the transformation of health of the Xavante. A total of 109 academic publications meeting the inclusion criteria were identified. The analysis revealed sustained scholarly interest in Xavante health, and a comparative examination of the earliest and most recent studies highlighted a marked decline in Xavante health over time. Despite constant shifts in the administrative frameworks governing Indigenous healthcare in Brazil that resulted in the reduction in mortality rates and increased hospital service utilization, the overall health of the Xavante has deteriorated significantly. I critically analyse this trend through a decolonial lens, highlighting the limitations of existing health policies and interventions. I argue that the prevailing

colonial approach to healthcare, compounded by the denial of culturally appropriate services, represents a clear violation of human rights. It underscores the impact of social determinants such as historical trauma, cultural disruption, and systemic inequality on the health outcomes of this community.

Presenter(s): Katarzyna Górka

Psycho-Pedagogical Governance in Chinese Colleges: Its Origin, Impossibility and Success

Increasing scholarships in psychiatric anthropology have engaged with the popularization of psychological knowledge, interventions, and management in China, termed as "psycho-boom" (xinli re) in recent years, among which some have considered the use of psychology as governance means to achieve political projects, largely borrowing the theoretical vocabulary from scholarships on neoliberal subjectification through psychologization in the West. Its entanglements in China with Confucian and Maoist legacies and affinity with political-ideological education, however, are less noticed. This paper, based on in-depth interviews with current college students in Shanghai and historical tracing of the policies of psychological interference with students, argues that the management and engineering of the Chinese students' inner worlds could be best described as "psycho-pedagogical governance," a term borrowing from the historian Greg Eghigian's discussion of forensic psychology in East Germany (2004). Psychological management in Chinese colleges often concerns less psychology as a specialized set of knowledge and practices than the Confucian ideal of pedagogy as making personhood and Maoist engineering of the socialist new person, which holds the same aim with political-ideological education and is historically and practically mixed with it. I will also examine the tensions within such governance, especially arising after the Chinese "psycho-boom" in the 2010s and the mental health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic, which rendered the aim of remaking the new person practically impossible and the therapeutics inefficient. Despite such ineffectiveness, however, it succeeds through its specific institutional arrangements in producing unresponsiveness from students and maintaining the State's monopoly in discursive space.

Presenter(s): Florian Zhang

Shifting Crises: College Mental Health and Where We Go from Here

The mental health of college students is an area of growing concern in higher education. Studies have documented a rising burden of mental illness among college students at universities in the U.S. with the 2010s marking the beginning of an 'college mental health crisis' that has continued into the present. Where did the 2010 mental health 'crisis' come from? Or rather, how did college mental health trends discursively move into the 'crisis' category? Certainly, the college mental health crisis is epiphenomenal to other political, economic, and social crises-crises that impact students' general well-being, emotions, capacity to care, and experiences in the world. I draw on archival analysis and preliminary fieldwork to discuss the coalescing crises that characterize contemporary student experiences. I offer a reflection on how we might approach the college mental health 'crisis' and move beyond care practices that localize distress as an individual

psychosocial affliction. In doing so, I underscore the importance of expansive understandings of crisis, distress, and their solutions.

Presenter(s): Gabi Huff

Spectral Belongings: Hauntings, Fragmentation, and Fugitivity within the Mad Transfeminine Death World

In the aftermath of empire, the transfeminine bodymind emerges as a haunted, ruptured archive, living within death worlds shaped by colonial, carceral, and biomedical violences. This paper traces how crip/mad/transfeminine hauntings materialize not only as residues of imperial violence but as insurgent practices of survival and world-making.

Drawing from crip of color critique, mad methodology, and decolonial embodiment, I theorize how transfeminine existence navigates fragmentation, opacity, and rupture as embodied archives of the colonial wound. Working through autoethnographic fragments, graphic counter-archives, and selfie aesthetics, I argue that the transfeminine body, rendered spectral by regimes of erasure and hypervisibility, refuses colonial logics of legibility and cure.

Haunting, in this context, is not a metaphor but a lived reality: an archive of survival stitched through broken narratives and non-linear temporalities. Building on trans necropolitics and desire-based frameworks (Tuck), I explore how trans/crip/mad bodyminds move beyond damage-centered narratives by claiming presence in rupture, forging spaces where alternative futures can be imagined.

Rather than framing home as a stable site of belonging, I theorize home as a hauntological trace, a spectral geography of memory, violence, and survival. Madness and disability are not objects of cure but insurgent epistemologies that dismantle colonial infrastructures of knowledge and care. The refusal to be healed or contained becomes a critical strategy against the biomedical and carceral technologies that seek to erase racialized, queer, and disabled life.

Through crip technoscience and abolitionist desire patchworks, I propose that transfeminine spectralities hold insurgent potentials for building fragmented, relational, and non-normative worlds. Haunting thus emerges as a form of political fidelity to lives lost and lives yet to be imagined - a way of tending to colonial wounds without seeking closure, and of inhabiting the ruins of empire to dream beyond its relentless grip.

This work insists that survival, rupture, and spectrality are not signs of brokenness but forms of radical endurance. Against the fantasy of normative healing, I center crip/trans/mad bodyminds as bearers of abolitionist, decolonial futures.

Presenter(s): Mustafa Baqai

Title: Technology, Loneliness, and the Haunting of Human Connection

This paper explores the subtle yet powerful ways digital technologies permeate young people's social worlds, shaping their experiences of connection, selfhood, and loneliness. Based on

ethnographic research with students at Northern Arizona University (ages 18-24), we examine how the presence of technology seeps into embodied relational life alters how intimacy is felt. Social media platforms and technology in the broader sense (including devices such as headphones) leave their imprint not just within media ecologies, but in the atmosphere of non-digital encounters even in the absence of technology. Technology here acts as a spectral force, both enabling and stranding, haunting the subjectivities and spaces between young individuals. These "ghost traces" of digital infrastructures call for phenomenological attention to how young individuals live, sense, and resist the often-invisible architectures that contour their relationships. This approach invites a reimagining of ethnographic attunement to include invisible and ambient loneliness.

Presenter(s): Rea Antoniou

Co-author(s): Michelle Parsons

Unhaunting the Self: Autoethnographic Rituals for Reclaiming Identity from the Wounded Past

We are all haunted. By fragments of former selves. By inherited shame. By the silences that shaped our becoming. In anthropology's 2025 invitation to explore Ghosts, this paper responds with a method: autoethnographic ritual, a healing practice and ethnographic tool for engaging what we can call the Wounded Self (Paul & Chopich 1998) or Protective Personality (Morter 2019).

From van Gennep's rites of passage (1909–2019 reprint) to Turner's liminality (1969), from Csordas's embodiment (1994) to Luhmann's sensory spirituality (2012), anthropologists have long mapped ritual as a site of transformation. My work continues that lineage, but shifts the gaze inward. Here, ritual is not an object of study—it is a methodology of un-haunting. A way to meet the internal ghosts that linger: unprocessed grief, cultural rupture, self-abandonment, and the inherited ache of dislocation.

Rooted in applied psychological anthropology and informed by somatic, narrative, and spiritual epistemologies, I engage with autoethnographic rituals as self-designed, embodied practices that bridge personal narrative with cultural inquiry. They invite the practitioner to engage memory, sensation, and meaning—not just intellectually, but ritually—through symbolic action and reflective awareness. In this frame, haunting is not pathology, but a call toward integration.

This paper (and related presentation) draws from my own journey as an immigrant woman, anthropologist, and practitioner. I outline four mytho-psychological stages-symbolic phases of identity evolution rooted in both lived experience and collective story:

- 1) Ancestral Bedrock - the quiet force of inherited values, silences, and unresolved legacy
- 2) The Fracture - rupture from homeland, language, safety, or sense of belonging
- 3) Terra Incognita - the liminal space of becoming, uncertainty, and grief
- 4) The New Topography - emergence of the Soulful Self, marked by voice, agency, and coherence

Although time will not allow for a full sacred theater enactment, I will briefly reference two original ritual technologies developed by Courageous Being, the center I founded: the Inner Bonding® Guided Journal and Courage Cards. The Journal supports emotional integration through a six-step framework designed by Paul and Chopich, while the Cards act as intuitive tools for symbolic engagement, emotional inquiry, and ancestral reconnection.

Through these tools-and the broader lens of autoethnographic ritual-this paper and related presentation position healing as both ontological and ethnographic: a site where theory meets embodiment, and where ritual becomes a conduit for re-membling the self. As anthropology opens to the immaterial, the haunted, and the embodied, we are invited not only to study transformation-but to undergo it.

Presenter(s): Ivana Polonijo

513 Society for Economic Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Martin Gubsch , Heidi Cooke, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Erik Forman , Camilla Carabini , Wesam Hassan, The London School of Economics and Politics, Christian WALTER , Dejana Kostic

Presenter(s): Martin Gubsch, Heidi Cooke, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Erik Forman, Camilla Carabini, Wesam Hassan, The London School of Economics and Politics, Christian WALTER, Dejana Kostic

Presentation(s): Between ecology, spirituality and economy: Ontological Conflicts and the Economic Imaginaries of Green Transformation onomy

This paper looks into ontological conflicts in the context of Colombia's green energy transition, with a focus on wind park developments in the Wayuu territory of La Guajira. It argues that conflicts emerging around energy infrastructure projects are not reducible to disagreements over environmental impacts or failed participation processes, but are results of deeper ontological contradictions-specifically, conflicting economic imaginaries. Building on recent debates in political ontology and political ecology, this paper proposes to treat economic reasoning itself as an ontological category, thereby shifting the analysis of socio-ecological conflict from a dispute over means to a confrontation between divergent worlds.

The fieldwork traces how different actors-Wayuu community leaders, consultants, company representatives, and government officials-mobilize distinct conceptions of value, development, and most importantly land. These are not variations of a shared economic framework but represent fundamentally different ontological logics. While some actors conceive land as a resource to be optimized for national progress or local employment, others understand it as inalienable territory part of a valuable ecosystem that has to be cared for to be able to create sustainable ecological

future. Economic action is not interpreted through a single rationality but enacted within distinct regimes of meaning and practice.

These conflicts are haunted by the historical backdrop of coal extractivism, colonial dispossession, and failed state integration. Economic interventions under the guise of green development revive long-standing patterns of territorial fragmentation, marginalization, and erasure.

By attending to the ontological dimension of economic reasoning, the paper provides an alternative framework for understanding socio-ecological transformation. It demonstrates that consultation, participation, and even resistance form implicit alliances on an ontological level that are often unrecognized, leading to accusations of betrayal, corruption, or irrationality. The analysis displaces the notion of a unified "local voice" or "indigenous perspective" and instead foregrounds the internal heterogeneity of Wayuu positions, each grounded in a distinct understanding of what constitutes a viable future and how reality works.

The paper contributes to anthropological debates on ontology by grounding them in the empirical study of economic transformation, arguing for the necessity of incorporating ontological analysis into the study of development, infrastructure, and environmental governance. By tracing the character and spirits of the land and objects of transformation understanding economic development becomes as much about profit as it is about addressing variety of old ghosts, current possessions and the spiritual world of coal and wind.

Presenter(s): Martin Gubsch

Financialising Conservation: The Role of Market-Based Instruments in Global Biodiversity Governance

This study interrogates the financialisation of nature through the lens of the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre's (WCMC) ENCORE Programme. At the intersection of environmental conservation and capitalist governance, ENCORE emerges as a critical tool in transforming natural capital into monetisable assets. The research problematises the belief that market-based solutions can adequately address ecological crises. Instead, it argues that financial instruments, such as biodiversity derivatives and carbon credits, serve to reify environmental degradation as deferred obligations while simultaneously creating new market objects.

By integrating remote sensing data and satellite imagery into its analytical framework, ENCORE quantifies ecosystem services and environmental risks, recasting ecological degradation as an immediate credit obligation rather than a future liability. This process not only illustrates the inherent contradictions of capitalist realism but also highlights the tensions between speculative financial practices and the ethical imperatives of conservation. In this credit-based natural capital accounting model, environmental damages are transformed into measurable, tradable assets, which, while generating new investment opportunities, risk obscuring the diffuse, dynamic nature of ecosystems.

To explore these dynamics, the study employs interviews and field site observations at the WCMC centre in Cambridge. Interviews with key actors involved in ENCORE's development provide firsthand insights into how the programme is used to engage businesses in managing their ecological risks and how these market-based approaches are reshaping conservation governance. The findings reveal that while financial mechanisms can drive innovation and profit, they often reduce complex environmental phenomena to simplistic metrics, perpetuating a cycle in which the problems and solutions of conservation are indistinguishably intertwined.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a critical understanding of how capitalist logics shape environmental governance. It calls for a reimagining of natural capital frameworks, one that prioritises immediate ecological accountability and social justice over speculative financial gain, thereby ensuring that environmental stewardship remains at the forefront of conservation policy.

Presenter(s): Heidi Cooke

Ghosts in the Machine: Double Movement and the Venture-backed Tech Startup, the Case of Uber in New York City

Over the past decade, venture-backed tech startups have matured into the monopolistic corporations of "Big Tech," rewiring circuits of social reproduction on a planetary scale and materializing a new tech-enabled way of life for millions across the globe. This represents the latest turn in a decades-long process of "digital transformation," defined as the deployment of digital technologies to mediate, automate, and accelerate economic activity. This flash presentation examines the impact of digital transformation in the specific context of "double movement" in the New York City rideshare and taxi industry, exemplified by the ascendancy of Uber, seen as paradigmatic for a further evolution of the capitalist economy toward a new configuration defined by some as "techno-feudalism" (Durand 2020, Varoufakis 2023), and resistance by drivers and civil society allies through strikes, litigation, legislation, and creation of a driver-owned platform cooperative, presenting seeds of a systemic alternative.

The presentation argues that core elements of the current "techno-feudal" paradigm can be identified as in embryonic form in prior pre-neoliberal epochs, and now live on as "ghosts in the machine," embedded in the core logic of the digital age. Namely, in the "New Deal Order" (periodized from 1935 to 1975), techniques of power that have now become dominant were already evident, for example, in the practices of the public authority as a semi-private governmental organization. These practices include privatization of system-level planning, enclosure of public or common assets, socialization of costs to the gain of private actors, tolling flows as a revenue generation strategy, ringfencing of assets, segmentation of the labor force into groupings with different and lesser rights, opaque concealment of the operations of power, and direct materialization of new infrastructures compelling new political-economic patterns of life. These practices were complemented in the post-1975 neoliberal era by innovations in the taxi industry itself: mass "responsibilization" of workers through the ambiguous freedom of entrepreneurship—evident in the shift to independent contractor status for taxi drivers orchestrated by taxi fleet owners at the end of the 1970s, and asset inflation as a core strategy for accumulation—evident in

the commodification and eventual securitization of the taxicab medallion. All of these practices became core elements of neoliberalism, the dominant political-economic paradigm in the United States from 1975 until present. Rather than reflecting a value-neutral teleology of technological advancement, through "digital transformation" of the economy these once-marginal value-laden practices became deeply embedded in the way of life of capitalist societies. However, these "ghosts in the machine" are now facing challenges by movements of drivers and civil society allies to materialize a new reality, animated by a different core logic.

Presenter(s): Erik Forman

Haunting JAM-DEX: three styles in the study of central bank digital currencies

The presentation suggests three domains in the study of CBDCs that invite further anthropological research: the exploration of the dichotomy between private and public-sovereign money; the relationship between class and race inequalities and the financial inclusion rhetoric; and the religious anxieties that can prove to be a strong resistance force to CBDCs adoption. These analytical frames address a critical gap in the CBDC discourse, which often focuses on technology and monetary issues, leaving behind qualitative analysis. Like ghosts haunting contemporary reality, past structures, ideologies, and unresolved histories persist and shape the present and future. JAM-DEX, Jamaica's CBDC, is haunted by multiple historical and structural forces that shape both its design and its reception.

JAM-DEX embodies an aspirational modern future—a vision where most of the economic and bureaucratic processes are digitalized, marginalized communities that base their economy on informal activities become part of the formal financial sector, and, less explicitly, where their economic sovereignty will uphold the pride that characterizes this small island. However, this vision is haunted by its long history of economic dependencies, social inequalities, and religious anxieties towards state-led initiatives.

I argue that the design and communication choices of JAM-DEX replicate the mainstream narrative of CBDCs to please the global central bankers' élites without disrupting the (im)balances of the current financial system. By doing so, JAM-DEX introduces latent but unanticipated tensions between the central bank and the private sector that cash and electronic transactions did not entail. It also fails to provide "greater financial inclusion" or a "more modern, seamless, secure and easy to use" method of payment (Haynes 2020), mainly because it fails to overcome the structural class and racial inequalities. This is exacerbated by the long-held subcultural perceptions that both Jamaica's government and financial sector are part of the "Babylon system"—a term derived from a religious perspective denoting corrupt, secular, and oppressive national or global structures. These perceptions foster a resistance characterized by mistrust and hyper-vigilance toward CBDC adoption.

JAM-DEX, therefore, exists in a liminal space, the reappearance of Jamaica's historical ghosts in digital form. On one hand, it is promoted as an instrument of modernization, while on the other, it is shadowed by historical patterns of dependency, control, and exclusion.

This analysis draws on an extensive ethnographic study (16 months between May 2022 and October 2024) that coincides with the initial rollout of JAM-DEX.

Presenter(s): Camilla Carabini

In Pursuit of Stability? Post-Crisis Capitalism and the Rise of Cryptocurrency Trading in Turkey

By drawing on 18-month ethnographic fieldwork conducted amongst people who participate in state-regulated games of chance activities in Turkey during the recent Turkish economic crisis in 2021-2022, cryptocurrency trading was identified as a game of chance that swings between hinging on luck or skills. In the meantime, cryptocurrency trading was also viewed as an investment technique that would accumulate savings for the future amidst fluctuating national currency and polarized political realities. Through engaging with scholarly work on the anthropology of Turkey, economic anthropology, and anthropology of gambling, this paper illustrates the rise of cryptocurrency trading in Turkey since 2019, and unpack imaginaries of wealth, if it is understood to be generated with /or without labour (Foster 2018), and materiality of money, both as token and commodity (Hart 2012) through pursuing speculative economic practices within a 'post-crisis' economic capitalism (Weiss 2015, Bear 2020). It shows how people situated the volatile cryptocurrency trading within their own techniques to ameliorate financial volatility and mistrust in governmental financial institutions during times of economic uncertainty and financial crises. This paper suggests that cryptocurrency trading is a contested topic in the Turkish context, where the controversy of cryptocurrency trading is also thought to be a result of the presence of dissonance between traditional ideals, that condemn easy money and emphasize the value of hard work, and capitalistic realities and neoliberal modes of accumulation in neoliberal Turkish economy since the 1980s. In the paper, I argue that during heightened times of economic and political uncertainty, the boundaries between gambling, investing, and savings are porous, leading to prioritizing the 'lucky moments' in time that needs to be captured to be able to make uncertainty productive. As a consequence, I argue, states of fragmented temporalities (Fuchs 2007, Alexander et al 2011, Couclelis 2003) are created to tolerate the uncertain realities, when time is divided into several smaller units (moments) that people chase to make profits.

Presenter(s): Wesam Hassan

The ghost in the machine: the CAPM case in finance

The intellectual justification for managing portfolios by following a broad market index (named "passive investing") stems from a paradigmatic model of financial theory, the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) developed by William Sharpe (1964). The CAPM is the ultima ratio of the relevance of benchmarks in asset management.

Financial technology resulting from the CAPM has revolutionised the risk culture of portfolio managers. We argue that the technical components of the CAPM can be interpreted as a theatrical script defining role-playing games, leading to a theatrical staging of asset management. The new form of life that develops from this theatre raises the question of the autonomy of the asset manager's own desire in relation to the desire of the machine whose algorithm dictates its design.

The CAPM acts as an invisible director in the everyday life of asset managers. We argue that CAPM can be thought as the "ghost in the machine" in asset management practices. We document a case in which an investment desire derived from the CAPM mathematical structure has replaced the manager's desire.

A form of life generally refers to a set of practices, beliefs, modes of action and institutions that shape our individual lives, our values and our societies. The culture of the asset management industry had created a form of life for asset managers in which they could develop their careers and their existence at work. In the field of asset management, the CAPM profoundly changed this initial form of life, as the intellectual framework of the mathematical model acted invisibly inside the technical devices. This invisibility raises the issue of the autonomy of the desire of portfolio managers in relation to the desire of machines algorithms designed based on the CAPM principles, and of the production of the discourse of financial institutions developed based on the same intellectual principles of the CAPM. The form of life of asset managers is directed by the ghost in the machine.

In fact, the financial technoscience that emerged from the CAPM was not axiologically neutral. The artificialisation of management decisions due to the ghostly presence of CAPM in computer systems and the calculation of managers' performance in relation to reference portfolios (the benchmarks) led to a change in the desire of human managers. In the 2010s, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the financial sector of portfolio management reinforced the mechanising trend of previous developments. One of the characteristics of the use of AI in portfolio management is that it gives the impression of being able to free oneself from the parasitic emotions that produce decisions described as irrational. But as CAPM acts, the so-called parasitic emotions were replaced with a theatrical script, written by the mathematical structure of the CAPM. The ghost became the leader of decisions. Hence, the asset management industry became "the most haunted field" of finance.

Presenter(s): Christian WALTER

The Sovereign Commodity: State Power and the Circulation of Goods

Karl Marx opens *Das Kapital* with the analysis of the commodity, asserting that to understand capitalism, one must begin with its most basic unit-the commodity. Building on this foundational insight, this paper argues that to fully grasp not only economic systems but also the political structures that sustain them, we must start with an analysis of the control exercised over commodities. Drawing on ethnographic research on Serbia's customs regime, I demonstrate that commodity management is not merely a technical or economic procedure, but a central mechanism through which state power is enacted and sovereignty is produced. In Serbia, nearly half of the national budget is derived from customs duties, making the regulation and surveillance of goods essential to the state's ability to fulfill its social contract. To sustain this fiscal and political capacity, the state has increasingly deployed technologies such as risk analysis algorithms and GPS tracking systems to monitor commodity flows. These infrastructures serve a dual purpose: they enable the state to assert control over transnational exchanges while meeting market

demands for speed, efficiency, and predictability. Yet, these same technologies also deepen the mystification of the state's role in market-making. Revisiting Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, this paper argues that commodities obscure both the labor that produces them and the political structures that enable their exchange. Through customs classifications, tariffs, and tracking and surveillance technologies, the state shapes the market while presenting its influence as neutral and technocratic. By examining the everyday bureaucratic labor of customs officers, traders, and policymakers, this paper shows how commodities become sites of negotiation between economic practice and political authority. In tracing these entanglements, the paper reveals the political stakes of commodity control and the embeddedness of state power in global economic life.

Presenter(s): Dejana Kostic

519 Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Presenter(s): Zaira Magana Carbajal, Medgar Evers College, Brenda Garcia, Yadira Silva Rios, Kimberly Melgoza, Gloria D'Alessio, Linda Sanchez, University of South Alabama, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, Gloria Sosa

Presentation(s): Between Classrooms and Disciplinary Landscapes: Educational Experiences of Latinx Youth in the U.S.

The U.S. is going through a historical moment in terms of attacks on democracy, civil rights, free speech, and public education. One of the most impacted is the migrant population and, within them, the Latinx youth who have arrived at U.S. public schools in recent years and months.

My research is an ethnography of an urban high school in a white, mid-size Midwestern city. It examines the current political moment through the experiences of young people from Latin American countries who recently arrived in the country. By pointing out the disciplinary apparatus in the school and how it conflates with broader discourses of law enforcement and the threats of deportation, this research asks young Latinx people how their belonging, presence, and educational experiences are shaped in uncertain times. It also looks at how the school navigates the current political climate and to what extent it generates a space of safety and belonging for Latino families.

The paper for this presentation presents preliminary findings on the intersections of disciplinary practices and law enforcement enactments both inside and outside the school (e.g., the policing of school surroundings) and will discuss Latinx experiences in the education system regarding such elements. It will also discuss the methods used in this research. In an attempt to propose more youth-oriented data collection methods, this research uses semi-structured interviews, but also field trips, workshops, lunch hangouts, and dialogue circles with youth. As part of data collection

and analysis, youth gather multimedia artifacts (like pictures and social media screenshots) to describe experiences of belonging and safety in educational spaces in the current moment that schools and Latinx communities are facing. These artifacts are being analyzed in small groups where Latinx youth frame their understanding of their presence in the U.S. at the current moment and how this shapes their educational experience. Overall, the project aims to contribute to the fields of Latinx Youth and Education, as well as to the Anthropology of Education, by employing non-traditional methods of data collection that center the experiences of young people in urban schools.

Presenter(s): Zaira Magana Carbajal

Mexico's Militarized Aesthetics and the Hauntings of Mestizaje

This presentation examines the hauntings of an exhibit in Campo Militar Marte, a military camp in Mexico City. The exhibit consists of 32 monuments constructed from firearms such as AK-47s, guns, rifles and other weapons molded into different nationalist symbols such as archeological artifacts, regional animals, and historical objects. Former president Felipe Calderón inaugurated the exhibit (or module as its official documents call it) as part of a larger plaza dedicated to the fallen soldiers in Mexico's war against narcotrafficking. The monuments invite onlookers to forget that these weapons crossed national borders, killed innocent and not so innocent people in the name of national security. Each monument invites the audience to look beyond the horror of the weapons and instead focus on the beauty of the Mexican nation. From monuments representing the iguanas of Guerrero to the bikes of Mexico City, the beautified firearms trap the spirits of the lives they took.

I discuss the ghosts that haunt the monument's militarized aesthetics. I examine the conditions that these ghosts create, in particular the racial capitalism that justifies the international exchange of weapons and the desperate conditions that pushed some people to become soldiers while other enemies of the nation. I argue that the Mexican government continuously erases life histories through art and architecture, only to create ghosts that haunt the monuments, the military camp, and Mexico City at large.

Presenter(s): Brenda Garcia

Reflections from Early-Career Academics on Navigating Challenges in Community-Based Participatory Research

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) has been used throughout various disciplines for decades as a way to bring community work into academic spaces. CBPR is not just a method but also a praxis used by many scholars, especially scholar-activists, to encourage more equity and inclusion in research, from the design, to the implementation, to the dissemination. However, there are numerous challenges that researchers often face as they aim to center their work around this model, especially for scholars working in institutions that undervalue the labor and dedication this approach requires. Despite the widespread applications of CBPR, there is a lack of scholarship critically examining when and why challenges arise and how early career scholars navigate them.

Using kitchen table reflexivity and pláticas, this paper presents ongoing conversations between a PhD student and her mentor, a pre-tenure professor, two Latinas working to align their food systems research with community needs while working in an overwhelmingly White institution. We aim to demonstrate how efforts to stay dedicated to CBPR can prove difficult when trying to progress professionally and academically, but we offer strategies and insights for how we stay true to our convictions in community engaged work. Most importantly, this paper hopes to offer an honest reflection on the difficulties faced over the past year as we considered social, academic, and political variables that could impact our capacity to adhere to a CBPR model.

Presenter(s): Yadira Silva Rios

Co-author(s): Melva Treviño-Peña

Santa Muerte: The Statuette

Santa Muerte is a saint that has been popularized in Mexico during the last few decades. This saint is depicted as a skeleton figure that sometimes resembles the death reaper. Due to her display and her connection to narcoculture, crime, and violence, Santa Muerte is thought to be part of a religion of evil, and specifically in Mexico seen as a demonic cult. However, Santa Muerte is much more than that, she is a saint of healing, love, and everyday needs. The veneration of Santa Muerte has many artistic dimensions, including visual representations, home altars, and a complex system of color symbolism. This paper will emphasize the importance of her physical presence in a follower's life.

Presenter(s): Kimberly Melgoza

The Making and Unmaking of a Borderland: Mobilities and Everyday Negotiations in the Darién jungle

This research examines the making and unmaking of the Darién borderland between Colombia and Panama by tracing the entangled infrastructures, actors, and everyday negotiations that shape migration in the region. Focusing on the period between 2020 and 2025, the study explores two key transformations: the surge of south-north migration through the Darién corridor, and the recent reversal marked by the U.S. reimplementing of deportations and border closures in early 2025. Through multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork across Afro-Colombian coastal towns of Necoclí, Capurganá, and Acandí, this study investigates how migration channels are assembled, transformed, and governed by a plurality of actors-including paramilitary groups, brokers, humanitarian organizations, religious institutions, and local municipalities. Rather than approaching the Darién as a stateless or exceptional zone, the research analyzes the region as a dynamic site of political and moral economy, where power is negotiated through both formal and informal institutions. Drawing from critical migration studies, border anthropology, and moral economy theory, the project explores how everyday practices of bordering, mobility, and smuggling challenge dominant narratives of sovereignty and post-conflict peace in Colombia. Ultimately, this work contributes to rethinking borders not as static lines but as contingent, lived processes shaped by competing forms of governance and value.

Presenter(s): Gloria D'Alessio

Underground Railroad Spirits Influencing Immigrant Rights Advocacy and Activism in the Deep South

The spirit and spirits of the Underground Railroad, a network that assisted enslaved people in escaping to freedom, actively influence the immigrant rights movement in today's Deep South. Given the current presidential administration's push through virulent executive actions to deport noncitizens, and even threats to deport citizens, the importance of underground and grassroots methods are reinvigorated in this sociopolitical moment.

This research focuses on immigrant advocacy and activism in the red Deep Southern states of Alabama and Georgia. I argue that while these states are extremely conservative, they also have strong subversive currents of activism not just with the Underground Railroad's history, but also with the legacy of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and are pushing back against the current administration through ongoing demonstrations, advocacy work, activism, creating networks of care, and more. Here in these states, the immigrant rights movement draws heavily from African American resistance tactics and communal care approaches.

This study utilizes ethnographic fieldwork methodologies such as participant observation and interviews with the local community, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, student led activism, Freedom University, and so on. Located in Georgia, Freedom University offers college-level instruction to undocumented students, since this region does not allow undocumented students to enroll in public universities. It is modeled after the 1960s Freedom Schools, which were spaces established by community organizers after various local governments shut down public schools in an attempt to stop integration. My work spotlights Freedom University's college readiness retreat, which prepares undocumented youth for higher education and provides tools for academic success.

In Alabama, I focus on Mobile, a port city on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in close proximity to New Orleans. Being the birthplace of Mardi Gras, Mobile's motto is "Born to Celebrate," and the city is well suited to large gatherings and a collective response, which adapt well to demonstrations and providing systems of care. Protests at Mardi Gras Park and Mobile Government Plaza occur frequently, draw diverse demographics, and even elicit downtown shopkeepers to walk out of their establishments to cheer on the procession of marchers.

Contrary to public perceptions of the Deep South, my findings reveal that this region is actively pushing back against draconian immigration policy, not just through demonstrations, but also with things such as know-your-rights-workshops, Q&A panels for immigrant students, non-profit work, humanitarian assistance, and celebration. The spirits of the Underground Railroad paired with the spirit of Mardi Gras make Mobile unique in resistance tactics. The South honors the life and spirits of those who were part of the Underground Railroad and Civil Rights movement by continuing their work.

Presenter(s): Linda Sanchez

Undocumented High School Girl Activists Leading Social Change in Los Angeles

This article underscores the political agency of undocumented underage adolescent Latina girls living in Los Angeles. Current scholarship examining the activism of undocumented youth revolts around college students' ungendered experiences. This suggests that undocumented students begin their activism after attending college. However, I show that the onset of activism starts in high school, especially for girls. Undocumented underage Latina adolescents' political consciousness stems from their awareness of the vast socioeconomic barriers they must overcome to pursue a college education. Learning this forces undocumented adolescent youth to seek support from allies outside their family, especially girls who wrestle with family and culturally bounded expectations. In securing resources to pursue a college degree, they exercise active citizenship, engaging in risky activism and exposing their unauthorized status, a relentless source of retaliation power. Their activism led to local institutional changes that benefit themselves and undocumented and United States citizen peers alike.

This paper draws from three years of fieldwork in Los Angeles, engaging in active participant observation of public demonstrations led by undocumented youth activists. I complemented my fieldwork by conducting oral history housed in the "Disruptors: Cal State LA's Undocumented Working-Class Youth Activism Digital Archive," which is publicly accessible through the California State University of Los Angeles library website. Examining the oral histories of former undocumented youth activists, I demonstrate that their positionality as underage students both enabled their community-led activism and, at times, hindered their progress but ultimately transformed them into social justice agents. My analysis adds to the understanding of why vulnerable communities engage in risky activism and expands our knowledge about grassroots social movements during social unrest.

Keywords

Undocumented high school girls; activism; undocumented youth; social movement; political agency; Los Angeles.

Presenter(s): Gloria Sosa

520 Combined Flash Session #7

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Omer Hacker , Nguyễn Huy Hoàng , Tarryl Janik , Muyan Guo , John Dennehey , Holly Walters, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology, Samantha Hochmann

Presenter(s): Omer Hacker, Nguyễn Huy Hoàng, Tarryl Janik, Muyan Guo, John Dennehey, Holly Walters, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology, Samantha Hochmann

Presentation(s): Incorporating the Spirit: Tech Companies' Sovereignty and the Inclusion of Religion

Tech workplaces are now inviting workers to "bring their whole self to work." This paper examined whether religion is invited as well, and under what circumstances. Studies of the realm of religion in the public space of the state assume a legally grounded position of minorities and individuals debating social norms (e.g., Engelke 2013; Mahmood 2015; McCrary 2022). Yet corporations are a kind of "private government" that holds one-sided control over work norms and rules, especially in the non-unionized tech sphere (Anderson 2017; Gershon 2024; Lofton 2017; Prentice 2022; Stern 2023).

Thus, when exploring the expansion of the corporate realm into more personal aspects of workers' lives, we need a different conceptualization of this private yet shared sphere. Based on fieldwork in the tech industry, I offer to conceptualize the accommodation of religion using the social framework of hospitality. This kind of relationship involves a combination of sovereignty and generosity on the part of companies, and conditional and temporal presence on the part of workers (Derrida 2000; Shryock 2012). I illustrate the norms for what I term a 'religion of guests,' which includes company sponsorship for various religious activities in the workplace that nevertheless dissociates these practices from broader religious-based social perceptions.

Presenter(s): Omer Hacker

Mơ Mơ Màng Màng: An Encounter with Thought, Otherness, and the Figure of Cá Ông in Quy Nhơn

This thesis examines the cosmological figure of Cá Ông, or the Holy Whale, in Nhơn Lý, Quy Nhơn, Việt Nam, as worshiped by the locals and fishermen for safe passage across the sea and harmonious weather conditions for seafaring business. Emerged from fieldwork among the fishermen and Xương Lý, Hưng Lương shrines' custodians is a series of ontological contradictions, the possibility that there is a fundamental clash on what Cá Ông is, not merely a fish, a human or a deity. I thus make a twofold argument as follows to reconcile with Cá Ông as a force of otherness. First, drawing from Viveiros de Castro's concept "perspective," I argue that Cá Ông has double perspectives, or a double-natured being. This formulation explains the phenomenon of "mơ mơ màng màng" (half-dreamy, half-awake)-a term used by Nhơn Lý fishermen to describe the effect of Cá Ông's saving on their state of being-not as a mere trance-like state but a slip across perspectives. Second, for Cá Ông's double perspectives to be comprehensible without resorting to the language of errors, Nhơn Lý fishermen continuously think through him instead of defining Cá Ông in discreet terms. The alternative conceptual shape to their thoughts, I advance, is a double flow. The analytic "mơ mơ màng màng" is then recast as a verb to signify such flows of thought. Combining these two arguments, this thesis makes a case for a mode of doing anthropology that sustains contradictions in motion-that when a thought exceeds itself.

Presenter(s): Nguyễn Huy Hoàng

Sacred Sanctuary & Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church: The Intersection of Transpersonal Psychology & Law

In this paper I focus on how transpersonal psychology and law affected individual and collective post-ceremony integration at Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church and inform the current integration

approach and engagement with the DEA by Sacred Sanctuary (a new ayahuasca church that emerged from the bankruptcy of Soul Quest in 2024). I look specifically at how Soul Quest's syncretic approach to ayahuasca integration was made sense of by church members and was situated in the philosophy and ethics of a secular psychedelic integration training program called Being True to You. Being True to you is an integration program which employs a transpersonal psychotherapeutic approach to psychedelic health and healing. I argue that Sacred Sanctuary, who is currently seeking religious exemption from the DEA to use ayahuasca for religious purposes, draws from Soul Quest's oeuvre as well as nuances their approach based on Soul Quest's bankruptcy and denial for religious exemption.

Presenter(s): Tarryl Janik

Self-Apprenticeship', an Improvisation of Learning Amidst Structural Transformation -- Reflected in UK's AI PhD Training

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has profoundly transformed cultural production, challenging traditional knowledge-making paradigms. AI represents both a rupture-disrupting established educational and professional systems-and a new flow that fosters emerging connections and relationships. Intrigued by how AI designers-arguably the key architects of humanity's future-imagine and shape this future, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork at Cambridge and Oxford in the summer of 2024, focusing on PhD students in AI-related fields.

This study builds on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation, constructing the theoretical framework of "self-apprenticeship" to describe the learning and working modes of these AI PhD students. Self-apprenticeship reflects the loosely structured advisor-student and peer relationships in UK doctoral training, granting students greater autonomy in learning and resource-seeking. Their learning no longer depends on long-term physical co-presence but instead unfolds across physical and virtual spaces, centered on students' individual needs. Their interactions may be human-to-human, human-to-online communities, or even human-to-AI systems mimicking human cognition. This reconfigures the spatiality of "situatedness" in the digital age.

At the same time, AI as a highly applied field shaped by computing paradigms fosters a professional trajectory where the PhD is merely a stepping stone toward full participation in the AI industry. Rather than pursuing academic careers, these students aim for core positions in the tech industry, seeking high-level employment instead of repetitive or marginal IT work. However, due to the structural gap between AI research and industry in the UK, many PhD graduates must seek positions abroad, leading to further mobility and brain drain.

This ethnography thus examines how new technologies reshape learning models and academic trajectories while also revealing how education-conditioned by industrial globalization, capital flows, and concentrated knowledge production-unfolds across multiple spatial and temporal dimensions. Through the lens of AI PhD students, this study offers insights into how flows of

knowledge, talent, and labor interact with systemic ruptures, shaping contemporary and future educational landscapes.

Presenter(s): Muyan Guo

Spirits in the Material World: An Exploration of Evil Spirits Within China's Material Culture

Evil spirits play an important role in Chinese cosmology. They are an enduring presence in daily life, always threatening misfortune for the living. China's extensive typology of demons and malevolent forces possess a variety of characteristics and abilities rooted in the diversity of regional belief systems. A fear of these evil spirits has led to the development of a protective material culture that is equally diverse and multifaceted. China's protective objects are grounded in apotropaic beliefs, relying on the ability of the physical world to manipulate the spiritual landscape. Symbolism and cosmology are key components - stones taken from sacred mountains are placed at entrances where sacred power is transformed into protective strength against evil. Meanwhile, mythological creatures guard vulnerable locations, and symbolically placed walls and features protect those living inside. This presentation examines how China's apotropaic objects, prevalent within the material record, provide an opportunity for greater insight into shared cosmology and the built environment. The challenges of changing public perception are also discussed as this material culture is both reclaimed as cultural heritage and reimagined in pop culture.

Presenter(s): John Dennehey

Techno-Dharma and Mechanical Maya: Automated Adoration in a Virtual Age

The research for the presentation began, in a very real sense, while I was conducting ethnographic work for my first book on Shaligrams, the sacred fossil ammonites of the Himalayas. While working in Nepal, and in Northern India, on Shaligram pilgrimage and interpretation from 2015 to 2018, I was introduced to a series of websites and online forums devotees had been using for several years as a platform for community building. These virtual connections were particularly important for many people at the time due to increasing challenges in maintaining a spiritual and ritual community in an ever-increasing international diaspora. But, as the user base had grown considerably in a short amount of time, the online practice of Shaligram worship was swiftly beginning to constitute something of a digital religious revival. The main idea, as one young Hindu explained to me, was that the use of social media and dark web media hosting (meaning that the sites were not visible to search engines) was allowing practitioners to "decolonize and protect" their ritual practices from outsiders and to ensure that the Shaligrams themselves were kept out of the hands of unscrupulous sellers and souvenir hunters. This, however, was only the beginning. I soon became even more fascinated by the growing relationships between religion and technology when, during the Ganapati festival in Pune in 2017 (and again in 2021), Pune-based tech company Patil Automation Pvt Ltd (PAPL) - followed by Monarch Innovation in Ahmedabad for 2021 - unveiled a fully robotic puja arm programmed to conduct aarti (offering of a fire lamp) to a Ganesh deity icon that had a concurrent cellphone app for users all over India to log into and view the ritual.

This paper aims to further my previous research into object-agency and ritual object-personhood by approaching two emerging concepts in the study of South Asian religion ethnographically. One, what is the relationship between Hinduism (and other included syncretic practices) and generative AI/LLMs? And two, what is the relationship between Hinduism and robotic ritual automation? These questions then form the foundation for an argument that will focus on the "haunted" nature of sacralized technology and digital ritual practice in South Asia today.

Presenter(s): Holly Walters

The Secret Afterlives of Ghosts: Uncovering Local History Through Hauntings

From creaking floorboards to ghostly whispers, haunted spaces offer more than spine-tingling stories—they reveal the cultural narratives communities choose to preserve, question, or forget. This presentation explores how paranormal tours at the historic Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum serve as a unique form of public anthropology, blending folklore, memory, and material culture to tell Rockford's story from the shadows.

Drawing on anthropological ideologies such as collective memory, symbolic interactionism, and liminality, we'll examine how ghost stories function as modern myth-breaking—providing insight into local identity, and the social life of buildings long after their original occupants are gone. The Tinker Swiss Cottage becomes more than a haunted house; it becomes a living archive, where the past speaks not only through preserved artifacts, but through the legends that linger in the shadows.

Attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of how paranormal investigations and interpretation can enrich historical preservation and offer emotionally resonant, community-driven storytelling that connects people to place—and to one another.

Presenter(s): Samantha Hochmann

4477 The Left Behind: spectres of the past and promises for the future

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The term 'left behind' has appeared in public and policy speak over recent years placing certain communities and territories at the crossroads of celebrated pasts and uncertain presents/futures. In popular discourse, left behind is imagined as a constituency of otherness, whereby disenchantment with the status quo is a consequence of the economic and material decline that has accompanied shifts in the economic order as we know it. It is a condition of inhabitation that is threaded through the ruins of once eminent industries, which now appear as a blot on the streetscapes of numerous post-industrial cities across the world, as well as rural terrains now at a standstill when juxtaposed against the modern over-developed world. In contemporary politics the category 'left behind' has been used to mobilise the affections of certain dispossessed communities, whose subsequent inclination toward populist politics renders them vulnerable to political designs of welfare retrenchment and austerity.

Firmly grounded in ethnographic inquiry, in this roundtable, we seek to interrogate some of the antinomies around the concept of left behind through considering its adoption in dramaturgical discourses of stigma, as well as co-option in the phantasmic promises of populist politics. The table brings together six presenters with ethnographic contributions that examine the lived experiences of individuals and communities situated in spaces marked by marginalization, abandonment, or symbolic decline. Spanning diverse sites-from rural China to the Greek island of Chios, from Brittany in France, and migrating Estonian youth, to peripheral regions in Denmark-these contributions illuminate how people navigate and contest dominant visions of modernity, belonging, and development. Presenters address topics such as the embrace of neo-rural utopias by disillusioned Chinese urbanites and their paradoxical alignment with state agendas; the resistance of Greek villagers to EU-funded migrant infrastructure through localized narratives of neglect; the reframing of productivist farmers in Brittany as marginalized actors within environmental debates; and the role of nostalgia and care in sustaining place-based belonging in Danish localities experiencing symbolic erosion. Together, these perspectives interrogate the complex intersections of space, agency, and affect in shaping what it means to be-and to respond to being-left behind. By drawing on a rich set of ethnographic contexts across Europe and beyond, the roundtable offers a comparative lens through which to critically examine the political, social, and emotional contours of "left behindness" today.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Olga Jubany, Universitat de Barcelona

Presenter(s): Xueyan Shao , Amelia Veitch, Yale University, Romm Lewkowicz, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Terje Toomistu, University of Tartu, Hanne Louise Jensen, Aalborg University, Anja Jørgensen, Aalborg University

Discussant: Camila del Mármol , Ajmal Hussain, University of Warwick

3456 Be Your Own Fairy Godmother with the Power of Career Readiness

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

There is a lot going on in higher ed that you might want to wish away, but what do you wish for you and your students? With the assorted crises affecting higher ed, anthropology programs are awakening to a new cultural reality. The vast majority of students will not work in academia, including PhD students. Anthropology programs are facing increasing pressure from legislators, administrators, majors, and the parents of prospective students to show the value of anthropology in the world. A transformation is needed. But unlike a pumpkin becoming a carriage, you can choose how you and your anthropology program adapt. Preparing students for careers in the work sector of their choice has the virtue of confronting and addressing these external forces head on and departments become more resilient.

This session offers an opportunity to learn what is involved in "teaching practice" to students. It demystifies this process, reducing much of the burden that instructors feel and simultaneously

benefiting students. A variety of strategies are introduced during the Anthropology Career Readiness Network's (ACRN) service known as the Departmental Advisory Initiative (DAI). ACRN facilitators coach anthropology programs on integrating career readiness and practitioner voices into their curriculum and overall programming. DAI is customized for each anthropology program since each has its own unique history and surrounding "ecosystem."

Initial questions from anthropology program participants in DAI range from How can we teach practice when most of us do not have that experience? to How do we leverage our context to benefit our students? Over a 12+ month period, facilitators and participants brainstorm, discuss, craft an implementation plan, and then execute it. One emerging pattern is that DAI helps anthropology programs coalesce to identify and accomplish their own set of career readiness goals. A second pattern is also notable: discomfort and apprehension give way to confidence and excitement as DAI anthropology programs begin achieving their objectives.

Eight anthropology programs have partnered with ACRN since 2023. The U of Delaware has finished DAI, while the other programs are at various stages of completion. These early adopters represent a range of universities in terms of research productivity, institution type (i.e., public/private), size, and other factors. DAI participants from several universities take part in the Roundtable sharing their experiences and offering reflections on the following questions:

- What did you learn about your program by participating in DAI?
- To what extent did DAI help you to change how you teach?
- How would you describe the effect that DAI has had on your anthropology program during this time of change?
- How would you explain DAI to other anthropology programs contemplating a shift toward career readiness?

Come join us and discover how career readiness can be integrated into your academic program!

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Elizabeth Briody, Cultural Keys LLC

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Briody, Cultural Keys LLC, Patrick Beauchesne, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Chad Morris, East Carolina University, Department of Anthropology, Susan Johnston, West Chester University, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Allison Hopkins, Texas A&M University, College Station, Department of Anthropology, Kedron Thomas, University of Delaware

Discussant: Jennifer Studebaker

5053 Race, Caste, and the Global Rightward Turn

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together anthropologists whose work attends to how the categories of race and caste operate in dynamic relation in the present moment as right-wing political movements surge across the globe. We are particularly interested in the ways academic knowledge production—particularly, but not exclusively, in the Euro-American academy—reproduces an area-siloed approach to each and the repercussions of this in the age of right-wing revanchism. For example, the scholarly conversation on caste has tended towards "provincializing," understood as only relevant to South Asia, India, and/or Hindus. This siloing has worked within Orientalist understandings of where and who caste is pertinent to and has allowed the Hindutva state to argue that caste is a culturally specific "internal matter" not to be discussed, debated, or challenged in global conversations on oppression. Similarly, race has only recently been taken seriously as a scholarly category in the context of South Asia, primarily because race has been largely understood in relation to the Americas while South Asia has remained captured in the colonial lenses of religion and caste. How do we attend to the ghosts of this siloed geographic legacy in ways that activate an attention to the connectedness and conceptual differences of these projects of hierarchical differentiation? How might, for instance, a global caste critique challenge right-wing politics and allow us to see aspects of caste that may operate in contexts not usually associated with it while, simultaneously, thinking through the ways racism functions as part of authoritarian projects?

Section: American Ethnological Society**Organizer:** Bhoomika Joshi, National University of Singapore, Arjun Shankar, Georgetown University**Presenter(s):** Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Renny Thomas, Sareeta Amrute, The New School, Brian A. Horton, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology**Discussant:** Pinky Hota

5328 After Theft

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM**Venue:** Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3**Type:** Oral Presentation Session

What comes after theft? This panel explores theft committed or commissioned by state actors—of property, of labor, of life, of memory—and attempts to grapple with their consequences, whether ongoing or after decades or even centuries. These thefts were never clear violations of law at the time; they were either explicitly legal, not illegal, or fell into a gray non-space of law. This makes confronting them a doubly difficult task, because the imprint of legality complicates any attempts at accountability, and because the act of theft is entangled within a violent gift economy of taking and owing. The cases here concern the enslavement of Chinese by Japanese corporations during World War II, the contemporary seizure of Haitian freighters by state actors, the disposition of Nazi- and colonial-looted art, artifacts, and human remains in Germany, and the mediation of the memory of descendants of Japanese internment camps in the United States. All of these cases are haunted by law as it simultaneously frames and displaces these otherwise different acts of thievery

into extra-legal spaces of redress.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jonathan Bach, The New School, Yukiko Koga, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jonathan Bach, The New School

Presenter(s): Yukiko Koga, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Jonathan Bach, The New School, Miye Sugino

Discussant: Anand Vaidya, Reed College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Unrepayable Debt

What does it mean to reckon with imperial violence through legal means decades after the formal end of violence? What do out-of-court settlements settle, and what does reconciliation look like on the ground? This paper ethnographically explores Chinese slave labor settlements following a series of lawsuits filed within Japan since the mid-1990s by survivors against the Japanese government and corporations that enslaved them in the 1940s. Headlines announcing the successful signing of settlements after decades of legal battle cannot capture the emotional labor of reconciliation among Chinese victims and their bereaved families, Japanese lawyers who represent them pro bono, and civic activists in Japan. This paper shows how the transnational legal redress movement itself has become a site of reconciliation that defies the assumed model of redress, in which the story ends with the perpetrator acknowledging historical wrongs and making amends. It unsettles assumptions about where and how reconciliation takes place, who counts as victims, and whose needs are served. This includes facing uncomfortable questions about the lack of accountability within the movement, reckoning with the unsettled figure of victims as collaborators, and asking what it means to be faithful to historical truths in a context that privileges a clear-cut binary between perpetrator and victim. Instead of settling accounts, the paper shows how the work of reconciliation opens up even more to account for.

Presenter(s): Yukiko Koga

After Theft: Loot, Loss, and Reckoning in Germany

What does it mean for Germany to navigate the colonial past alongside the memory of fascist and socialist regimes? How does reckoning with Germany's vast museum collections of colonial-era artifacts, objects, and human remains map onto past and ongoing attempts to deal with Nazi looted art? This paper explores the shifting landscape of the aftermath of state-sanctioned theft. Focusing on the elevation of provenance research to a major approach for dealing with historical injustice, it traces how provenance research shifted from a technical to a moral practice, enabling and producing different forms of knowledge and new social relations. The paper draws from ethnographic research in Germany to explore how what I call a memory infrastructure has emerged around the discourse of provenance, and how provenance research itself is shifting from the realm of a sober, legalistic, and historical method to a site of narration, rediscovery, and implication in emotional and violent histories. I call this provenance-centered reckoning, and explore its potential

to reshape our moral and political landscapes of historical responsibility through new directions in art and law.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Bach

Consoling the Spirits: Language Politics in the Afterlife of Japanese-American Incarceration

This paper explores how Japanese American communities negotiate different narratives to reshape their collective memory of wartime incarceration, and how practices of "breaking silence" among victims and their descendants paradoxically create new layers of silencing. To explicate these oft-invisible dynamics, it traces debates on terminology to reflect the violence of Japanese American wartime incarceration—including "internment" vs "incarceration," and "internment camp" vs "concentration camp." How are historical narratives negotiated by different stakeholders, with different consequences of silencing? Who tells these narratives, and for whom? This paper recovers victim voices through archives, ethnography, and extensive interviews with formerly incarcerated Japanese Americans and their children, scholars, and activists. In contrast to existing literature on trauma, this paper reveals that practices of "breaking silence" do not necessarily center the voices of victims: rather, they are enabled by mediators who frame victimhood in ways that conform to dominant trauma narratives. It shows how the experience of suffering after release—such as familial disintegration and economic devastation—remains underexamined. The case study of Japanese American wartime incarceration shows that historical silences persist not only through suppressing discourse, but also through encouraging certain narratives over others.

Presenter(s): Miye Sugino

Discussion

4596 Ghost Routes: The Haunting Realities of Mediterranean Border Deaths

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Death and disappearances haunt European borders, where political violence and abandonment leave uncanny traces and create chasms. The Mediterranean Sea is seen as an open cemetery, where lives are consumed on the altar of indifference or the violence of border control. Deaths during migration constitute and reconstitute the very idea of the Mediterranean, transforming it into a space of death. What ghosts emerge from these watery graves to inscribe stories of erasure and interruption? How does framing Mediterranean disappearances through the lens of the ghostly allow us to theorize forms of haunting that are not confined to the past, but are actively produced through ongoing border violence? In what ways do these mobile shadows - following migrants' routes, inhabiting border objects, and propagating beyond intimate bonds - challenge conventional understandings of haunting while revealing the broader political and social implications of

systematic disappearance? What do the ghosts of the Mediterranean want to bring to light, what do they ask us to reckon with?

In the tension between movement and interdiction, between surface and marine abysses, ghosts inhabit these routes, narrating stories of interrupted journeys. Through an ethnographic examination of what de Martino termed "the crisis of presence," this panel investigates how these spectral absences manifest in contemporary border spaces. Looking at the Mediterranean as a region of passage beyond its shores, we examine how these ghostly presences persist and inflect the everyday through prayers, legends, fears, and material remains.

This panel explores the ghostly dimensions of migration routes, analyzing how disappearances and deaths at borders transform the Mediterranean region, at maritime frontiers and beyond, into haunted landscapes. Disappearance creates profound disruptions leaving behind interrupted narratives, ambiguity, debris, and a peculiar geography of loss: graves without names on one side of the border, and graves with no bodies on the other. Those who traverse these same paths are haunted by the specters of those who came before, while families and communities bear the marks of severed bonds through unresolved grief. Even those on the other side of the border find themselves grappling with these deaths - from the concrete task of managing and burying unidentified bodies to the crushing weight of collective responsibility.

These are not mere accidents but manifestations of a deadly border regime that enforces racialized hierarchies of mobility. This panel calls for an urgent anthropological engagement with the structural violence and moral crisis underpinning border policies, advocating for critical examination of exclusionary systems and the fundamental right to freedom of movement.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Giorgia Mirto, Columbia University, Michela Lovato, University of Genoa

Chair: Giorgia Mirto, Columbia University

Presenter(s): Michela Lovato, University of Genoa, Saila Kivilahti, Tampere University, Giorgia Mirto, Columbia University, Nives Ladina, Sapienza University of Rome, Félicien de Heusch

Discussant: Gabriella Soto, Arizona State University, Gerhild Perl

Presentation(s): Inhabiting Absence: Ethnography of Ghosts in Migratory Routes in Morocco

The frontiers are inhabited by the deaths and disappearances of those who were denied passage. For the family left behind, these unresolved losses produce a haunting temporality, where grief is deferred in the absence of a body to mourn or a truth to reconcile with. In their lives, absence is materialised in a haunting presence: personal objects are kept intact, spaces are preserved, and conversations oscillate between present and past, creating an ecology of waiting in which the absent continues to inhabit the present.

Based on ethnographic research in Morocco, this paper aims to explore border disappearances through the lens of the haunting, focusing on how families navigate the uncertainty of loss. Through rituals, practices, and the search for the truth of family members, the disappeared assert a presence that disrupts official narratives about migration and border control. The ghost emerges as

a manifestation of unresolved grief resulting from violent and unexplained disappearances, configuring itself as an emblem of border violence that transcends material boundaries. It accompanies the search for truth, constituting a constant reminder of the systematic and racial violence of border policies and demanding justice. By analyzing the material and grieving landscapes shaped by these absences, this paper explores how haunting becomes a form of political testimony, revealing the persistence of border violence in the lives of those left behind.

Presenter(s): Michela Lovato

The Sea as a Shallow, Fluid Grave: Migrants Encountering Floating Bodies on Their Route to Spain

This paper analyzes the sea as a haunted landscape by exploring the ghostly presence of the dead among West African migrants crossing the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea routes to Spain. Beyond facing deaths aboard their boats, migrants frequently encounter the remains of those who perished during simultaneous or earlier crossings, in the form of floating bodies. Rather than merely making the dead disappear, the sea functions as a fluid and forensic archive, with the bodies of migrants washing up on beaches, becoming entangled in fishing nets, or drifting on the surface of the sea. Thus, despite being consigned to a watery grave, the sea remains in constant horizontal and vertical motion, shifting bodies and either submerging or keeping them afloat.

My research data shows that while crossing the sea, migrants witness floating bodies either due to their stage of decomposition or because objects hold them on the surface. However, even when confronted with the dead, they are unable to act, as doing so would endanger their own lives, forcing them to pass by and continue their journey onwards. In this way, former migrants actively haunt those attempting the passage today, narrating stories of their interrupted passages and reminding them of their own peril and mortality. Even in Spain, as bodies wash ashore to be identified, buried, or repatriated by the former crossers, they act as a stark reminder that they, too, could have been among the dead instead of the living.

Presenter(s): Saila Kivilahti

Lampedusa's Cross to Bear: Boat Fragments as Spectral Relics of Mediterranean Border Deaths

The transformation of migrant vessel debris into sacred objects represents a distinctive manifestation of the spectral presence that characterizes Mediterranean migration routes. This study examines how boat fragments recovered from Lampedusa and Southern Italy, diverted from disposal and transformed into religious artifacts by inmates in Italian penitentiaries, become vessels of memory revealing the ghostly dimensions of border deaths. Through participant observation of recovery, transformation in carpentry workshops, distribution in churches, and subsequent religious use, I explore how these objects function as spectral presences, embodying interrupted narratives that inhabit everyday spaces. Through transformation, the deceased migrant is symbolically reconfigured within the paradigm of martyrdom, allowing these wrecks to become modern relics bearing witness to the structural violence of border policies. These sacred objects mediate between absence and presence, between visible and invisible realms of experience. By analyzing the relationship between border deaths and migrants' boats, this research demonstrates

how the anthropology of death and religious practices contributes to understanding debris as manifestations of spectral absences, enriching our understanding of the political life of border deaths and revealing how the Mediterranean becomes a haunted landscape where current tragedies persistently inflect the present.

Presenter(s): Giorgia Mirto

Haunting remains: Bodies, objects and images from deaths in the central Mediterranean

In recent years, deaths and disappearances of people on the move in the Mediterranean Sea have undergone significant changes. The externalization of borders and the growing obstacles to rescue operations have reinforced a deterrence strategy, resulting in a decrease in the visibility of shipwrecks and, consequently, in the ability to recover bodies. This has widened the gap between the number of missing persons and the number of bodies found. In this context, the sea acts as an agent of transformation, returning nameless bodies to the shores of Italy. This paper interrogates what occurs when the management of the corpse is not handled ritually by the deceased's relatives, but by forensic pathologists, dissection room technicians, and forensic anthropologists. What do we witness when a "bad" death is not tamed, and the "secondary burial" becomes the exhumation of an identified body before it is returned, cremated, or reburied? The sensory involvement of medical examiners, particularly through the touch of remains, contrasts with the centrality of sight in the dreams, visions, or hallucinations of the missing person, experienced by family members or fellow travelers. These individuals may express feelings of being haunted to psychologists, doctors, or lawyers who listen to their stories. The shadow of the deceased manifests differently to doctors and survivors. If we take these stories seriously, the question becomes: can ghosts become part of the identification process itself?

Presenter(s): Nives Ladina

Mobilizing Violent Deaths as Emblems: The Ghostly Political Afterlives of Migrant Street Vendors in Southern Europe

The risk of death, as a spectral and haunting presence, follows the experiences of irregular migrants who cross borders at the cost of their lives, particularly in the Mediterranean. Even after arriving in Southern European cities, this spectral threat continues to shape the lives of precarious migrants engaged in dangerous jobs such as street vending. By focusing on the violent deaths of undocumented migrant street vendors, this paper investigates how these deaths become politicized and fuel both local and transnational mobilizations. Based on ethnographic research in Spain and Senegal, it examines cases where the violent deaths of Senegalese migrants in Spain have sparked political action. The study explores how these deaths generate demands for justice, shape collective memory, and mobilize migrant, community, family, and state actors. It argues that violent death in the context of migration is not just an endpoint but a catalyst for political engagement and claims-making, extending beyond the victims themselves.

Presenter(s): Félicien de Heusch

Discussion

Discussion

2969 Ghostly Media and Popular Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Invisible Presences in East Asian Media

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Contemporary popular media exist within a technetronic society, where technology and information networks reshape sensory and cultural experiences. In this environment, ghostly presences are not merely supernatural figures but cultural elements that shape memory, identity, and affective experiences. This roundtable explores how an immaterial media phenomenon—referred to as "ghostly media," which reconstructs memory and existence—is represented, consumed, and interpreted in East Asian popular media and how they differ from Western conceptualizations.

Western academia, particularly through media archaeology, has examined how technology summons forgotten presences (spectral return) and materializes memory and presence. However, these discussions remain largely Western-centric, with limited research on how ghostly presences function in East Asian media. While spectral entities in Western media are often confined to the horror genre, in East Asia, they are deeply intertwined with animism, ancestral veneration, and the power of words, taking on more complex cultural meanings.

This session will attempt to broaden the definition of ghosts in media from pure horror categories to invisible presences such as sound, memory, and avatars. This expansion is not merely a genre-based reinterpretation but a critical inquiry into how media construct sensory experiences and cultural memory. From a media archaeological perspective, ghostly presences are not simply cultural metaphors but recurring phenomena shaped by technological shifts, deeply intertwined with how media materiality and sensory perception operate. These spectral entities simultaneously recall the past and generate new meanings within contemporary technological and social contexts, a process that unfolds differently in East Asian popular media compared to Western narratives.

By comparing these perspectives, this session aims to propose a new analytical framework that integrates media archaeology and anthropology through East Asian case studies. In doing so, we highlight how ghostly presences are not merely remnants of the past but continually reconfigured through evolving technological and cultural landscapes.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Ryo Koarai, Hokkaido University, Takayoshi Yamamura, Hokkaido University

Presenter(s): Takayoshi Yamamura, Hokkaido University, Kyungjae Jang, Haruka Kasuga, Hokkaido University, Ryo Koarai, Hokkaido University

Discussant: Kyungjae Jang

7652 'Borrowed' magic: multimodal representations of women's witch practices as a hauntology for a feminist decolonial manifesto on spiritual healing.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Contemporary magical religious Witchcraft and allied traditions are bricolage identities underpinned by practices, well known for magpie 'borrowing' of rituals, images, substances, and stories. Today's practitioners –women, in the west, predominately white – are often highly attuned to political debates and anxieties about their sources and histories. Criticisms have highlighted extractive and neo-colonialist practices in spiritual discourses (including Witch/Wicca) and wellness communities. There are pertinent questions about how to – as Bucar (2022) says – borrow 'better', more responsibly. This roundtable addresses different perspectives and experiences of 'magical borrowing' from diverse scholarly and practitioner perspectives, focusing on visual, sonic, material, and media representations and explorations.

How do these representations, artefacts and testimonies go beyond text to convey the emotional and sensory nature of magical and participatory consciousness (Greenwood 2015, Maggiocco 2015)? We consider neoshamanism from Finland, Romani practices, Dianic witchcraft in the UK, Sex magic in the US, Afro Caribbean Obeah and traces that feed into and from these practices as feminist healing. Can increased recognition of practices origins and histories of their adoption affect healing qualities and their impact?

This will be a multisensory presentation comprised of discussion alongside examples of multimodal research including ethnographic film, soundscapes & artefacts.

We discuss how to generate further dialogue without text between: soundscapes and music, magical objects, books of shadows, photographs, film, visual art, autoethnography (for example) to facilitate feminist discourse around responsibilities, authenticity, power and bricolage practices. The panel will form as the first iteration of a new network or collective working to explore these themes using multimodal approaches that reach out beyond the academy. The group will collectively conceive an open access event to follow these conversations begun at the AAA.

Confirmed Speakers:

Dr Linda Annunen (Åbo Akademi, Finland): Ritual Studies. Religion and Wellbeing / Religion and Sound / Neoshamanism

Professor Ethel Brooks (Rutgers University, US): Women's Studies. Romani Identities / Performance / Women's Work

Dr Helen Cornish (University of London, UK): Anthropology and History. Alternate Historicities of Witchcraft / Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, UK

Lilith Dorsey (Magickal Practitioner, US): Afro-Caribbean, Celtic, and Indigenous American spirituality.

Dr D Ferrett (Falmouth University, UK): Feminist Sound Studies. Ecocriticism / Ritual / Voice / Violence Against Women

Dr Rosie Reed Hillman (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK): Visual Anthropology, Filmmaker. Menopause / Magical Healing / Emotion

Professor Jane Ward (University California Santa Barbara, US): Feminist Studies. Queer theory / Sex Practices / Green Witchcraft

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Rosie Reed Hillman

Presenter(s): Linda Annunen , Helen Cornish, Goldsmiths, University of London, Rosie Reed Hillman , Jane Ward, University of California, Santa Barbara, D Ferrett , Lilith Dorsey

Discussant: Helen Cornish, Goldsmiths, University of London, Rosie Reed Hillman

500 Society for Medical Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Emily M. Gillard , Nigar Sultana , Md Asaduzzaman, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Perna Singh , Julianne Paige, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, Iqura Naheed , Allie Reichert, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Mst Rabeya Khatun, The University of Alabama

Presenter(s): Emily M. Gillard, Nigar Sultana, Md Asaduzzaman, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Perna Singh, Julianne Paige, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, Iqura Naheed, Allie Reichert, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Mst Rabeya Khatun, The University of Alabama

Presentation(s): "Being With the Ghosts in the (Birthing) Room: Resisting the Urge to Exorcise Vulnerabilities during Midwifery-led Birth Care Provision"

Discourse around childbirth tends to address tensions between the medical/natural dichotomy with both 'sides' mobilizing concepts such as (scientific) evidence and (patient) satisfaction to ground birthing care practice and policy. In this work-scape, midwives in Ontario, Canada, in their ever increasing integration into the healthcare system, navigate the space between medical (the larger healthcare system within which they work) and natural (the traditional midwifery milieu) and find neither realm wholly adequate to meet birthing client needs. Both the medical and the natural realms demand an authoritative knowledge that labour and birth - when they are actually

happening - consistently evade. The error is in the attempt to ascribe to birth a cleanly comprehensible and reproducible mechanistic order, whether through application of medical technical proficiency dictated by protocols or by avoiding such 'interference'. Birth, instead, can be seen as an enmeshed web of relational doings, refusing to fit any (medical nor natural) mold. Inspired by author Robert MacFarlane's (2019) call for a new language to describe and delineate the relationship between trees and mycorrhizal fungi for which the term 'care' seems inadequate, I, a midwife and anthropologist, search for a new way to conceptualize what-is-needed-during-birth. What if one looks beyond care-as-medical and care-as-not-medical to a care-provision that demands of the carer what labour and birth demands of the birther: an adaptable, responsive, uncertainty - a watchful and humble presence? What if care-provision was not based on generalizable evidence (supporting either medical or normal actions) but was, rather, enacted as a series of intimate, particular connections, requiring attention, changeability, and denial of authority? This paper explores and imagines a midwifery practice whose expertise requires the discomfort of vulnerability. It explores the potential (re)conceptual consequences for birthing care provision in Ontario should midwives be able attend to the Ghosts of Uncertainty (see them, hear them, work with them) rather than expunge them.

Presenter(s): Emily M. Gillard

Cesarean or Vaginal? The Embodied Politics of Birth in Rural Bangladesh

This study examines how middle-class women in Bangladesh experience pregnancy and childbirth methods. It explores their cultural perspectives on vaginal and cesarean births and whether these perspectives influence their decision-making regarding which birth method to choose. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 18 women from a rural village in Bangladesh. The analysis was conducted using the frameworks of feminist theory, the Mindful Body theory, and the Theory of Habitus. The experiences of these mothers reveal a range of social explanations and perceptions surrounding vaginal and cesarean births, all of which affect their choice of birth method. Many people view cesarean births negatively, leading to pressure on women to opt for vaginal births, often dictated by family members or healthcare practitioners. However, research findings indicate that the choice of birth methods is evolving rapidly. Women are becoming more proactive and sometimes assertively determine which methods they prefer. This shift highlights how women empower themselves in this area, particularly within a society influenced by patriarchal views.

Presenter(s): Nigar Sultana

Coercion Under the Guise of Care: Reproductive Health and Authoritarian Humanitarianism in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Bangladesh

This study examines the authoritarian logic underpinning family planning interventions in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, where systems of surveillance, control, and coercion shape reproductive health policies. Contraceptive adoption-promoted through Community Health Workers (CHWs) via door-to-door counseling on implants and IUDs-is framed by NGOs and state

authorities as a means of managing high birth rates within the camps. While presented as a humanitarian effort, these interventions operate within a broader governance structure that prioritizes population control over reproductive agency, reinforcing power hierarchies between refugees, aid organizations, and the state. Based on semi-structured interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observation, this research examines how reproductive health policies function as tools of biopolitical regulation, where access to care is conditional, selective, and often aligned with securitization agendas. It reveals that refugees' reproductive choices are limited not only by cultural and religious conflicts but also by policies that demonstrate a form of soft authoritarianism, where consent is influenced by structural coercion, economic dependence, and limited healthcare options. The top-down enforcement of family planning reflects broader patterns of containment, where reproductive governance intertwines with strategies of social control, displacement, and exclusion. This study highlights the tensions between reproductive care and coercion by situating family planning interventions within the framework of authoritarian humanitarianism. It critically examines how refugees and community health workers navigate and resist these pressures, rearticulating reproductive health as a field of struggle rather than compliance. In doing so, it advocates for a shift from population control paradigms to community-centered, rights-based approaches that emphasize equity, agency, and self-determination in refugee health governance.

Presenter(s): Md Asaduzzaman

Decay and Preservation of 'Womanhood': Navigating Menstrual Health and Identity in an Urban Slum of Delhi

Kusumpur Pahari, an urban slum tucked within the affluence of South Delhi, forms the backdrop for an ethnographic inquiry into the intimate, embodied experiences of reproductive health among migrant women. Drawing on a year-long ethnography, this paper explores how womanhood is experienced, challenged, and reimagined through the lens of menstrual and reproductive health. In a setting where formal healthcare is unreliable and biomedical knowledge remains partial or inaccessible, women's narratives of their bodies become deeply entangled with moral, emotional, and symbolic understandings of fertility, menstruation, and decay. Central to these narratives is a profound anxiety around bodily decline. For many women, irregular menstrual cycles, infertility, or unexplained bodily changes are not simply biomedical disruptions but signs of an internal "decay", a term frequently used by participants to describe the sense of their bodies deteriorating in the city. This decay is experienced as both material and moral: a breakdown attributed to the polluted urban environment, relentless work, and emotional stress, but also as a collapse of the self as a reproductive, relational, and gendered being. Womanhood, in this context, is not static or purely biological; it is something continuously enacted, proven, and policed through cycles, fertility, and the ability to reproduce.

Menstrual blood itself occupies an ambivalent position in this landscape. While culturally coded as polluting during menstruation, it also signals vitality, fertility, and normalcy when it appears regularly. It becomes a diagnostic tool of sorts: a way to assess whether the body is functioning

"normally," and by extension, whether one is still inhabiting a viable form of womanhood. In this sense, the menstrual cycle becomes more than a biological rhythm- it is a site of interpretation, a moral and affective register through which women measure their health, worth, and place within families and communities. Rather than choosing between biomedical and traditional knowledge, they move fluidly across systems- government clinics, informal practitioners, spiritual healers, and ancestral remedies- constructing hybrid repertoires of care. These practices are not only attempts to 'fix' the body but also to reassert claims to womanhood, kinship, and dignity in contexts that often deny them recognition.

This paper argues that reproductive health in Kusumpur Pahari cannot be understood solely in terms of access or infrastructure. It must also be approached as a domain of meaning-making, where ideas of femininity, decay, and healing are constantly negotiated. By foregrounding these narratives, the paper brings attention to how gendered subjectivity is shaped not only through structural conditions but also through intimate, everyday acts of interpreting and caring for the self.

Presenter(s): Prerna Singh

Maternal placentophagy: a scoping review of the consumption of the placenta postpartum as a reproductive health practice

The consumption of the placenta during the postpartum period is an emerging practice purported to provide therapeutic benefits, such as improved mood, increased lactation, reduced fatigue, and accelerated physical recovery following birth. Scientific evaluations of these claims often emphasize the lack of statistical significance, small sample sizes and other methodological problems. Here we argue that such narrow metrics should not limit anthropological inquiry or determine the validity of placentophagy as a practice. This paper positions placentophagy as a culturally and symbolically robust lens for the analysis of maternal agency, depression prevention, and decision making in health care. In doing so, we call for an expanded research paradigm that values experiential knowledge, cultural context, and the subjective dimensions of health. Through this work, we aim to contribute to a broader rethinking of how postpartum practices are studied, validated, and integrated into frameworks of perinatal care.

Presenter(s): Julianne Paige

Co-author(s): Melissa Cheyney, Daniel Benyshek

Medicalization & Women's Health Beyond Reproduction in Karachi Pakistan

This paper will examine the medicalization of women's health in the context of 20th century colonial and post-colonial Pakistan. There is a long history of "dais" on the Indian subcontinent that underwent modernization through the synergistic processes of British colonialism and the institutionalization of the biomedical apparatus. 'Dais,' loosely translated to midwives, were women who were known within rural communities to possess healing abilities and knowledge. These women were often called upon to assist at the time of birth due to their expertise with women's bodies. The knowledge they possessed was passed down experientially. 'Dais,' while commonly

referred as to midwives, often served a much larger scope of healing to the villages and rural areas they served. They were an integral part of Pakistan's health system during the 20th century but following the colonial encounter their presence declined and their authority has been greatly devalued. A version of dais endures in the model for Lady Health Workers (LHWs). LHWs care for women in both rural and hospital settings in Pakistan and are often specifically trained in two-to-three-year diplomas to address gynecological issues (Varley 2003). Despite a wealth of work on women's reproductive issues in South Asia, women's health in the post-reproductive years demands increased scholarly attention. Building on previous research, this paper aims to look at the healthcare practices of peri and post-menopausal Pakistani women. Drawing on archival research and ethnographic data, this paper will investigate how Pakistani women navigate their health in the transition to menopause and how LHWs shape the post-reproduction experience of care. Further, this paper will consider how the colonial encounter and the transformation and decline of 'dais' has impacted the landscape of care. Similarly, in the context of women's health and menopause, how have bodily changes as a natural part of aging transformed into a medicalized "illness" to be treated by physicians and medical institutions? This paper ultimately examines what constitutes the landscape of care for Pakistani women beyond reproduction and how this landscape has been shaped by processes of decolonialization, medicalization, and traditional healing practices.

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Presenter(s): Iqura Naheed

Vertical Birth, Horizontal Power: Kichwa Midwifery and Decolonial Cracks in the Ecuadorian Amazon

In Ecuador and across the Americas, Indigenous midwives are increasingly targeted by state-led reproductive governance regimes that criminalize ancestral knowledge and constrain birthing practices. In this article, I draw on over 150 interviews and 300 surveys conducted with Kichwa midwives, women, and biomedical practitioners in the Ecuadorian Amazon, to understand broader dynamics of racialized health inequities, Indigenous resistance, and Amazonian feminisms. I ask how race, geography, political movements, and language shape both the systemic harms that Kichwa women experience during prenatal and birth care, as well as the movements that seek to name, confront and transform these forms of violence.

I use Maylei Blackwell (2023)'s concept of "meshworks" to describe how midwives create horizontal, relational formations-rooted in care, reciprocity, and shared struggle-that cut across national borders and epistemic regimes, to resist state-led biomedical hegemony and create alternative spaces for prenatal and birthing care. I draw specifically on two events, the first and

second national conferences of Ecuadorian and Latin American Indigenous Midwives, to sketch and reflect on how Indigenous midwives weave horizontal networks among themselves to simultaneously generate decolonial cracks, while also weaving resurgences among themselves.

These formations allow for the circulation of strategies, stories, and healing knowledge, while resisting the isolating effects of state violence. At the same time, drawing on Catherine Walsh, I argue that midwifery activism opens decolonial cracks within state-run health systems-spaces where other worlds momentarily emerge, and where "intercultural health," a term co-opted by the government, is reimagined from the perspectives of Kichwa midwives.

Presenter(s): Allie Reichert

"Examining Perspectives of Shared Decision-Making and Informed Consent for Cesarean Birth as Experienced by Bangladeshi Immigrants in the USA"

There is a significant association between patient satisfaction and maternal well-being within biomedical birthing contexts. Studies show that shared decision-making (SDM) and informed consent (IC) are associated with higher levels of patient satisfaction, reduced decisional conflict, and better health outcomes in the context of cesarean birth. Cesarean birth is a life-saving procedure in which a fetus is delivered through an incision in the mother's abdomen and uterus. Our research examines how the practice of SDM and IC affects patient satisfaction for Bangladeshi immigrants who are living in the United States, have previously given birth via cesarean, and/or are currently pregnant and planning to have a cesarean birth. The examination of cultural factors associated with practices of SDM and IC within the context of cesarean birth allows for an in-depth examination of standard of care practices as they are experienced by immigrant populations.

Presenter(s): Mst Rabeya Khatun

Co-author(s): Holly Horan

3809 Compromised Bodies: Cultural Imperialism, Agency and the ban on Female Genital Mutilation in Senegal - a discussion with the author

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Interview

The Senegalese parliament decreed a national ban on Female Genital Mutilation in 1999. As only around a third of the Senegalese population practiced female genital cutting (FGC) at the time, policy makers did not expect that the new law would cause commotion. Yet, in Fouta Toro - homeland to the Fulani and so-called "cradle of Islam" in West Africa - the response to the new law was full of anger and violence. More than a decade after the ban Fouta Toro was known as "the most difficult region" for governmental and non-governmental awareness raising activities. Tires were burnt, international NGO delegates were threatened and kept inside a hotel, activists publicly speaking out against the practice were religiously condemned, people were afraid - not just of physical violence but also of the marabouts' spiritual power. Today, animosity towards the law is

still palpable in the region. The ban, many locals say, is nothing other than an act of cultural imperialism imposed by the West, and resisting the ban is paramount to maintaining the autonomy and integrity of lifeways within the region.

From the outside, opposition to the law and NGOs seemed unified and strong. On the ground, however, things were far more complicated. This ethnography unravels the continued political tensions surrounding national and international interventions that place protection of the female body at the center of their concerns. Sarah O'Neill shows how some claim the female body as a reproducer of cultural identities, with reference to duties through kin obligations; others refer to human rights and the state. By way of the many stories of women and men caught up in these debates, the book reveals the personal struggles and difficult decisions Fulani face, be they traditional cutters, religious leaders, mothers and husbands, divorced women, male or female activists.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Sarah O'Neill, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains (Lamc) of the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

Presenter(s): Sarah O'Neill, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains (Lamc) of the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

Discussant: Janice Boddy , Ellen Gruenbaum, Purdue University

2764 Earthly Echoes: Beyond the Textual in Ecological Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The rapidly increasing scale of environmental destruction forges complex multi-species encounters and demands new modes of ethnographic representation. Recently renewed calls for multimodal ethnography, which has existed in the discipline for nearly a century, provide an avenue for scholars to address this need (Collins et al. 2017; Westmoreland 2022). In this session, we invite scholars working on more-than-human relations to reflect on how multimodality has influenced their research. We ask: How might non-textual vignettes uniquely capture the complexities of qualifying, moralizing, politicizing, or simply representing the relationships between humans and non-humans? How might multimodality promote cross-disciplinary dialogues? Multimodality is not just an alternative to textual representation in our discipline; it enacts a politics of invention that engenders new methods of knowledge production and analysis. (Dattatreya and Marrero-Guillamón 2019) Thus, scholars have advanced novel frameworks for examining 'landscapes' and multispecies relations, conceptualizing them as active agents and material expressions of socio-ecological histories. These approaches interrogate the spatial politics between species, the semiotic dimensions of material phenomena at scale, and the affective and moral contours of human–more-than-human dynamics (Ahman 2024; Barra 2024; Dawdy 2016; Morimoto 2023; Roane 2022; Zee 2022). Alternatively, we ask how might multimodality produce "bad habitus," wherein power structures and knowledge systems are reinforced via the privileging of specific non

textual representations (Takaragawa et al. 2019)? This panel includes visual essays, photography, illustrations, film, audioscapes, and smellscapes offering new ways to think, feel, and engage with the entangled worlds we study.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Quinn Georgic, Rice University, Ayluonne Txai Tereszkievicz

Chair: Ayluonne Txai Tereszkievicz

Presenter(s): Caroline Schuster, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology, Ayluonne Txai Tereszkievicz, Quinn Georgic, Rice University, Monica Barra, University of South Carolina, Patricia Alvarez Astacio, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Huatse Gyal, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Closure, containment: ethnographic comics and their environments

Sequential art invests a great deal in the gutters – the frames between panels that allow readers to stitch together meaning by filling the gaps to create a continuous narrative. Popularised by McCloud's influential work, *Understanding Comics*, the principle of "closure" relies on the active participation of the reader to establish mood, pacing, and storytelling.

Economic anthropology offers a conceptual entry point to understand how financial instruments also rely on certain forms of closure through data-driven frames or models stitched into temporal sequence. In the collaborative ethnographic comics produced by the Paraguayan studio *CómicClub*, sequential art has become a powerful mechanism to engage the complex speculative logics of weather derivatives, climate insurance, and agricultural commodities markets. We find that crops such as sesame are subject to similar modes of containment. Containing sesame within an insurance frame also promises to contain values such as yield and purity, contain risk within the terms of a contract, and ultimately to contain the unknowable effects of the climate crisis. Can the productive melding of narrative closure in comics with the (un)contained promise of financial speculation offer novel theoretical entry points for anthropological theories of value in increasingly troubled environments?

Presenter(s): Caroline Schuster

Sonic Traces, Toxic Grounds: Witnessing Environmental Remediation Through Audio and Filmic Imagery

Brunswick, North Carolina stands in the shadow of nine former rice plantations and a toxic EPA Superfund remediation site. Human and more-than-human relations co-configured this landscape: hauntings of tidal irrigation systems endure as deep depressions, once used to move waters and now morphed through centuries into stagnant receptacles of a tar-like carcinogen—creosote.

This presentation will examine how film and audio are critical tools to render perceptible the often-invisible dimensions of this toxicity, and to limn crosswires between the legacies of fast (chattel slavery) and slow (ongoing toxicity) violences in post-industrial rural counties.

Through ambient soundscapes, fragmented interviews, and visual sequences attuned to stillness and distortion, I reframe ethnographic witnessing in environmental anthropology and ask: How could these sensory mediums evoke the affective weight of contaminated land? How could they interrupt the dominant narratives of cleanup, progress, or historical closure underpinning the ethos of 'environmental justice'? Rather than representational clarity, my approach privileges sensory dissonance and material traces—patterns of connection and rupture between the human and more-than-human in sound and filmic imagery—to register both the presence of toxic matter in landscapes and the social life of its remediation. I examine ethical and perceptual gaps in how toxic landscapes are narrated, addressed, or ignored.

Presenter(s): Aylunne Txai Tereszkievicz

A Sense of Scents: Olfactory Explorations in Lemur Captivity

What can anthropologists learn through olfaction? To answer this question, this paper considers zookeepers and primatologists as they engage with the olfactory-centric world of lemurs. Among the most endangered primates on Earth, hundreds of lemurs live in breeding facilities in the United States and Madagascar, eventually to be rewilded in their native ecosystems. To improve lemur welfare in captivity, keepers provide intensive enrichment regimens that stimulate their senses. Unlike their primate cousins, however, lemurs have relatively poor eyesight and a very heightened sense of smell.

By illustrating how zookeepers and primatologists attune to lemur olfaction as a form of care, this paper first argues for the importance of sense-reorientation in multispecies encounters. I then consider ethnographic uses of scents more broadly. By presenting olfactory experiments and "smellbooks," during the talk, I invite listeners to reflect on the sense's ethnographic affordances (and limitations). Lastly, I conclude by underlining the political dimensions of using smell in my work. Responding to critiques of visibility and ocular rhetorics as prompting colonial and scientific violences, I offer olfaction as an exploratory means of engagement with ethnographic encounters.

Presenter(s): Quinn Georgic

Collaging earthly inheritance: Heirs' ecologies and Black land strategies in the American South

This paper describes my efforts to use visual methods—collage—to think through the ways Black families in the American South tend to and protect family land, specifically heirs' property. Heirs' property denotes property ownership that has been passed down from generation to generation among family without having the land title of the land changed from the original owner. Over time, when title is not changed, a piece of land can have upwards of hundreds of legal owners who each own non-geographically specific "share" (or interest) in the land. This category of land ownership is common among many Black southern families and has been linked to the widespread dispossession of Black land ownership in the US over the past century.

This paper explores the material and cultural dimensions of heirs' ecologies through collage (deconstruction, reconfiguration, and re-creation of images and objects) as a way to question the reductive and extractive relationships to land that heirs property, as a legal category, represents. Materials are sourced from fieldnotes, ephemera, legal documents, scholarship, and land (soil), and layered together to think through the distinct human-earthly relations between kin, soil, home, and law encompassed within heirs ecologies among Black families in the American South.

Presenter(s): Monica Barra

Qamaya Puka: Multimodal Experiments in Anti-Colonial Ecological Film

The cochineal beetle has been cultivated in the Americas since pre-Hispanic times to produce bright red and pink pigments. The only source of natural red and pink color, cochineal has seen a resurgence in Peru due to growing global demands for organic dyes used in fashion, food and cosmetics. This industry not only relies on the labor and knowledge of Andean Indigenous communities but is seen as environmentally sustainable—making arid lands productive while mitigating climate change. Using cochineal, its host cacti, and other organic materials from this landscape to process and produce film, has offered a methodological approach to center the politics of matter to explore how aesthetic and ethical ideals configure ecological relations tied to the material demands of more-than-human worlds, indigenous lives, and notions of capitalist sustainability. The Qamaya Puka experiments, explore the materiality of color to challenge the bad habitus of our modalities of documentation and consider the entropic force of cochineal—as pigment, animal, symbol—and its complex connection to Indigenous histories, presents, and futures. Besides moving away from the use of photo-chemicals to produce images, these experiments are exercises considering new ways to embrace ethnographic refusals while accounting for indigenous knowledges and material ontologies.

Presenter(s): Patricia Alvarez Astacio

Discussion

2907 Is Sustainability Sustainable? Corporate Value(s) Now, Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We live in a time of monsters. Fires, floods, and other disasters (natural and unnatural) abound. Fantasies of disembedded markets—which anthropologists have long loved to hate—sound quaint when life seems swamped, swarmed, and stuck in an increasingly disorderly socio-ecological world. At such a time, we ask: what can anthropologists learn from capitalist pursuits of sustainability?

Corporate sustainability may be an unlikely sphere to seek new insights, often critiqued as a "green" fig leaf covering up business-as-usual depredations, and now condemned from different angles as a "woke" assault on capitalism's values. The prevailing anthropological disposition has

treated capitalist enterprise as unsustainable (in descriptive and normative terms) and capitalist "sustainability" as a ruse for profit. We might pause here and attend ethnographically to whether, or which, capitalist sustainability actors are keeping on in the first instance, let alone profitably. Advocates for sustainability now seem fewer and farther between in many markets, beset by rollbacks, cutbacks, and backlashes. Existing practitioners grapple not only with external arguments but also doubts and uncertainties within their projects and workplaces. Where are those holding onto corporate sustainability, amid a diversifying mob of ghosts, zombies, and other returns of sustainability's repressed?

This panel assembles papers that take capitalist sustainability projects, pursuits, and people seriously even at a moment of apparent defeat and disorder in much of the corporate world. Is there more than meets the headlines? We offer anthropological interventions in the political ecology of capitalism, engaged with practices and practitioners of corporate sustainability, SDGs, sustainable finance, etc., as geo-historically situated phenomena and as arenas for ongoing and uneven negotiations of capitalist value(s). What are the contradictions, contingencies, and unexpected convergences involved in making capitalist enterprises sustainable, or trying and failing to? What are the relations, practices, and epistemologies through which profit and other values are sustained, lost, or transformed? How does all this vary in space and time?

We will avoid the analytical traps of capitalocentrism while also holding at bay reflex temptations to imagine otherwise. Instead, scholars will present papers that stay ethnographically with corporate forms, markets, supply chains, ecosystems, and their troubles.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Montserrat Perez Castro Perez, Dartmouth College, Matt Schneider, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Chair: Emma McDonell, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Department of Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies

Presenter(s): Daniel Renfrew, West Virginia University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Nikhit Agrawal, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Ramsha Usman, University of California, Santa Barbara, Yanping Ni, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Maron Greenleaf, Dartmouth College

Presentation(s): "We Produce Future": Green Corporate Visions and Forest Politics in Uruguay

Recent multibillion-dollar corporate investments in pulp mills in Uruguay accompanied the expansion of tens of thousands of hectares of commercial forestry plantations across a country of natural grasslands. Rapid afforestation has generated widespread socio-ecological harm, including groundwater depletion, industrial contamination, toxic spills, forest fires, land concentration, and rural community displacement. For its corporate boosters, pulp mills and tree plantations symbolize the promise of green capitalism and sustainable development through forest certifications, globally traded carbon bonds, and the green "bioeconomy." Corporate actors "naturalize" tree plantations as integral to local ecologies, improvements upon "empty" grasslands,

and as antidotes to chemically intensive, competing plantation monocrops. Meanwhile, these Scandinavian pulp/forestry corporations have financed some of Uruguay's most ambitious conservation initiatives. They have set aside vast swathes of land as protected areas, engaged in biodiversity conservation and rewilding initiatives, and partnered with small-scale farmers in promoting organic production and harvesting activities on plantation forest lands. This paper analyzes these new and contradictory frontiers of capital and conservation, examining how biodiversity conservation has been threatened, enabled, and revalued through corporate plantation logics and their contested visions of (as one corporate slogan puts it) "producing future."

Presenter(s): Daniel Renfrew

When more-than-human Meshworks Push Back: Infrapolitics in an Indian Tech-entrepreneurial Sustainability Program

Since the Paris Agreement in 2015, agriculture has gained increased prominence in global climate negotiations, both as a source of greenhouse gas emissions and for its potential to reduce them through carbon storage and sequestration. In the past decade, hundreds of agriculture technology (agtech) start-ups have emerged, promising to design and scale "climate-smart agriculture" (CSA) solutions. India has become a key destination for CSA investments, offering a unique vantage to examine their impacts. This paper traces how aspirations to address the ecological crisis urgently and at scale intersect with the complex environmental, social, economic, political, and cultural relationships that shape agriculture. Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD) of rice fields, a technique aimed at mitigating emissions by killing methanogenic soil bacteria, has gained traction among tech-entrepreneurs as a key CSA program. Based on an institutional ethnography of an AWD program at an Indian agtech start-up, this paper examines why and how technological interventions like AWD consistently face challenges, often fail, and yet continue to reappear. What drives their persistence despite repeated failures on the ground? How are these tied to the financing and scaling models of climate-smart technologies? This paper highlights the tensions and contradictions at the heart of scaling climate-smart agriculture and their implications for addressing the intertwined crises of climate change and agriculture

Presenter(s): Nikhit Agrawal

Responsibilities of Sustainability: Orienting Pakistan's Health Systems to Enable Exports to the European Union

Sustainability directives have long shaped governance especially in factories within global supply chains. This paper demonstrates how health systems in Pakistan are being shaped through sustainability directives introduced through the European Union's Green Deal. Recently, EU directives have sought to shape occupational health as a social sustainability marker needed for continued exports. Different stakeholders including, private factory owners, government employees, and worker unions, discuss how responsibilities regarding occupational health would be divided between industries and the private-public worker healthcare system. In this process, these stakeholders came up with innovative and makeshift methodologies in managing

occupational health, especially heat at work and workers' muscular pains. Therefore, I ask: what relationalities emerged between stakeholders as they worked towards the common goal of enabling exports to the EU through managing occupational health? Further, a focus on the methodologies devised for meeting occupational health standards reveals how the role of public health systems is being shaped to enable private factory exports to the EU. Therefore, I argue that when occupational health is shaped under sustainability directives, production sites and healthcare systems do not work as distinct private and public systems but align, albeit with tensions over responsibilities, to enable meeting occupational health standards and continued exports to the EU

Presenter(s): Ramsha Usman

When the Durable Becomes Disposable: The Paradox of Corporate Sustainability in the Chinese EV Industry

What happens when the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter pivots toward clean energy? In recent years, electric vehicles (EVs) have rapidly proliferated on China's roads, accompanied by sweeping changes. The network of charging points has increasingly expanded into remote areas, and public space is filled with advertisements for sleek cars, with pop-up shops in malls and airports inviting passerby to experience "vehicles of sustainable tomorrow." This spectacle results from close state-corporate cooperation on both material (e.g., subsidies) and meaning-making levels, as the state fervently embraces terms like "ecological civilization" and takes pride in the industry's meteoric growth. Similarly, new domestic EV corporations incorporate "sustainability" into their marketing language and corporate values. However, my fieldwork in Shanghai's EV infrastructure—studios, carshops, charging points, industrial seminars, expos, etc.—reveals a complex paradox of how "sustainability" plays out on the ground. I discovered that, irrespective of intentions, EV corporations have fostered a disposable mindset among customers. Few of my interlocutors raised environmental concerns, and most believed that EVs are much less worthy, durable, and reliable than traditional vehicles. Adding to controversies surrounding EVs' carbon footprints, this work investigates questions of value, materiality, and circularity in the Chinese EV industry, ultimately questioning what is sustainable about it.

Presenter(s): Yanping Ni

Discussion

8211 Gesture Politics: Powers and Circulations of Mimetic and Memetic Performance

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Elon Musk's attendance at Donald Trump's 2025 presidential inauguration became a key focus for news platforms reporting on the event. What attracted most attention was not anything he said or

did, but rather a gesture he performed while celebrating the moment, which both drew attention and played on deep and anxiety-laden ambiguities over its meaning and potential historical resonance. The term "gesture politics" tends to imply an empty yet demonstrative action, oriented toward the expectations of an assumed public. Together with other idioms such as making a "formal" or "official gesture" it contributes to the understanding of gestural performance as something somehow empty, lacking meaning. However, Musk's action (later controversially copied by other public figures, ranging from priests to politicians) suggests a richer range of interpretations, pointing not only to the ways in which gesture might play simultaneously on absence and plenitude of meaning, but also to its capacity to provoke both mimetic and memetic forms of circulation: embodied signs that may be semantically obscure yet socially consequential.

Analysis of gesture reaches into the history of anthropology. Tylor, Boas, Mead, and Mead & Bateson, all considered the role of gestures in social interaction (Kendon, 2019). Marcel Jousse, now relatively unknown in Anglophone circles but regarded by some as the founder of an anthropology of gesture, was a Jesuit scholar and student of Mauss (Sienaert 1990). However, Adam Kendon (2019) argues that after Lloyd Warner's (1937) work on signs in North Australia, there was only one article published in 1954 before he published his first piece in 1975. More recently, what Michael Lempert (2019) calls the 'fitful history' of gesture is undergoing a revival. Its interdisciplinary potential is being appreciated anew, alongside its capacity to shift across themes relating to ideologies of gesture (Hoenes del Pinal 2011) and broader questions of cognition and language development (Cartmill 2022). Here, our particular interest is in two, interrelated themes: 1) connections between gestures and social power that emerge because of the ideological work they perform beyond spoken language (Hall, Goldenstein, & Ingram 2016); 2) the ways in which such social power is itself constituted by the capacity of gesture to circulate widely through performances that are both mimetic and memetic.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Alana Sá Leitão, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Simon Coleman, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Simon Coleman, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Maximilian Conrad, University of Texas at Austin, Alana Sá Leitão, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Eric Hoenes del Pinal, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Simon Coleman, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Lifting for the Lord: Muscular Christianity and the Gestural Politics of Orthodox Christian Conversion

Gesture in Orthodox Christianity is most readily encapsulated by one singularly famous gesture: the sign of the cross. It is ubiquitous in Orthodox practice and performed by lay and clergy alike, often seemingly through unconscious habit. Despite this unconscious usage, gestures in Orthodoxy historically play an intriguing, often political role. Recent trends in Orthodox Christian conversion, particularly in the United States, necessitate a focus on gesture. For some newer converts, the sign

of the cross is not the primary gesture of Orthodoxy that it has been for longstanding members. Rather than using the sign of the cross as an icon of the entire faith, a new genre of gesture has emerged among "Orthobros" that indexes a specific vision of masculinity in Orthodoxy. Orthobros are an archetype of young men drawn to Orthodoxy for its perceived masculinity amidst what they deem a feminization of Christianity. Using the framework of Muscular Christianity (a twentieth century movement that mirrors the express concerns of Orthobros), I propose to examine the ways in which these Orthobros enact masculinity, particularly through weightlifting. The indexicality of this gestural weightlifting "lifts" a particular vision of Christian manhood and is further compounded by the memetic nature of online circulation. Finally, the politics of Orthobro conversion also represent a figurative "gesture" towards Russia – alongside ideals of authoritarianism and masculinity embodied by its politics

Presenter(s): Maximilian Conrad

“We are not dancing; we are making gestures”: gestures and embodiment among children in the most Evangelical city in Brazil

Gesture is a native category among some Evangelical groups in Brazil. They call "gestos" gesticulate especially with your hands and arms along with a song. Gesture in this sense entails acts performed in collective contexts, and are accompanied by loud singing. Despite its similarity with dancing, the two actions cannot be mixed up. In the most Evangelical city in Brazil, Abreu e Lima, it is widely known that dancing is a sin while making gestures is not. The number of Evangelical Christians in Brazil grew from 6% to 22% in thirty years, however in the city discussed here, this number grew close to 50%. In research among 3rd grade children in a public school in this city I found that the local Assembly of God is an important center of social activities – even for children whose parents are not members of the church. These children indicated how fond they were of the "grupo de gestos", meaning gestures group Participating in gesture groups, they gathered with other children to rehearse different sets of gestures for different songs, and to participate in events that could occur as frequently as every week. This article discusses the importance of the set of body movements articulated through these gesture groups, and the events where they are performed, for the constitution of the "Evangelical subject" among children in Abreu e Lima.

Presenter(s): Alana Sá Leitão

Discussion

Discussion

1598 Ghosts, Spirits, Gods, and Zombis in Vodou, Voodoo and Hoodoo in New Orleans, Haiti, and Beyond

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

This panel features ethnographers of contemporary cultural and religious formations rooted in the

tradition known as Haitian Vodou, with its historical branches in New Orleans. These forms hold a rich set of cosmologies and knowledge. The person is always embedded in an extensive network of relationships that stretch to living relatives and fictive kin, as well as ancestors, family spirits and the divine (Karen Richman 2005). This panel examines various forms of ghosts, hauntings, and "spirited works" (Paul C. Johnson 2014) produced by histories of violence and enslavement, as well as by new digital technologies that allow divinities to manifest in ways hitherto unimaginable. One paper draws attention to the power of spirit possession (by lwa) to recollect the ancestors (mò) in whose bodies they once manifested. The stirring intimacy and physicality of this mode of recollecting the dead is an overlooked aspect of spirit possession. Another paper recounts ritual spirit-work that enslaves the recently dead in a form of "zonbi astral" wherein a spirit is captured in a bottle and commanded to "work," and then finally liberated in a ritual undoing, or liberation. A third presentation reaches into the space of New Orleans, where denizens encounter the deceased, "haints," and ghosts, and must soothe, draw on, or repel them as necessary. The final presentation will show how devotees of these traditions use Artificial Intelligence image generators to empower themselves to materialize their deities on-screen, and create a vision of the figure they have come to know through spirit possession.

Organizer: Elizabeth McAlister , Hillel Athias-Robles, Fairfield University

Chair: Elizabeth McAlister

Presenter(s): Karen Richman, University of Notre Dame, Elizabeth McAlister, GRETE VIDDAL, Hillel Athias-Robles, Fairfield University

Discussant: Eugenia Rainey

Presentation(s): The Return of the Ancestors in Body and Spirit

Whereas studies of Haitian possession performance typically view it as a powerful expression of the bonds between the spirit and the assembled participants, few studies have recognized how this practice brings ancestors back to life as well. Drawing upon ethnographic research over the past four decades on ritual practices in a transnational community anchored in the Léogane Plain of western Haiti, this paper argues that possession is felt as a corporeal performance of interdependence between living members of a descent group, deceased members, and their inherited spirits. Connecting the living and spirits in a deeply embodied way to their ancestors, their lineal history, and their family land is an overlooked aspect of Haitians' experience of possession. The intimacy and physicality of this mode of symbolizing moral interdependence and indirectly motivating recollection of the dead reveal a profound and stirring aspect of spirit possession.

Presenter(s): Karen Richman

Zombies as Ghosts of Slavery and Freedom in Haitian Vodou

Three decades ago, I acquired a bottle in Haiti, which I later learned contained spirits of the dead known as zonbi. These spirits had been enslaved in a ritual by a spirit-worker and commanded to 'work' for me. Years later, a different spirit-worker performed a ritual to liberate the captive spirits, and he converted the bottle into an empty object. This talk delves into this case study and

discusses the ghostly remnants of the slave system in Haiti, the first nation to achieve independence by way of a rebellion by enslaved people. In many ways enslavement and freedom are both materially and symbolically present in Haitian culture. This talk allows us to consider the ghosts of both slavery and freedom in Haiti, and Haitian spirit-workers' ritual treatment of the hauntings of the past.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth McAlister

Saints and “Haints”: How New Orleanians shelter the living and dwell with the dead.

Hardware and home décor stores in New Orleans always carry a paint color called "haint blue." Neither Sherwin-Williams nor Benjamin Moore make a color by that name, but employees know how to find a robin's egg blue or shade of cyan that looks right. If you peer up under eaves or porch ceilings, half the houses on any block will reveal "haint blue." The color is said to repel ghosts or malevolent spirits.

In New Orleans, household habits, recipes, cemetery customs, and Black parading organizations incorporate rites that protect denizens from misfortune, spirit predation, and encourage the deceased to repose. Featuring conversations with neighborhood culture bearers and city tradition keepers, my presentation focuses on both Creole folkways and African American maskers known as Bonesmen who roam the cemetery at dawn on Mardi Gras morning to "wake the dead" and bring dispatches about right conduct to the living.

Presenter(s): GRETE VIDDAL

“Gods in the Machine”: Reenvisioning the Vodou Spirits and Afro-Atlantic Gods through AI

The mass circulation of European chromolithographs during the late 19th and early 20th centuries played a key role in providing devotees of Afro-Atlantic religions with a vast visual repertoire that could be used to represent, and re-imagine, their deities beyond their traditional correlation with the Catholic saints. A lithograph of a bust of the Virgin of Sorrows bedecked with jewels and heart ex-votos became the perfect image to stand-in for Ezili Freda, the Vodou spirit of love, wealth and beauty. Even a secular lithograph of a dark-skinned female snake-charmer was appropriated in Haitian Vodou to represent the snake divinity Ayida Wedo, and in Dominican Vudú to represent Santa Marta Dominadora, who helps women dominate men like snakes. A similar, crucial moment impacting how followers of different Afro-Atlantic religions envision the sacred has arrived with the rise of AI image generators, allowing them to transcend beyond the standard forms of the Catholic saints and chromolithographs. With a few prompts, grand deities emerge in line with the intimate ways in which devotees have come to know them through multiple modes of engagement. These modes include the personalities they show during possession, intimate conversations, and on the stories about them heard and shared. Furthermore, these new tools empower those wanting to decolonize the sacred's likeness. Ogun, the Yoruba god of war, no longer appears as St George in armor, but as the muscular Black God that he is.

Presenter(s): Hillel Athias-Robles

4520 Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Late Postclassic to Colonial Transition in the Maya Highlands

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Despite the growing body of archaeological and ethnohistorical research on the Maya highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala, much remains unknown about the transformations that Maya and other Mesoamerican communities in the area experienced during the transition from the Late Postclassic period (1250–1524) into the colonial period (1524–1821). This panel brings together scholars and approaches from the fields of archaeology, ethnohistory, linguistics, and ethnography to address key questions around interconnected issues relating to social organization, political economy, and identity. Rather than focusing on single cultural groups in isolation or addressing questions from one methodological angle, each of the papers in this session view Maya peoples and their neighbors as engaged in dynamic interaction and take a comparative and interdisciplinary approach. Thus, Postclassic K'iche' elite marriage practices are analyzed for what they can tell us about "international" relations with other Maya polities; archaeological and ethnohistoric data are connected to sort out entanglements among Tsotsil (Maya), Zoque, and Chiapanec populations; the dynamic social and political organization of Q'anjob'alan communities is reconstructed and compared to those of K'iche'an peoples using a mix of folklore, ethnographic, and documentary sources; and the economic strategies of Nahua and other central Mexican groups in southern Mesoamerica are considered through inventories of trade goods and material culture in the wake of the Spanish invasions. Collectively, this panel sheds new light on intersections of kinship, statecraft, trade, and ethnicity and how these phenomena changed and were deployed before and after the Spanish invasions of the early 16th century.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Mallory Matsumoto, The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Religious Studies, Stacey Schwartzkopf, Hendrix College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Chair: Mallory Matsumoto, The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Religious Studies

Presenter(s): Iyaxel Cojti Ren, Marie Annereau-Fulbert, Stacey Schwartzkopf, Hendrix College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Laura Matthew

Discussant: Guido Pezzarossi, Syracuse University, Judith Maxwell, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Creating kinship networks between the Postclassic K'iche' and other Highland Nations

The K'iche' was one of the strongest political units of the Maya Highlands during the Late Postclassic period (1250–1524 CE). It is thought that the K'iche' had a militaristic state that subdued several nations through coercion. However, this is a generalization that hides diverse

strategies employed by the K'iche' to create lasting relationships with other highland nations. The K'iche' ruling lineages practiced exogamy, which resulted in creating kinship networks at the regional level that chroniclers and Spanish authorities identified after their arrival in the territory now known as Guatemala in 1524. In this presentation, I will discuss the creation of kinship networks at the regional level by the K'iche', which had the purpose of maintaining peace in the region, strengthening existing alliances, and colonizing new territories. This presentation aims to understand kinship among the Postclassic K'iche' and its political implication at a regional level.

Presenter(s): Iyaxel Cojti Ren

The Título de Chiapa and archaeological evidence for the study of the Postclassic horizon in Central Chiapas

Recent studies in the Guatemalan Highlands on the Postclassic horizon represent both a methodological challenge and a significant milestone in the investigation of these phenomena in Central Chiapas from the perspectives of archaeology and early colonial history. Our study area lies within the transition zone between the Jobel Valley (present-day San Cristóbal de Las Casas Basin) and the Central Depression of Chiapas.

During the period preceding the arrival of the Europeans, historical sources, particularly the Título de Chiapa (Navarrete 1966; Annereau-Fulbert & Flores 2021), document deep in time and complex patterns of population movement. These processes had significant implications for the interactions among the Zoque, Chiapaneca, and Tsotsil groups, who occupied the region through diverse forms of territorial settlement. As a result, establishing a direct correlation between archaeological sites and the ethnic and linguistic organization of the early colonial period becomes challenging.

Drawing on documentary evidence and the spatial configuration of the Monte Guineo archaeological site, located in the present-day municipality of San Lucas, we analyze key indicators to better understand these ancient socio-political dynamics.

Presenter(s): Marie Annereau-Fulbert

A Tale of Brothers: Reading Postclassic Q'anjob'alan History in the "Title of Jacaltenango" and Oral Narratives

Scholarly awareness of the konob' ("town") and niman konob' ("Great town") and their cognates among Q'anjob'alan Maya peoples (Q'anjob'al, Popti', Chuj, and Akatek) in northern Huehuetenango has been limited by a lack of coordination of relevant data across ethnography, history, archaeology, and folklore. Each provides key pieces of information about these social units comparable to, yet distinct from, the chinamit and amaq' among K'iche'an Maya peoples. Here I connect these disparate sources, focusing on the "Title of Jacaltenango," a Spanish-language land title containing critical information about the region's early history. Reading this and related texts in conjunction with oral narratives and ethnography, I reconstruct the area's Postclassic and colonial political and social organization. This reconstruction is related to the limited archaeology done in the area and compared to the chinamit and amaq'. In contrast to the latter's focus on ranking noble

houses, konob' and niman konob' emphasize ritual hierarchies among towns connected by common descent from ancestral couples, using kinship among elder and junior siblings as a metaphor for intra- and intercommunity relationships. This is shown in narratives about named ancestors venerated at specific locations within a sacred landscape, reinforcing common identification and potential alliance (or rivalry) with "brothers" and "sisters" across town boundaries, a pattern that endured into the colonial era and after.

Presenter(s): Stacey Schwartzkopf

Survivance in Small Things: Interregional Trade on the Camino Real de Abajo, 1570–1640

This paper is premised on the frequent claim that central Mexican allies of the Spanish conquistadors sought fuller access to ancient trade routes running through present-day Chiapas and Guatemala, which had never been fully incorporated by the tributary Mexica empire. If this is true, did the mostly Nahua allies get what they wanted by the end of the 16th century? This period was also the nadir of Indigenous demographic collapse in the wake of Spanish invasion. I use economic data not only to suggest the state of Mesoamerican interregional trade in a globalizing era, but to imagine Mesoamerican lives amid disaster through the small details of things they produced and purchased. I will focus on four documents: three prosecutions of illicit sales by Spanish priests or administrators who were forbidden by law from selling to Mesoamericans, plus the postmortem inventory and auction of a middling Spanish merchant in the Izalcos (San Salvador). These documents, along with some 20 other inventories or bills of sale, provide a unique view of merchandise marketed to Mesoamericans by Spaniards at the turn of the 16th to the 17th centuries. They cannot tell us why someone would have bought feathered huipiles, leather children's booties, blue naguas from Oaxaca, or rosaries in a given situation. But examining them as a corpus, with an eye towards pre-Columbian versus Spanish colonial patterns of production and interaction, suggests a wider range of possibilities than is often admitted.

Presenter(s): Laura Matthew

Discussion

Discussion

4887 “The Wound is a World:” Writing Trauma as Politically Engaged Research

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Inspired by traditions of feminist testimonio, "felt theory" (Million 2009), fugitive anthropology (Berry et al. 2017), and the work of tracing "imperial intimacies" (Carby 2019), this session considers the possibilities and challenges of writing about/with trauma as politically engaged research. Agreeing with Billy-Ray Belcourt that "the wound is a world" that opens up otherwise futures and Dian Million's assessment of academia as a gatekeeping institution that dismisses alternative forms of

knowing-namely, Indigenous women's intimate storytelling about structural violence-we center ways that activist-scholars document, "witness," and practice care with others' and our own lived traumas. Rather than romanticizing this process or celebrating the scholar-martyr, we center papers that think critically about these intimate collaborations and often uncomfortable, laborious exchanges. We ask, what are the roles of writing and witnessing as part of politically engaged scholarly projects? What do we owe each other, and what is the work of mutuality and care when documenting trauma? How might, to return to Million, feelings re-enter our accounts: feelings that carry histories, structural wounds, and hopes for alternative futures? Our papers dwell on these questions and complexities. Largely uninterested in seeking resolution, we linger in paradoxes and ambiguities that "haunt" our work and inspire us to theorize otherwise.

Notably, the papers in this session are under review to be part of a special issue of *Feminist Anthropology*, forthcoming in spring 2026. We envision the proposed session as a space for dialogue with a diversity of feminist anthropologists to further enrich our critical analysis. It will also serve to preview and publicize the forthcoming issue of *FA*. Inspired by Mariana Mora's (2017) insistence that decolonizing feminist research requires focusing on the research process itself, "This Wound is a World" intervenes in conversations around the field, fieldwork and homework, and the practice and politics of writing. Like *FA*, our session is committed to multidisciplinary and experimental approaches to research that refuse what Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017) calls the singular masculinist vision. Gómez-Barris invites scholars to embrace "queer femme methodologies" that move beyond the singularity of "extinction, colonial absorption, and violence" and instead look for, listen to, and are guided by submerged perspectives that prioritize forms of life bubbling below the surface. Our collective understands feminist anthropology as an approach that tends to the submerged, sensorial, embodied, intimate, and "fugitive." Importantly, we have learned from feminist scholars like Chandra Mohanty (1984) to refuse essentialism and "unity," instead celebrating the differences, fault lines, and tensions in our approaches and methodologies.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Angela Stuesse, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Maya Berry, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Presenter(s): Angela Stuesse, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Robin Reineke, University of Arizona, Chandler Classen, Isabel Abarca, Kathleen Coll, University of San Francisco

Presentation(s): Finding Our Way Through: On Activist Scholarship, Co-Authorship and Trauma

Following a sequence of traumatic events involving a home raid, immigrant detention, and family separation, over fifteen years after co-authors Angela Stuesse and Daniela A. Vargas first met, our lives became entwined in ways we could never have predicted. In the eight years since, we have been collaborating to narrate that experience, interweaving Dany's life story with an analysis of how U.S. immigration policy since 9/11 has indelibly shaped the lives of undocumented youth. As part of a commitment to horizontal, longitudinal, activist scholarship, our co-authorship of #FreeDany and our grappling with the many questions this experiment generates stretches the bounds of collaboration beyond research design/data collection into the less explored realms of writing and

publication. But one thing about trauma is that it lingers. You think you've healed, and here it is again. You revisit it and it surprises you with its intensity. And, we've found, it insistently confounds our best intentions of collaborative storytelling and authorship. Looking to Latin(x) American, Black, and Indigenous feminist theorizing of testimonio and witnessing (Latina Feminist Group 2001; Murphy 2019), relationality and embodiment (Berry et al. 2017; Stephen and Speed 2021), desire and refusal (Tuck 2009, Tuck and Yang 2014) in this paper we attempt to come to terms with how trauma has troubled, made demands upon, and ultimately reshaped the possibilities for our collaborative scholarship.

Presenter(s): Angela Stuesse

Contraband Grief in the US-Mexico Borderlands

This paper reflects on experiences of practicing forensic anthropology and writing ethnography from a place of grief. By weaving together reflections on personal grief with ethnographic observations about the grief of others—namely, families of migrants who have died or disappeared while crossing the border—this paper theorizes personal grief as a form of haunting. Following Gordon's (1997) definition of haunting as circumstances "when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings won't go away," this paper considers the role of stigmatized emotions in forensic anthropology and the intrusion of personal grief in the process of ethnographic writing. Drawing on these anthropological ways of knowing alongside critical indigenous theorizations of ancestors and relationality, it is argued that contraband grief has a role in anthropological practice whether we welcome it or not.

Presenter(s): Robin Reineke

"Re-Opening Wounds": Community Fallout in the Aftermath of Failed Nuclear Waste Siting

When I was 12, my family told me a story about their community falling apart and coming together, a time someone tried putting a nuclear facility in their (our?) hometown. The story lingered in the background, rarely spoken of. As such, the story – I believed – had little significance until I embarked on a "homeplace" ethnographic journey (hooks). As I returned home, heightened tension permeated the community atmosphere in the affective and geographic shape of community life. One collaborator asked (accused?), you just want to re-open our biggest wounds, don't you? Even though he wasn't alive during the "nuke-dump fight," woundedness has been passed down. These deep wounds became central to my ethnographic inquiry, one complicated by the intimacy between myself, family, and the community. Inspired by these tense, traumatic relationships, this essay articulates ethnographic practices of productive care and reciprocity in which re-opening wounds bears communal risk – risks that can deeply attune us to the stakes of research and understand the structural inequities that rely on community trauma.

Presenter(s): Chandler Classen

Mapping Diasporic Inheritances: Through Memory, Autoethnography, and Family Ethnography

This paper explores questions of what constitutes inheritance, how it's felt and embodied, and the ways it can be conceptualized, understood, and enacted upon. Through autoethnography and positioned as a second-generation, American-born, child of a Salvadoran immigrant, I consider notions of inheritance and felt responsibilities as both an aspiring politically engaged scholar and daughter of the diaspora. Inheritance will be mapped out through everyday interactions and conversations, ranging from childhood memories to present, and conceptually addressed in relation to themes of trauma, care, responsibilities, obligations, and hope. This work aims to contribute to theorizations of how inheritance informs practices of care both as a daughter and as a scholar, especially when the inheritances are intimately intertwined with trauma. I also consider, through these autoethnographic reflections, methodological and theoretical possibilities within anthropology of what it could mean to conduct family (auto)ethnography. This is framed, broadly, as the study of a family within the family and works to extend autoethnographic conventions for both the ethnographer and participants. I argue that this approach could open up new anthropological understandings of family, generational relationships, intergenerational knowledge production and transmission, and how generations are engaging with memories to look towards a collective and imagined future.

Presenter(s): Isabel Abarca

Sanando juntas: Community Research on Trauma, and Activism that Heals

This paper considers testimonio as a key methodological and epistemological tool in both grassroots community organizing and research on trauma and healing. Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) is an immigrant women-led grassroots organization in the San Francisco Bay Area with over thirty years of history working with survivors of violence. In early 2020, MUA launched a research team with academic allies to study, document and analyze their approach to community power-building and domestic violence prevention. Key organizational values and practices of mutuality and care, including dialogue and testimonio, made research a space for healing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sharing testimonios within the group builds trusting relationships and collective knowledge (Latina Feminist Group 2001). Sharing testimonios publicly is an activist intervention linking personal healing with political engagement and advocacy. Testimonio and reflective dialogue turned research team meetings about interviews, focus groups, surveys, and archives into opportunities for healing and support. At the same time, the realities of democratic collaboration across multiple lines of inequality and privilege, from research design through dissemination, were far more complex, uncomfortable, and laborious than we could have predicted. This paper considers both on the tensions and limits of conducting such research, including the feminist anthropologist's role in the project of "sanando juntas."

Presenter(s): Kathleen Coll

6898 Echoes from the Past: How Political Culture Haunts Medical Education and Patient Advocacy

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Medical education does not exist in a vacuum. It is shaped by historical legacies, political constraints, and institutional structures that determine how future physicians conceptualize patient advocacy. In today's shifting political climate, legislation increasingly limits discussions of racism and structural inequities. The ghosts of past medical injustices, such as medical research conducted on enslaved people, continue to influence training, practice, and the doctor-patient relationship. Anthropology has an important role to play in shaping the future of medicine. This roundtable explores how historical reckonings, or the lack thereof, manifest in medical curricula, health policy, and advocacy efforts.

Participants will examine how race-based medical theories persist in contemporary training, how hidden curricula transmit past ideologies, and how political restrictions, such as anti-DEI legislation, shape medical students' preparedness to address health disparities. Drawing on research in medical anthropology, science-based best practices in patient care, and firsthand experiences in medical training, this discussion will highlight the tensions between historical accountability and present-day political constraints.

This session focuses on both the structural challenges and the pathways forward. It aims to brainstorm strategies for involvement by anthropologists as advocates, educators, and practitioners. We'll explore insights into how political culture influences medical education and what can be done to ensure that the next generation of physicians is prepared to advocate for equitable healthcare.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Courtney Rejano, University of South Florida

Presenter(s): Richard Gonzalez , Mirko Pasquini, University of Gothenburg, Sarah Rubin, Ohio University, Dennis Wiedman, Florida International University, Hannah Connolly , Sean Bruna, Medical University of South Carolina

Discussant: Courtney Rejano, University of South Florida

4157 Embodied Archives: Bones, Memories and the Afterlives of Enslavement and Genocide

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel concerns the present absences of embodied archives (Weller 2021, Semerdjian 2023),

the simultaneous materiality and spectrality of bones and bodies, of memories and memoirs. How might we approach these tensions and complementarities, both methodologically and epistemologically? The panel has a comparative focus on two geographies and histories and their afterlives: the Armenian genocide and trans-Atlantic enslavement. We center on ethical questions that arise around refusal: when should bones (or ghosts) be left alone, and when do we engage? How do we dig deeper without enacting further violence on the living and the dead? How does one navigate the field when the ethnographer herself is turned into an embodied archive? Do we turn to spectral methodologies, echoing Navaro's (2020) call for a negative methodology for the study of mass violence with a focus on erasures and voids?

The panel – an interdisciplinary conversation of bio-archaeologists, social anthropologists, historical anthropologists and a historian– traverses landscapes that offer intertwined material and spectral traces of genocide and enslavement: in Van, a Kurdish region in Turkey, where the quest for enchanted gold unfolds amid bones and cryptic maps of century-old genocide; in the American mid-Atlantic, where ancestral remnants of slavery persist as sticky and tricky palimpsests; in early 20th-century Istanbul, where a writer, having barely escaped genocide but lost his entire family, wanders incessantly through the urban landscape as an act of creativity and survival; and in the South Atlantic, where attempts to (re)articulate the remains of the "liberated" can be sources of simultaneous repair and constraint.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Ayse Parla, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Andreana Cunningham

Chair: Elyse Semerdjian, Clark University

Presenter(s): Anoush Suni, Andreana Cunningham, Delande Justinvil, American University, Ayse Parla, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Robert Weller, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghostly Gold and the Material Traces of Genocide

This paper examines the material and spectral traces of histories of genocide through imaginaries of buried and enchanted gold in the Kurdish majority region of Van in Eastern Turkey. A century after the Genocide of 1915 destroyed the Ottoman Armenian community of the region, Kurdish treasure hunters imagine, search for, and unearth the material remnants of that violent history. They hunt for gold but often encounter bones as they dig in cemeteries and around medieval churches, their efforts often thwarted by enchantments that keep them at bay. Treasure hunters rely on maps with captivating images, old texts in incomprehensible alphabets, and inscriptions with cryptic messages. These maps and images engender new imaginations of the past, present, and future, as Kurdish residents of Van—a landscape marked by historical and contemporary violence—seek to read the material traces of the past as they imagine possible futures enriched by treasure. As they attempt to access the information held captive within these enigmatic texts and images, treasure hunters also seek an interpreter who can guide them to the riches they desire. As an Armenian-American ethnographer studying the traces and remnants of the Armenian Genocide in Van, I reflect on the way that Kurdish treasure hunters position me as the missing link, the key to the

cypher who can unlock the secrets in the maps, and as a living, embodied archive, who can restore the severed link between past and present.

Presenter(s): Anoush Suni

Disorientations of Researcher and Bone: Pivots in conceptualization of the material legacies of enslavement in the South Atlantic

Despite the growing emphasis in skeletal research on descendant community collaboration and conceptualization of remains as complex and inherently valuable, tensions persist in skeletal analysis. The process of disarticulating and rearticulating remains—recording bone measurements and later integrating them into a composite interpretation of a person—forces researchers to dramatically pivot between seeing remains as scientific objects and as individuals with intricate past and present lives. This process risks overexposing the intimate histories of the dead, projecting false life onto them, and in some cases causing irreparable harm. I apply these considerations to a case study of 19th century "Liberated Africans" who were laid to rest in St. Helena, whose dislocations reflect both the horrors of trans-Atlantic enslavement and their ensuing relocation to a transit zone in the South Atlantic Ocean. Skeletal and archival evidence boldly inscribe their fraught navigations of surveillance, health, and kinship in this transitional home. However, the processes of dis-/rearticulation from these data, which may profess to rehumanize, have the potential to instead flatten the material legacies of the "Liberated Africans." Further, these processes can clash with modern St. Helenians' own entanglements with the humanity held at this site of the dead.

Presenter(s): Andreana Cunningham

Residual Impacts: Palimpsests as windows into resituating enslavement era sites and embodied archives of the Black Atlantic

This work explores the concept of dislocation—understood as the coercion of bodies out of place historically, socially, and spatially—not merely as a violent act of erasure, but as indirect evidence of prior existence. By acknowledging death, loss, and removal, dislocation simultaneously recognizes the presence of lives and bodies that once were. My research centers on Black ancestral remains, with a focus on the DMV area, but situates these remains within broader Atlantic heritage contexts. Influenced by Marisa Fuentes's frameworks of the body and the archive—specifically the body of the archive, the body in the archive, and the body as the archive—I employ these concepts to frame my contributions. Through the notion of "residues" as persistent, even "sticky" traces of the past, I emphasize the importance of critical fabulation and speculative historiography in uncovering the traces that guide the work of bioarchaeologists and archivists alike.

Presenter(s): Delande Justinvil

The Limbs and Bones of Hostage Writing and the Art of Survival After Genocide

Walking- as- writing is pivotal to the artistic self-fashioning of Hagop Mintzuri, pivotal intellectual of early 20th century Istanbul, prolific short story writer, columnist, bread distributor, school teacher, baker, secretarial clerk , fodder seller, coal seller, church caretaker, and genocide survivor. This

paper follows in the footsteps of Mintzuri's *Istanbul Memories* (1897–1940), first to honor him as a meticulous chronicler of urban life, one who offers exemplary thick descriptions of how class, ethnicity, and nationality were inscribed and performed in fin de siècle Istanbul, through the Armenian Genocide, and World War I, and extending into their aftermath. At the same time, the paper takes a step back to reckon with what it must have meant to continue to walk and observe when collective mobility for surviving Armenians was violently ruptured. How does an author navigate a city that is not only exclusionary but also haunted by an attempt to annihilate the walker? How does one go on walking and writing, when one's entire family was marched to their deaths and when each step carries the body into a denialist present that refuses to acknowledge one's status as a survivor? I also ponder questions of method and archive: how does one conduct an ethnographic, historical, and embodied reading of a memoir that hovers between what Weller (2021) describes as present absences and absent absences?

Presenter(s): Ayse Parla

Discussion

4079 Dynamic Belonging: The Formulation of Social Bonds in South Korea

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the diverse ways individuals and communities negotiate belonging within the dynamic landscape of contemporary South Korean society. Across a variety of social spaces, Korean individuals emphasize uri (우리 - "we" or "us") over the self, making community an essential facet of their lives. The purpose of this panel is to delve into uri's place in social circles of the dynamic cityscape of Seoul. Through five distinct ethnographic lenses-ranging from faith communities and food culture to labor, migration, and urban subcultures-this panel's research collectively highlights how social identities are shaped, expressed, and contested in everyday life. The panelists, throughout nine weeks of ethnographic study in the field, explore the daily experiences of Koreans as they choose or refuse to engage within certain social spaces, focusing particularly on how this is influenced by the development of bonds. Overall, through analyzing the role of various social spheres within Seoul, this panel seeks to contribute to a critical discourse on the formulation of belonging within a collectivist society.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Charlotte Hancock, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Charlotte Hancock, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Charlotte Hancock, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Parker Skousen, Bella Valdizan, Sergio Romero, Denisse Sanchez, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology, Rachael Channer

Discussant: Greg Thompson, Brigham Young University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Education and Faith: The South Korean Balance of Religiosity with Schooling

The purpose of this study was to explore how the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter "the Church") provides spiritual experiences in order to strengthen the faith of their South Korean youth (ages 11-17). Youth in South Korea are known to be subject to rather demanding schedules, with school during the day, hagwon after school, and, for some, private tutoring into the night. At the same time, the youth program of the Church is also known to be very demanding of young people's time, with not just regular church attendance expected but also often early morning seminary and evening activities being normatively expected of youth. Through 9 weeks of ethnographic research with young female Church members in South Korea, this study documents how South Korean young women navigate these multiple and significant demands on their time. This study's methods included participant observation in and around religious meetings, lessons, and activities as well as semi-structured/unstructured interviews about these youth's experiences with the Church. The majority of time was spent with teenage girls whose families attend church in Seoul. This research documents the ways that young women in the Church navigate their relationship to the Church while managing intense secular demands. At the same time, this research offers insight into the demands of being a young person in Korea today by documenting the first hand experiences of youth.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Hancock

Jeong in Korean Ping Pong Clubs

Jeong (정) is a Korean cultural concept that describes deep emotional and social connection that grows over time. Characterized by repeated reciprocal exchanges between people in a shared community, jeong is typically said to be found in tightly knit village communities, in families and between spouses, and in ban (반) homeroom classes in school. Scholars have suggested that jeong has been declining in urban life as social exchanges have become less reciprocal and more transactional (Olga Fedorenko, "From Unsaid Feelings to Frank Communication: Portrayals of Jeong in Orion Choco Pie Advertisements and the Encroachment of Emotional Capitalism in South Korea," *Korea Journal* 62, no. 4 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.25024/kj.2022.62.4.226>). In my research, based on two months of field research in which I participated in a ping pong club in Seoul, South Korea, I investigate how jeong may persist in the less formally connected community of the ping pong club. I ask questions such as: can the community formed by a ping pong club be well described by jeong? Is jeong more a function of repeated exchanges over long amounts of time, more a function of in-group belonging, both, or something else?

Presenter(s): Parker Skousen

Latino Immigrants, Calor Humano and Jeong in South Korea

South Korea has had a long-standing internal narrative about the relative ethnic homogeneity of its population. However, due in part to what its recently impeached president called a national

emergency, namely, the birth rate crisis, South Korea is faced with a growing need for immigrant labor and thus for immigrants. The objective of this research is to understand how Korea's population is developing its relations with one particular group, Latino immigrants and travelers. In this research I consider the different cultural characteristics of Koreans and Latinos as they interact with one another. This research builds on research by a colleague (Lopez 2024) that pointed to the fact that Latinos in Korea felt a distinctive lack of warmth (*calor humano*) while living, working, and moving about in Korea. This finding is particularly interesting because it showed that the Korean concept of *jeong* (which, in practice is similar to *calor humano*) did not seem to translate to their experience. This study employs ethnographic methods, mainly studying places where Latino culture has bloomed, such as celebratory festivals, restaurants, dance clubs/classes, etc., as well as included interviews. This research then analyzes how Koreans and Latinos interact in multiple settings, their comfort with each other and their cultures, their capacity to create relationships, and their general level of interest in one another.

Presenter(s): Bella Valdizan

Architectural Anthropology: The Influence of Our Built Environment

This project explores the intersection of architecture and anthropology by examining how the design and structure of spaces—both ancient and modern—shape human behavior, social interaction, and cultural meaning. Drawing on methods from ethnographic research and architectural analysis, the study investigates the anthropological dimensions of built environments and how physical space both reflects and produces specific ways of living, gathering, and relating to one another. Through comparative analysis, I will examine architectural elements in ancient sacred spaces such as temples, ziggurats, or pyramids alongside modern structures like museums, public buildings, and minimalist homes. This contrast will help highlight the continuity and transformation of spatial influence over time. The project will focus on how these environments guide movement, foster emotional responses, and cultivate collective identity or isolation. I aim to learn how intentional design choices—light, openness, scale, acoustics—are made with social and emotional outcomes in mind, and whether these ideas are informed by or diverge from the functions of ancient spaces. Ultimately, this research seeks to offer insight into the silent power of architecture: how it not only shelters but also shapes us. By placing modern design in conversation with the ancient, the project contributes to a deeper understanding of how space becomes a social actor in human life.

Presenter(s): Sergio Romero

Education Aspirations

This ethnographic study investigates how South Korea's social class system influences students' educational aspirations. In a society where academic achievement is closely tied to social mobility and job security, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds often face unequal access to educational resources, support systems, and opportunities. Drawing from my own background in the United States—where ideals of self-determination and individualism shape career narratives—

this research contrasts how cultural and structural forces shape ambition and success. Through interviews with South Korean students currently studying in the U.S., along with field observations in South Korea during the summer, this study examines how class status affects students' perceptions of academic success, the types of careers they believe are attainable, and the pressures they experience. Special attention is given to the role of private education (hagwons), observations in libraries, and interviews with individuals who have become lawyers and doctors in Korea. This research aims to reveal how deeply embedded class differences contribute to shaping both opportunity and outlook within Korea's education system.

Presenter(s): Denisse Sanchez

Kimchi Culture and Food Community in South Korea

This research is based on 9 weeks of ethnographic research in South Korea, both in Seoul and the surrounding countryside. This research explores kimchi culture and food commensality within South Korea, focusing on how these play a role in people's everyday relationships. It also examines the impact of the industrialization of kimchi and the importation of Western goods on food traditions and commensality. Kimchi is an integral part of South Korea's food culture, and has been called the pride and identity of Korea by various scholars (e.g., Surya & Nugroho, 2023, para. 12; Surya & Ga-Yeon, 2022). In addition to the cultural importance of kimchi, this research also considers its health benefits - including those of other traditional foods - taking inspiration from and seeking to expound on the research of these scholars. This paper examines various aspects of kimchi and food culture such as son mat (hand flavor), yaksik dongwon (food as medicine), and small/local family businesses. It investigates how these cultural concepts affect relationships in South Korea and how industrialization has impacted, and still is impacting, these traditional concepts. Through ethnographic fieldwork, thematic and discourse analysis and coding this paper additionally explores the connections between food and wellbeing in Korean culture as seen in modern day interactions with kimchi and other Korean foods, as well as the history of kimchi in Korea.

Presenter(s): Rachael Channer

Discussion

7088 Spectres and Presences: Necessary Hauntings and Contingent Exorcisms in Ethnographies of Addiction and Recovery in North America and Europe

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Reflecting on his opium habit, the French writer and artist, Jean Cocteau, famously wrote, "The dead drug leaves a ghost behind. At certain hours it haunts the house." Cocteau was not the first, and certainly won't be the last to understand the power of haunting to frame the experience of

addiction and the process of recovery. Strangely, in the near-century since his death, the spectres have refused to leave this opposition and continuum. Currently, Addiction and Recovery remain both agreed-upon terms in multiple discourses as well as being sites of strenuous contestation. Not only do older models, of, say Recovery, haunt modern discourses, say, of harm reduction, but ghostly idealized types of these terms can inhabit and are alternately summoned by their respective use. For many decades, for example, especially in North America, "addiction" has made uncomfortable bedfellows of a saccharin spirituality and a bitter materialist science, neither of which can shake the other for long, leaving many people uncertain as to which belongs in this dimension and which in another. Some modern popular theorists, such as Gabor Maté, matter-of-factly talk about "Hungry Ghosts" inside of us to model trauma and addiction, an idea which he has increasingly built up as a foundation for a very conservative cultural politics. Yet, "ghosts" can also be therapeutic, as Recovery Genealogies attest to, where people in Recovery can be connected by departed sponsors, whose presence is recalled in group meetings. Thus, which spectres can be summoned (or, alternatively, which can be exorcised) produce regimes of policy-making, waves of diverse social activism, and various moral panics, all of which have helped constitute modern Addiction and Recovery Studies. These papers interrogate ethnographic work in North America and Europe from the perspective of ghosts and their exorcising.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Thomas Stewart Spitzfaden, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology, A. Jamie Saris, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Thomas Stewart Spitzfaden, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): A. Jamie Saris, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology, Benjamin Strassfeld, Suzana Jovicic, University of Vienna, Thomas Stewart Spitzfaden, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Capitalism and the Spirit of Addiction: The Making and Unmaking of the Social in the Business of Appetites

Famously, Weber credited an accumulation-oriented economy to the "Protestant Ethic", an immaterial force at the heart of capitalism. Some decades later, Keynes, reflecting on Capitalism's crises, posited "animal spirits" as an ephemeral but necessary driver of economic growth. But, if capitalism accumulates profits, based on the growth and satisfaction of ever-increasing and refined appetites, then other, darker spirits also appear. As the 20thC progressed "Addiction" emerged as the spectre haunting capitalism, appetites unleashed to individually and socially destructive ends. Thus, Maté sees a "hungry ghost" at the heart of addiction, left there by modern capitalism's relentless ability to melt into air all that should be solid. In the USA at least, Addiction, especially the opiate crisis, has emerged as a stable metaphysical platform to critique a society based solely on contracting, self-interested individual at the heart of the bourgeois political imagination. Similarly, theorists of the Anthropocene worry that we are sleepwalking into a mass extinction due to our collective addition to petrochemicals. This paper examines how a variety of actors talk about addiction from this perspective of ghostly presences and haunting appetites, while reflecting on both the making and dissolving of social ties. Included are the musings of small-

scale drug-dealers in Ireland through manifestos of mass-murderers, all of whom assume addiction as a social fact in the modern world.

Presenter(s): A. Jamie Saris

Temperance, Prohibition, and the Haunting of the American Recovery Movement

In this paper I argue that the prohibition era, and the specter of the temperance movement that birthed Prohibition, has haunted how the U.S. imagines and treats alcohol addiction. I begin with Alcoholics Anonymous, founded two years after Prohibition ended. Notably, early AA literature deliberately distanced the group from temperance crusaders. The temperance movement was associated with Protestant middle-class white women protesting the alcohol industry. In contrast, AA was male-dominated and focused solely on helping the struggling alcoholic, showing no interest in the broader industry profiting from addiction. AA likewise takes no position on outside matters, including alcohol industry regulation. In the 1980s, as advocacy groups urged Congress to regulate alcohol advertising much like earlier tobacco reforms, the recovery movement with AA at its center remained silent. This silence paralleled AA's institutionalization that began with the creation of the Minnesota Model in the 1950s, which brought its philosophy into inpatient treatment settings. The widespread adoption of this model has entrenched the view that alcohol addiction is an individualized problem requiring a single mass-produced model for the treatment of the individual, with little attention to the structural forces enabling and profiting off addiction.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Strassfeld

"Something sleeping that shouldn't be woken up": Embodied Uncertainties of Relapse in Internet Addiction Treatment

Patients entering an Austrian addiction clinic encounter bureaucratic procedures—signing paperwork, receiving predictable medications, and following structured timelines—all producing an illusion of certainty, bounded space, and linear time. Yet as narratives unravel in group therapy, traces and untold stories of those returning after relapse introduce a spectral presence that haunts the therapeutic space. This fear of crossing the threshold of relapse is especially potent when no clear thresholds exist to begin with. Unlike abstinence-based alcohol treatment, where relapse is openly acknowledged and viscerally discussed, internet addiction treatment faces a core challenge: abstinence is impossible in a digitally dependent world. This paper examines how clinicians use a "traffic light" metaphor for behavioural self-classification—creating a seemingly simple system in which treatment success remains largely self-defined. I argue that this interpretative ambiguity amplifies embodied anxiety about relapse, described by therapists and patients as "something sleeping that shouldn't be woken up" or a dormant "stomach worm." While biomedical models frame addiction as a "relapsing neurological disorder," internet addiction treatment reveals how recovery is haunted by the unique challenges of behavioural addictions lacking clear physiological markers. This paper explores how linear recovery pathways are haunted by the immaterial presence of uncertain relapse threats.

Presenter(s): Suzana Jovicic

“We are all ghosts here”: Hauntings, Memories, and Institutions

The institutionalization of recovery in the U.S. unfolds across three distinct but overlapping forms: state-regulated treatment facilities, extra-institutional and culturally dominant mutual aid groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, and the newer, ambiguously governed, and rapidly proliferating sober house. Though structurally different, most of these institutional settings participate in hegemonically accepted understandings of addiction and recovery. In this paper, I draw on recovery genealogies to analyze how people speak about their dead in divergent ways. I contrast two cases: (1) a nonprofit treatment facility that, after becoming for-profit, erased its deceased cofounder by demolishing his namesake hall; and (2) a sober house that, following a resident's death, ceased operating as such and became a site of reflection, prompting affiliates to reassess recovery and the role of the sober house. In these settings, addiction treatment language preemptively assigns subject positions to the living, but in some cases, also the departed subject. I also examine how these institutions incorporate, erase, or silence the dead, making death a site for institutional change in terms of how the dead can haunt what is said, what is practiced, and what is remembered. I will show how recovery practices can be re-moralized in settings where dominant discourse is supposedly stable yet shared beliefs and practice about healing may be subject to change.

Presenter(s): Thomas Stewart Spitzfaden

2958 Exceptions to Exceptionalism: Toward a New Anthropology of France

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In ethnographies of France and francophone contexts, ideas about tradition, stability, and cultural coherence rest in permanent tension with cultural crises, rapid demographic change, and social unrest. As Susan Rogers observed over twenty years ago in an Annual Review article, tropes of "social disarray and exclusion" have largely been taken for granted as "social problem[s]...to be analyzed in terms of the breakdown of institutions of integration" (2001: 493). On Rogers' view, central to both mainstream narratives of social change in France, and to anthropological studies of that change, are questions about hegemonic culture, powerful institutions, and the state. Alongside these idioms, however, there has been a consistent ethnographic focus on "social relations expressed in the symbolic and material practices of everyday life" (Ibid).

In this respect, there are at least two longstanding, intersecting themes in ethnographies of France and French empire. Firstly, scholars have wrestled with the seemingly irreconcilable contradictions between "top-down" and "bottom-up" ethnographic approaches. While the former home in on (mainly Parisian) political and economic institutions, the latter figure France from the perspectives of rural villagers, banlieue and outer-seas department residents, migrants, and other marginalized subjects. Secondly, conversations about fragmentation and coherence often implicate fraught

geographic divides. That is, scholars have tacked continuously between romanticized visions of the rural heartland and the turbulent realities of a racially riven, postcolonial (sub-)urban contexts.

This panel asks whether and how these dynamics in the anthropological study of French and francophone contexts have shifted, and, if we continue to recycle these tensions, what this might suggest for new ethnographic approaches. How can we better interdigitate imaginaries of France as a holistic, durable social order with attention to fragmentation and crisis? How might we track political instabilities and mounting extremism without reproducing the simplistic divide between Paris and la France profonde, or between metropole and colonies? To focus our discussions, we home in on exceptions and exceptionalisms. If French people have long seen themselves as participating in an exceptional liberal, humanist, Republican tradition, then ethnographers of France have proved particularly adept at illuminated exceptions to this exceptionalism (Ticktin 2011, Fernando 2014, Fleming 2017, Beaman 2017, Silverstein 2018, Kleinman 2019). Emphasizing contradiction and paradox, we seek to transcend the polarities that have long marked the anthropology of France and French empire.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Luke Forrester, Brown University, Damien Stankiewicz, Temple University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Damien Stankiewicz, Temple University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Julie Kleinman, Fordham University, Damien Stankiewicz, Temple University, Department of Anthropology, Luke Forrester, Brown University, Jennifer Cole, University of Chicago, Elayne Oliphant, New York University

Discussant: Paul Silverstein, Reed College, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Citizens Beyond Borders: French Exceptionalism in the Era of Transnational Migrant Rights Activism

Based on an ethnography of a transnational migrant rights network made up of overlapping activist collectives in France and West Africa, this paper examines how activists both engage with and contest French traditions of labor rights, international solidarity, and activist struggle. By following the trajectories of activists in the network, I propose a methodological approach that examines how people encounter French exceptionalism and its paradoxes in practice. I argue that West African activists offer a model for confronting France's longstanding "racial project" (Beaman 2017) by creating non-hierarchical networks that mobilize the "prefigurative politics" (Graeber 2014) of resistance, whereby networks' structure and function seek to establish the equitable solidarity and social justice that constitute the ultimate objective—even in the face of crisis and setback for migrant rights. This paper concludes by reflecting on the methodological lessons of decentering France as the ethnographic focus, as well as the possibilities and limits of mobilization given increasing deportations, border violence, and rights violations that further question the relevance of the universalist model.

Presenter(s): Julie Kleinman

From Media Exceptionalism to Mediated Nationalisms: Thoughts Midst Fieldwork with the French Far-Right

Mass media in France have long served as sites of French exceptionalism and cultural protectionism, perhaps most famously through the 1996 Toubon laws which required that 40% of radio songs be in French. French public media, especially through TV, are among the most robustly funded in the world, as are France's press subsidies, which total €400-€500 annually. The Ministry of Culture has powerfully shaped what French people see and hear on screens, and this has generally been understood to be in keeping with ideas about the unifying, edifying functions of Republicanism. In this paper, drawing from my first project at the TV channel ARTE, and with recent examples from fieldwork among supporters of the Rassemblement National and other far-right ideologies in southern France, I demonstrate how French media exceptionalism has come under attack from the right as "establishment propaganda." I argue that a decades-long mediatic stability and coherence (namely, as a public good and commons) is loosening and fragmenting. I detail how people in one southern French town are "tuning out" from mainstream media sources and increasingly connecting to digital platforms and apps like Telegram, where they find alternative and often extremist political sources and perspectives. I conclude that new tensions and paradoxes are emerging through novel, competing mediated nationalism(s), corresponding to new social and cultural polarizations that are at once local and unevenly national.

Presenter(s): Damien Stankiewicz

The Melancholy of the Universal: Rethinking French Republicanism

Many have shown that the French ideology of Republican Universalism paradoxically depends on a racial and cultural "differentialism" (Fassin 2011). Put otherwise, exceptions are integral to French exceptionalism: Universalism particularizes even as it claims to unify (Schor 2001, Camiscioli 2009, Wilder 2005). Ethnographers have understandably focused on showing how the paradoxes of Republican Universalism are displaced onto marginalized subjects (e.g., Fernando 2014). However, little attention has been devoted to how white French subjects experience and inhabit this ambivalent political ideology. Documenting these experiences is critical for understanding how white French people maintain their power.

This talk builds on "third wave whiteness studies" (Twine and Gallagher 2008) and French Whiteness studies (Cohen and Mazouz 2021) to ask how white French people experience the contradictions of Republican Universalism. Through ethnographic portraits of "Primitive Expression" practitioners, white French people who mimic African spirit possession rites, I show how Republican Universalist ideology leaves white French people with a melancholic orientation to racial and cultural difference. While they fear and reject these forms of difference, they also feel a deep yearning to embody and incorporate them. Ultimately, this talk argues that thinking through Universalism as a form of melancholia (Freud 1917, Butler 1997) changes the way we think about French hegemony.

Presenter(s): Luke Forrester

Postcolonial Marriage Exchange in France: l'amour est dans le pré?

Since the turn of the millennium an explosion of research has emerged on transnational marriage and kinship in France; much of this research has focused on urban settings, where narratives of "unruly migrant kinship" and threats to the French national family abound. As is so often the case, the focus on crisis and breakdown in urban centers tends to imply that more provincial French contexts remain much as they always have – part of a romanticized vision of la France profonde. They contribute to a synoptic illusion which obscures the important continuities between rural and urban contexts as well as the ongoing interdependence between (former) colony and (former) metropole. Building on these observations, this paper explores the formation of a system of postcolonial marriage exchange between men in rural southwest France and women from the former French colony of Madagascar. I show how marriage between French men and Malagasy women simultaneously challenge and uphold aspects of racial and gender hierarchies and contrast this case with other examples of France's reliance on their overseas empire to repopulate rural areas of French society. The paper concludes by considering some of the unexceptional, everyday aspects of social change in contemporary France.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Cole

A Faithful Restoration: Reconstructing France as Exception through Notre-Dame

A number of narratives imagine France as the ultimate expression of liberty, secularity, and equality, despite the violent histories of missionization, colonization, and enslavement that it has pursued around the globe. The myth of France's exceptional status is what necessitates its exceptions. The exceptions are those whose experiences and critiques of France deny the nation's France's exceptional status as a space of true freedom and equality and, therefore, must be refused. Key to rethinking the anthropology of France, therefore, is the need to address the historical formation and ongoing reproduction of its myths, a task that requires addressing France in ways that exceed the Hexagon. As the literary scholar Jared Hickman has argued, in order to come to terms with our current world order, we need to address Europe not as defined primarily by its "secular," but by its "global" condition. In this paper, I will explore visions of France in its "global" condition by analyzing the expansive work necessary to assert France's exceptional status through the "faithful restoration" of the Notre-Dame cathedral. Relying on exhibits, publications, lectures, and interviews that asserted the necessity – and necessarily "faithful" – reconstruction of the edifice to its exact form prior to the 2019 blaze, I will highlight the surprising moments when France's exceptions – or its "global" condition – rose to the surface and had to be contained.

Presenter(s): Elayne Oliphant

Discussion

6957 Haunted Infrastructures: Temporality, Accumulation, Urbanization, and Governance

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists have insightfully analyzed infrastructures as systems that facilitate the circulation of people, commodities, information, and capital (Larkin 2013). Recent ethnographic work reaches beyond the literature's initial focus on space and materiality, taking temporalities into consideration (Anand et al. 2018) and analyzing capitalism's influence on infrastructures (Buier 2023). Taking up the conference theme, this panel extends those interventions by theorizing the "hauntedness" of infrastructures.

Rather than forward-looking frames like "promise" or "modernization" or "development," hauntedness highlights how the speculative futures of infrastructures are linked to histories of racialization, colonialism, and militarism. Levees in Louisiana are built by the sedimentation of successive extractive regimes: plantations, petrochemicals, and now real estate confronting risks of climate catastrophe. NGOs clearing ordnance in Vietnam are addressing the history of war while also negotiating futures for safe and sustainable development. The housing crisis in Los Angeles and the liberal promises that undergird its "solution" are the result of past and present racio-colonial dispossession, as well as the immediate and intensifying climate crisis.

Beyond temporality, hauntedness also enables a generative approach to the tension between the promise of infrastructure and the constant risk of its failure, disruption, and decay. More than just pointing towards such inherent tension, this panel asks: What is haunting the infrastructure, for whom, and how? How do different actors react to the specters? Congestion haunts Manila's working-class commuters; demolitions threaten the houses of Chinese migrant workers; chokepoints spook logistics firms in Memphis; the presence of racialized people scares Pittsburgh's property managers and investors. These hauntings lead to new kinds of infrastructural work and speculative investment, so this panel explores processes of value creation, extraction, and destruction that emerge in and around these infrastructures.

Haunted infrastructures offer new insights on urbanism, labor, and politics. These papers unpack how infrastructures shape urban life and expand processes of urbanization past city limits; they reckon with work beyond the wage and outside the formal workplace; they uncover political antagonisms and alliances that lurk within landscapes and the built environment. This panel traces these tendencies across geographies, starting from right here in New Orleans to other sites in the United States, China, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The papers show how haunted infrastructures are productive sites to examine tensions between histories and speculative futures, promises and failures, cities and hinterlands, labor and capital, states and subjects.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Yutong Han, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Angela Romea, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Paulo Suarez, CUNY, The Graduate Center

Presenter(s): Yutong Han, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Nicole Mabry, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Nick Welna, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Angela Romea, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Jason Vu, University of South California, Chen Si, University of Pittsburgh

Discussant: Ryan Jobson, University of Chicago

Presentation(s): "It feels like a ghost city": Security work, Infrastructure of Feelings, and Asset Value in Post-Pandemic Downtown Pittsburgh

Allied Universal, a name unfamiliar to most, is currently the third-largest employer in the U.S. after Walmart and Amazon. Most of its employees are contracted unarmed security guards (Jones, 2024). They are low-paid service jobs taken primarily by racialized and gendered workers. This research focuses on the neglected expansion of the guard industry and asks what kind of "security" is being produced and how they are rendered valuable. Specifically, I contextualize these questions under the post-pandemic concerns for commercial real estate value among property managers and investors in downtown Pittsburgh. Impacted by the hybrid working, more than two dozen office buildings are close to foreclosure (Belko, 2024). This presentation argues that the affective labor of unarmed guards enables a particular "the infrastructure of feeling" (Gilmore, 2022). As a spatiotemporal project (Appel et al., 2018), such infrastructure facilitates "security" against haunting threats: spatially, there are the racialized others coded as homeless people outside of the buildings and vacant office spaces inside the buildings. Temporally, the recent past of the pandemic and the potential risk of foreclosure and devaluation in the future. Drawing on the call to focus on the ordinary infrastructure worker (Star, 1999), the talk pushes us to rethink the role both labor and infrastructure play in capital accumulation on the horizon of the "asset-manager society" (Christophers, 2023).

Presenter(s): Yutong Han

Sedimentary inheritances and abstract reassurances: the work of proposed levee infrastructure in Louisiana's northshore

In January, Congress approved 17 major water infrastructure projects across the U.S. The largest of these is sited in south Louisiana, on Lake Pontchartrain's northshore, the St. Tammany Flood Risk Management Project, and authorizes \$5.9 billion for new levee infrastructure. The term 'levee,' referring to artificial embankments constructed to impede flooding, originates in French colonial Louisiana. As an earthworks technology, levees have long been entwined with the racialized concentration of wealth and resources in the region, facilitating successive extractive regimes, from plantations to petrochemicals, and advanced by landowners as a means to inflate land value, from the 19th c. to the present. Levees contradictorily condition the emplacement of many Louisianans reliant on their protection, at the same time that they have so compromised the geomorphological stability of the region that they are considered principal drivers of coastal deterioration. I address St. Tammany's specific recuperation of the levee, and consider especially the project's affective

dimensions, in which its abstract reassurances are arguably more impactful than its material guarantees. As a 'generational project,' the levee's extended construction timeline is jarringly out of step with the immediacy of climatic and landscape change. And still, tentative promises of safety do work in the present, in a manner that reproduces and retools this earthen technology's fraught history in this floodplain.

Presenter(s): Nicole Mabry

The Specter of the Chokepoint and the Rise of the Hub in Memphis, Tennessee

Since the 1970s, elites in Memphis, Tennessee, have marketed their city as "America's Distribution Center" to attract capitalist investments. Boosters boast that Memphis moves commodities via river, rail, road, and runway. This marketing campaign seems successful; technocrats now recognize the city as a prototypical global "logistics cluster" (Sheffi 2012).

Some scholars conceptualize places like Memphis as "chokepoints" (Carse et al. 2023) because the infrastructure is haunted by the possibility that something could constrict the movement of commodities. My paper discusses how the specter of the chokepoint haunts the logistics industry in Memphis. But my analysis also moves beyond that haunting, to examine how logistics firms and their allies respond to the risks of the chokepoint.

The specter of the chokepoint, I argue, spurs more investment in logistics infrastructure, as companies demand redundancies that they hope will produce "supply chain resiliency" impervious to crises. These speculative investments in the built environment transform Memphis into a "hub," not just a chokepoint. Developing in dialectical relation to the specter of the chokepoint, the hub leverages overlapping infrastructures and creates localized economies of scale to deal with the risks of the chokepoint. Thinking through the hub, then, raises doubts about the potential for radical uprisings that some scholars have attributed to chokepoints (Alimahomed-Wilson and Ness 2018).

Presenter(s): Nick Welna

Carmageddon: Infrastructures of Urban Exhaustion in Manila

Manila's streets are a gridlock. Over the years, the Philippine government has adopted infrastructural projects and policies centered on alleviating traffic, but with little success. Central to these conversations on traffic are urban planning and the jeepney, Manila's most accessible form of public transportation at around 15¢ per ride. American colonization haunts both: following World War II, car-centric urban sprawl was built over the destruction, while Americans left behind military surplus vehicles—jeeps, from which "jeepneys" get their name. Stopping in the middle of the road, the jeepney is an easy scapegoat compared to the burgeoning private ownership of cars by the middle and upper class. Mass transportation systems are underfunded, buoyed by public-private partnerships, private cooperatives, and state-owned corporations. This paper delves into the class inequalities prevalent in Manila's transportation system, focusing on the narratives of Manila as a congested dystopia which is historically rooted and experienced by all. How do the everyday frustrations of traffic and urban infrastructure fuel demands for strict governance? In my paper, I

will explore the various ways in which frustration and exhaustion are invoked through discourses on traffic. I draw upon literatures that infuse infrastructure with affective and temporal underpinnings, unsettling the linear development timelines of planning imaginaries.

Presenter(s): Angela Romea

Whose Peace?: Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Infrastructures of Remediation in Postwar Vietnam

Building upon scholarship that examines the role of military waste in shaping postwar spaces (Schwenkel 2013; Zani 2019; Sisavath 2020), this paper attends to the work of explosive ordnance disposal in postwar Vietnam by following the work of PeaceTrees Vietnam (PTVN), a non-governmental organization that coordinates explosive clearance operations in the provinces of Quang Tri, Quang Binh, and Thua Thien-Hue. Founded in 1995, PTVN asserts its mission as not only the clearance of unexploded ordnances but also the restoration of lands to communities for safe and sustainable development. On one hand, I examine the ways that PTVN's objectives are realistically implemented on the ground and negotiated alongside local and governmental interests. In particular, this paper explores what takes place after munitions have been cleared and the ways that different notions of development, especially in the form of infrastructure, converge when determining the future of remediated landscapes. At the same time, this paper also situates bomb clearance efforts within the present context of Vietnam's increasing ecological vulnerability, charting the ways that PTVN has had to more recently adapt its operations in response to ever more extreme climate conditions. In so doing, I foreground the infrastructures that presently enable explosive ordnance disposal in Vietnam, all while shedding light on the different futures that such operations may either promise or imperil.

Presenter(s): Jason Vu

The making of illegal housing: infrastructure, politics, and everyday life in China's informal settlements

In recent years, the state has used the category of illegal housing as a tool to manage informal settlements amid rapid urban expansion. However, by examining the material-social history of illegal housing, a different story emerges. In the informal settlement, rural migrants have gathered due to the availability of affordable housing. Local homeowners, driven by speculation, have expanded their buildings to maximize future demolition compensation and benefit from rental income. In doing so, they constantly negotiate the boundaries of legality with the state. Meanwhile, rural migrants, who often work as laborers in the construction process, refer to these structures as "fake houses" due to their poor materials. I examine how their engagement in making such housing shapes their understanding of illegal housing and how both groups interact with the state. Together, they demonstrate that illegal housing is not a fixed or predetermined category. Rather, the legality and materiality of housing are constantly negotiated between residents and the state. This challenges the state's use of illegality as a stable and legitimate basis for demolition, while also revealing how the emergence of illegal housing is deeply tied to the state's sustained ambiguity

toward informal settlements. This research contributes to the study of informal settlement politics by breaking down the legal/illegal binary and foregrounding the material and infrastructural dimensions of politics.

Presenter(s): Chen Si

Discussion

3692 Trump, Orbán, MAGA, MEGA: The Specter of Hungary Haunting the U.S.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

For over a decade, the specter of Viktor Orbán and the fear of "becoming like Hungary" have loomed large in the political nightmares of the liberal order across the West. In the context of the second presidency of Donald Trump, this specter is anything but a phantom. Trump has openly praised Hungary's authoritarian Prime Minister as a role model, lauding the country's illiberal regime-building as a potential blueprint for the future of the United States. Institutional ties, intellectual exchanges, sponsorships, and personal visits underscore a relationship marked by mutual admiration and ideological alignment. Yet, the two leaders also diverge significantly. Orbán, with decades of strategic regime-building under his belt, has meticulously expanded Hungary's global ambitions while Trump has embarked on reducing the United States' global commitments. Despite this, both leaders learn from each other: "Make Europe Great Again" has become a slogan also for the second Trump presidency, and the two leaders converge in their anti-liberal rhetoric and shared ambition to reshape state apparatuses, ushering in a new political era. Anthropologists have shown that the mass defection from liberal hegemony can be understood as a consequence of neoliberalism. However, much remains to be explored about the connections between political economy and the cultural and epistemic aspects of far-right regime-building. This roundtable brings together anthropologists working on these two contexts to examine how the two leaders, from opposite sides of the Atlantic, are simultaneously haunted by the remnants of the old liberal order while constructing post-liberal hegemonic regimes. What steps of far-right regime-building have anthropologists observed in Hungary and the United States? What parallels and divergences can be drawn, and can one regime's trajectory illuminate the other's? Furthermore, how does the decline of liberal epistemic hegemony reshape the conditions of anthropological research in these contexts? Finally, can anthropology's long-standing critique of neoliberalism help us better understand the rise of anti-liberal regimes?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Annastiina Kallius, University of Helsinki, Sara Swerdlyk, University of Toronto

Presenter(s): Douglas Holmes, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Carolyn Rouse, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Susan Gal, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Ilana Gershon, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Kristóf Nagy, Princeton University

Discussant: Ayse Caglar, University of Vienna

1873 The Gendered Labor of Education in East and Southeast Asia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Education is often framed in popular discourses as an individual endeavor, in which students progress through school according to their own efforts and aspirations. Such accounts fail to recognize, however, the ways in which young people are enmeshed in relations of dependency. This panel examines the labor—both waged and affective—performed by kin and classmates that defines and makes possible students' educational trajectories. It takes gender as a central analytic, focusing on the ways that this labor that underpins education relies upon and reworks gender norms, in turn transforming the social relations and subjectivities of those performing it. It also draws attention to the ways in which the structure of education systems matter in this regard. Seemingly "gender neutral" policies related to competitive school admissions and grading standards, segregated school spaces, educational privatization, organizational management models, and school-to-work pipelines all have gendered effects, not just for students, but for those who support them. Anthropologists and other feminist scholars of social reproduction have long highlighted the importance of seeing labor in the home and the paid workplace as co-constitutive of gender inequality and other intersecting forms of oppression. This panel shows that it is crucial to also consider the role of education, and how it is connected to the work performed by multiple people across these spaces.

To explore these issues, the panel brings together papers based on research in East and Southeast Asia. Göransson's paper examines parents' gendered and affective labor around emerging tensions between aspirations for their children's academic achievement and school-life balance within Singapore's competitive school system. Drawing on work in Chinese special education schools, Wu's paper asks how fathers navigate the fraught terrains of masculinity and (dis)ability and engage in care labor in a setting that destabilizes men's self-understanding. Ling and Xiao focus on middle-aged female migrants returning from Chinese cities to their rural hometowns to become "mom workers" in local industries, demonstrating the links between gender, education, industrial upgrading, labor organization, and care regimes. Estes shows that due to the semi-privatization of the Cambodian state education system, rural students rely upon feminized labor, including remittances from migrant siblings who become wage workers in precarious urban labor markets. Based on research in a Chinese university, Sum's paper explores how student organization leaders' attempts to move beyond bureaucratic organizational culture by treating members as kin serve to intensify women's affective labor. By putting these papers into conversation, the panel sheds light onto how the labor of education shapes gendered roles and relations of dependency across the region and beyond.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Jennifer Estes, National University of Singapore

Chair: Zachary Howlett, National University of Singapore

Presenter(s): Kristina Göransson, Lund University, Jinting Wu, SUNY, University at Buffalo, Minhua Ling, Geneva Graduate Institute, Jennifer Estes, National University of Singapore, Chun-Yi Sum, Boston University

Presentation(s): Navigating 'Cruel Optimism': Ambivalent Aspirations and Parents' Care Labor in Education among Singaporean Families

In Singapore, children's education is typically presented as "an overriding and all-consuming concern," fueled by extreme competition for grades and school admissions (Waters 2015: 290). However, parents' desire for academic excellence as a route to better lives is not as straightforward as it may seem. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with Singaporean families, this paper explores parents' gendered and affective labor around emerging tensions between aspirations for academic achievement and school-life balance. It examines how parents navigate these conflicting desires and their implications for gendered divisions of roles and responsibilities, drawing on Lauren Berlant's (2011) concept of "cruel optimism" – a state marked by significant anxiety over the unfulfilled promises of modernity and neoliberalism. This is particularly evident in affective attachments to fantasies of "the good life," such as upward social mobility, job security, or freedom. The conditions of cruel optimism are marked by a prevailing sense of impasse, requiring hypervigilance—a "proactive, hopeful affective force that remains open and indeed seeks out possibilities for change" (Sotirin 2020: 12). In examining how parents renegotiate ambivalent aspirations with regard to their children's education, this paper highlights the affective landscape underpinning vigilance and the reconfiguration of upward social mobility.

Presenter(s): Kristina Göransson

Vulnerable Fatherhood: Masculinity, Disability, and Moral Becoming in China's Special Education Schools

This paper examines the less-known realm of vulnerable fatherhood in the practical and emotional realities of raising and educating children with disabilities in urban China. It is set in a particular type of institutions called special education schools where students with complex needs are accommodated in socially, spatially, and educationally segregated spaces. In China's cultural and familial ideals, women bear disproportionate shame associated with birthing "less-than-perfect" offspring; as well, the "diminished" personhood of children with disabilities also renders fatherhood fragile and insecure. This paper explores the embodied practices of "caring masculinities" performed by fathers, in the context of a special education school where disability profoundly destabilizes men's self-understanding in relation to their children, partners, and educators. How do fathers navigate the fraught terrains of masculinity and (dis)ability and engage in the worlds of care? How do they mesh lingering patriarchal ideals with new embodiment, emotionality, and moral becoming in their everyday encounters in and out of the special education school? This paper, based on long-term ethnographic research on disability segregation in contemporary China, explores vulnerable fatherhood as a site of gender and disability intersection, and as the unintended consequence of a patriarchal structure that supposedly privileges men.

Presenter(s): Jinting Wu

From "Dagongmei" to "Mom workers": Gender, Education, and Return Migration in Post-reform China

This paper probes into some of the changing patterns among female migrants in post-reform China and explores how gender intersects with educational ecology, industrial policy, and labor organization under late-socialist transformation. After reviewing the early well-documented "dagongmei" phenomenon, in which young, usually unmarried, women migrated from rural hinterlands to the Pearl River Delta and other east coastal areas to work mostly in export-oriented industries in the 1990s and 2000s, this paper examines the recent trend of middle-aged female migrants returning to their hometowns for jobs in the e-commerce and artificial-intelligence related industries. By exploring the underlying sociocultural undercurrents in addition to the institutional factors that contribute to such changes, this paper departs from an economic-centric explanatory model and reveals how the agentive role of gender has to be understood not only within the domestic realm of intergenerational care but also in the macro spheres of industrial and educational policies. This also seeks to construct a dynamic module that situates gender in the central node of the compass that links education, industrial upgrading, labor organization, and care regime into one to enrich the current literature on migration.

Presenter(s): Minhua Ling

Co-author(s): Suowei Xiao

Paying For Social Mobility: Educational Privatization and Gendered Labor in Cambodia

In Cambodia, neoliberal economic policies have resulted in untenable agrarian livelihoods, limited state support for social reproduction, and widespread indebtedness. Against this backdrop, many rural families see children's education as the best way to secure their household's economic future. With a secondary school diploma, youth can achieve social mobility by attending university and qualifying for white-collar careers in the capital city. However, Cambodia's nominally free education system is semi-privatized, requiring that students spend significant amounts of time and money on supplementary private classes in order to graduate. Drawing on ethnographic research in a rural community, this paper explores the gendered labor that underpins this educational landscape. Women, including daughters who are often students themselves, continue to do the vast majority of domestic work that allows youth to dedicate their time to schooling. Many students also rely on the paid labor of siblings who have dropped out of school and migrated to enter gendered job markets in urban areas and abroad. In particular, households often receive remittances from young women working in Cambodia's garment sector to help cover educational expenses. This paper illustrates how possibilities for social mobility via education rely on and rework gendered relations of production and reproduction.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Estes

Toward Humanistic Management: New Opportunity or Burden for Female Students in University Clubs?

Many extracurricular groups on the twenty-first century Chinese university campus aspired to becoming a "happy and loving big family." In student participants' imagination, kin-based interdependence and affective belonging to a fictive family were emblematic to a desirable organizational culture. Student leaders attempted "humanistic management" of extracurricular affairs, as it would purportedly foster "workplace" wellbeing and a people-centered culture in ways that adults' institutions beyond the ivory tower lacked. As opposed to ossified socialist institutions that relied primarily on impersonal bureaucratic logic to mobilize, youth organizations treated members not as workers but more importantly as affectively-connected kinspeople. In reality, however, turning peer into family had the unintended effect of exacerbating inequity in gendered labor, as a result undermining Chinese students' effort in building moral institutions characterized by flattened hierarchy and gender egalitarianism. This paper shows, through vivid ethnographic examples, how students' reimagination of female student leaders as loving mothers intensified women's affective burden in caring for individual students and justified the deeply gendered expectations for women to make sacrifices for the collective. Feminine work continued to be rendered invisible, and women's voice became further marginalized in fictive families that mimicked the operation of patriarchal Confucian households.

Presenter(s): Chun-Yi Sum

6198 How to Live An Invisible Life: Coming Out or Staying Stealthy?

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Our present is never a moment of solitude. Through the echoes from the past, it is as important to draw on the scanty evidence of existence that was reduced to void, the invisible people that speak from where it was thought to be silence. This panel explores the historical and ongoing constructions of invisibility by seeking out China, tracing its roots in literature, archives, and lived experiences. Through interdisciplinary perspectives, we examine how lives have been systematically rendered invisible and how they generate insights from where they were constrained.

By re-presenting the events in divergent histories and from contested points of view, we challenge the infrastructure that grounds invisibility as something embedded in the past. Zhishan LIU's study uses an anecdote collection to trace how Song dynasty female bodies emerge as sites of subtle autonomy and desire within the constraints of Confucian ideology. Zheyu HU's work turns to examine the persistent entanglement between the fox cult and imperial, Confucian, and patriarchal authorities. The fox spirit, as a class- and gender-fluid entity, embodies nonconformity and the transgression of Confucian ideals, enabling marginalized individuals' means to subvert dominant social normativity and distinction, as well as access forms of power otherwise denied to them. Temporally, there is a gradual process in which various women subjects seek out their voice in documenting their experiences as if they communicate across time.

The panel continues to interrogate contemporary invisibility. Qianwen XUE's work explores how intimate care has been transformed into a gendered labor of endurance in late-life Chinese marriages. The temporal-material entanglements of elderly women's ghostly embodied caregiving institutionalize what she terms "silver-haired wife punishment." Turning to the younger generations, Tate PAN examines young adults who operate biomedical and tacit knowledge as technologies to care for and guan their sick family members, navigating filial morality that assumes care duty and renders it "invisible." Tracing the origin of care politics, Jingchen XIAO looks at the genealogy of care from socialist China to the present female care workers in urban China, who use mutual care as a channel to form a revolutionary self-care and make a time for resistant caring.

Together, we recognize invisibility not as an analytical task but a commitment to reframe life beyond tradition/modernity, East/West, and mind/body. Centering the spectral presence of historical violence in present-day care economies, we ask: How to see invisibility as a site of both oppression and resistance? What methodologies can reveal the embodied, affective, and temporal dimensions of care that dominant frameworks overlook? This panel invites dialogue on how invisibility is reproduced, endured, and contested across time, urging a rethinking of invisibility in social change.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Zheyu Hu , Zhishan Liu

Chair: Zheyu Hu , Tate Pan

Presenter(s): Tate Pan, Jingchen Xiao, Zheyu Hu, Qianwen Xue, Zhishan Liu

Discussant: Jingchen Xiao , Qianwen Xue

Presentation(s): Matters that "I Cannot Not Guan": Biomedical and Tacit Knowledge as Technologies of Care and Guan in the Chinese Family Life

In Chinese family life, one does not become a caregiver but assumes the care work by being a family member to a sick person. This study examines how Chinese young adults (18-24) operate biomedical and/or tacit sensory knowledge as technologies to care and 管 guan (care, control, manage, and/or parent) their sick family members, reimagining knowledge as pragmatic tools to navigate filial morality. Based on interviews with 20 young adults and autoethnography, I show how young adults operate biomedical and tacit knowledge pragmatically: participants cited/adopted medical expertise when convincing elderly to take medication, yet relied on sensory knowledge for daily care. The paper highlights how caregiving is not a role/identity to become but assumed by Chinese family moral duty, rendering care work "invisible." Sick family members often suppress their needs to avoid "adding bother," while caregivers are expected to intuit these needs without direct communication. This family moral expectation shapes caregiving practices and use of knowledge. These young adults developed medical competence not just for treatment efficacy, but to guan elders. Simultaneously, their cultivation of sensory attunement - learning to detect unarticulated needs - serves as technologies of care, yet taken by granted within the moral relation of guan. The findings complicates feminist STS's notion of "matters of care" to consider "matters that one cannot not guan" (or that one cannot not stay with).

Presenter(s): Tate Pan

Sharing Bodies, Making Time: Domestic Workers' Practices of Mutual Care, Self-care, and Resisting Capitalist Discipline

The word 'care' is slippery because of its multifold meanings. Linguistically, socially, and politically important and yet ambiguous, the term "care" renders discrepancies between how the market of care labor commodifies care and how domestic workers, as the subject of labor, understand care as a daily practice. The research examines archival works to comb through the genealogy of care in PRC history and situate the ethnography of a community of domestic workers in Beijing as ethnographies of the present. As the daughters and sisters of socialist China, these workers in Beijing gathered as a community and paved their way to mutual care, using massage, collective learning, and writing to share mutual experience and care for others. The reciprocity extends to a revolutionary sense of self-care, which the workers practice through micro-dispersed practices in their workplace to resist capitalist discipline. Drawing together Western and Chinese feminist thoughts, I argue that there is a new temporality emerging from their daily practices and language of care, which I call making a time for caring. In rethinking the meaning of care and building dialogues across traditions of theories, I build the framework of the study at the intersection of "providing care" and "paying attention to," trying to challenge a more affective and supportive mechanism of making care.

Presenter(s): Jingchen Xiao

Transcending Social Structure: the Fox Spirit and the Social Reproduction of Marginalized Individuals in Late Imperial Northern China

This thesis examines fox spirit worship during the Ming–Qing dynasties and its role in empowering communities marginalized within Northern China's social landscape. The entanglement between the fox cult and imperial, Confucian, and patriarchal authorities produced complex and anomalous consequences for the communities that found agency through its veneration.

Existing scholarship has explored the fox's multiple roles in the dynamics between officials and civilians, between genders, and its connection with gender-nonconforming individuals. The subjectivity of marginalized individuals through the fox worship remains undiscussed.

This research interrogates the ambiguous space between orthodoxy and marginality through the lens of fox worship. Drawing on Ming–Qing zhiguai (tales of the strange), alongside 1930s ethnographic works, the study investigates how the fox spirit symbolically represented marginalized figures such as disenfranchised scholar-officials, women, prostitutes, and gender-nonconforming individuals.

The fox, as a class- and gender-fluid entity, embodies nonconformity and the transgression of Confucian ideals such as ritual, righteousness, and social hierarchy. Through its liminal status, the fox spirit offered these individuals not only symbolic refuge but also a means to subvert dominant

social normativity and access forms of power otherwise denied to them. In this way, the "way of animals" becomes a critique of orthodoxy—and a space of resistance.

Presenter(s): Zheyu Hu

Phantom Labor in Late-Life Marriage: Embodied Narratives of Elderly Female Caregivers

This study examines how intangible forces—material traces, mnemonic residues, and foreclosed futures—reshape intimacy among aging couples through fieldwork with 15 Beijing suburban households. Situated at life's twilight where corporeal decline disrupts romanticized futures, marriages transform into contested sites where care obligations intersect with spectral presences of unrealized possibilities. The cohort reveals gendered health disparities: men exhibit higher rates of stroke, disability, and chronic illness linked to occupational hazards and risky behaviors (smoking, drinking, commercial sex), while women shoulder intensified care burdens amidst vanished sexual/affective bonds. Physical touch becomes mechanized labor devoid of intimacy—a "cursed" ritual sustaining biological existence without emotional reciprocity.

Drawing on Gammeltoft's (2021) framework of kinship as imaginative labor, I argue women's endurance emerges through temporal negotiations with "socially impactful non-realities"—ghostly presences of absent relatives and internalized futures sustaining daily care regimes. Mrs. Chang's declaration "my husband's body is my prison" epitomizes this carceral domesticity where marital duty materializes as unrelenting bodily management. Contra narratives of elderly marital bliss, spousal loss may paradoxically liberate caregivers from chronic stress, exposing marriage's transformation into disembodied labor under gerontological crisis.

Presenter(s): Qianwen Xue

What If She Came Back? Women in the Cracks of Neo-Confucian Ethics in Song Anecdotes

"To perish from hunger is but a trifle; to lose a woman's chastity is of utmost gravity." This maxim encapsulates the Neo-Confucian demand placed upon women in Song dynasty elite discourse. Women were expected to embody moral purity within the social order, regardless of their own desires or survival. Yet, beyond the didactic voices of male discourse, how did women act in practice in the Song dynasty? The paper turns to Yijian zhi 夷堅志, a major Song dynasty anecdote collection, to examine alternative narratives of female subjectivity and bodily practice. In these stories, women traverse cosmic realms and employ their bodies as mediating agents between Heaven, the human world and the underworld. Drawing on narrative and visual analysis, including comparisons to religious iconography such as Danuo tu 大難圖 and Soushan tu 搜山圖, this paper explores how the female body becomes both a site of spiritual labor and a force of epistemic disruption. No longer confined to passive moral archetypes, these female figures initiate disruption, reveal hidden truths, and articulate their desires. While acknowledging the anxieties and constraints are still embedded in male-authored texts, the study analyzes how moments of female intensity—through resurrection, birth, or haunting—generate narrative and spiritual transformation, leaving indelible traces through the ink and brush of male narration.

Presenter(s): Zhishan Liu

Discussion

4361 Ordinary Hauntings, Absent Ghosts, and the Everyday Work of Death

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The papers in this panel take as their context places one might expect to be haunted: a massed grave, a street lined with funeral parlors, a cremation ghat, and a city in the midst of political tumult. Our interlocutors are those for whom dealing with death is the everyday, for whom corpses are everywhere and ordinary, their accounts set in biographies of repeated loss.

What does haunting mean in times and places where ghosts are merely ordinary? When interlocutors have little interest in speaking of hauntings or ghost possessions precisely because they are so common-place, the least pressing parts of day-to-day life? Or when we, as anthropologists, expect ghosts but fail to find them? When we commit to taking hauntings seriously, but those we work with make clear they do not? If "ghosts thrive in settings that are far from ontologically pure" (Good et al 2022), perhaps places where they can be taken for granted, or accounts in which they are hidden in plain sight, create new space for the "uncanniness of the ordinary" (Cavell 1988) to creep in?

What else haunts our interlocutors' accounts? And our ethnographic writing? To borrow Michael Jackson's phrase, are we "haunted by the hubris of reductionism," while our interlocutors' demand "a resistance to closure" (2019)? Haunted by anthropologists' past, from whom we cannot escape? What are the spectral dimensions of quotidian life that we cannot shake? What does haunting hide, as much as it reveals? And what if it's the anthropologists who are uncanny?

In this panel, we draw together a series of mistaken ghost stories and unlikely possessions: from New York City's massed grave, where despite its grim purpose, Hart Island apparently withheld ghosts and instead soothed the souls of those who laboured there; to an apparent case of possession during Delhi's Emergency – and what researchers were really trying to say about the politics and conditions of life then; to Singapore, a city-state rich with ghost lore but where the only places that are reliably ghost-free are funeral parlors; and to Northern Indian cremation sites, to examine how claims of religious continuities are marked by haunting breaks in modern state power.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Ruth Toulson , Sargam Sharma

Chair: Sally Raudon, University of Cambridge

Presenter(s): Sally Raudon, University of Cambridge, Sarah Pinto, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology, Ruth Toulson, Sargam Sharma

Discussant: Sarah Wagner, George Washington University, Bhrigupati Singh

Presentation(s): Hart Island's Solace

One might expect that Hart Island, New York's massed grave of one million unmarked dead buried by Rikers Island Prison inmates, would be seething with unhappy ghosts. Yet I heard no ghost stories, though interlocutors often said they sensed something uncanny when they visited. But former Rikers inmates who had worked the burial detail described carrying Hart Island and its dead with them long afterwards. One had dreamt about it persistently for years.

They found the burial work morally distressing, physically difficult and sometimes hazardous. They also thought of those they buried. But Hart Island itself seemed to offer them solace, providing an insistent and peaceable presence that intruded on their thoughts long after they were freed. How can we reckon a place usually associated with death and horror that also, for a few who really knew its business, meant consolation? How had Hart Island's significance shifted so dramatically that for some it became, paradoxically, a dreamscape? And what is at stake when inmates find refuge in a place where the only human activity is a massed grave?

Presenter(s): Sally Raudon

Sita's Ghosts, Sita's Bodies: Reproduction, Affliction, and the Political Body in Emergency-Era Delhi

From the 1960s through the 1980s, anthropologists Ruth and Stanley Freed wrote detailed monographs about a village they called "Shanti Nagar" at the edge of the expanding city of Delhi. One of their main interlocutors was a woman they called, variously, Daya and Sita, whose life they recounted in detail, especially in an extended case study. The case study included accounts of Sita's illness history and reproductive life (babies born, lost, and possibly taken by government nurses) as well as her domestic labors in the context of Delhi's Emergency and the years before and after it. The monograph, in all its complexity, was contained by the framing question of her "ghost possession" and how anthropology might understand it, even as it, ultimately, offered a complex multiplicity of explanatory frames. This paper considers the political narratives that run through what is, at the same time, a narrative framed by key devices: the mystery of spirit possession and the explanatory structure of "conversion disorder," and, remarkably, the eventual rejection of those frames by a more complex and less familiar reckoning of the biological body in the context of political and social change. How did a multiplicity of "bodies" that appear in the Freed's accounts allow for a - possibly covert - critique of political conditions? What are the stakes of possession, reckoned as a site for one such body, not as a singular explanation, but as part of other, even contradictory ones?

Presenter(s): Sarah Pinto

"Did you feel the dead pull you down?" Singaporean funeral parlors and other places that cannot be haunted

When I returned to Singapore, after several years away, the funeral parlor where I worked as a mortician was suddenly inundated with the worst kinds of deaths, with suicides and drownings, far

more than one would usually expect. At night, I dreamt of nothing but corpses. And, a week into my stay, as I ran in the park at dusk, I smelt the dead then felt them drag me down into an uncovered storm drain, breaking my leg.

Singaporeans are, as a rule, fond of ghost stories. The city-state can be mapped by the places where ghosts linger: sites of the Japanese occupation, overgrown cemeteries, abandoned hospitals, and national service military camps. There are nine-tailed fox spirits, frangipani-fragranced flying Pontianak, and multiple headless and faceless but highly scented ghosts. But there are to be no ghosts in the funeral parlor, nor at the state-run crematoria, and absolutely none at currently operating cemeteries. And nothing is quite as unprofessional as a death worker who has seen (or smelt) a ghost.

This is an account of all the people who saw ghosts when they absolutely shouldn't. Of a visit to a "Luck Enhancement Service" at Katong Shopping Center, overseen by the Taoist Jade Emperor. Of an awkward exorcism. And of why every Singaporean Mass Rapid Transit station is haunted but funeral parlors are not.

Presenter(s): Ruth Toulson

More Delicate Degrees of Otherness: Narrative Management of Death Impurity at a North Indian Cremation Site

The space of the Hindu cremation ghat (site), usually set by river bodies is layered with many kinds of nonnormative meanings. The Simariya cremation site at the banks of River Ganga in Northern India where my fieldwork is based, as good as drowns come the monsoon season. In contrast, the dham or the pilgrimage site right beside it has seen a spate of renovation projects in an attempt by the state to raise the 'Hindu' glory of the holy site. The whole enterprise then, takes on a haunted quality - with what is seen as desirable by the state shadowed by what must find ways to sustain itself without any kind of investment. By investigating the proximity of life worlds and death worlds, this paper elucidates how death is not only the limit condition of modern governmentality, but also constitutive of it.

Presenter(s): Sargam Sharma

Discussion

Discussion

3358 13 Ghosts of Multimodality: Critiquing, Rejecting and Learning to Live with Multimodality's Problems

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

William Castle was the director and producer of countless horror movies, many of which utilized various "gimmicks"--seats wired to deliver electrical shocks, puppets that appeared from behind

the movie screen, props of all kinds. His film "13 Ghosts" (1960) was no exception: the movie recounts the efforts of a family to spend the night in a haunted house and the audience was given special glasses to see the ghosts or make them disappear, an effect ("Illusion-O") that critics found a distraction and that did not last into the re-making of the film in 2001. Indeed, many of Castle's tricks didn't work as intended: too much voltage to the seats, puppets that people would throw their popcorn at, props that ran far afield of the films they were supposed to support. These were the "ghosts" that bedeviled Castle films. Whatever their success or failure, however, Castle could be considered a multimodal pioneer—constantly trying to reach beyond film to engage other senses. And like Castle, we are also faced with our multimodal "ghosts"—the media that distract, that open alternative narratives, that escape us to create their own, refractory meanings or that produce their own attendant inequalities. Finally, we face some of the same charges of glib insouciance in adopting media that are often seen as outside of anthropology's usual purview. Here, the gravity of anthropology itself haunts the work.

This panel considers all of these ghosts, and not necessarily to vanquish them. In the spirit of Avery Gordon, ghosts emerge from the past to demand that we act in the future to address an injustice. These multimodal ghosts challenge us to confront digital divides, interrogate what we mean by "collaboration," and, ultimately, address ethnographic revanchism at the edges of an aesthetic multimodality. Alternately, as Alfred Russel Wallace believed, ghosts are messengers from a utopian future that might stimulate us to lean into the multimodal in order to "burn down" the colonialism of anthropology. Finally, like the hapless Zorba family in "13 Ghosts" who try to last the night in the haunted mansion, we might choose to leave—to reject the multimodal—or stay on, learning to live with meanings, platforms and narratives that do not always go as planned. Accordingly, this panel seeks to include papers in a variety of registers: theoretical, confessional, accusatory, communicating through text or through diverse media. Like Castle's "Illusion-O" glasses, we shift perspectives to see the ghosts or render them invisible; this is both the promise of the multimodal and its inherent weakness. From one perspective, the multimodal helps us to understand and intervene in an increasingly unequal world; from another, power retreats behind a re-deployment of the auteur for a digital age.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Samuel Collins, Towson University

Chair: Krista Harper, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Samuel Collins, Towson University, Max Oginz, University of California, Santa Cruz, Harjant Gill, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice, Carlos Tobon Franco, Matthew Durlington, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice

Discussant: Krista Harper, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Summerland, Otherwise and the Ghosts of Alternative Futures: the Limits of Multimodality in Anthropology and Spiritualism

As anthropologists work with collaborators in evoking alternatives to capitalist fascisms, they increasingly engage multimodal registers; games, design, drawings and soundscapes join film and text in innovative work that seeks to ground worlding in sensorial engagement and haptic experience. Here, the multimodal can support the emancipatory politics of communities where anthropologists work. But what of the politics of multimodal? Is there anything inherently emancipatory in the engagement with diverse platforms? In order to problematize the multimodal, this paper explores another moment in multimodal evocations of alternative futures—19th century Spiritualism. While "spirit rapping" may have been the first Spiritualist media, the movement soon incorporated writing, drawing, sounds, photographs and multiple objects into its evocations of a "Beautiful Beyond" that represented not only the afterlife, but the utopian promise for humanity itself. In many ways, though, the multimodal proved inadequate to the task of evoking the hereafter, with these diverse media platforms dragged down by their obstinate corporeality and their quotidian fabrication. While our concerns are different today, comparing the fate of spirit photography, object levitation and apportioning to the multimodal anthropologies of today can nevertheless help us explore the limits of multimodality in our similarly anxious age. Can the spirits we evoke be more effective than those nineteenth century ghosts?

Presenter(s): Samuel Collins

Inscription: Archaeological Techniques and the Cost of Multimodality

This paper is concerned with the multimodal techniques through which memory is inscribed in land, as well as a reflection on my own multimodal approach to understanding and documenting these techniques. I focus on a group of Sonoma State University archeologists recording and archiving in multiple modalities including metal detection, ground-penetrating radar, and drone powered aerial tomography. Situated in Sonoma County, California's wine country, my field site, The Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) was once among the largest facilities for people with disabilities in the United States. After its closure in 2018, the state entered a years-long process of redevelopment, settling on a private developer with intentions to build a utopian vision of both affordable housing and large single-family plots; a 500-room luxury hotel and a state-of-the-art climate center; a "tech hub" and group homes for people with disabilities. Placed in the context of this ongoing development by three years of audiovisual fieldwork for my film project *A Proposed Alternative to Ghosts*, I observe that the archaeologists' recording of material history serves to mitigate the cost of remembering the center's more troubling history of mid-century eugenics and radiation experiments. The inscription of land by archaeological techniques offers a space in which private and public interests meet to redefine land against the memory that haunts it.

Presenter(s): Max Oginz

Multimodality in the Age of Advanced Neoliberalism, Surveillance, and Securitization

My project explores Delhi's pervasive security and surveillance apparatus, and how it mediates the state's relationship with its citizens. With more than 415,000 CCTV cameras surveilling 1,482 square kilometers of the city around the clock, Delhi is among the most surveilled cities globally.

How has video surveillance and private security reshaped the social and political geographies of Delhi along with the lives of its inhabitants? My forthcoming multimodal project, Surveillance City explores the everyday lives of Delhiites, their interactions with state surveillance and the geographies of this complex city, and the seemingly inconsequential ways in which the neoliberal state monitors (and controls) its citizens by normalizing video surveillance while chipping away at basic rights and freedoms.

Presenter(s): Harjant Gill

Haunting Aesthetics and Conventions Ghosts: Hidden Presences within Documentary Practices

Ethnographic films emerged at a particular moment in time when presence (being there) and urgency (sharing widely) through the one-man-crew-limitations (handheld 16mm cameras and synchronized sound) pretty much defined the genre aesthetics. With few exceptions –Flaherty's reenactments, Marshall's experiments with time, and Rouch's social plays; such conventions framed the genre vis-a-vis the more structured, storied, and 'aesthetic pleasant' Blockbuster-like documentary creations. My inquiries within this presentation are three-fold. First, I'd like to trace the genre changes concerning commercial productions and avant-garde experiments. Secondly, I will explore pieces in which such conventions are broken and the idea of the ethnographic film is expanded –I will look at a global scale but will center my discussion within Latin America. And third, such radical ethnographic examples will lead us to a 'local aesthetics' concept, a perspective in which media piece shapes are formed through the local cultural settings to fulfill ethnographic films' premise of a transcultural cinema.

Presenter(s): Carlos Tobon Franco

Haunting Multimodality: What do you do when a project ghosts you?

Over the last several years I have been part of a team of anthropologists, archivists, and public historians developing two projects with the National Park Service. These multimodal projects focus on the reinterpretation of Ellis Island immigration narratives and Black perceptions of the Statue of Liberty respectively. The first project involves opening the possibilities of the inclusion of immigration stories around Ellis Island that move beyond the well-known tales of predominantly white European journeys through this site that are often celebrated in various forms of media. The latter project is volatile by definition and seeks to open perceptions of the Statue of Liberty as a site of protest and demonstration by Black activists and others throughout its history. But what happens when a president is elected that positions the National Park Service as an enemy? How do you celebrate inclusiveness and birthright citizenship as a pillar of democracy while it is being dismantled? How do you create a dialogue and contestation around a statue that is the most well-known symbol of democracy and freedom in the world? These projects are ready for public consumption, educational possibilities and contestation but they now exist in a liminal and haunting space. Is there a possibility of an applied multimodal anthropology as a means of circumventing silencing and moving from projects that become specters that can strategically haunt power?

Presenter(s): Matthew Durington

Discussion

2590 Beyond War and Conflict: Exploring Lives and Worlds in Contested Spaces

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Conflicts and wars, particularly those that are protracted, are often analyzed in state- and territory-centered ways, dominated by grand narratives of geopolitics and ethnic divisions. Such politically contentious and violent contexts draw attention due to their perceived political exceptionality, while issues such as socioeconomic disparities, infrastructural inequalities, and environmental changes-concerns shared with the so-called stable settings-tend to be overlooked. However, a growing number of anthropologists have challenged these dominant frameworks, shifting focus on the more nuanced realities of everyday life in politically contested spaces. Stamatopoulou-Robbins (2019), for instance, focuses on an emergent, a seemingly apolitical form of siege in Palestine, the waste siege that occupies people's everyday lives in unexpected, tangible, and urgent ways. In doing so, she re-introduces Palestine into the conversation with broader issues of the world by examining it through the lens of waste. Focusing on life rather than death in a war zone, Munira Khayyat (2022) unpacks the enduring relationships between humans and other species amidst pervasive destruction, offering a picture of war as a space where "ecologies of resistance" enable life. Decolonizing "distant theories of war" (Khayyat 2022), such anthropological studies allow us to consider war and conflict from innovative, overlooked perspectives, and help us understand everyday realities and creative ways of living in such turbulent and destructive spaces.

This panel focuses on contexts of war, conflict, and political dispute in ways that go beyond state- and territory-centered analyses. The panel includes papers exploring diverse issues in contested spaces such as technology of water in Jerusalem, DNA identification in post-war Azerbaijan, hazelnut cultivation in Georgia's contested periphery, Kashmir's handicraft industry, and "rubbletopia" in Bangladesh. By focusing on such themes in war and conflict zones, the panel aims to bring together anthropologists who offer novel and decolonizing perspectives on a long-standing issue in social sciences.

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Stamatopoulou-Robbins, Sophia. 2020. *Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine*. Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Gorkem Aydemir-Kundakci, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Chair: Gorkem Aydemir-Kundakci, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Presenter(s): Gorkem Aydemir-Kundakci, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Huzaafa ., Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Emilie Glazer, University College London, Department of Anthropology, Aanmona Priyadarshini, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology, Leyla Jafarova, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: David Henig

Presentation(s): Contested Lands of Nutella: Cultivating Hazelnuts under Conflict and Climate Change in the de facto Georgian-Abkhazian Borderland

In the unrecognized Georgian-Abkhazian borderland, spatial engagements of the displaced Georgians go beyond arbitrary fences and checkpoints. Sedimented histories of landscape engineering and agricultural practices also interact with conflict-driven lives. By exploring these interactions, this paper seeks to understand people's changing relationships with the land under displacement, conflict, and, more recently, climate change. To do so, I focus on the hazelnut—a centuries-old product of the region. Despite being a primary crop in the Black Sea region, hazelnut trees could not venture beyond family-owned orchards in Soviet Georgia, as its homeland was colonized by the engineered fields of subtropical crops. After the Soviet Union, vast plantations were abandoned, stripping people of their jobs. Hazelnuts became the main cash crop for households shattered by shortages and wars. For the people of Gali, hazelnut orchards in Abkhazia have enabled lives by providing a reliable income for three decades. Involving a range of actors, from criminal groups to multinational companies like Ferrero (the producer of Nutella), hazelnut production in the region has been increasingly disrupted by flooding and invasive pests, altering people's relationship with lands. By focusing on hazelnut cultivation in the contested borderland, this paper explores how people constitute, experience, and perceive their land as they produce hazelnuts in a conflict zone, under the impacts of climate change.

Presenter(s): Gorkem Aydemir-Kundakci

Craft in a Time of Conflict

Kashmir, the site of a conflict between India and Pakistan for over 77 years now, is often reduced to its disputed nature. By extension, everyday life as it unfolds in the region, much like other places embroiled in protracted war, is often sidelined. Drawing attention away from such "distant theories of war," this paper centres Kashmir's nearly 600-year-old handicrafts industry and its artisans to highlight ordinary and everyday practices of work. With Kashmiri artisanal imaginaries as a lens, I focus on how artisans rely on the long histories of their craft, often transmitted generationally, to think beyond the physical containments imposed by the Indian nation-state and the temporal confines of 7 decades of conflict. Their craft histories connect them to Iran, Central Asia, Tibet and beyond—unsettling dominant geopolitical frameworks. Concomitantly, Islamic missionaries are thought to have disseminated both craft and religion in the region, thereby entangling artisans' narratives of their work with their religious sensibilities. Both *deen* and *dunya*—the spiritual and the

worldly—permeate their livelihood narratives as they navigate a violent terrain. Underscoring everyday life in Kashmir as it is mediated by daily practices of religiosity and craftwork thus helps us understand life beyond the dominant narratives of war, even as it takes place within it.

Presenter(s): Huzaafa .

Hydrological Surveillance: specters of securitization along Jerusalem waters

How does occupation shape the technology of water in a thirsting world? Along pipelines under the city of Jerusalem, devices designed to monitor water quality send signals to the urban utility, depicting chemical parameters in real-time. Their effects conjure specters connecting global regimes of securitization to situated imaginaries and histories of contamination, offering a vantage point to grasp the less obvious consequences of settler colonial rule. When urban flows transform into data points, I explore how daily acts which seemingly do not involve digital technology – a toilet flush, a running tap – can become the basis for surveillance. In Jerusalem these metrics can be the grounds to remove a Palestinian Jerusalemite's ID. As potential tool for dispossession, hydrological surveillance augurs the intensification of surveillance into ever more intimate realms, just as it brings into relief other modalities of protecting water which challenge the state. And as water innovation continues to be a channel for Israeli soft power, it articulates the presence of colonial formations, state violence, and racial capitalism within technologies that at first glance appear removed from militarization while claiming to solve a global water crisis. By tracing what haunts the securitization logics of water infrastructure, this paper draws attention to forms of violence away from the extremes of war, to show the affects, imaginaries, and ideologies that pervade its far wider reach.

Presenter(s): Emilie Glazer

Living with and within Rubble

The violent destruction and subsequent commodification of reconstructed sacred spaces as tourist attractions generate "infrasecular geography," where various forms of belief and non-belief coexist, intersect, and come into conflict in everyday life. The dazzling spectacles of infrasecular spaces are often disrupted by everyday placemaking strategies in the city that cultivate a deeper awareness of the underlying processes of ruination from which these spaces emerge. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Ramu, Bangladesh, following the 2012 destruction and ongoing tourism-driven reconstruction of Buddhist religious sites, I argue that rubble serves as the primary locus of this awareness. By collecting, selecting, preserving, and displaying certain rubble in deliberate ways, people often carve out distinct spaces within infrasecular landscapes where the positivity of newly built religious structures is contested and resisted. I call this new space "rubbletopia"—a site of resistance that disrupts normative arrangements of built spaces, evoking uncertainty and unease. It highlights the ongoing material and social sedimentation of destruction in the aftermath of violence. By situating rubbletopia within broader conversations about how spatial destruction is integral to the production of space, this paper explores how people around the world navigate life in

and through rubble, thereby illuminating the complex realities of everyday life in politically contested spaces.

Presenter(s): Aanmona Priyadarshini

Persisting Presence in Absence: Desire, Relational Continuity, and the Missing in Post-War Azerbaijan

War and conflict are often examined through frameworks of absence—what is destroyed, what is lost, and who is missing. Humanitarian forensic interventions frame disappearance as a void to be resolved through the recovery of bodily remains. Forensic technologies, particularly DNA identification, have become central to these efforts, positioning scientific evidence as the arbiter of presence and absence. Yet, for families of the missing, absence does not only merely rupture; rather, it reconfigures relationality, allowing the missing to persist socially, affectively, and spiritually. Drawing on ethnographic research in post-war Azerbaijan, this paper explores how families sustain presence through practices of relational continuity such as narrating dreams, consulting fortune-tellers, and circulating rumors. Rather than conceptualizing absence as a void, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of desire, which challenges the notion of lack as a defining condition of subjectivity. Families do not simply long for their missing kin; they actively sustain their presence in their daily lives. In doing so, they challenge dominant frameworks that equate resolution with bodily recovery, foregrounding ongoing relationality and the endurance of the missing within lived experience. By centering presence rather than loss, this paper highlights how families create an alternative epistemology of persistence—one that reconfigures kinship, care, and futurity beyond dominant epistemologies.

Presenter(s): Leyla Jafarova

Discussion

5574 Hauntings vs. Lively Legacies: How the Past Manifests in the Present in the U.S. South

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel responds to the conference theme of “Ghosts,” which fits squarely within Southern gothic narratives that frame the U.S. Southeast as uniquely haunted. Past events associated with the violent displacement of Native Americans, the violence of enslavement and Jim Crow, and the violent suppression of labor organizing can and do linger in the present, shaping Southern lives and places. This panel wishes to question: in the context of the US Southeast, does framing these events and their legacies as hauntings create a move towards abstraction that ultimately makes violent histories more palatable via metaphorization? In what ways can we use hauntology (Good 2020, e.g.), and in what ways might the language of ghosts render abstract and distance us from histories that we are the inheritors of? Anthropologists of the US Southeast have pushed back

against regional political or social reification and instead attended to the ways that the region's history informs complex social relations in the present (Benson 2011, Buck 2019, Griffith 2021, Jackson 2011, Joos 2023, Kingsolver 2011, Ogden 2011, Stuesse 2016, Thomas-Houston 2004). We invite papers that reckon with the fine-grained details of the lively legacies of Southeastern history, of the ways that those histories manifest in the present to guide the way communities imagine what life in the Southeast can be, rather than leave people fearful of what was/is. We are especially interested in the region-specific activism that may (or may not?) get overlooked or recast when the Southeast is primarily thought of as haunted/dead.

Benson, Peter. 2011. *Tobacco Capitalism: Growers, Migrant Workers, and the Changing Face of a Global Industry*. Princeton U Press.

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Griffith, David. 2021. "Labor in Livelihood Constellations along Coastal Plains." *Anthropology of Work Review* 42(2): 82-92.

Jackson, Antoinette T. 2011. "Shattering Slave Life Portrayals: Uncovering Subjugated Knowledge in U.S. Plantation Sites in South Carolina and Florida." *American Anthropologist* 113(3): 448-462.

Joos, Vincent. 2023. "Settling in the US Deep South: Race, Ethnicity, and Belonging among Haitian Migrants in a Small North Carolina Town." *Transforming Anthropology* 31(1): 42-56.

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Ogden, Laura A. 2011. *Swamplife: People, Gators, and Mangroves Entangled in the Everglades*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stuesse, Angela. 2016. *Scratching out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South*. UC Press

Thomas-Houston, Marilyn M. 2004. *'Stony the Road' to Change: Black Mississippians and the Culture of Social Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Mauri Systo, University of Minnesota, Morris, Sydney Pullen, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures

Chair: Sydney Pullen, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures

Presenter(s): Shawn Lambert, Mississippi State University, Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures, Kristin Buhrow, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Olivares, University of Texas Medical Branch, Sydney Pullen, Mississippi State University,

Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures

Presentation(s): Ghost Routes and Resonant Things: Object Itineraries and Hauntological Landscapes at the Concord Quarters Plantation in Natchez, Mississippi

This paper examines the late 18th-century Concord Quarters plantation site in Natchez, Mississippi, through the dual frameworks of object itineraries and hauntology to reinterpret its landscape and material culture. Rather than treating artifacts as static remnants of a closed past, I explore how objects at Concord—bricks, bottles, tools, and domestic wares—circulated through entangled networks of labor, trade, violence, and resistance. These material itineraries chart routes shaped by enslavement, global economies, and ongoing struggles for Black sovereignty. Hauntology further deepens this analysis by centering the absences that linger within the plantation's architectural and archaeological record—voices, futures, and lives excluded by systems of racialized labor and domination. As Sadeq Rahimi argues, haunting emerges from the unfulfilled potential of what might have been; at Concord, spectral presences are embedded in the very ground, evoking both the trauma and the resistance of those who lived and labored there. The plantation landscape thus becomes a palimpsest of intersecting temporalities: past objects remain in motion, while the spectral absence of enslaved lives continues to shape the present. By collapsing the distinction between heritage and history, presence and absence, this paper foregrounds Concord as a site where ethics, memory, and materiality converge, offering new modes of archaeological storytelling that reckon with both what remains and what haunts.

Presenter(s): Shawn Lambert

“I’ve Never Experienced Racism”: Chinese American Survival Strategies, 1940’s and Today

This presentation considers Chinese American experiences of Southern racialization and discrimination in two distinctly Sinophobic eras. Ethnographic interviews collected primarily in Atlanta, Georgia, just after the COVID-19 pandemic and the city's notorious Spa Shootings, will be analyzed alongside archived interviews of attendees at the first Chinese-language schoolhouse in Mississippi, just after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1943). Resonances across these interviews trace a living legacy of racial triangulation—a practice by which Asian Americans strategically accept presumptions of foreignness to create conceptual space for themselves outside of the South's Black/White racial binary (Kim 2001). This consistent practice, I argue, has given rise to a regionally specific form of racial dissociation: a psychic defense mechanism in which, under conditions of obvious discrimination, individuals assess their situation to be unaffected by race (Eng & Han 2018). This analysis considers the possibility that racial segregation and Chinese Exclusion constitute living legacies which have taken shape in new, modern forms (Cox Richardson 2020), and which have catalyzed generational trauma responses which haunt Southerners of all backgrounds, including Asian Americans.

Presenter(s): Kristin Buhrow

Policing and the Ghosts of Slave Patrols in Southeast Texas

This paper examines how the history of mounted patrols in Houston—beginning with slave-catching patrols and evolving into contemporary police units—constitutes a "lively legacy" shaping state power, public memory, and protest management. Tracing the transformation of mounted officers from slave patrols to "Cow Catchers" to today's crowd-control specialists, I show how their presence still evokes earlier regimes of bodily regulation and racial control. This tension came into sharp relief during the Red Summer of 2020, when the same streets that saw police on horseback corralling protesters also witnessed a powerful reversal: Black riders from the NonStop Riders club led a march on horseback, shirts bearing Floyd's image. Their presence reclaimed the horse as a symbol of resistance, unsettling dominant associations of horseback riding with whiteness, wealth, and frontier masculinity. In conversation with this panel's questions around haunting and metaphor, I ask: does the trope of the ghost risk making the materiality of racialized policing more palatable—as seen in museum displays and civic spectacle? While hauntology offers one register for reckoning with historical violence, I argue that mounted patrols operate not only through ghostly traces, but through ongoing infrastructures of racial control and selective nostalgia. This paper foregrounds how the past animates the present through institutions that continue to police, surveil, and stage power in the U.S. S

Presenter(s): Jessica Olivares

Everyday Historical Production in the Rural South: Challenging Southern Gothic Orientalist Tropes

In his landmark work, Edward Said (1978) explains that orientalism functions through "imaginative geography and history" that accentuate differences, real or imagined, between Europe and "the Orient." Similarly, Southern Gothic portrayals of the U.S. South that paint the region, and the people who live in it, as strange, violent, grotesque or otherwise aberrational create temporal and geographical distance between the South and the rest of the country, or between the contemporary and past South. That distance enables ahistoric explanations of present-day political economic realities in the U.S. South, divorcing them from deeper regional histories. In this paper, I draw on archival, interview, and participant observation data from 19 months of fieldwork in rural, Black Belt South Carolina to analyze when and how South Carolinians invoke the past in their explanations of the present. South Carolinians are engaged in their own, everyday practices of historical production, developing nuanced and/or contradictory historical narratives. Their stories of navigating poverty and racism challenge Southern Gothic Orientalist tropes as they indicate that the political economic dynamics of the U.S. South are hardly exceptional and highlight the ways that Southerners draw on histories of exploitative, racialized labor hierarchies to guide their struggles for a more just South.

Presenter(s): Sydney Pullen

1387 The Ghosts We Eat: Unseen Entities Forming and Deforming Our Food Systems

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Executive Roundtable/Townhall

This roundtable focuses on the ghosts, the unseen and immaterial but acting entities that form and deform our global food systems, and which we ingest, sometimes unaware. Of special interest are the ghosts of the past, and ghosts we refer to in shorthand as of present. Following the work of Thompson, Stoler, Tsing and others, past ghosts include ecological traces of multiple more-than-human histories, including the afterlives of colonialism, plantations and plantation technologies. Here, we think also of the material debris of colonialism, of camps that may change from being colonial to migrant, labor to refugee in function or name. The ghosts of the present are invisible specters in the ways Derrida and Merleau-Ponty have theorized-the 'becoming-body', the 'nothing visible' that needs a body to exist and can only come to be and be seen by inhabiting visible entities or by figuring in different kinds of bodies. We think of these present ghosts as forces of hierarchy such as racial capitalism, bordering practices, and nationalisms. We also conceive of them as unseen but palpable elements; for example, excessive heat in greenhouses, smoke downwind from wildfires in fields, carcerality and fear in the workplace, supply chain infrastructures, as well as pesticides, viruses, bacteria and their health effects.

This multi-modal roundtable explores conceptually, textually, and visually how these past and present ghosts form and deform the social structures in and through which food is produced and consumed. These ghosts manifest the ways in which socio-agri-food systems are formed as well as how these figurations at times, become deformed, destroyed, and left in ruins. Simultaneously, we analyze the ways bodies process past and present ghosts in sensory and affective registers. We discuss ghosts through ethnographic research in various food settings in the U.S., Mexico, Spain, and Austria; in vegetable greenhouses, strawberry fields, orange orchards, as well as in packing warehouses, refrigerated trucks, and industrial and personal kitchens. The roundtable juxtaposes the visual-sensory with the textual in order to understand the haunting of bodies – of humans, societies, food, landscapes and waterways – as well as of the contemporary and future otherwise. In this historical moment, we find it critical to examine the ghosts we eat, the beauty and brutality in the food we consume, specters that become part of our bodies, inflecting our individual and collective futures.

Organizer: Seth M. Holmes, University of California, Berkeley, Mael Vizcarra

Presenter(s): Alesandra Tatic, Universitat de Barcelona, Gerardo Rodriguez-Solis, University of California, Berkeley, Paul Sperneac-Wolfer, Mael Vizcarra, Heather Paxson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Dvera Saxton, Brenda Gutierrez Mora

Discussant: Cristiana Bastos, University of Lisbon, Seth M. Holmes, University of California, Berkeley

7179 Anthropologies of Disillusionment and (Un)Belonging

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the possibilities and contradictions that emerge from considering how

disillusionment, precarity, and belonging function, materialize, or are absent from ethnographic field sites, among communities, and in the social, economic, and political processes that we as anthropologists observe. Through deeply ethnographic case studies from Abkhazia, Uganda, El Salvador, Egypt, and Thailand that attend to the multiple forms, layers, and scales of belonging, this panel investigates how belonging shapes social relations and dynamics in diverse communities, and when and how belonging is experienced alongside alienation, exclusion, and disillusionment. Drawing on various bodies of work in feminist anthropology, political anthropology, critical race studies, and more, this panel interrogates the possibilities that emerge from considering how people negotiate belonging and disenchantment in contexts of political turmoil. Recognizing that many of the people we work with may be haunted by skepticism, cynicism, harsh breaks to pre-existing world views, silences, or ghostly encounters, this panel addresses the myriad ways that these hauntings of disillusionment and (un)belonging are negotiated. For instance, this panel attends to the ways that hauntings and disillusionment are negotiated through humor, labor (Buch 2013), the building or shaping of intercommunal relations (McGovern 2012; Ring 2006), the careful navigation of interactions with authority (Aretxaga 1997; Streicher 2020), and intimate homemaking and kinship-making practices (Feldman-Savelsberg 2020; Salas Carreño 2016; Wellman 2017). To do so, this panel explores how peoples' racialized, gendered, and classed embodiments and positionalities reflect in and through their experiences of belonging, exclusion, and disenchantment. The format of this panel emphasizes discussion and collaboration, bringing together scholars from different regional backgrounds and at different stages in their careers. Following individual paper presentations, the panel will respond to questions presented by the panel discussants intended to foster a dialogue across regional contexts, before moving onto an open question and answer session. In engaging in a panel conversation across regions, this panel works to develop theories of belonging and disillusionment, while maintaining the ethnographic particulars of layered socio-temporal contexts.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Gehad Abaza, University of California, Santa Barbara, Chantal Croteau, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Gehad Abaza, University of California, Santa Barbara

Presenter(s): Christine Chalifoux, Franklin & Marshall College, Department of Anthropology, Adam Adam, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Gehad Abaza, University of California, Santa Barbara, Irina Carlota [Lotti] Silber, CUNY, City College, Department of Anthropology, Gender Studies, and International Studies, Chantal Croteau, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sharika Thiranagama, Sarah Muir

Presentation(s): Witches and Flags: National Disillusionment in Kampala

Witchcraft is a classic anthropological subject, and much has been written about its role in creating and undoing social bonds. In Kampala, Uganda, the ubiquity of witchcraft is evident from signs scattered throughout the city advertising cures for it. While people are indeed concerned about the possibility of a friend, neighbor, or coworker bewitching them, this paper specifically interrogates

witchcraft accusations against President Museveni. Foregrounding the experiences of ethnic minority migrant workers, I contrast the ways in which President Museveni was called a "witch" while notoriously violent dictators of the past, such as Idi Amin and Milton Obote, escaped such characterization. I ask: What distinguishes the violence of the current political regime from that of previous leaders? How does the accusation of witchcraft, in particular, help us understand the disillusionment and resentment felt towards President Museveni? In exploring these questions, issues of ethnic and national belonging are revealed to be intimately intertwined with ideas of who can be a witch.

Presenter(s): Christine Chalifoux

Improvising Life: Hidden Epistemological Logics of Humor in Cairo

This presentation examines how young adults (18–35) in Cairo, Egypt deploy humor and improvisation to navigate authoritarian neoliberal rule and economic precarity. Despite increased state censorship and shrinking expressive spaces, stand-up comedy has been proliferating; stand-up comedians dominate cultural centers, YouTube shows, podcasts, etc. often masking political commentary in an apolitical guise. Through ethnographic fieldwork in Cairo's comedy scenes, I analyze improvisational humor through locally embedded concepts such as *fahlawā* (cunning) and *etsaraf* (figure it out). Moving beyond dominant frameworks that reduce humor to resistance or relief, and drawing on Black Radical Traditions, I theorize humor as an epistemological practice for navigating contradictions beyond compliance/resistance binaries. Improvisational humor emerges as a tactic of maneuvering—an embodied, relational knowledge that operates in the interstices of power. By tracing youth's experiences and interactions across stand-up shows, digital content, and urban spaces, I analyze how humorous improvisation cultivates social consciousness, fosters agency, mitigates repression, and negotiates belonging. This work engages with anthropological debates of humor, the state, and urban studies by centering improvisation as an adaptive mode of sense-making, not merely a form of defiance.

Presenter(s): Adam Adam

Disillusioned Belonging: Precarious Lives in an Empty Paradise

This presentation explores how forcibly displaced migrants negotiate belonging, housing, and homemaking in the aftermath of war, particularly within the context of an emergent statecraft project. Relying on extensive ethnographic fieldwork with Syrian-Circassian women in Abkhazia, a semi-recognized state in the Caucasus, my analysis centers the gendered transformations—including entrance into the workforce, care labor, and homemaking—that take place in post-conflict contexts of displacement and exile, at the margins of war and defeated revolutions. I ask: How do war-time migrants contend with their politics of (un)belonging within a racialized and gendered statecraft project through the intimate labor of homemaking? As they struggled to create homes for themselves, Syrian-Circassians had to contend with their politics of (un)belonging, their gendered racialization as Muslim and Syrian women, and the reality of economic precarity in an isolated post-Soviet state. I argue that my interlocutors expressed a form of "disillusioned

belonging" that provides an ethically driven critique of their instrumentalization in a statecraft project under a globally militarized and racialized border regime. Through their labor within and beyond the home, these women's attempts to create opportunities for themselves in a context of material and social ruination serve as a means of building a sense of self and wider communal belonging, even in its disillusioned forms.

Presenter(s): Gehad Abaza

Compromised bodies, imperiled lives, and threatened stories

Compromised bodies, imperiled lives, and threatened stories haunt my work as an anthropologist. In this presentation, I take up the invitation to "embrace the creative potential of the ghostly and the spectral." I present new, experimental writing and thinking that explores four discrete and positioned projects, their attendant sources of knowledge, and the weight of this work. These projects consist of 1) an ethnographic archive of postwar El Salvador; 2) a collaborative, horizontal and decolonial project on photography and historical memory; 3) crafted writing on disease and disability in family life; and 4) generational loss and silences of migrant life. The paper will play with the arc of my writing that falls within a now well-developed anthropological understanding of *compromiso* and global calls for *solidaridad* alongside the various interpellations regarding the haunting of that which is compromised about/of this work. For example, what does an exploration of compromised lives, instances, memories, relations do for this panel's question on belonging, which for many is always spectral and rooted in exclusion and disillusionment? From my original doctoral research on a "spectral reconciliation" as an afterlife of war, to narratives about compromised bodies and experiences of anticipatory sorrow, the proposed presentation offers a window into bringing together an anthropology of postwar with critical disability studies to address comprised lives as abundant spaces.

Presenter(s): Irina Carlota [Lotti] Silber

Fragile Kinships: Region, Ethnicity, and Belonging in Thailand's Tin Industry

Industries of extraction have long flourished in the resource rich region of southern Thailand, the confluence of state interests and capitalist production coming to shape intercommunal relations and to define and enforce categories of ethnicity and religion in the region. This paper focuses on one such industry – the tin mining industry, which exploded along the southern coast of then Siam in the 19th century. Attending to the relations of kinship, region, and ethnicity generated through the mining industry, this paper examines the ways that kinship practices came to inform belonging or its absence. In particular, this paper shares the story of one woman's journey to the south in the 1970s, following her migration from the rice growing region in the northeast of Thailand to her efforts to survive in the volatile world of the southern tin industry, a world made all the more unstable by earlier state policies that had cultivated debt and addiction within the mining laborer community. Following Yai's (Grandmother's) stories as they unfolded over time and her embodied practices of kinship, this paper analyzes how the building of intimacy and kinship can operate as a strategy of survival in unpredictable times. Yai's story, however, reveals that the making of kinship

requires continuous cultivation, her belonging to the southern imaginary tenuous even after decades of living together in a shared space, fragility and risk inherent to kinship and, through kinship, belonging.

Presenter(s): Chantal Croteau

Discussion

2980 Spectres of Ruptured Time: Distemporalities and Their Afterlives

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines the complex relationship between time and its ruination, focusing on how communities navigate temporal disruptions resulting from mass violence, genocide, colonialism, enslavement and racial capitalism, forced displacement, and environmental destruction. The panel considers how habitual modes of communal time-reckoning – both evental and everyday social rhythms – fare against such contexts of forced disorientation. It asks how these temporalities might manifest within spaces of exile and return, the economies of enslavement and dispossession, as well as in rituals, dreams, storytelling, and artistic practices. We are concerned with more-than-human temporal relations and their systemic unravellings. Our discussion will seek to critically interrogate the role of imperialism and the state in the processes of distemporalisation – understood as a variety of projects that deny, restructure, or obliterate temporalities deemed nonconforming. In thinking distemporalisations, we take time both as a structuring force and a matter of unfolding encounters, feelings, and exchanges, entwined with space, ideologies, infrastructures, and bodies. The panel thus asks what occurs when temporal lifeworlds are ruptured. Do temporal structures disappear, merge with, or resist new orders? Do they haunt? How are disrupted temporalities commemorated? Contributors address nationalism, colonialism, systemic enslavement, archival violence, gendered, and racialised time-making, as well as the affects and economies of time, offering insights into the lives and afterlives of distemporalities.

Papers examine the spectral presence of disrupted time, from the haunting archival traces of gender nonconformity in colonial New Orleans to the fragmented timekeeping of Bosnian returnees after genocide. The interplay of temporalities of catastrophes emerges in the reconstruction of Nepal's earthquake-stricken heritage, while colonial archives in Sudan and Palestine raise urgent questions about ongoing epistemicide and historical erasure. Environmental and legal temporalities are interrogated through critiques of the exclusionary framing of future generations and the struggle for arboreal jurisdiction in Australia. Together, these discussions trace how distemporalities linger as spectral forces – unruly, unsettled, and insistent – haunting the landscapes, archives, and juridical structures that seek to erase them. The fractured temporalities do not simply disappear; they persist in echoes of epistemicide, in spectres of personhood beyond the colonial ordinary, in contested reconstructions of place and memory, in the spectral weight of dispossession, and in the legal fictions of progress. These hauntings remind us that ruptured time is never fully lost but instead returns, unsettles, and demands reckoning in the present.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Safet HadžiMuhamedović, University of Stirling, Vanja Hamzic, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Chair: Safet HadžiMuhamedović, University of Stirling, Vanja Hamzic, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Presenter(s): Vanja Hamzic, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media, Safet HadžiMuhamedović, University of Stirling, Gina Heathcote, Newcastle University, Alice Finden, Vanicka Arora, Emily Jones

Presentation(s): Re-temporalising Etienne La Rue outside the Colonial Ordinary: Gender Non-Conformity and Distemporalisation in Early New Orleans

This paper zooms in on the trial of one Etienne La Rue, a twenty-two-year-old free person of colour from Senegambia in West Africa, before the Superior Council of Louisiana in New Orleans, in May 1747. I examine, in particular, a gendered and racialised insult hurled at La Rue by a French soldier, and La Rue's quick response, which had started the brawl and led to the trial. Mistranslated, misspelled, and seemingly purposely mis-analysed in the resultant archival afterlife—especially by the Jim-Crow-era archivists and historians—this insult sheds light on a peculiar practice of personhood- and time-making in the colonial legal archive. I maintain that this insult and La Rue's story are exemplary in the history of early New Orleans in that its insurrectionary potential, its ways of telling a past that does not quite square with the colonial ordinary, is speculative and contingent on a critical analysis of the very way that extractive, dispossessive colonial ordinary came into being. Could La Rue's own senses of the self and the other have been incongruent to an extent, or altogether, with the surviving categories of colonial difference—such as race and gender—in linear time? And to what extent can the surviving, often ghostly, archival traces of eighteenth-century Senegambian time-keeping and non-linear temporalities interrupt and expose diverse distemporalising effects of the colonial ordinary, centuries after La Rue's trial?

Presenter(s): Vanja Hamzic

Surviving Chronocide in the Bosnian Highlands

Three decades after the genocidal destruction of their towns, landscapes and communities, small groups of returnees to the Dinaric Bosnian highlands are the uncanny timekeepers of an erased world. Based on their stories and my long-term ethnographic research, I trace the religiously plural and more-than-human relations that their temporal structures and devices held together. Following seasonal agricultural work, neighbourly interactions, rituals, feasts and attempts at their postwar reconstruction, the paper engages with time as, first and foremost, communal orientation. I encounter haunting spiritual matter of the deceased and mass-murdered inhabitants, as well as the exiled supernatural beings, with competing cosmological and political claims over the living and their landscapes. Then, I sketch out the main features of nationalist distemporalising violence, as it latched onto the communities, with attention to the reappropriation of the traditional cyclical calendar and the constructions of the 'wounded history-ominous future' ideological complex employed to perpetuate the genocidal regime. Chronocide, I suggest, is neither straightforward nor

immediate; like nationalism more generally, it slowly and insidiously fabricates new worlds out of the rubbles of those it destroys. The fragments of usurped time thus haunt it intrinsically.

Presenter(s): Safet HadžiMuhamedović

Arboreal Jurisdiction

Inspired by Indigenous resistance to the Victorian State government's destruction of sacred Djab Wurrung trees for road construction, I examine human affective and legal relations with trees, alongside legal refusals to recognise nonhuman legal relations as known within non-Western legal systems. The paper—and the law it examines—is haunted by the Australian genocide, including on Djab Wurrung land, and which reverberates through settler-colonial laws in Australia. I examine the legal temporalities that shape the ways of knowing permitted within Western legal traditions and draw on Indigenous legal knowledge to evidence the role of genocide in haunting contemporary legal arrangements in the region. I argue that the refusal to acknowledge the Djab Wurrung trees, and their presence in Djab Wurrung knowledge structures, repeats the settler-colonial violence that the Australian state is the product of, and denies the affective, intergenerational and cross-jurisdictional claims offered through arboreal encounters. I develop an account of arboreal jurisdiction to address the temporal residue and repetitions of law's violence, and to think beyond Western progress narratives. The building of a road becomes a more-than-metaphor for liberal legalism's obsession with progress, while Direction Trees are felled and the knowledge of intergenerational, ecology-grounded legal relations is refused.

Presenter(s): Gina Heathcote

Colonial Archives and Violence: The Cases of Sudan and Palestine

This paper interrogates the meaning of colonial archival sources for understandings of ongoing violence and conflict. I draw upon two sites of continuing violence in Palestine and Sudan in which temporal lifeworlds have been ruptured through the destruction of cultural, social and educational institutions. In both cases of ongoing conflict and state violence, people are subject to lethal violence, expulsion from their homes, forced migration and starvation. In both cases also, institutions of social and cultural memory, educational institutions, libraries and archives have been subject to destruction and erasure, to the extent where, in the case of Palestine, the systematic obliteration of knowledge has been termed 'epistemicide'. This paper asks questions about the meaning of colonial records about both of these states given ongoing destruction of national memory. It asks, how are colonial records differently read upon a background of ongoing violence? How does archival violence persist and in what shapes does it appear today? Following decolonial approaches to the archive, this paper further questions whether these records can ever be spaces of redress, and whether, through engagement with impacted communities they might be relied upon to re-write national histories and reimage possible futures.

Presenter(s): Alice Finden

Earthquake Afterlives: (Re)Constructing Heritage, (Re)Claiming the Past in Bhaktapur, Nepal

This paper examines the overlapping temporalities of earthquakes and their aftermaths that are in operation in Nepal. A country that is perennially 'between' earthquakes, with a devastating seismic event recurring every century, previous and future disasters continue to haunt public imaginaries. In the aftermath of the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, as the citizens and local government officials in Bhaktapur rallied to reconstruct over 124 heritage buildings across the city, an opportunity arose to 'right' the wrongs of past reconstruction efforts that followed the 1934 Nepal Bihar Earthquake. A dramatic change in aesthetics and style, returning to a pre-1934 state was chosen across multiple sites, reclaiming, through built form, the identity of Bhaktapur as a political capital and centre of power. But simultaneously, driven by national policy and community sentiment, reconstructed buildings are required to address a future inevitable earthquake and its aftermath. And so, spectres of past earthquakes and their aftermaths coincide with the disruptions sure to be brought upon by future earthquakes. Through a series of cases across the city, I draw attention to the multiple temporalities unfolding in each building, some drawn anew, some reassembled, and others left as ruins commemorating past disasters, each shaping the current identity of Bhaktapur as a 'heritage city.'

Presenter(s): Vanicka Arora

The Temporality and Hauntology of Future Generations

The idea of protecting the environment for future generations has been gaining traction in recent years. This paper argues, first, that the concept of future generations, as deployed in environmental law is, however, deeply exclusionary, with only some humans being envisaged as future generations, these exclusions being marked by gender, race, class, ableism and anthropocentrism. This argument is made through an analysis of the figure of the universal child, held alongside an evaluation of how future generations, as a concept, was conceived of in international law in the 1970s. In particular, the links between future generations and debates on population control and speciesism will be discussed. Second, the paper will discuss the politics of temporality that underly the concept of future generations. The notion that the planet should be protected for those to come sounds hopeful. However, the concept, as deployed by courts, assumes a modernist idea of linear time as progress. Furthermore, claiming that future generations need a right to environment is problematic given that such a right does not yet exist for present generations. The paper will end by asking whether the concept, given its haunted past, should be abandoned or whether it can be recast considering the critiques made of it here. In doing so, the paper will reflect on both the hauntology and temporality of future generations while centering Indigenous conceptions of space-time and intergenerational equity.

Presenter(s): Emily Jones

5211 Attending to the Circulations of Care: Critical Medical Anthropology in the Global South

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The geopolitical category of the Global South/the Majority World reflects a history of imperial rule and economic subjugation brought about by the multiple dimensions of European colonization. The construction of differential racial positionality as a justification for colonialism gave rise to a complicated world history wherein different kinds of supremacy – both local and global – structured social, political and epistemic institutions that continue to influence our contemporary lifeworlds. Health infrastructures and conditions of care in and beyond locations in the Global South are part of such assemblages of postcolonial situations that continue to embody the ghosts of colonial subjugation.

This panel centers the Global South in interrogating the spirit of supremacy that haunts the biomedical infrastructures that came into being in the aftermath of colonialism. In particular, the panel seeks to intervene in conversations within critical medical anthropology, extending analytical attention toward interrogating the legacies of extraction that are imbricated with global flows of biomedicine. The panel also attends to how these legacies are resisted, reconfigured or otherwise situated. Furthermore, the panel draws upon histories of advocacy and activism to investigate how negotiations are taking place in accessing healthcare in the respective countries. Finally, the panel is concerned with how interpersonal questions of care are intertwined with the ways that care is made available to communities amidst the backdrop of failing neoliberal healthcare infrastructures.

The panel consists of scholars who work in and on countries classified as belonging to the Global South while attending to how healthcare providers, patients and patient advocates, disability activists, communities, and policymakers negotiate with the ghosts of supremacy, at times re-materializing and at other times exorcising them. All participants further engage critically with the category of the Global South resituating its theoretical import in anthropologies of the body.

The panel addresses the following questions in/and/from critical medical anthropology in the Global South, including:

1. How are experiences of disability and illness shaped by - and come to shape - the navigation of care as provided by health systems?
2. In what ways has the digitization of healthcare and the proliferation of digital health interfaces influenced the development of a burgeoning economy of surveillance amidst the provision of care?
3. How does the intertwining of capital and health come to influence the political economies of the provision of care in different locations across the Global South?
4. What are the moral and sociopolitical universes that surround the provision of healthcare for historically oppressed communities in and through the welfare state?
5. How might we attend critically to both state investment in health infrastructure and policy regimes across locations?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Kim Fernandes, University of Pennsylvania, Sanghamitra Das, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Sanghamitra Das, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology, Kim Fernandes, University of Pennsylvania

Presenter(s): Lorenzo Alunni, Gemma Aellah, Rinku Ashok Kumar, Kennedy Opande, Ritu Ghosh, Maria-Keiko Yasuoka

Discussant: Nesselte Falu, University of Texas at Austin

Presentation(s): Healthcare at the Border: Bodies, Migration, and Surveillance in the Mediterranean

This paper is based on an ethnographic fieldwork on the island of Lampedusa, at the center of the central Mediterranean route – one of the deadliest of "illegal" migration corridors in the contemporary world. The research work focused on the medical apparatus of the border, its use as an organizational, legal and political tool of border management, and the ways in which that border is embodied by those attempting to reach, cross, and survive it. The question of medical care in the space of the border specifically intersects with all the political and technological dimensions that shape it, with a transformative, sometimes resistant and adaptive effect. This contribution aims to investigate the ways in which, in the framework of the contemporary European border regime, the interaction between innovations in forms of biometric control, clinical practices, and related political, racial, and moral frames shapes the bodily experience of the border, as well as its colonial legacy and contemporary effects. The analysis of the legal, medical, and technological entanglement observable in the maritime threshold between Europe and Global South offers insights and perspectives that go far beyond the border itself.

Presenter(s): Lorenzo Alunni

Affective Bureaucracies: Love, Care, and the Struggle to Recognize Podoconiosis in Ethiopia

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) disproportionately impact marginalized populations yet remain overlooked in global health agendas. Podoconiosis—a disabling but preventable disease endemic to Ethiopia—exemplifies this systemic neglect. Though excluded from WHO's official NTD list, Ethiopia included it in its 2023 NTD Masterplan, a milestone achieved not through technocratic decision-making alone, but via the often-invisible labour of care. This multi-sited ethnography (2020–25) traces how care—as emotional commitment and political action—shaped podoconiosis policy. Combining document analysis, biographical interviews with Ethiopian/ UK researchers, NGO staff, government officials, and ethnographic observations of WHO meetings and advocacy events, we show how disparate actors united by shared concern navigate institutional silences and policy gaps. Their work, supported by limited yet critical evidence, counters dominant paradigms of 'evidence-based' policymaking, revealing how affective engagement reshapes bureaucracies. We argue policymaking is not merely a rational exercise, but a terrain shaped by multiplicities of care, personal dedication, and collective advocacy. By centering lived experiences, this study unsettles assumptions about how global health policy is made, highlighting care's quiet but transformative

role in confronting structural neglect. These insights call for a reimagining of equity in NTD responses & broader health justice in the Global South.

Presenter(s): Gemma Aellah

Co-author(s): Getnet Tefera

Postgenomic Imaginaries of Health in Urban India

After the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003, postgenomic science or the "-omics" turn has troubled the hold of genetic determinism or has "demoted the gene" while situating the body in the social (Lock 2012). In urban India, postgenomic interventions powered by biocapital (Sunder Rajan, 2006) constitute narratives of health (as opposed to narratives of illness). As my fieldwork among gut microbiome test takers suggest, they seem to form uncanny contours between rural and urban, ancient and modern, poor and rich, where the idealized health imaginaries of the "rural", "ancient", and the "poor" come to haunt the categories of "urban", "modern", and economically "rich" through intervention of postgenomic knowledge. For example, through the introduction of gut microbiome tests. The subsequent health imaginaries bear upon the care and management of gut microbial ecosystems of primarily urban and socioeconomically privileged Indian guts. In this paper, I explore the arc of these contours while delineating the emergent care practices of the non-humans primarily in humans. Through exploring the molecularization of the body (Landecker, 2011), I reflect on ways in which biocapital and biopolitics shape the postgenomic subjectivities in the global South.

Presenter(s): Rinku Ashok Kumar

Ghostly Protocols: Neo-colonial Legacies in Neurological Care in Kenya

Neurological care of neural tube defects [NTDs] and childhood disability, brain injuries, epilepsy among others in Kenya is shaped by colonial and neo-colonial protocols, biomedical practices and technologies which disentangle these conditions from culture-specific ideas that intersect with them. This has exposed the local health care infrastructures as spaces of reproducing decontextualized global health techniques that are unsuited to respond to these neurological and disability conditions. Drawing on clinical ethnography in Kenya, this paper explores the structural deficits of the local health care infrastructures dealing with neurological conditions and childhood disabilities which have been compounded by ghosts of neoliberal market policies. It adopts critical disability studies approach to investigate the power, privilege, and oppression of the bodily and mental norms which devalue the social perspectives, practices, and concerns about disability. Indigenous, moral ideas, practices and discourse, perspectives and conceptions of disability from the local context are explored. The paper proposes attending to neurological conditions and associated disability as interconnected phenomena that require paying attention to creative local systems and cultural practices as forms of life.

Presenter(s): Kennedy Opande

"They are Very Rigorous About Screening": The Unmaking/Making of Surrogacy Markets in India

The Indian state has recently criminalized commercial surrogacy, legally recognizing only altruistic surrogacy for select clients. While commercial surrogacy compensates surrogate workers for the gestational labor provided, altruistic surrogacy involves no monetary compensation for this form of heavily biomedicalized, intimate labor. Surrogacy in India, much like forms of intimate labor worldwide, is built on imbalances of power, with largely lower-income, oppressed-caste, migrant women outsourcing their wombs to wealthy, upper-caste clients. My ethnographic research in West Bengal interrogates India's new surrogacy legislation as an instance of reproductive governance that naturalizes and devalues marginalized women's reproductive labor. Bengal is the first state in the country to implement the new legislation and has a rich history in the field of assisted reproduction. My research in Bengal highlights the stratified biomedicalization of the surrogacy process, now situated within new legal dynamics of altruism. I ask how the state systematically "unmakes" reproductive labor markets, and how surrogacy work becomes the site for this unmaking. Raising crucial questions for the ethics of rendering such corporeal, intimate, and affective labor as free, my research explores how surrogate workers and other actors navigate the new bureaucracies of the surrogacy industry, and how they secretly resist these structures to "make" informal markets of reproductive labor.

Presenter(s): Ritu Ghosh

Japan Depends on Overseas Organ Donors: Are Organ Donors from the Global South, Angels or Ghosts to Japanese Transplant Patients?

Although Japan is a medical advanced country, there is a severe organ shortage, so most recipients rely on living donors and overseas transplants. Especially, there has been an increase in overseas organ transplants in countries of the Global South recently. The reasons for organ shortage are first, a distrust in organ transplants and second, a lack of care for donor families. So, donor families revive donors like ghost and keep donors alive in their hearts. Whether the donor becomes a ghost or pride depends on the grief of care. Also, the Japanese concept of the dead body prevents organ donation.

Overseas transplants were from the US for hearts, Australia for livers, and Southeast Asian for kidneys. Currently, Japan depends on Global South countries for overseas transplants, especially China and such as the Philippines, Colombia, Belarus, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Brazil, Cambodia, Taiwan, Argentina and Egypt.

For Japanese people, there is a psychological resistance to overseas transplants. There are various post-transplant issues and how recipients perceive donors is very complicated. While there are recipients who come to love the donor's country, there are also recipients who feel a negative burden towards the donor's country. Also, organs are always flowing from the poor to the rich. In Japan, the issue of organ donor's nationality is complex and the current situation is that the issues are intricately intertwined.

Presenter(s): Maria-Keiko Yasuoka

Discussion

8050 Ethnography, Voice, and the Question of Violence in Anthropology Today

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together an intergenerational group of cultural and medical anthropologists to reflect on how conducting research in contexts marked by conflict, war, and violence influences ethnographic writing and pedagogical practice. Drawing on fieldwork from diverse global settings, we explore the complex interplay between ethnographic voice and the role of autobiography in anthropological knowledge production.

Our conversation is driven by a shared curiosity about how sociocultural anthropology engages with the embodied and affective experiences of ethnographers working in environments shaped by both historical and ongoing violence-where human suffering and the ruptures of everyday life-are continuous and deeply entangled. In response, we trace three interconnected threads:

First, we explore autobiography not as confession or solipsism, but as an epistemological and ethical mode-one that reveals the porous boundaries between knowledge of the self and knowledge of the other. This perspective invites relational accountability and attentiveness to the complexities of centering the self within the entanglements of fieldwork.

Second, we reflect on how fieldwork lingers in the form of echoes, fragments, and unresolved (sometimes unanticipated) traces. These often emerge belatedly-registering what exceeds narrative closure-or surface as disruptions that resist being flattened into coherent ethnographic accounts. Recognizing that meaning often unfolds gradually, we ask how ethnographic writing might create space for these nonlinear and affective dimensions of experience.

Third, we consider how violence challenges us to rethink pedagogy. We approach teaching as a space where the ethical and emotional complexities of fieldwork can be acknowledged rather than suppressed. This involves cultivating learning environments that support vulnerability, critical reflection, and care. Rather than reproducing harm or attempting to neutralize the affective weight of field experiences, we emphasize pedagogical practices that hold space for what is carried back from the field-its traces, tensions, and unresolved questions.

Ultimately, we ask how proximity to violence, and the entanglement of personal and collective histories, shapes the form and content of our writing. At times, ethnographic texts may appear almost ghostwritten, mediated through silence, refracted through the voices of others, and marked by the weight of what remains unsaid. In conceptualizing ethnographic voice as embodied and relational, we seek to write and teach in ways that trouble the notion of context as something added "from the outside." Our aim is to reflect on how the ongoing work of reckoning-with violence, with the past, with ourselves-can illuminate, rather than obscure, the communities with whom we work and the stories we are still learning how to tell.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Aalyia Sadruddin, Wellesley College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Clara Han, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Erica James, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Omar Al-Dewachi, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, Talia Katz, SUNY, Binghamton University, Jennie Burnet

Discussant: Michael Fischer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

3621 Roundtable Title: On the Frontier of a Critical Anthropology: Celebrating Ida Susser and her Legacy

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This round table celebrates the trailblazing career of Ida Susser from the perspective of her students. As a distinguished professor at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, former President of the American Ethnological Society, co-founder (with Maria Vesperi) of the Society for North American Anthropology (SANA), and co-creator (with Emily Martin) of Anthropology Now, Ida Susser has pushed the boundaries of anthropology in creative and productive ways. Her earliest work on the ramifications of New York's 1975 fiscal crisis on working class neighborhoods, of the health impact of industrial pollution in rural Puerto Rico, and the AIDS crisis in New York City and Southern Africa, all centered the experiences of working class women and the power of collective mobilization to counter devastation. Her most recent work in France encourages us to find hope in progressive mobilization across class divides. Ida trained and supported a generation of students to engage, interpret, and theorize the global transformations of contemporary life and inequality, while highlighting the human face of daily struggle, resistance and transformation. From the dynamic vantage point of New York City, Ida conceptualized an urban anthropology "that was a prism through which to visualize class, social movement, gender, and changing relations of race." With the founding of SANA in the 1990s, along with Maria Vesperi, Ida challenged the discipline to apply anthropological insights and methods not only overseas, but at home to an understanding of contemporary North America. Our roundtable brings together some of Ida's many students to acknowledge the multifarious ways her influence has permeated and sharpened contemporary anthropology.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Katherine McCaffrey, Montclair State University, Kenneth Guest, Baruch College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Christine Kovic, Elsa Davidson, Theodore Powers, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology, Alisse Waterston, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Andrew Newman, Wayne State University

Discussant: Katherine McCaffrey, Montclair State University, Ida Susser, CUNY, Hunter College, Department of Anthropology

1922 Critique the World/Save the World: Ghosts of a Global Order in the Present

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores how we conduct ethnographies of the international in the shifting world order. We bring together scholars whose ethnographic work spans key inflection points for political, legal and economic anthropology: the 1990s era of global democratization and rule of law initiatives (many of which struggle to continue in the present), the post-9-11 period of Bush Doctrine militarization and securitization, responses to the 2008 financial crisis, and the contemporary expansion of global authoritarianism and neo-imperial projects. In each moment, political, economic and legal anthropologists have tracked the role of international networks and institutions in constituting infrastructures and ideas about global orders, variously defined. Together, panelists bring over 30 years of perspective to the study of globalization and its imaginaries via ethnographic engagement, including global governance, human rights, humanitarianism, transnational NGOs, and the financialization of global capital. Key to our analysis is not simply that an era of internationalist world building is behind us. Rather in interrogating the conditions of possibility of that order and its legacies, we better identify the seeds of the authoritarian, carceral and grossly unequal logics of the present.

The roundtable will explore a range of topics including the rise of police states and the use of carcerality in conjunction with militarization and the authoritarian turn; approaches to financialization that center race as key to understanding the interrelated processes of elite financial resurgence; the integral relationships among rule-of-law-driven modes of internationalizing liberal democracy in the post-Cold War era, and rising populist, authoritarian politics. We ask how the very mechanisms that internationalized liberal proceduralism -- rights-based legal advocacy, initiatives of transparency and good governance and neoliberal market mechanisms -- are now implicated in liberalism's undoing. Building on varied research perspectives and research settings, with the common ground of "the global," roundtable participants will reflect on the unsettling of settled terms and terrain. We consider our earlier research, conducted in the heyday of globalization, in relation to the current ethnographic contexts we find ourselves exploring in our multi-polar world. What are the afterlives of the old order, and how do they shape our conceptions of the present? How do we study the global in this unsettled world, or do we abandon the project altogether? Our comparative perspectives seek to identify historical resonances, and shadows of past paradigms and examine how these paradigms help or hinder political and legal organizing.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Jessica Greenberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Erica Bornstein, University of Oregon

Presenter(s): Catherine Besteman, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Karen Ho, University of Minnesota, Elif Babul, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Aradhana Anu Sharma, Wesleyan University, Anthropology Department, Jessica

Greenberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Erica Bornstein, University of Oregon

Discussant: Matthew Canfield, Leiden University

4466 Insurgent materials: spectral encounters with urban matter

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The roundtable examines the spectral force of material insurgencies. While scholarship has shown how concrete (Choplin 2023) or water (Anand 2017) shape tangible urban worlds that anchor and stratify social relationships, few studies investigate the role of matter in producing confrontations with an immaterial and disembodied world. Inspired by recent fieldwork in and across cities, contributors interrogate how matter – sediment, vapor, or mold – connect people with the unseen, unaccounted, and uncanny and produce encounters "that stir ethical consideration and potential intervention" (Shapiro 2015,369).

How do chemicals, liquids, and other non-organic things determine how cities come to exist in the mind and imagination of inhabitants? We ask roundtable participants to engage with seminal scholarship in urban anthropology and geography (Augé 2008; Appadurai 2000; Roy 2013; Swyngedouw 2018) to examine the role of material uprisings as moments in which other realities that lurk under the surface of the visible world come to light (De Boeck and Plissart 2014). We invite reflections into how these moments make and destabilize residents' and communities' claims to urban space and infrastructure. Spectral traces across the city reveal past acts, such as incidents of colonial violence, displacement, or environmental destruction. Toxic plumes, floods, or outages can be described as urban haunting, that is, when matter imposes its own temporality on urban design and infrastructure. These hauntings can serve as "a mode of reading the city" (Best and Ramirez 2021) that refuses the burial of alternative histories under modern ideals of development. At the same time, their fleeting materiality evokes imaginaries of futures that may or may not be actualized, opening up alternative planes for political action.

Contributors are encouraged to conjure up spectral urban situations via auditive, visual, or other means. They may discuss how ethnographic attention to matter can help transform the immaterial into tangible evidence of that which has been silent. They can engage with the spectrality of matter in the context of topics as varied as housing, climate adaptation, or waste management to show how insurgent material not only undercuts and disrupts human building projects and infrastructure designs, but also mediates the experience of being haunted.

Selected references:

Anand, N. 2017. Hydraulic city: Water and the infrastructures of citizenship in Mumbai. Duke University Press.

Barua, M. 2023. *Lively Cities: Reconfiguring Urban Ecology*. Minneapolis: University of Minn. Press.

Best, A., and Ramírez, M. M. 2021. "Urban specters." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 39(6):1043-1054.

Choplin, A. 2023. *Concrete City: Material Flows and Urbanization in West Africa*. John Wiley & Sons.

Shapiro, N. 2015. "Attuning to the Chemosphere: Domestic Formaldehyde, Bodily Reasoning, and the Chemical Sublime." *Cultural Anthropology* 30 (3):368–9.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Lukas Ley, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jingru (Cyan) Cheng , Tarini Bedi , Bruce O'Neill, Saint Louis University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Katherine Dawson , Olga Bostan

Discussant: Amy Leia McLachlan, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

7556 Invisible Fruits: Hauntings of the Diaspora

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

To be a member of the Black Diaspora is to be haunted. Haunted by legacies of slavery, colonial oppression, and enduring systemic racism. The Black female anthropologists who present in this session discuss how these hauntings materialize in our lives, affect our shared collective consciousness, and are overcome by Black communities throughout the diaspora.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Zenzi Moore-Dawes, San Francisco State University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Bria Brooks

Presenter(s): Bria Brooks, Aria Vasquez-Young, Zenzi Moore-Dawes, San Francisco State University, Department of Anthropology, MyKayla Williamson, Stanford University

Discussant: Bria Brooks , Zenzi Moore-Dawes, San Francisco State University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Phantom Shores: Black Feminine Invisibility in Coastal Narratives

Black women exist as spectral presences in the historical and environmental discourses of coastal spaces. While coastlines have long been sites of colonial conquest and diasporic memory, the presence of Black women within these narratives remains curiously absent, erased, or reduced to faint traces. Water is linked to rebirth, healing, and ancestral memory. Yet Black women, who are so often the bearers of life and knowledge are ghosted from coastal histories. This absence forces Black women anthropologists of the African Diaspora to face the haunting reality of seeking ourselves in archives that were never meant to hold us. With little historical documentation and enduring bias, our histories take on a mythical quality. Black women are seen as legend rather than

fact, which in turn disrupts our research and sense of truth. Researching Black femininity in coastal narratives becomes a process of reclaiming these histories, because Black women have been ghostlike figures, whose labor, lives, and knowledge were erased from dominant narratives.

Presenter(s): Bria Brooks

Mummy Gan Work: Entanglements of Gendered Labor in the Domestic Sphere

Historically, women's labor in Jamaica has been heavily gendered, making it essential for the maintenance of tourism infrastructure. Dating back to the era of slavery on the island, where the productive and reproductive capital of Jamaican women has been controlled and commodified within the industries of service and sale. This interrelation is central to the construction of, and interplay between, the home and the Jamaican tourism frontier. Precepts of the home were influenced by the exclusion of Jamaican women from the discursive territories of womanhood and the domestic, predicated on their captivity within these exploitative labor structures. The domestic lifeworld of hospitality laborers becomes entangled, yet remains invisible, and "haunts" the daily realities of the island's recreations and pervades in the lives of their loved ones. This presentation speaks to the lingering spirits of the Jamaican women who have labored in tourism for decades, and whose identities and domestic spheres have been shaped by their work. Behind the walls of the island's recreational arena, lies the incarnations of those who have lived and died in the service of others, yet not afforded the fruits of their labor.

Presenter(s): Aria Vasquez-Young

Infrastructure That Haunts Us: Confronting Legacies of Environmental Racism Across the Diaspora

Black Americans have long been disproportionately and negatively affected by federal infrastructure projects. Exclusionary zoning policies, such as redlining, have contributed to persistent racial segregation, economic disruption, and unequal exposure to environmental hazards. Historically, federal initiatives have justified the marginalization of Black communities by emphasizing the economic benefits of these projects—benefits that are often unevenly distributed. As a global superpower, the United States has served as a model for many developing nations, influencing their social and economic policies. Just 550 miles south of Miami, the island nation of Jamaica recently celebrated the completion of its longest and widest bridge: the Montego Bay Bypass Bridge. However, the development has disproportionately harmed the poor, rural communities through which it runs. Jamaica's national motto, "Out of many, one people," promotes a collective identity rooted in a history of colonialism and creolization. Yet, in practice, socioeconomic status in Jamaica still closely aligns with skin color—its poorest rural communities are overwhelmingly Black. The experiences of Black Americans and Black Jamaicans are linked not only by the shared legacy of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade but also by the ongoing replication of U.S. neoliberal policies that perpetuate racialized economic and environmental injustice.

Presenter(s): Zenzi Moore-Dawes

Holy (S)Hainthood: The Rhizomatic Possession of the Homeplace

To be from the deep South, specifically Mississippi, often is to be misread and mythologized. Your lived experience is called upon to answer questions that other's recall from a nearly-forgotten family member, asking for confirmation on how things "are" in Mississippi. Saul Ostro discusses in "Spectacle and the Self" the politics of illusion, fantasy, and exaggeration. I pair this with Saidiya Hartman's critical fabulation and Daphne Brooks' thought on historical performances expressed in *Bodies in Dissent* to craft a narrative of experience. In this paper, I offer a personal reflection on haunting and performance, reckoning with what it means to be from the Deep South while moving through academic and geographic spaces. As a Black woman anthropological archaeologist from rural Mississippi and a first-year PhD student, I carry with me not only the weight of my history but experiences of living through it. These hauntings that come with being a Mississippian persist, and I engage the mirror as both metaphor and method, exploring what happens when the world shows you a distorted image of yourself and your community. Last, I invoke a personal Sankofa, exploring what it means to look back in order to go forward.

Presenter(s): MyKayla Williamson

Discussion

Discussion

7027 Policing War, Militarizing Peace: Ethnographic Perspectives on State Violence

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel invites ethnographic attention to the legal concepts and practices that shape state violence. Specifically, we examine how the jurisdictional division between military intervention (war) and police action (peace) is enacted, contested, and transformed through legal-bureaucratic concepts and practices. Scholars have shown how military violence has been legally reframed as mere "police action," thereby denying the existence of conflict or war—such as in the case of Colombia's civil war, where conflict was legally reframed as a fight against criminal narco-terrorists. Conversely, the language and logic of war have facilitated the militarization of state policing forces—whether police, border enforcement, or other security officers. This is extensively documented in scholarship on the War on Drugs in the Americas, the War on Terror, and on the militarization of border enforcement on the U.S.-Mexico border and globally. Building on this scholarship, this panel explores how law and bureaucratic concepts and practices are mobilized to reinforce or dismantle the jurisdictional distinctions between military intervention and police action in the exercise of state violence. We consider comparative ethnographic perspectives from Mexico, Colombia, the U.S., and Pakistan on questions such as: How do legal concepts and practices enable or inflect material practices of state violence? What are the specific ways in which a jurisdictional divide of the forms of state violence appropriate to war or peace is enacted? How do lawyers, social movements, or individuals and their kin seek to challenge or disrupt the legal mechanisms that

enable state violence normalized as part of "war" or "peace"?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Anna Wherry, Johns Hopkins University, Sara Bellezza, Freie Universität Berlin

Chair: Deniz Yonucu, Newcastle University

Presenter(s): Esteban Salmon Perrilliat, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Zainab Najeeb, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, Anna Wherry, Johns Hopkins University, Sara Bellezza, Freie Universität Berlin, Petra Molnar, York University

Discussant: Deniz Yonucu, Newcastle University

Presentation(s): Shadow Accountability: How Prosecutors Legalize Police Violence in Mexico City

Political liberalism promises to safeguard populations from unlawful state violence through accountability mechanisms. To achieve this, liberal regimes have established extensive oversight systems. However, police violence remains a widespread problem. How do law enforcement agents evade the legal frameworks intended to restrain their violence? This paper draws on two years of ethnographic fieldwork with prosecutors and criminalized populations in Mexico City to examine how systems of accountability sustain police impunity. I argue that chains of command—intended to establish responsibility—also facilitate coordination among prosecutors, police, and judges to circumvent institutional checks. Sanctions such as demotions, transfers, and even criminal charges are not used to enforce accountability but to ensure loyalty to political priorities, including shielding police officers from prosecution. Prosecutors referred to this alignment with political directives as "toeing the line." This practice cultivated a disposition of obedience to the ruling party's interests, which they called "being institutional." The enforcement of political directives and the cultivation of obedience created a system of shadow accountability that employs bureaucratic oversight to undermine the liberal promise of protecting populations from state violence.

Presenter(s): Esteban Salmon Perrilliat

Presentation(s): Gendering the Legal Life of War: Displacement, Surveillance, and Everyday Policing in Pakistan

This paper examines how gendered forms of state violence are sustained in the transition from military conflict to peacetime governance in post-Global War on Terror Pakistan. Drawing on ethnographic and digital research with displaced Pashtun women in Peshawar, I examine how the aftermath of the 2014 military operation Zarb-e-Azb blurred the line between war and peace—legally and materially. The 2018 merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), framed as civilian "integration," instead extended counterinsurgency logics through bureaucratic surveillance, conditional aid, and social policing. Pashtun women, already marginalized at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, continue to navigate militarized governance under the guise of peace. They face mobility restrictions, moral scrutiny in universities, and pressure to repatriate as markers of "rehabilitation." This paper explores how displaced women contest these gendered technologies of control by refusing return, asserting presence in urban centers, and building alternative political networks online. By foregrounding how post-conflict

governance functions as gendered policing, I argue that legal reforms in KP mask a reconfiguration—not a cessation—of state violence. This paper contributes to feminist and legal anthropology by showing how the logics of war are not dismantled but redistributed, and how women's acts of refusal challenge the state's rebranding of militarism as peace.

Presenter(s): Zainab Najeeb

War's Jurisdiction: Law, Amnesty, and the Remaking of Conflict in Colombia

This paper examines how technical jurisdictional decisions at Colombia's transitional justice court are reshaping the history of conflict after a peace agreement. In 2016, the Colombian government signed a peace accord with the FARC—the Americas' longest-standing leftist guerrilla—ending five decades of war. The accords created a special court to prosecute commanders for atrocity while granting amnesty to low-level militants for political crimes. Amnesty would erase criminal records, free ex-militants from prison, and support their reintegration. Yet to grant it, the court must sift through these records to determine which acts count as political crimes of "the conflict" under its jurisdiction, and which are "ordinary" crimes for penal courts. These jurisdictional decisions are fraught: FARC militants were often prosecuted as narco-terrorists before the accords to deny the conflict's existence. Based on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Bogotá, this paper traces a single amnesty case excluded on jurisdictional grounds. It approaches jurisdictional decision-making as a site of anthropological inquiry to examine how boundaries around conflict and rebellion are reconfigured in the aftermath of a peace accord. It contributes to the anthropology of jurisdiction as the "governance of legal governance" (Valverde 2015) and shifts ethnographies of transitional justice from atrocity cases to consider how low-level militants are configured as legal subjects.

Presenter(s): Anna Wherry

Contesting the Border: Law, Violence, and the Politics of Accountability

The militarized border apparatus dividing the Mexico–U.S. borderlands has increasingly been criticized for waging a so-called 'war on migrants.' Over the past decades, diverse forms of violence, both state-sanctioned and extralegal, have shaped the trajectories of people on the move seeking entry into the U.S. from Mexico. This paper examines the legal and political conditions that enable such forms of violence against civilian populations in the name of border enforcement during times of peace. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted between 2019 and 2022 with asylum seekers, legal practitioners, and human rights defenders, I analyze how these violences are interpreted, challenged, and rearticulated. Focusing on strategic litigation and monitoring as sites of contestation, I trace how migrant and civil rights attorneys and their clients engage the law to pursue accountability for grave rights violations, challenging state practices such as the use of chemical agents, unlawful expulsions, and lethal force by border agents. These legal and political contestations reveal law both as a mechanism of state violence and a terrain of resistance. Drawing on multiple legal regimes (i.e., domestic and international), interlocutors variously frame these

violences as human rights abuses, or, in their systematic and repetitive form, argue that the severity and recurrence of such acts amount to crimes against humanity.

Presenter(s): Sara Bellezza

The Walls Have Eyes: Policing Migration through Surveillance and Automation

Migration is increasingly becoming digitized. From robodogs surveilling the US/Mexico border to drones flying over the Mediterranean Sea to biometrics being collected in refugee camps, untested and high-risk technologies have made their way into virtually every aspect of human movement. States have developed these experimental projects without public scrutiny or accountability mechanisms, and the current governance and legislative frameworks around border technologies remain inadequate to safeguard people's human rights. The political discourse around migration control also plays a central part in normalizing surveillance and artificial intelligence to manage borders. This paper explores how fears around migration and systematic exclusion of certain communities prevent people-on-the-move from Majority World countries from exercising their freedom of movement and animate the techno-solutionism at the centre of the decisions that powerful actors make to police migration and borders. The private sector is also a major player in normalizing surveillance, profiting in a multi-billion dollar industrial complex built on testing out new technologies in places like the Occupied Palestinian Territories and exporting them for border enforcement to places like the US/Mexico border and the fringes of the European Union.

Presenter(s): Petra Molnar

Discussion

4941 Portals and Promises: Black Movement, Memory, and Architectures of the In-Between

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Portals and Promises" is an interdisciplinary panel consisting of emerging scholars in the fields of art history, education, history, and visual art. Inspired by the 2025 AAA theme of "Ghosts. Apparitions. Spirits. Specters," this panel examines how Black temporalities defy linear histories and disrupt Eurocentric understandings of subjectivity, ontology, and humanism. Through recurring themes of movement and stillness, presence and absence, captivity and freedom, the presenters of this panel interrogate Black existence through the lens of liminality, attending to how Black life is navigated, narrated, and remembered in these interstitial spaces — the in-between. "Portals and Promises" provide the audience with introspective understandings of Blackness, ones that stretch boundaries of colonial imaginations and articulate how Black beings possess archives. In looking at movement, physically, geographically, and temporally, the main objective of this panel is to discuss afterlives, Black imaginations, and redefinitions. We engage the questions: How can the Black body be both a haunted space and a locus of care, creativity, and survival? How can we rethink the

possibilities of return and connecting to those in their past lives through dance, art, commemoration, and engaging with the archives? How do historical actors, liberatory spaces, dance, and art function as connective threads across geographical locations and generations in the African diaspora, offering not only a sense of belonging but also modes of knowing, remembering, and imagining otherwise?

This panel will be organized into four presentations, concluding with a roundtable discussion facilitated by the chair. Stephanie Gibson's work, grounded in theories of memory, diaspora, and spatiality, uses historical analysis and site interpretation to examine a symbolic place of return for the African diaspora. Glynnis Reed-Conway, through Conjure Feminism, analyzes artmaking as a critical method for mapping iconographies of transcendence. J. Norma Watson applies speculative fabulation to imagine Black experiences in the colonial past. Quiana M. Jackson's presentation utilizes ethnographic frameworks to theorize movement as a method of conjuring memory and resisting historical erasure. Together, these contributions reveal how Black diasporic communities navigate, reimagine, and transform the liminal—whether through architecture, law, the body, or spiritual practice—into spaces of survival, connection and becoming.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Quiana M. Jackson

Chair: Quiana M. Jackson

Presenter(s): Quiana M. Jackson, Jasmine Norma Watson, Glynnis Reed-Conway, Stephanie M Gibson, Hollins University

Presentation(s): Embodied Memories: Choreographing the Ghosts of the Diaspora

This paper explores the body as a site of haunted memory and ancestral transmission in the Black diaspora, focusing on how dance becomes a methodology for conjuring history. The dancing body doesn't merely move through time and space; it remembers, carries, and channels the unspoken. Within this framework, movement becomes both ethnographic practice and epistemological archive, revealing how performance bears witness to what official histories repress. This paper posits that the choreographic works of Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus are not only artistic acts but embodied ethnographies—rituals invoking diasporic pasts and spirits that refuse erasure.

Dunham's dance anthropology in the Caribbean and Primus's research in the American South and West Africa offered choreographic vocabularies steeped in cultural memory. Their bodies moved with, and through, spirits: of the enslaved, the displaced, the ancestral. These performances didn't illustrate ghostly presences—they were the hauntings, staging what was systematically absented. In dialogue with Black feminist theories of embodiment and diaspora, this paper argues that Black performance resists colonial modernity's death-drive by reanimating the affective, spiritual, and ancestral registers of memory. Through embodied citation, Dunham and Primus blur the boundaries between living and dead, past and present, anthropology and art—offering knowledge that is felt before it is known, and remembered before it is archived.

Presenter(s): Quiana M. Jackson

Confined Freedom: Complexities of Blackness and Mobility 19th century Brazil and Cuba

This paper examines African-descended people's experiences in Brazil and Cuba before, during, and after the processes of gradual emancipation. Using speculative interpretation and movement as a lens of analysis, I investigate Black folk's contradicting experiences of freedom rooted in confinement. Brazil and Cuba's gradual emancipation laws, or "Free Womb Laws," declared all children of enslaved mothers born after its legislations in 1870 and 1871 "free". How does one transition from being a socially labeled controlled object to an emancipated being? Juxtaposed alongside close reading of the Free Womb Laws, I use letters such as one from an enslaved mulatto,

Andres Marquez who is searching for an emancipated Black woman Paulina, who "promised" to marry him and work for his enslaver Doña Isabell Drysdale. While exploring Paulina's possible whereabouts, I investigate what I call the "complexities of Blackness", that deem us as being neither confined nor free but in a middle space of existence. My research argues that Black people's movement exposes the contradictions of racial capitalism. I focus on intersectional identities of enslaved, emancipated men and women to uplift resistance strategies and radical imaginations used to navigate antiBlack colonial states. I engage the questions, how were tools of confinement used to control Black people after they gained freedom? And what can Black people's movement tell us about Black life, Black subjectivity, and slavery's hold?

Presenter(s): Jasmine Norma Watson

Iconographies of Transcendence: Navigating the Spiritual in Art by African Diasporic Artists

As I create art, I contemplate my reflection in the emerging imagery as though it were a mirror, and sense, at times, guardian spirits dancing with me in the artistic process. I often create art in the same room that I keep my ancestral altar, forming a milieu where spiritual channeling intersects with art making. Often, I am guided as a vessel for otherworldly communication and find myself in somatically driven conversations with spiritual energies beyond my conscious awareness. Using an autoethnographic method, I explore the relationship of my interiority to communication with the spirit world through art making. I examine images from multiple artworks created over a span of nearly 25 years to show how my relationship to interiority and the spirit world has shifted over time. Global feminist scholar, M. Jacqui Alexander's theories of sacred subjectivity and embodiment offer foundational perspectives for my explorations of creativity in liminal realms of the supernatural. I interpret hidden messages and meanings in my work and that of other African Diaspora artists through Conjure Feminism. Conjure Feminism is a Black feminist theory developed by scholars that critically engages with the situated knowledges of Black women within the contexts of community and ancestral legacies. In this paper, I analyze art making as a critical method for mapping iconographies of transcendence and to study the navigation of the spirit world as seen in the work of African Diaspora artists.

Presenter(s): Glynnis Reed-Conway

Maison des Esclaves: Constructing a lieu de M moire

The rupture caused by the trans-Atlantic slave trade eradicated the sense of place, specifically a place to call "home," in the collective memory of the Black Diaspora. Analyzing the importance of the return to home in critical Black memory, this paper is focused on the real and imagined site of memory that is the Maison des Esclaves, the colonial home of Madame Anna Colas Pépin on Gorée Island, Senegal — the location of the infamous "Door of No Return," whose modern interpretation commenced in 1962. This paper is an examination of the way in which the Maison des Esclaves became an important site of memory for the African diaspora and exploration of the importance of memory and the power of space in constructing a lieu de mémoire. By leading visitors on a narrative journey through space, executive director and lead curator, Joseph N'diaye, provided a space for members of the African Diaspora to call home. This sense of possible connection is the result of a targeted information campaign and careful cultural programming undertaken by Léopold Sedar Senghor, Senegal's first post-independence president. During his presidency (1960-80), he fashioned Senegal, specifically Dakar, as a site of return for the people of the Black Atlantic – as a place for the African diaspora to return home.

Presenter(s): Stephanie M Gibson

2541 Being Curious: The Art of the Question

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Curiosity may have killed the cat, but this roundtable discussion posits that being curious is a critical method, skill, and, fundamentally, ethical claim in anthropology. But what does it mean today for scholars and students in our discipline to be curious and to hold onto curiosity as an intellectual value? How can curiosity be taught, and why would it be focused on? Is being curious more akin to mere dabbling, risking the warning to "stay in one's lane" rather than to tread on the theoretical or ethnographic toes of others? This roundtable seeks to foster a space and time for thinking with and working through the politics, poetics, and potentials of curiosity in our contemporary moment. At a time when the very questions we ask, let alone the answers we hold true, are perceived by some as dangerous or requiring surveillance, what does it take to continue to insist on curiosity as a fundamental right? We make the argument that one way of thinking about being curious in anthropology is as the art of the question.

We are motivated by a desire to collectively remember and extend the work of Berkeley anthropologist Nelson Graburn (1936-2025). However, this roundtable discussion explores not what his conceptual contributions were to the discipline, but rather the fundamental characteristic – curiosity – that defined his intellectual worldview. You do not need to have ever met Nelson Graburn or read his work to come to this roundtable; all are invited. Being a Graburn student had only one real requirement: being up for conversations with anyone and actually listening to them. In retrospect, it was a tall order. Curiosity is infectious. Curiosity is emboldened by company. Many scholars are remembered by their scholarly contributions: the core concepts they coined, or the theoretical apparatuses they constructed. But within and beyond his scholarship on tourism,

kinship, museums, and Native arts, Nelson excelled at being curious and in turn, he trained, encouraged, and supported generations of very Graburn curious beings: anthropologists whose research topics range from medical to media anthropology, and whose field research sites span across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. As his students, collaborators, and friends, the participants in this roundtable will begin with brief remarks on how curiosity has shaped our scholarly work and relationships, to be followed by an open discussion on the necessity and problems of being "curious beings" in academia today.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jenny Chio, University of Southern California, Zeynep Gursel, Rutgers University

Presenter(s): Zeynep Gursel, Rutgers University, Chris Vasantkumar, Macquarie University, Marcia Inhorn, Yale University, Kathryn Mathers

Discussant: Jenny Chio, University of Southern California

2570 Ghosts of the Past, Spirit of Place, and the Politics of Memory

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This is one of two sessions forming a cross-cutting exploration of how "ghosts"- as traces, metaphors, or spiritual forces – inform contemporary engagements with heritage and tourism landscapes.

In this panel the presentations draw from diverse ethnographic contexts, addressing forms of investigating how haunted pasts and intangible presences shape practices of heritage-making and historical reckoning. The papers explore how heritage sites become haunted by legacies of past and contested memories to examine how difficult pasts are haunting the present, and how these affect community identities, collective memory, and institutional heritage narratives.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Paula Mota Santos, Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Magdalena Banaszkiwicz, Jagiellonian University

Chair: Mary Mostafanezhad, University of Hawaii, Manoa

Presenter(s): Maria Kim, Jagiellonian University, Paula Mota Santos, Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Nuno Coelho

Discussant: Kathlen Adams, Loyola University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The elephant of forgotten memories: The First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition revisited

In 1934, the First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition was held in the gardens of the Crystal Palace, in Porto. The "sample-exhibition" of the Portuguese Empire consisted of an official section ("scientific" exhibitions), a private one (400 pavilions of trademarks) and one of attractions (train, cable car, luna park, theater, cinema, zoo, etc.). However, the biggest attraction was a large open-air exhibition re-

creating "indigenous villages" from various Portuguese colonies. To be exhibited there, 324 people were "brought" to represent the various "civilisational states", a "human-zoo" used to structure the reading of the Other according to the hegemonic Eurocentric lens. The exhibition attracted 1.3 million visitors. Its mascot was an elephant, materialised in a huge sculpture (reproduced in souvenirs such as prints and porcelain miniatures). In 2021 the space of the exhibition (which is the most visited public garden in Porto today) was critically addressed via a curatorial program that while addressing the ghostly and spectral elephant through activities that brought together artists, activists, academics, students, teachers and a diverse audience, aimed at an urgent collective exercise in reflecting on an element part of the city's history. This paper describes the historical context of the colonial exhibition and the 2021 curatorial statement aimed at critically revisiting the place that hosted the colonial exhibition, an invisibilised, spectral event in the history of Porto.

Presenter(s): Nuno Coelho

Negotiating Memory: Statue of Peace and the Performance of Heritage

This presentation examines the heritage of Korean comfort women—victims sexual slavery by the Japanese military in the first half of XX century—through the lens of its most iconic representation: the Statue of Peace, first erected in Seoul in 2011. As a site of memory, the statue not only embodies historical narratives but also becomes a space where heritage is negotiated, contested, and performed. This study explores how the discourse surrounding the statue extends beyond its material presence, shaping public engagement and institutional narratives. It considers the interactions of various stakeholders—activists, survivors, tourists, students, cultural institutions and governmental bodies—with the statue and the meanings they attribute to it. By analyzing the statue's spatial context and modes of public interaction, this research investigates the performative dimensions of commemoration and the tensions between personal memory, collective recognition, and political framing. Ethnographic research conducted in Seoul, South Korea, incorporates visual methodologies, including photographic documentation of the Statue of Peace. Utilizing semiotic analysis, this study examines how representations of a contested past shape contemporary heritage-making and public discourse.

Presenter(s): Maria Kim

The ghosts of Heritage Past, Heritage present and Heritage yet to come

In 2009, works to build an underground carpark outside the southern Portuguese city of Lagos' Old City walls started. The works revealed human remains. The archaeological works carried out that year revealed, among other remains, the remains 158 individuals who were identified as being 15th century enslaved Africans. In 2018, Djass, an association of Afrodescents, submitted to the Lisbon City Council Participatory Budget a proposal for the creation in Lisbon of a memorial to enslaved people. The project was approved by the popular vote and in 2019 the Lisbon City Council approved the project. In 2020 Djass selected the actual project for the memorial. In 2025, almost 20 years over the discovery of what is the earliest burial grounds of enslaved Africans in European soil, the remains of these enslaved men, women and children are still being held in boxes of the University

of Coimbra facilities. In 2025, almost 10 years over the popular vote that approved the construction of a memorial to enslaved people, the memorial is still unbuilt.

Taking heritage as a 'structure of feeling', this paper will address these two instances of resistance to memorialization and to heritage creation, as related both to colonial aphasia and to imperial continuities present in Portuguese society, ultimately producing an 'orphaned heritage'

Presenter(s): Paula Mota Santos

4269 Repetition, Transformation, Annihilation: Ethnographic Encounters with the Psychoanalytic Drives

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together anthropologists exploring the analytical potential of psychoanalytic drive theory across diverse ethnographic contexts. Moving beyond conventional anthropological emphasis on culture and subjectivity, participants investigate how conceptualizing human experience through Freudian notions of drives-as liminal forces operating at the threshold of the psychic and the organic, simultaneously conservative and transformative-opens new interpretive possibilities for ethnographic material.

Presenters examine varied manifestations of drives across global settings: illicit drug use in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside reconceptualized through the Lacanian death drive; regression dynamics in Chinese Group Relations Conferences; death drive enactments in an Iranian content creator's violence; digital media's hypnotic animation of repetition and self-annihilation; disgust, compulsion, and the death drive in horror film consumption; compulsive repetition in TikTok's "brainrot scrolling"; and the relationship between death and speculative thinking in the context of a psychiatric hospital in the West Bank.

Through these diverse cases, we interrogate several questions: How might ethnography describe and understand the movements of the drives rather than cultural forms? What analytical purchase do the death drives and life drives offer for understanding seemingly self-destructive behaviors without pathologizing them? How do drives function as binding forces with otherness? In what ways are drives simultaneously regressive and progressive, conservative and transformative?

By returning to psychoanalysis' foundational texts while engaging contemporary ethnographic material, this roundtable explores how drive theory illuminates repetition, compulsion, regression, and death across cultural contexts-challenging us to reconsider anthropological approaches to human experience at the boundaries of life, death, pleasure, and destruction.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Nick Bartlett, Barnard College, Samuele Collu, McGill University

Presenter(s): Samuele Collu, McGill University, Nick Bartlett, Barnard College, Molly Hales, Northwestern University, Setrag Manoukian, McGill University, Department of Anthropology, Eli

Sheiner , Ramzi Nimr, McGill University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Lisa Stevenson, McGill University

1890 Marxism and Anthropology: The Present and Futures of a Relationship

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In the 1970s and 1980s, Marxism – as both a mode of critique and a normative politics – occupied a central place in Euro-American anthropology. The prominence owed much to a global wave of political movements that took their bearings from Marxism: from Maoist-inspired national liberation struggles in the global South to Black and Red Power movements closer to home. Marxism's standing within the discipline was significant enough to prompt Maurice Bloch to publish *Marxism and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship* (Clarendon Press, 1983). Yet Marxism was soon eclipsed in the discipline – a reflection not only of its waning influence as a global political force but also as an outcome of debates internal to the discipline itself. As culturalist approaches triumphed over political-economic ones to acquire hegemony over the discipline, both were later displaced by post-structuralist and Deleuzian turns. Of late, however, Marxism has acquired renewed interest within anthropology – perhaps a sign of both transformations in the broader political terrain and the inadequacy of prevailing anthropological tools to make sense of them. From escalating capitalist crises and widening (racialized and gendered) class inequalities to an intensifying climate catastrophe intrinsically tied to capitalist growth, renewed imperialist wars, and the re-emergence of national liberation struggles – most visibly in Palestine – the current conjuncture has fueled a revival of interest in socialism and Marxism for the 21st century.

Our panel asks, on the terrain of anthropological theory, a question increasingly posed in political struggle more widely: what does Marxism look like in anthropology's 21st century? Can – and should – a Marxist anthropology and/or an anthropology of Marxism cohere as an intellectual practice? What might Marxism offer to anthropology, and what might anthropology offer to Marxism today? We assemble a group of anthropologists traversing across these intellectual terrains, employing Marxism variably as a set of analytical tools, a horizon of normative political commitments, and/or as an object of anthropological inquiry in its own right. In reflecting on this relationship, we also hope to shed light on the constituent terms themselves. What does "anthropology" mean today, at a moment when its coherence is again questioned, when calls not just decolonize the discipline but even let it burn grow louder? And what of "Marxism," a term that is increasingly misapplied by a fascist right against the political center?

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Shozab Raza, University of Toronto, Paul Kohlbry, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Paul Kohlbry, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Hadia Akhtar Khan,

Cornell University, Shozab Raza, University of Toronto, China Sajadian, Vassar College, Department of Anthropology, Amiel Bize, Cornell University, Ikaika Ramones, University of California, Berkeley
Discussant: Sharryn Kashmir, Hofstra University, Department of Anthropology

3795 The Art of Haunting: Spectral Legacies behind the Creative Economies

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The arts are often positioned as drivers of economic growth, yet they remain haunted by histories of labor exploitation, uneven patronage, and political appropriation. This panel explores how ghosts, both metaphorical and material, shape the contemporary culture industry. What past artistic movements, state cultural policies, and economic structures continue to haunt today's creative economies? How do artists grapple with the lingering presence of institutions, ideologies, and labor conditions that partially define artistic "value" and "legitimacy"? Topics may include the afterlives of colonial cultural institutions, the shadow of state censorship, the ghosts of precarious labor in the gig economy and in self-styling. By engaging with the theme of haunting, this panel considers how artists, cultural institutions, and policymakers navigate the unseen forces that shape artistic production, circulation, and economization.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Tara Westmor, University of California, Riverside

Chair: Lily Chumley

Presenter(s): Lily Chumley, Tara Westmor, University of California, Riverside, Andrew McGrath, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Llerena Searle, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology, Chi Ha, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Shalini Shankar, Northwestern University

Presentation(s): Dead Forms: Thirdness and Immortality

Cultural industries are built on reproduction of dead forms. Images, emblems, icons, and forms float across time and rise from graves. This paper will consider iconography as a house of apparitions, reflections and uncanny reappearances: the semiotics of thirdness, the replica or legisign (the sign that's experienced as a token of type), a resemblance of an absence. Focusing on recurring forms in political art and numismatics, this paper will consider how pattern-books of decorative form and databases of moe-elements (Azuma) contribute to industrial processes of resurrection, and spectres of dead faces and dead forms operate as political and economic powers.

Presenter(s): Lily Chumley

“Poets Were Soldiers”: Haunted Aesthetics in Vietnamese Contemporary Poetry

During the American War in Vietnam, poetry was mobilized as a weapon: an instrument of revolutionary consciousness and an armament of the cultural front. This paper examines how Vietnamese poets, particularly those affiliated with the Writers' Association, inhabited dual roles as both artists and soldiers, blurring the line between aesthetic production and state-sanctioned warfare. Formed in 1957 by wartime poets, the Association institutionalized the ethos of "poet as soldier," and canonized a genre of revolutionary verse that welded nationalist sentiment to lyrical form. Drawing on archival material and contemporary interviews, I explore how the specter of revolutionary verse persists not only as a nationalist relic but as a recurring aesthetic mode, one that animates ongoing debates about authenticity, memory, and the cultural labor of poets in post-reform Vietnam.

Presenter(s): Tara Westmor

Positively Haunting: Ritual, Signs, and Belief within a Spectral Science.

The supernatural and the aristocratic share epistemological discursive space in the worlds of American ghost hunters. The contemporary search for empirical evidence of the afterlife is reflected in resurgent signs of Judeo-Christian identity in the social praxes of otherwise secular middle and working-class Americans. Filtered through the so-called "Death of God" and seeded by the paranormal works of William James and Carl Jung, latter-day ghost hunters are increasingly guided by a consecration of western science. With meaning cultivated in the dual invisibilities of electromagnetic fields and demons, informed by the rotating sign values of noises, goosebumps, and camera compression rates, contemporary ghost hunting has given the paranormally-attuned the ability to simultaneously anchor themselves to the legacy of Cartesian rationalism while surrendering to the mysteries of an elusive supernatural Gnosis. Once-sacred liberal formations such as democracy and equality are conspicuously absent. The acceleration of identity-centered communication platforms including YouTube has made the performative a crucial aspect of the hybrid rituals of the paranormal scene. In the tumult of branding, hoaxing, and relentless self-promotion, humble subservience to the mystical and divine and any belief in the righteousness of the meek has been replaced by the aristocratic impulse of 21st Century American life, furnishing a latter-day feudal ethics validated at the fulcrum of science and religi

Presenter(s): Andrew McGrath

Crafting the Empire's Echo: Design, Labor, and (Anti- / Post- / Neo-) Colonial Hauntings in India

To build a more just world order, philosopher Olufemi Taiwo argues that we must contend with the fact that our current social order rests on relations of colonialism that did not end with colonial independence in the 1940s-1960s. Slavery, colonialism, and racial capitalism have created what he calls the "Global Racial Empire" which accumulates advantages and disadvantages, harms and capabilities unevenly (2022). How might we understand "design" as a set of practices that operates within such a world system? Drawing on 8 months of ethnographic fieldwork with furniture and interior designers in India, this paper examines the ways in which designers navigate capitalist

markets that continue to be haunted by colonialism. On the one hand, creative experts shaping Indian elite homes describe design as an anti-colonial project, poised to free India from tastes, fashions, and products from abroad. On the other, designers navigate hierarchies of values set by global markets, including demand for exotic, uniquely "Indian" products. Furniture production also relies on craft methods still defined through neocolonial discourses of "crafts difference" (McGowan 2009) and on caste and class dynamics that legitimize labor exploitation. By investigating how these unseen forces – histories, values, and ideologies – structure design practice in India, this paper contributes to our understanding of the politics of the creative industries and their imbrication in the "Global Racial Empire."

Presenter(s): Llerena Searle

From Opium to Indigo: Histories of Trade, Development, and Cultural Governance in Vietnam's Ethnic Minority Textile Economy

This paper explores how the legacies of opium trade history, rural development policies, and cultural preservation agenda continue to shape not only the material practices, but also the discursive positioning of ethnic minority textile artisans in Vietnam's emerging creative and cultural economy. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, the study focuses on Hmong indigo dyers in Pà Cò, Hoà Bình Province to highlight how former opium-producing zones have become experimental sites for development interventions and heritage policies. Rather than treating ethnic craft economies as isolated or ahistorical, I trace how artisanal production is entangled with shifting state visions of development, market inclusion, and cultural governance. It foregrounds the tensions and negotiations artisans have to navigate within Vietnam's cultural and creative industries, where contemporary discourses of sustainability, indigeneity, and creativity converge while the political ecology of earlier livelihood transformation tends to be obscured.

Presenter(s): Chi Ha

Discussion

4052 How it lingers: the cultural adoption of disaster aesthetics

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Disaster, for better or worse, is a community event where a population shares an experience that destabilizes and reconfigures how society operates and is organized. Some of these changes are temporary and fade away when things start to recover, sometimes these things linger and become imbedded in a new normal. The human experience is punctuated by moments of collective trauma that can be observed in the archeological, historic and contemporary record. The process of communities metabolizing these events can express themselves in a multitude of ways; A hurricane becomes a cocktail on Bourbon St., skyscrapers rise out of the ashes to form a Second City, your favorite coffee shop issues branded cotton face masks. We show in so many ways that we are in constant communication with our environment and our past. Following the example of

Shannon Dawdy's work *Patina*, this panel will explore the ways in which disaster iconography becomes pervasive and embedded.

This session explores the way disaster and disaster recovery influences cultural semiotics. Presenters will explore how disaster impacts imprint themselves on community aesthetics and how these aesthetic expressions become an act of healing, protest, memorial, and celebration extending far beyond a singular event. In that spirit we will examine disaster as a generator of cultural practice and material, and how communities embrace the unforeseen aftermath of catastrophic impact.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Kathryn Lucas

Chair: Kathryn Lucas , Evannrue Cox

Presenter(s): Kathryn Lucas, Evannrue Cox, Miles Jordan, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Heidi Buratti

Presentation(s): Hurricane Parties: rituals and souvenirs from hurricane land

For those who have lived on the Gulf of Mexico, there is nothing so anxiety inducing as the start of a new hurricane season but imbedded in that anxiety is a type of irreverent levity that unifies people in the path of these storms. Since the advent of satellite weather forecasting and state policies enacted after Hurricane Andrew, Florida, along with other Gulf states have realigned their relationship with storms.

This paper will examine how residence of Florida have created seasonal rituals revolving around storm anxieties, through archival research and ethnographic interview. It will explore the role of storm motifs and "souvenirs" generated by repeated exposure to these potentially catastrophic events as a tool for cultural resilience, and how hurricane parties operate as unifying events during and after a storm. This paper asks how do these rituals and motifs help communities heal and process the threat of hurricanes, and what roll do they serve in encouraging people to stay and persist in these precarious geographies?

Presenter(s): Kathryn Lucas

Fan Depictions of Mass Shooters in American Culture

We know that disaster is commonly described as an event that shapes a community, but what happens when, instead, disaster creates a new one? This paper will delve into the world of the online "true crime community", or more specifically, the fandom revolving around specific mass shooters. Like any other online community, there are participants who create and perpetrate art and iconography of the shooting and its shooters. This study seeks to analyze what these works mean to those who create and engage with them, as well as what it means for media's portrayals of the disaster, as well as American society at large.

Other topics addressed in this study are gender, normalization of trauma and violence, and white supremacy. The glorification of online violence is commonly associated with men, but the true crime community is dominated by young women -- yet, it also revolves around shooters who are

most often men, and who also often engage in gender-based violence. Many of these men are also white supremacists, meaning that the glorification of their acts online have layered implications for the afterlives of slavery and colonization (following Deborah Thomas' *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation*), as well as skewing the demographics of those involved. What does it mean when a population not only normalizes violence, but begins to idolize it?

Presenter(s): Evannrue Cox

Visual Reclamation and Dispossession: Photography, Disaster, and Gentrification in Post-Katrina New Orleans

This research examines how disaster recovery in New Orleans is embedded in the city's visual landscape, focusing specifically on the role of photography in documenting these changes. Through an extensive photographic survey of post-Katrina urban environments, the project explores how visual markers—such as memorials, public art, and home renovations—serve as symbols of resilience while interrogating the more complex and often troubling forces of gentrification and displacement. The photographs capture the dual nature of recovery: symbols of survival and hope are juxtaposed with visual cues of socio-economic shifts, where gentrification reconfigures neighborhoods and displaces long-standing communities. By analyzing the semiotics of everyday visual forms—ranging from murals to home color shifts and architectural changes—this project uncovers how these aesthetic choices not only commemorate the past but also contribute to the ongoing transformation of New Orleans. The study demonstrates how disaster iconography functions as a site of cultural resistance and memory, while simultaneously reinforcing the exclusionary forces of urban redevelopment, revealing the layered complexities of recovery and displacement in a post-Katrina New Orleans.

Presenter(s): Miles Jordan

Volunteering in Fire-affected areas: Practicing Community-Accountable Archaeology Through Cremains Recovery.

Many communities within the state of California have been ravaged by wildfires, leaving what appears to be a bleak and hopeless landscape. Fires driven by powerful winds change people's lives and result in the loss of their most prized possessions – family heirlooms, symbols of major life events, and their loved ones' cremains – in an instant. For many, the loss of the family members' cremains revisits the initial loss of their loved ones, further compounding their grief and desperation. Volunteering with Alta Heritage Foundation provides hope and healing to those affected by the fires.

This presentation will address the impact of archaeology during disaster recovery, and its role in processing trauma and bringing closure to those most affected by the fires. Furthermore, participating in cremains recovery is a form of community-accountable archaeology – prioritizing the needs of the communities we work in using our archaeological expertise. Our unique skills as archaeologists may answer impossible questions and illuminate a community's resilience.

Presenter(s): Heidi Buratti

4130 Listening to Future Ghosts: Towards a Universally Haunted Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In anthropology, there are ghosts everywhere: the ghosts of those who founded the discipline, and of a discipline that continues in the present-day to accompany violence (AAA 1969; Asad 1973; Said 1979; Sharpe 2023); the ghosts that haunt our interlocutors, who we have argued are co-presences, if not themselves ethnographic subjects (Beliso-De Jesus 2015; Nelson 2009; Ng 2020); the ghosts produced by enslavement, settler colonialism, and late capitalism that haunt the silences, the absences, the overproductions of the present (Garcia 2010; Good 2019; Harney and Moten, 2013; Stoler 2006; Taussig 1987). Social figures that trouble, inhabit, and mediate the lines between the living and the dead, the past and present (Gordon 2008[1997]), ghosts haunt; lurking, seething, accosting, ghosts give voice to marginalized voices unheard, livelihoods denied or eroded, hopes and dreams destroyed, moral and political betrayals, alternative moral and political paths not taken (Hollan 2020). We agree, it seems, that ghosts live in the past and the present; but what of haunted and haunting futures?

Surely, ghosts have proliferated in our writing since Derrida's *Specters of Marx* and Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*; perhaps this mirrors the field's reflexive turn, its desire to write more justly. Derrida writes, "It is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and just, that does not recognize in it a principle that respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet there, presently living" (1994, p.xviii, italics in original). And, writing from a different tradition, Beliso-De Jesus (2024) demonstrates that ghosts' work is not limited to memory work; rather, haunting is a dynamic process that continues to unfold across time, to make new presents and futures.

With this roundtable, we discuss ghosts' work on futures. We ask: How might we properly attend to ghosts of other temporalities, including the time of Black feminism, the future real conditional, that which hasn't happened yet but must (Campt 2014)? Is the appearance of ghosts dependent on violence, or do they appear in other contexts? Similarly, must ghosts either be freed or unseated for justice to be achieved, or are there other forms of living with, walking alongside? Is it possible to write "literature without a show" as Taussig (2022) suggests, which might bring an end to killing, or will our work always generate new forms of haunting? Finally, what literary forms would our writing take if it were also haunted?

Roundtable Participants:

Aisha Beliso-de Jesus, Katie Kilroy-Marac, Doug Hollan, Michael Ralph, Byron Good, Martha Lincoln, Rachel Niehuus, Ryan Whitacre, Ross Perfetti

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Rachel Niehuus , Ross Perfetti, University of Pennsylvania

Presenter(s): Douglas Hollan, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Byron Good, Harvard University, Ryan Whitacre, University of California, Berkeley, Martha Lincoln, San Francisco State University

Discussant: Katie Kilroy-Marac , Aisha Beliso-DeJesus, Princeton University

4280 Desire and Materialism: Anne Allison's Scholarship and Mentorship

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable panel pays tribute to Anne Allison, a dedicated scholar, passionate teacher, and generous mentor whose work has left an indelible mark on the anthropology of capitalism in and beyond Japan. Throughout her career, Allison has illuminated the entanglements of intimacy, labor, precarity, and care in contemporary Japan and beyond, forging a distinctive blend of methodological experimentation and intellectual rigor. Her scholarship has advanced our understanding of capitalism not only as an economic system but also as an intimate, affective force that shapes everyday life. From the commodified fantasies and intimacies of *Nightwork*, to the enchantments of fantasy play and the disenchanted realities of economic uncertainty in *Millennial Monsters*, to the fractured social worlds and quiet survival strategies in *Precarious Japan*, and most recently, the existential confrontations with social death and precarious relationality in *Being Dead Otherwise*, Allison's work probes the emotional economies and social imaginaries that sustain and trouble contemporary existence. Beyond her writings, Allison's unwavering commitment to teaching and thoughtful mentorship have nurtured generations of anthropologists, modeling an engaged, empathetic, and courageous approach to both ethnography and academic life. This panel brings together scholars whose research programs have been shaped by Allison's scholarship. The presenters will reflect on the ways in which Allison's work has inspired their research and the ways she continues to inspire new modes of thinking, teaching, and being in the world.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: June Hee Kwon , Gabriella Lukacs, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Margot Weiss, Wesleyan University, Patrick William Galbraith , Shaka McGlotten, SUNY, Purchase College, Michael Berman, Brandeis University, Department of Anthropology, Joshua Reno, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Tomas Matza, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology

6330 Children's heteroglossia and resistance/conformity to language norms

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Children's everyday language practices in peer group interactions exhibit marked heteroglossia, with children pulling in words from different named languages and social voices, all of which carry indexical ties to social categories and features (ghosts, so to speak). These practices serve as a site for children to explore adult roles and registers (Paugh 2018; Dyson 2005), learn and create new language forms, and take critical stances (Bakhtin 1981; Kyratzis, Reynolds, & Evaldsson 2010; Minks 2013). For example, through translanguaging, that is, engaging in fluid bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, children can "resis[t] the historical and cultural positionings of English monolingualism" as well as ideologies that blame them for 'incomplete acquisition' of 'heritage languages' (García & Leiva 2014; de León 2018; Otheguy & Zentella 2012). Alternatively, they can uphold dominant language norms (Evaldsson & Cekaite 2010) and domain-language patternings. It is in multilingual peer groups that children have opportunities to engage in playful interactional practices and use innovative/transgressive language forms such as play with word forms, pretend role voices, language-crossing, verbal improvisations, corrective practices, joking, and teasing (Goodwin & Kyratzis 2011) that are unlikely in more asymmetrical interactions with adults.

There is a wealth of sociolinguistic research on how youth in multilingual interactions orient to, take stances on, and exploit linguistic diversity along with ethnic divisions and racial stratifications (Rampton 2017). This panel adds to previous research by exploring children's creative language use and heteroglossic verbal practices, that is, their use of multiple codes and registers, and the larger socio-political meanings and ideologies that are negotiated through those linguistic forms (Kyratzis, Reynolds & Evaldsson 2010). The papers document children's sensitivity to heritage and standard language forms and orthographic conventions, and emphasize how children in everyday interaction play with and juxtapose linguistic features and their social and cultural meanings (Maybin & Swann 2007; Cekaite & Aronsson 2014), forming their own associations between linguistic codes and social categories, or breaking through regimented patternings that exist in the adult culture (Bailey 2007). By attending to the plurality of language practices, values, identities and groupings that children are exposed to and exploit in everyday interactions, the panel will contribute knowledge on children's heteroglossia and spontaneous play in situ, as it emerges in varied activities and settings (free plays, transitional spaces, after-school social-networking platforms) in multilingual and culturally heterogenous communities in Sweden, Japan, and the U.S.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Amy Kyratzis, University of California, Santa Barbara, Ann-Carita Evaldsson

Chair: Amy Kyratzis, University of California, Santa Barbara

Presenter(s): Asta Cekaite, Linköping University, Sweden, Amy Kyratzis, University of California, Santa Barbara, Matthew Burdelski, Ann-Carita Evaldsson

Discussant: Jennifer Reynolds, University of South Carolina, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Heteroglossic practices and everyday poetics in multilingual children's peer talk

This presentation examines young children's (3–5-year-olds) peer group interactions, heteroglossic language use and everyday poetics in two multilingual preschools in Sweden. It demonstrates multilingual children's creative use of various language varieties, including the societal language (Swedish), English, and their heritage languages (Kurdish, Albanian). Video-ethnographic data is analyzed by using language socialization (Ochs, 1996) and multimodal interaction analytical (Goodwin, C., 2018) perspectives. The study shows how young multilingual children exploit their multilingual knowledge, creating variations and transformations of various features of the languages available in their educational settings. "Everyday poetics" involved young multilinguals' aesthetic exploratory talk produced by reference to sound and meaning associations, category-explorations, cross-speaker sound and word play in both institutional languages. Children's language play had multiple purposes that were not limited to the social relationality of the peer group. Aesthetic performances as well as language teaching/learning were part of the social episodes that started out as language play. Heteroglossia was supported by children's peer group word meaning explorations and comparisons between various languages. The presentation argues that analytical attention to aesthetic and playful features of everyday encounters contributes to our deeper understanding of human sociality.

Presenter(s): Asta Cekaite

Heteroglossic practices and play with school genres: Multilingual children's interactions in the literacy corner

This paper reports on peer interactions in the literacy corner of a bilingual Head Start preschool in Southern California serving Mexican heritage families and preparing children for English-medium public school education in California, drawn from a larger video-ethnography that followed friendship groups of children at the preschool. Data are analyzed using the theoretical frameworks of language socialization, heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) and multimodal conversation analysis. Children picked up books and enacted multiple genres of school talk, including reading voice, teacher talk, counting, writing, and talk as disruptive students using marked embodied, linguistic and prosodic features to do so. They "pulled in" resources without much regard for which linguistic system, English or Spanish, or role, they "'belong to'" (Minks 2013), partly based on perceived linguistic competencies of the shifting group present in the corner. As the example unfolds however, pressures that push towards English for literacy become evident. The example illustrates how children's playful heteroglossic explorations enable them to organize participation (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004) as well as carve out spaces for English, Spanish, and where boundaries between them can be blurred, underscoring how competing language ideologies are interactionally negotiated and contested in everyday peer interactions.

Presenter(s): Amy Kyratzis

Heteroglossic, bilingual peer interaction in the classroom: Adhering to and subverting an “English only” norm at a Japanese international school

This paper explores children's heteroglossic, bilingual peer interaction in an "English only" classroom at an international school in Japan. In this classroom, children are socialized into the school language policy of "English only," through various teacher practices, including reminders, reprimands, and corrections. Yet, during specific moments in the classroom, especially outside teacher-fronted lessons, particularly during activity transitions (i.e., unstructured spacetime configurations between two scheduled lessons or other events) and at lunchtime, children engage in robust forms of translanguaging whereby they mobilize two languages (English and Japanese) in interacting with peers. Based on audiovisual recordings in a first-grade classroom, the analysis details ways in which children employed talk and multimodal resources (e.g., gesture, facial expression) to engage in bilingual, interactional practices in creative ways, which at times adhered to and at other times subverted the "English only" norm. Based on this analysis, it argues that peer interaction outside teacher-fronted lessons are a key site through which children perform heteroglossia and create a "translanguaging space" through which they display their interactional and sociocultural competence in challenging the ideology of "one language at a time" that ungirds the "English only" norm, thereby reproducing and transforming the moral order of the classroom and socializing peers in the process.

Presenter(s): Matthew Burdelski

Heteroglossic literacy practices and identity performances in multilingual children's engagement with social media.

This study uses Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) processual view of heteroglossia as a framework for examining multilingual children's creative peer language practices and hybrid identity performances in their engagements with social media. The study draws on a language socialisation approach (Ochs & Schieffelin 2012) to children's peer group as a central socializing agent (Kyratzis, Reynold & Evaldsson, 2010). The data is based on video ethnography with Swedish children (8-9 years) of diverse multilingual immigrant backgrounds (mainly Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic) in an urban Swedish afterschool setting with a monolingual policy. It examines how the children exploit their multilingual experience and play with the linguistic varieties at their disposal mixing features from i) a local urban youth style, ii) heritage language forms and iii) monolingual orthographic forms (e.g. social values and pragmatic uses) in their chat communication within social media. Such heteroglossic literacy practices – while mainly used for playfulness, social status and identity performances– show how children's peer engagement with social media affords linguistic creativity and playful explorations of a plurality of norms, repertoires and identities. The findings underscore the need to broaden empirical research on multilingual children's language practices from co-present to mediated interaction, and to explore the heteroglossic practices and ideological tensions children exploit in interplay between the two.

Presenter(s): Ann-Carita Evaldsson

7723 Nationalism and its Discontents: A Conversation on Studying Majoritarian Victimhood

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Conversation/Debate

Over the past decade, a surge of populist, right-wing, and nationalist movements have trafficked in rhetoric that paints ethnic, racial, and religious majorities as the members of society who are truly vulnerable or besieged, under threat from "powerful minorities". We are three graduate students with a shared theoretical interest in the mechanisms by which this happens across three geographic sites: the United States, India, and Israel/Palestine. We ask: how do those who hold majoritarian positions in these contexts, even those who may not identify as right-wing nationalists themselves, construct their subjectivities as victims? What effect does that process of subject-formation have on how we study slippery concepts such as whiteness, indigeneity, and caste? At a theoretical level, how do we locate victimhood within the context of both recent right-wing politics and the nation-form itself? In asking these questions, we intend to interrogate the affective, material, institutional, and discursive mechanisms by which majoritarian movements may politicize pain, invert victimhood relations, or respond to imagined or real attempts at redistributive justice. How are these mechanisms experienced in everyday life, in various state and non-state domains, and across geographies? How do we as ethnographers position ourselves to this felt victimhood or pain and create political projects that challenge reactionary movements? Moderated by Xavier Robillard-Martel, who documents victimhood and marginalization among white Cajuns in Louisiana, this conversation will feature our initial impressions from the field, providing us a space to interrogate the similarities and differences across distinct geographies.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Pinaki Chandra, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Liam Greenwell, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Pinaki Chandra, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Liam Greenwell, Cornell University, Or Aroch

Discussant: Xavier Robillard-Martel, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

7946 Spectral Visibility and Fatalist Hauntings: Tracing Ecological Entanglements

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We have gathered papers that explore the labor of contending with waste from Italy to Ecuador, the work of gardening and (re)construction of shared land-knowledges, and enacting the present in

Miami amidst a future sea level rise. Launching from a framework of political ecology, engaged ethnographic practice, and environmental justice, this collection of papers engages politics, ethics, and ecology by exploring intimate entanglements between daily life and material infrastructures, waste, labor, and multispecies kinship. We remain especially attuned to visibility as a regime of understanding, the haunting presence of an imagined past or future, everyday negotiations in light of that spectral presence, the work and enactment that recreates particular human-non-human entanglements, and the opening of nuanced socio-political understandings based upon those entanglements.

This panel explores traces of ecological kinship, how individuals embody and become entangled within their infrastructures, landscapes, labor, and imaginings of past and future. If traces serve as reminders, then we are also concerned with memory and how memory develops into an embodied practice where the past then becomes inseparable from future imaginings. Given the rapid pace of change in our globalizing world, there are elements of nostalgia, fatalist rhetoric regarding the end of the world (as we understand it), and the necessity of alarmist discourse as a means to influence change towards desired futures. Launching from ongoing work on environmental justice, especially Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence, along with ethnographic interventions in political ecology like Tim Choy's (2011) anticipatory nostalgia, we will explore the impressive and undeniable presence of what appears as a specter but carries most dire consequences. Similarly, we are concerned with how something as essential as the invisible labor of waste pickers or the ignored practice of land-knowledges forces us to think about justice when confronted with questions about land, labor, and multispecies entanglements. In each case, what may not be immediately visible - like marginalized labor or knowledge, as well as future environmental catastrophe - haunts our everyday practices and becomes equally compelling as what is visible - leading us to question the political prominence of visibility itself.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Clate Korsant, University of Florida, Matteo Saltalippi

Chair: Clate Korsant, University of Florida

Presenter(s): Angela D'Souza, Smith College, Aja Cacan, Clate Korsant, University of Florida

Presentation(s): Gardens of Memory: Intergenerational, Indigenous, and International Sites of Ecological Kinship

Botanic gardens are a relatively recent innovation buttressing the epistemological cartography that propagates westernized science and so-called modernity. Spaces of curated beauty, legacies of early genetic experimentation by progressive religious, and colonial aesthetics converge in a unique space—one that, in its living collections, simultaneously transcends the borders ascribed to nation-states regardless of sovereignty of First peoples, while also encasing histories of such exploitative colonial world-making. Less publicly known is that these academic networks become institutionalized between the 16th and 20th centuries, fueling biopiracy and constructing emerging modernity through the kinds of decontextualization and dehumanization required for capitalist transactions and their infrastructure to take shape. In this increasingly compartmentalized and intellectually-credentialing system, alienation through distributions of labor and the differentiating

of disciplines seek to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their knowledge— knowledge intimately based on land relations. As colonial ways of knowing, being, and doing function to determine distinction from racialized others, settlers forsake their own relationships to homelands and ancestors' interconnectedness to the more-than-human world—weather, land, waterways, flora, and fauna. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, life cycles and relationships among ecological kin are obfuscated through the post-industrializing U.S.

Presenter(s): Angela D'Souza

Miami as Mirage: Echoes of past and future on the threshold of sea level rise

Miami is once again a city on the edge – the edge of a future that will be defined by the severity of sea level rise and the possibility of mitigation. Sea level rise is neither temporally nor spatially linear, and this rhythm manifests in echoes and ephemeral traces, revealed and obscured as if cleared by a wave. These ghostly forms range from immaterial to concrete, appearing as memories, mirages, and the destructive force of matter. This talk will focus on the mirage as a ghostly threshold that bridges the immaterial and material experience of ecological uncertainty. The mirage distorts the fabric of everyday life, invoking anticipatory loss and rattling the foundations of cities and the lives within them. Complicating both what we see and how we respond to it, the mirage engenders the structures of feeling (Williams 1954) and embodied atmosphere of inhabiting a present that is haunted by an unsettled past and unknowable future.

Presenter(s): Aja Cacan

Visualizing the Green Regime: Living Amongst Environmentalist Hauntings

In this paper I aim to present the aesthetics of environmentalism as the haunt, disrupt, and become entangled with everyday life – especially within the cases where I'm most familiar in Costa Rica. From street art to drawings to tattoos, Costa Rican environmental agendas create an unmissable iconography and an aesthetic sensibility that makes the national character and its inseparability from conservationist ethics impossible to ignore. These environmentalist hauntings call forth ethical and political agendas that also – given the rise of tourism in the neoliberal context – parallel capitalist developments. This means that the green regime includes elements of nationalism, environmentalist ethics, socio-political movements, capitalism, embodied aesthetic sensibilities that are meant for affect. Scoping the green regime looking for ecological entanglements and fatalist messaging leads to a review of photos, signs, iconography, and other types of media derived from years of archive collection and mixed participatory method research in Costa Rica, which has been concerned with the politics of environmentalism.

Presenter(s): Clate Korsant

4134 Feeling in Illiberal Times

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Across the world today various forms of racial and ethno-nationalism, elite capture, and eugenicist rhetoric are on the rise amid a renewed contestation over so-called rational knowledge at a level not seen since the "science wars." In the United States, for example, white supremacist power thrives on the cultivation of anger, disgust, resentment and victimhood among its supporters to animate the cruelty and vigor of violent actions ranging from brutal anti-immigrant carceralism, to the autographing of bombs destined for Gaza, to the promotion of anti-masking and transphobic policies. In India similar feelings embolden anti-Muslim violence, while in France they enable the proud wearing of Nazi uniforms and attacks on those they call "Islamist-leftists." This panel asks: what does illiberalism feel like, and how do people enact or endure those feelings? Liberalism offers us a grammar that focuses on sympathy, compassion and tolerance, which enable both care and violence. How might we expand or nuance our affective grammars beyond liberal feelings, to understand this growing underbelly of discontent, and its vicious enactments? Liberalism was never innocent, but its violent dismantling leaves us to wonder about the built-in cracks in its architecture, and to question how it was ever the ground we stood on. Even as innocence, that cornerstone of liberal affect, speaks in the language of life when used by illiberals – the life of the unborn child – it has fed their desire for death: from banning vaccines and masks, to promoting genocide. We ask, how do claims to innocence actually underlie the slide into illiberalism, rather than protect against it?

Together our panelists will pursue what the loss of liberalism feels like for those who ever believed in it: from the loss of academic freedom, which has translated into what seems like an event of an entirely different order: students being kidnapped by ICE and detained and deported; to the twisting of any implied or assumed community of care under covid to a politics of distrust and disconnection. We will consider the rapacious desires of illiberalism, to redo the world: a spectacular appetite for deportations, for numbers, for agencies and capacities demolished. How do people feel these forms of destruction as celebratory, even ecstatic, from the US to India? For instance, the inauguration of the Ram Temple, erected on the site of Babri Masjid, which symbolized the squashing of Muslims in India, generated new feelings of pride, joy, and ecstasy as people celebrated across India. Finally, as we contemplate the feelings of illiberalisms and lost liberalisms, what are the surplus effective grammars that we are seeing emerge, captured by neither of these, from indifference, respect, discomfort, to comradeship and pleasure?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Miriam Ticktin, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Julie Livingston, New York University

Presenter(s): Rashmi Sadana, George Mason University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Miriam Ticktin, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Cori Hayden, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Kaya Williams

Discussant: Julie Livingston, New York University

3617 Haunting Materialities in States of Extraction

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable begins with the twinned assertions that ghosts are at once temporal and profoundly material beings, tied to places and political economies that render their presence both uncanny and untimely. In this lively conversation about the role of the spectral dead in extractive states including the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Myanmar, participants will speak from several different "haunted" materials and their transubstantiation: black plastic totem poles that intricately re-member what Zoe Todd calls "fossil kin" as souvenirs; Kodak film as photochemical memory borne in the bodies of workers; extractive projects that link colonial imaginaries with petro-futures; "unearthing" in land speculation; contemporary photographic practices that dwell in the ghostly and chemically unstable aesthetics of the afterlife of industrial materials; ghosts of Wanuskewin buffalo who tell their stories through zoepolitical alliance lodged in stones; and poetry that engages ongoing questions of the living and the dead in a toxic historical order. In addressing these lively matters, each speaker will draw in interdisciplinary methods from art, performance, science and technology studies (STS), and critical phenomenology, that anthropologists might use in tracing material hauntings. Building on recent work in cultural and visual anthropology and the environmental humanities, our performative conversation will raise questions about those human-matter entanglements that Vanessa Agard-Jones has theorized as "body burdens," toxicity, futurity – and the strange things that happen around the cult of oil in extractive states.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Eugenia Kisin, New York University, Joseph Weiss, Wesleyan University, Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Eugenia Kisin, New York University, Joseph Weiss, Wesleyan University, Anthropology Department, Hilary Morgan V. Leathem , Ali Feser , Chitra Ramalingam , Kristen Holfeuer

Discussant: Joseph Weiss, Wesleyan University, Anthropology Department

3827 Calling It Failure: Ethnographies of Unfulfilled Plans and Failed Projects

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Not fully executed plans are everywhere in contemporary societies, yet only at certain moments are unfulfilled plans cast as failed projects. This panel explores the social, material and political effects of unfulfilled plans that are (or are not) deemed as failed to analyze how "failure" haunts, lingers, disrupts, or enables future possibilities for action, planning, and projecting. What conditions influence plans so as to render them unfulfilled and eventually failed? What political effects does "calling it failure" bring about?

Over the last decades, anthropologists have studied the generative potential of incompleteness and unfulfillment in infrastructure (Carse and Kneas 2019), political mobilization (Armbrust 2019), kinship (Franklin 2013), and temporal orientations (Bryant and Knight 2019). Others have ethnographically examined failures in knowledge production and temporal dynamics (Alexander 2023), while scrutinizing the always slippery notion of failure (Ssorin-Chaikov 2016), and the powerful side-effects that follow in failure's wake (Ferguson 1994).

In an attempt to spotlight more closely the interplay of these processes, this panel ethnographically interrogates how unfulfilled plans do (or do not) get cast as "failures". How does a plan or a project end up on a trajectory toward unfulfillment, and when exactly is the struggle for fulfillment abandoned and failure proclaimed in its stead? To what extent is failure understood as irreversible, and in what contexts and by whom? While exploring these often unpredictable trajectories, the panel asks: how are abandoned (life) projects, delayed or unrealized goals and failed aspirations shaped, contested, and reconfigured? How do failures materialize? What does failure mean to different people, and what kinds of social, material and political work does it carry out?

The panel brings together ethnographic case studies from five different sites where infrastructural reconfigurations have made unfulfilled plans and "failures" acutely tangible in local communities - from a submerged and relocated town in Turkey, to one of Europe's busiest transshipment ports in Spain, to a long "failed" but recently booming Egyptian desert city, to a mining village in Serbia undergoing relocation, and to a former steel manufacturing town in East Germany. Together, the papers examine how unfulfilled plans and failed projects not only enable or disrupt everyday life, but also how "calling it failure" disrupts and generates new forms of knowledge, challenges temporal frameworks, and (re)shapes political and material configurations.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Deana Jovanovic, Utrecht University, Carl Rommel

Chair: Catherine Fennell, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Samantha Fox, Ekin Kurtiç, Hege Leivestad, University of Oslo, Department of Social Anthropology, Carl Rommel, Deana Jovanovic, Utrecht University

Discussant: Ashley Carse, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Origins of the Urban Landscape: Reevaluating Socialist Failure in the Former East Germany

Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany offers a case study in rethinking socialist legacies as necessarily associated with failure. Founded in 1950 as Stalinstadt, an East German steel manufacturing hub and showcase for humane urbanism, the city's socialist origins were scrubbed from the urban landscape following German reunification. Lenin Avenue became Linden Avenue and Red Square, Rose Square.

Yet socialist urbanism persisted, understood as both a strategy of urban design and a commitment to communitarian values. And in recent years, that legacy has been instrumental in revitalizing Eisenhüttenstadt, undergirding large-scale projects aimed at both social and material change. This

paper draws on over ten years of ethnographic research to examine the shifting legacy of East German socialism, showing how Eisenhüttenstadt's origins are widely credited with enabling the city's current success. Indeed, urban administrators, architects, and citizens alike point to various facets of the socialist past as critical enabling forces.

Such claims, I show, are acts of "social stratigraphy" (Dawdy 2016), excavating the social in ways that reincorporate elements of the socialist past into the present. As such, they refute the assumption that socialist urbanism is an obsolete legacy (Murawski 2018; Ringel 2018; Schwenkel 2020) and point to new forms of value (Graeber 2001) and ruination (Stoler 2016) forged in a moment of sociopolitical turbulence.

Presenter(s): Samantha Fox

Calling It Shortcomings: The Political Power and Limits of Promised Improvements

Yusufeli, a small northeastern town, has, over the last decade, become a microcosm of authoritarian populism in Turkey. Since the start of the construction of the country's tallest dam in 2013, most town inhabitants saw it as a necessary project requiring self-sacrifice, in return for which they asked not to be victimized. The authoritarian populist AKP regime – along with its local municipality – promised to fulfill these expectations through strong political rule, claiming capability and readiness to serve the people.

While the town is now submerged under the reservoir, dam construction and resettlement have been marked by unfulfilled promises of decent compensation for "docile" inhabitants—a process that, however, has not been cast as "failure" overall. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in this submerged and relocated town, this paper explores the political work of "calling it shortcomings." How are un/half-fulfilled promises framed as shortcomings? What role do "shortcomings" play in circumventing the register of "failure" and cultivating a sense of expected improvements? How do inhabitants experience and mobilize shortcomings? Finally, to what extent does the framing of shortcomings serve to contain criticism? By addressing these questions, this paper will explore the discursive and practical maneuvers that allow the politics of promised improvements to persist despite failures.

Presenter(s): Ekin Kurtiç

Cemented Failures: Contesting Concretized Seafronts in a Spanish Port Town

When does the expansion of a cargo port turn into failure? This paper explores the material, political, and affective dimensions of cemented port growth, examining its transformation from water to land. While concrete is traditionally linked to the construction and aesthetics of mobility and logistics, it also serves as a medium through which the destructive aspects of infrastructure can be interrogated. Ethnographically, this presentation traces the politically contested urban transformations of Algeciras, a Spanish town on the Strait of Gibraltar that hosts one of Europe's busiest transshipment ports. It focuses on a seafront development project, The Maritime Lagoon, which was conceived to address historical urban planning failures caused by the port's expansion.

But what happens when an urban renewal project meant to rectify past mistakes becomes a failure itself? This paper introduces the concept of concretization to illustrate how abstract processes of port-making materialize through concrete—a substance that, in turn, becomes central to local understandings of political betrayal. In Algeciras, I argue, a cemented seafront continues to concretize what it means to live with failures that refuse to disappear.

Presenter(s): Hege Leivestad

When Failure Is Not Called: Reflections on Projects in an Egyptian Desert Town

Badr City – an industrial town 60 kilometers east of Cairo – has never lived up to expectations. Planned in the 1980s, journalists and urban planners have long noted the lack of residents, businesses and services, casting it as an epitome of the regime's failed attempts to transfer populations into the empty deserts. Regardless of facts on the ground, however, the government never admitted that Badr had failed. In the last decade, the city has also experienced a boom triggered by the construction of Egypt's New Administrative Capital 15 kilometers away. Today, investors, workers, state functionaries and small-scale business owners flock to Badr, which suddenly looks both central and attractive.

This paper reflects on the Egyptian government's reluctance to label Badr failed, in an effort to analyze the work that not-calling-it-failure does. Combining media material and ethnographic fieldwork with men who launch small investment projects in Badr, I spotlight the connotations and visions vested in the Egyptian notion of a "project" (mashru'). For my interlocutors, project making is typically cumulative and nested rather than sequential; insofar as incomplete projects work as platforms for the initiation of new projects, it rarely makes sense to label any of them as failed. By the same logic, Badr, the project city, never failed. Indeed, small projects often thrive in glitches between the city's incomplete, but not necessarily failed, urban plans and infrastructure projects.

Presenter(s): Carl Rommel

"Failures" and Unfulfilled Plans: Ethnographic Exploration of Temporalities in a Mining Village in Serbia

The mining village of Krivelj in eastern Serbia has faced relocation plans for over forty years due to its proximity to what could potentially become an expanding open-pit mine. When a Chinese copper and gold company acquired the mine from the formerly state-managed company, its sudden expansion made relocation seem imminent, forcing villagers to quickly question their future. Despite promises of a new village, the collective relocation project never materialized. Instead of resettlement, residents experienced displacement, seeing themselves as victims of discrimination, colonization, and neglect.

This paper ethnographically examines the experiences of failed promises in this context. It explores moments when unfulfilled plans came to be seen as failures and analyzes their social, material, and political effects. By tracing how failed relocation attempts have haunted, disrupted, or enabled future possibilities, I ask: Under what conditions do unfulfilled plans come to be recognized as

failures? In what ways such distinction differentially affects the ways in which people acted upon their futures? How is failure contested and normalized in daily life? How does a stalled and potentially failed collective relocation project shape residents' temporalities and agency? While addressing these questions I theorize "failure" as a political tool that, I argue, sustains extractivist projects while ultimately extracting time from those affected.

Presenter(s): Deana Jovanovic

Discussion

7486 “(The) Misdirection (of human conduct) through formalism”

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Many varieties of formalism pervade the social sciences and the institutions they examine or inform, and thereby percolate into ordinary life as well. Statistical formalisms are implemented in technologies of governance, industry, health care, and education. Taxonomic formalisms organize the manner in which people are grouped into categories of the national census, systems of taxation, and into electoral districts. Academic disciplines (sociology, linguistics, ethics, demography) incline towards protocols of reasoning in which abstractions and generality of results are valued.

The papers in this panel focus on the manner in which formalisms are created or negotiated through the activities of people trying to cope with specific social phenomena. All formalisms are created through forms of discursive semiosis that invest locutionary forms (whether taxonomic, enumerative, legalistic, algorithmic, or any other) with uses adapted for specific purposes. Some are created in institutional domains, as in linguistics, where early 20th c. formalisms for describing 'language structure' were created when the wider range of properties of human language were poorly understood (Agha); or in bioethics, where the prestige accorded by medical ethicists to mathematical formalisms transplants rational choice theory (and idealized assumptions about people's mental states) into settings where the conduct of people seeking healthcare must be reformulated into computably deterministic outcomes in order for something called 'ethics' to be applied to them (Clapp). Others emerge when everyday forms of communication become peppered with formalisms, as when vernacular Italian is invested by business executives with memorably archaic forms of verb deixis under emblematic formulations of autochthonous tradition designed to make modern brands and customer outreach work (Perrino); or when a genuinely traditional and typologically unusual genre of communication such as Mazatec whistle speech is studied by Western scholars through the denotational formalisms they use to study ordinary language, thereby leaving out much of the object of study in the course of exhibiting fidelity to favored formalisms (Faudree); or when discrete formal categories are created for analyzing gradient contrasts, which works when linguists rely on introspectable intuitions to create "acceptability judgements" in published articles, but not so well in the Indonesia-Malay borderlands where gradient choices made by actual people depart entirely from the results of papers published elsewhere (Carruthers).

When formalisms are far from home, their vulnerabilities become apparent, the results they yield do not fit the phenomena they allegedly describe, and the conditions under which they appear to prosper become contrastive objects of study. The papers in this panel approach these issues in diverse ethnographic settings and through entirely distinct questions, allowing the theme itself to become visible.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Asif Agha, University of Pennsylvania

Chair: Kristina Nielsen, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Asif Agha, University of Pennsylvania, Sabina Perrino, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Justin Clapp, University of Pennsylvania, Andrew M. Carruthers, University of Pennsylvania

Discussant: Kristina Nielsen, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): An epitaph for language structure

All attempts to describe human language require the use of metalinguistic devices, of which linguists' technical terms are a special case. As technical tools change across eras and schools of thought, so do object-formulations of what language is taken to be. Such changes sometimes rely on conspicuous notation, more often on giving new senses to old words; in the latter case, the change may be barely noticeable. The nouns structure, language and form (and derivatives like language structure and linguistic form) were invested with new senses in the 20th century and came to denote objects that could not exist in the 19th century because the metalinguistic idioms through which these objects are curated had not yet been devised. Who created these idioms? What were they groping towards? Is it sensible to use such idioms today? These questions are easily answered if we attend to certain motifs that recur—over and over again—across the course of 20th century linguistics. This paper describes (a) how formal-grammar/language-structure got metalinguistically extracted from the range of semiotic properties that human languages have, (b) how it came to be constituted as a discrete object of study through specific metalinguistic idioms, (c) how idioms that led to undeniable insights also led to extraordinary delusions, and (d) how the salvageable portions of this enterprise can be retained only if these delusions are abandoned.

Presenter(s): Asif Agha

Remote Past and Made in Italy in Northern Italian Narratives

Often referred to as the crib of the Renaissance, Italy has been promoting art and history as cornerstones of Italian culture and identity. Italian rootedness in the past visually emerges from the numerous medieval buildings, Renaissance palaces and villas, and ancient Roman ruins. This connection with history and art is part of Italian sociocultural life as well. Even in the business sector, Italian executives resort to overlooked historical deeds to elevate a supposedly collective "Made in Italy" brand. In this paper, I examine how Northern Italian executives perform and inhabit a collective identity that is deeply rooted in their history as it emerges in their storytelling practices. More specifically, I show how these executives change their official register(s) while they tell stories

about their companies. By constantly shifting between the Italian remote past tense (*passato remoto*) and the more commonly used past tense (*passato prossimo*), for example, these executives inhabit various gradients of conventionalism. Crucially, this remote past tense, which was used across Italy centuries ago, has been replaced by the *passato prossimo* in many Italian regions. Yet, as the narratives that I collected demonstrate, using this remote tense helps narrators take a more formal stance, especially when they elevate their companies and their identities to align them with the Made in Italy brand.

Presenter(s): Sabina Perrino

Formalism, mind, & mystification in bioethics

A central mission of the field of bioethics is to increase the participation of patients and laypeople in healthcare and research. In this fight against clinical and scientific paternalism, bioethics has drawn inspiration from Kantian and Rawlsian theories of autonomy and justice and from the amorphous paradigm of decision theory. This talk will show how these theories project properties onto the referents of terms like value, preference, and desire by extracting the linguistic expressions in which the terms are commonly used from their social context. These terms can thereby be taken to refer to mental states or contents, which serve as building blocks in formalistic ethical theories centered on rational introspection and calculation. Such theories mystify efforts to sort out the moral complexities of clinical care and research.

Presenter(s): Justin Clapp

On the (mis)direction(s) of comparison

Formal linguists have long sought to typologically disaggregate the paradigmatic "comparative construction" — i.e., NP_j [is--]MOREADV-¬ADJ than NP_k — in terms of its constituent semantic features. Not least of these disaggregated features has been the so-called direction of comparison (Ultan, 1972; Stolz and Stolz, 1995; Dixon, 2012), one emblemized (in English, at least) by way of degree operators like "more" or "less." This paper considers what such formalistic accounts leave behind in their analysis of the tropological more-or-lessness of life, by ethnographically attending to "comparison" as a categorially and co-textually emergent socio-semiotic phenomenon. Drawing on data of speech from the Indonesia-Malaysia borderlands, the paper moves beyond formalistic, "prototypical" (Dixon, 2012) accounts of comparison's grammatical categoriality, to more broadly examine its "co-textual" semiotics in a borderland region. I conclude by considering the "spectre of comparisons" (Anderson, 1998) as it inflects current anthropological theorization.

Presenter(s): Andrew M. Carruthers

Discussion

6303 In What World Do We Now Find Ourselves? Ghosts in Post-Pandemic, Late-Socialist China

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the wake of deferred revolutions, failed promises, and shifting global dynamics, ghosts return-not as mere metaphors, but as active figures shaping memory, mourning, and the possibilities of the future in post-pandemic, late-socialist China.

This panel examines how disruptions rooted in various socialist constructions underlie the fraught, uncertain transformation unfolding in post-pandemic China: from the remnants of socialist infrastructure and urban homemaking to diasporic reading groups and the ritual, revolutionary resonances of global Black popular culture. These papers offer a salvage footage and temporal depths that engage both speculative futures and spectral continuities of the past-of lost histories, uncertain progress, and fractured collectivities-made newly urgent as previous promises collapsed, leaving hope and the good life suspended in a prolonged liminal stage marked by political and economic stagnation and existential displacement.

Ghosts, here, are not singular beings but plural presences; not merely echoes of traumatic pasts, but also dynamic, but shifting actors in the ongoing (re)configuration of memory, identity, and futurity. They do not always arrive through clear callings, but emerge through bodily states, ambient intensities, and non-teleological encounters. They differ not only by type, but by their depth, texture, and the affective-imaginary projects they partake in. Moving through cracks where official narratives falter or cannot reach, ghosts whisper untimely stories-stories that challenge state-sanctioned visions of modernity, unsettle linear promises of progress-but also cast a skeptical eye on any impulse of hope whenever it aligns too easily with the forward march of history.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Zhuoli Gao, University of Pennsylvania, Shay Xianyang Zhang, Cornell University

Chair: ruize xu, University of Michigan, Chloe Rong, Haverford College

Presenter(s): Zhuoli Gao, University of Pennsylvania, Chloe Rong, Haverford College, ruize xu, University of Michigan, Kuo Guang, Shay Xianyang Zhang, Cornell University

Discussant: Emily Ng, University of Pennsylvania, Kuo Guang

Presentation(s): Chronotopes of Grief: Hip Hop, Memory, and the Ghosts of Revolutionary Solidarity

Abstract: This presentation explores how haunting travels through Black music and dance, evoking social memory in participants beyond racial lines. It is part of a larger project on the politics of Black popular culture in contemporary China and the United States, exploring how Chineseness, Blackness, nation states, and the cultural self- and group-making intersect amid current global geopolitics. Drawing on fieldwork in Philadelphia's underground Hip Hop dance scene, I highlight a public mourning event commemorating two recently deceased community members. Using

autoethnography (Han, 2020), I explore how this ritual evoked a personal sense of grief in me, a foreign ethnographer, across chronotopic dimensions (Ng, 2021). Examining the semiotic bundle that constitutes the Black mourning ritual's enregistered style (Agha, 2007), I argue that its efficacy—grief—offers a lens into PRC's socialist and post-socialist transformations. This grief also gestures toward an often-forgotten revolutionary solidarity between Chinese and Black Americans during the 1950s—how it is remembered, contextualized, and recontextualized across both sites in contemporary times (Brown, 2016; Frazier, 2014; Ke-Shutte, 2023).

Presenter(s): Zhuoli Gao

Fragments, Foreclosures, Futures: The Ethics of Psychoanalytic Reading in China

Reading groups have emerged as intellectual spaces in China and its overseas over the past decade. At the intersection of Marxist legacies, post-structuralist critique, and leftist thought refracted through China's modernization, psychoanalytic reading—as a genre and a practice of listening (Marsilli-Vargas, 2022)—carries demands for sustained engagement with the fractured self. Dreams, silences, and trauma are not merely interpreted but treated as historical inscriptions (Pandolfo, 2018), making reading both a mode of knowing and a medium for working through collective and personal wounds. Across in-person and diasporic sites, I trace reading groups as experimental spaces where authority and collective life are reimagined under post-socialist governance. Intergenerational dialogues animate suppressed histories, revolutionary afterlives, and disavowed affects, rendering psychic pain a register of political economy and state restructuring. Here, psychoanalysis resurfaces not as doctrine but as a language of delay, fracture, and encounter—inhabiting the unresolved pasts. Two motifs recur: the search for an inner psychic site amid social and existential dislocation, and the textual pursuit of a political potentiality where past insurgencies collide with suspended presents. I approach psychoanalytic reading as an epistemological and ethical gesture of staying with pain—rather than interpreting the revival of psychoanalysis fully integrated into liberalization or psychotherapeutic

Presenter(s): Chloe Rong

Between the Cruel and the Dreamlike: Reconfiguring Hope in Socialist Ruins in China's "Garbage Time"

Ghost lingers amid the debris of once-cherished visions of a good life, in China's post-pandemic era of prolonged economic downturn, political authoritarianization, and social disillusionment. In this era that some phrase as the "garbage time of history," regions long deemed geographically, culturally, and economically peripheral since the intensification of neoliberal reforms at the close of the last century—along with the nostalgic and rudimentary lifestyles they index—have become newly valorized as symbolic and material sites for economic revival and the restoration of public confidence in everyday life: sites for the reconfiguration of hope. This paper explores how spectral remnants of socialist infrastructure in these peripheral areas—state-led structures built to serve socialist construction purposes before the late 1990s—become central to the emergent practices of "hope-making" in the crisis time when the promise-oriented technologies of statecraft and rule

have been proven unsuccessful and a set of new narratives is being called to deny failures and reinvigorate the national and societal dynamism. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in Harbin, Hegang, and Yumen, I ask the heterogeneous aspiration of hope and its affections, narratives, aesthetics, histories, and the lifeworlds that wind through them, as well as what a prefigurative politics they might be doing or engaging with and how. I argue that ghost is neither merely a facilitator for hope to rise

Presenter(s): ruize xu

Murder at the End of the World: A Case in Southwest China

This project explores how individuals, after losing the promised certainty of a future vision, reconfigure their understanding of loss through narratives of the past, and how this retrospective construction colludes with the present. Based on fieldwork conducted in Harbin, Chengdu, and Panzhihua from 2024 to 2025, I focus on a childhood "murder case" in the memory of a Chengdu restaurant owner—specifically, the death of a secret base at the city's margins. The narrator describes this event as "the beginning of everything collapsing," a disintegration of cosmology from within that culminated in his parents' layoffs during the enterprise restructuring of the late 1990s. His family migrated from Northeast China to Panzhihua, a southwestern industrial city, during the Third Front construction of the 1970s, where he was born. Constructing the past through narratives of death has long been a theme in ethnographic writing (Mueggler, 2014), but studies focused on non-biological deaths remain nascent. I argue that this specific story—and the narrator's deliberate shifts in discourse, even accent—reveals spatiotemporal experiences that offer a new lens to examine the metabolic transformations of urban life and futurity itself. These transformations surface like spirit photography on the ruins of history, particularly in 2025, a moment of renewed uncertainty.

Presenter(s): Kuo Guang

Home Without Ancestors: Intergenerational Homemaking, Inheritance, and Rejection

Abstract: For many second- and third-generation Beijingers, Beijing is not their ancestral home but rather a place where their parents and grandparents, who migrated from multiple parts of China, came together and formed new, mixed families that do not share a common identification with a regional kin group or community. Children of these mixed families form a blurry category as they try to find their places in Beijing, selectively inheriting and rejecting certain elements of their complex family backgrounds, as well as their migratory histories entangled with political violence and social upheavals in modern Chinese history.

I offer an intergenerational oral history of family and homemaking that centers on how second- and third-generation Beijingers understand and experience notions of home and hometown. Engaging with immigrant and diasporic anthropology (Abu-Lughod 1988; Behar 1993; Appadurai 2013; Desmond 2016), it takes "home" not as a fixed concept but as a collectively constructed narrative subject to continual reimagination, and a site for intergenerational inheritance and reckoning. It argues that the identification of home and place-based belonging among second- and third-

generation Beijingers comes with the consequence of rejecting other possibilities of what home could be. By studying how they make home in Beijing, I examine how narratives of memory, belonging, and hopes for the future intersect with their gendered, classed, generational experiences and interperso

Presenter(s): Shay Xianyang Zhang

Discussion

Discussion

3028 Corporations and the Afterlife of Empire

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In recent years, corporate sovereignty – as the exercise of power by a non-state entity – has seen increasing attention and theorization in anthropology with regards to its constitution alongside and against state sovereignty (Hull 2022; Appel 2019; Rogers 2015; Welker 2014; Cattelino 2011; Sawyer 2006, Hansen and Stepputat 2006; etc.). Corporations receive unique exemptions from national laws and jurisdictions, while challenging states' claims to exclusive territorial authority. Yet, the modern business corporation as we know it today is an artifact of empire (Kelly 1999; Barkan 2013; Stern 2023), and the imperial foundations of the corporate form continue to haunt the postcolonial world as companies gain control over lands, resources, and populations, frequently in collaboration with state actors.

In this session, we explore the relationship between corporations and states in the aftermath of empire in the postcolonial world. Contributions draw upon archival and ethnographic data to excavate and illuminate the making of corporate regimes as shaped by the legacies of empire, and the political-economic circumstances that have enabled the expansion of corporate regimes across Africa and Asia. In particular, we examine corporate strategies and interactions with state actors and agencies in the establishment and maintenance of corporate authority in the postcolonial political terrain with the aim to shed light on the nature of contemporary sovereign power itself. Finally, the papers show new configurations of postcolonial state sovereignty as it acknowledges, incorporates, and/or defends itself from private interests in the long shadow of empire.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Tanmoy Sharma, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Wen Zhou, National University of Singapore

Chair: Wen Zhou, National University of Singapore

Presenter(s): Wen Zhou, National University of Singapore, Emilia Group, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, Elisa Tamburo, Tanmoy Sharma, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Making the corporate sovereign: Concessions and company rule in Gabon, Central Africa

Private concessionary regimes have characterized Equatorial African forests since their first allocations by French colonial authorities in the late 19th century. However, initial debates in the metropole saw acute divisions between those who argued for the deployment of concessions as an efficient mode of privately financed colonization, and others who feared the threat of emergent corporate sovereigns overwhelming the nascent colonial state. Based on archival and ethnographic research conducted in Gabon, France, and the Republic of the Congo, this paper considers the triumph of colonial concessionary delegations as the grounds for contemporary corporate governance over peoples and resources in Gabon. Examining the architecture of past and present concessionary contracts, this paper argues that the concessionary company has been constructed as both an extension of the state and its most important constituent. Thus, while the social and environmental non-compliance of recently arrived Chinese logging companies appears to challenge the terms of their concessionary agreements vis-à-vis rural populations, the contractual position of concessionary companies in relation to the Gabonese state ensures them a political status – of sovereign-subject – that remains inaccessible to the country's nominal citizens.

Presenter(s): Wen Zhou

Mapping Empire through Oil and Climate

In the 1950s, oil companies initiated large-scale projects to establish networks of weather observation stations to facilitate oil extraction. By deploying hundreds of on- and offshore stations in specific regions, companies like British Petroleum and Exxon Mobil not only sought to extract oil but also to map climate, all while reshaping territorial power. This paper examines one such project in the Arabian Gulf, interrogating how the production of meteorological knowledge allowed oil companies to map regions in new ways where imperial influence appeared to be waning and postcolonial state sovereignty was still in flux. By leveraging weather and climatic knowledge to determine where infrastructure would be placed and which areas were most viable for resource extraction, oil companies effectively delineated new imaginaries of political boundaries. This study contends that these oil industry practices facilitated the stabilization of imperial power by anchoring territorial claims in environmental science, linking oil exploitation with the reshaping of colonial geographies. In doing so, it engages the production of oil and climate as a lens for rethinking the relationship between the formation of postcolonial states, corporate sovereignty, and the changing contours of empire. It further offers a critical window into the ways corporations continue to co-produce sovereign power alongside and against the state in the long afterlife of empire.

Presenter(s): Emilia Groupp

Contested Sovereignty: Chinese-led urban development, city-making, and urban futures in Nairobi, Kenya

The paper focuses on city-making and on the stakeholders involved in it to identify ways in which sovereignty is at stake beyond the scale of national polities, especially in postcolonial contexts. The rise of Chinese private businesses in the construction sector in Nairobi, Kenya, since the early 2000s has transformed how the city is planned, built, and lived. In Nairobi, China-built urban infrastructure not only divides the local urban middle class but also evidences conflicting interests among Chinese stakeholders. In the paper, I'll explore the effects of China's financial engagement in Kenya, asking which kinds of contested visions of the city may emerge and how these visions are tied to concepts of citizenship, governance, and sovereignty in a postcolonial context.

Based on eight months of ethnographic fieldwork in Nairobi, the paper argues for the necessity of nuanced and careful differentiations among stakeholders, among which businesses, residents, and the local municipality, and proposes that we venture beyond the level of the nation-state – which in Kenya also means the domain of sovereign debt and government-to-government loans – to examine how sovereignty can operate. The scale of the city ultimately offers new vistas to the powers at work to produce visions of the future, which are often different from those that urban dwellers imagine and aspire to.

Presenter(s): Elisa Tamburo

The Making of a National Oil Company in India: Corporate Sovereignty at the End of Empire

The discovery of a large oil field in the state of Assam in India's northeastern periphery by the British-owned Burmah Oil Company in 1953 inaugurated an expansive political drama concerning the rights over resources in the nascent Republic of India. It also put the spotlight on the place of British companies in the economy of independent India. This critical event shaped the ground on which the question of corporate sovereignty in a postcolonial democracy would be articulated and reconfigured. Following the 1953 discovery, this paper explores the encounter between Indian state actors and British corporate actors, and traces the making of Oil India Limited, through a series of contested negotiations between the Government of India and the Burmah Oil Company. Despite the socialist aspirations of political leaders in India, the paper shows how the new oil and gas industry in India had to be crafted in significant alliance with foreign capital which gave new life to the British colonial-era rationalities of exploration licenses, concessions, and subterranean property rights. Drawing on archival and ethnographic research, this paper explores the legacies of empire in the postcolonial Indian energy corporation as it takes formidable shape and works through immunities in the name of the national community in an ever-expanding "state-sanctioned permissive space" (Diphoorn and Wiegink 2022).

Presenter(s): Tanmoy Sharma

4374 Body as a Target of Intervention: Emergent Modes of Governance in Authoritarian Contexts

Start Date: 11/22/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/22/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropological examinations of "the state" have long emphasized that it is not a uniform, fixed entity but rather a dispersed set of discourses, practices, and actors (Aretxaga 2003, Das and Poole 2004, Sharma and Gupta 2006). This analytical framework has led anthropologists to study the blurred boundaries and porosity between state and non-state actors, the multiplicity of contemporary governance orders, as well as informal, nested, and incomplete sovereignties, among other themes. However, anthropologists have had little to say about authoritarian rule. Often conceptualized as "one-man rule," imaginations of the authoritarian state as a centralized machinery that enacts the will of a despotic leader have left little room to analyze the diffuse discourses, techniques, and technologies of governance that encompass authoritarian rule.

Against dominant narratives that take authoritarianism as a taken-for-granted analytic or a strongman rule opposite liberal democracies, this panel seeks to conceptualize authoritarianism not as a uniform, fixed, or novel regime but as a dispersed set of discourses, techniques, and technologies of governance. While the latter may not be new, we aim to situate them within long-standing political and economic currents while identifying what might be particular or emergent about their deployment and reconfiguration in the contemporary moment. The panel pays particular attention to the body as a renewed target of intervention and examines the ways in which mobility, labor, and reproduction have emerged as key sites of governance in authoritarian contexts, as well as how they are mobilized to negotiate and respond to such interventions.

Works Cited

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Das, Veena, and Deborah Poole, eds. 2004. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. School for Advanced Research Press.

Sharma, Aradhana, and Akhil Gupta, eds. 2006. *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Seda Saluk, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Luciana Chamorro, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Chair: Luciana Chamorro, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Presenter(s): Nicola Chávez Courtright, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Seda Saluk, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Luciana Chamorro, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Zeynel Gul, University of Illinois at Chicago | AnthroClub, Lauren Woodard

Discussant: Joao Felipe Goncalves

Presentation(s): Nacer sin cariño: Family-First Authoritarianism in El Salvador

A biopolitical imperative to regulate family life has been a cornerstone of governance in the Americas since colonization. El Salvador continues this tradition under the dictatorship of Nayib

Bukele, in which the heterosexual nuclear family is promoted to the detriment of other kinship formations. By framing heteronormativity as a technique of authoritarian governance, this paper highlights the role of the presidential family in the proliferation of totalitarianism. I argue that the Bukeles' evocations of heterosexuality, childhood and pureness act to safeguard these national investments, with real consequences for bodies who fail to reproduce, or fail to reproduce through intelligible family formations, such as trans people, lesbians, transients, sex workers, pro-choice feminists and women who abort.

As self-proclaimed caretakers of the nation, the Salvadoran presidential family helps render already suspect bodies even more vulnerable to state intervention, protecting an infantilized citizenry from these "dangerous" subjectivities. While others have rightly highlighted the Bukele administration's masculinist displays of hard power, such as mass incarceration and torture of political opponents, I turn to writing by Lee Edelman, Cathy Cohen and Roderick Ferguson to examine how a focus on the Salvadoran family violently forecloses common forms of nonnormative kinship under authoritarianism, through techniques like gentrification, censorship and pro-natalist policies.

Presenter(s): Nicola Chávez Courtright

Monitoring Reproduction: Data, Surveillance, and Authoritarian Governance in Turkey

In 2008, the Ministry of Health in Turkey launched an ambitious yet controversial public health surveillance project aimed at combating high rates of maternal and infant mortality. Known as the Pregnancy Monitoring System, the project built a vast data infrastructure that tracks the sexual and reproductive health information of not only pregnant individuals but also all women of childbearing age in the country. The Ministry praises the project for its success in improving efficiency in healthcare planning and delivery. Opponents, however, view it as yet another mechanism of authoritarian governance that curtails reproductive privacy and instills fears of being constantly monitored, particularly among young people using public health clinics. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul—among activist networks and in healthcare clinics and people's homes—this paper explores how the implementation and impact of public health surveillance reveal complex configurations and negotiations with authoritarian governance. Against the backdrop of growing concerns about data surveillance, this paper provides new insights into how emerging modes of governance operate not through control and coercion but through selective manufacturing of information.

Presenter(s): Seda Saluk

The Right to Return

In response to mass demonstrations against austerity measures in 2018, the Nicaraguan government has enacted arbitrary controls over the movement of its citizens, denying them travel documents, impeding their exit from and entry into the country, and most recently, deporting its own citizens, leaving thousands effectively stateless. Independent journalists and human rights organizations have documented the chain of command that issues such extralegal decisions, often traced back directly to Nicaragua's First Lady and Vice-President. However, in the case of citizens

who are denied entry into the country, they rarely have any interface with government authorities or receive any official notice informing them of this decision. Rather, the Nicaraguan state relies on airlines or bus companies to refuse boarding, often leaving passengers stranded mid-route during layovers, and without the documentation necessary to make any claims for international protection. This paper examines the network of actors involved in making sovereign decisions effective, including the transnational corporations effectively tasked with enforcing the government's arbitrary and illegal border controls. Here, I revisit theorizations of sovereignty to illuminate the ways in which the most extreme manifestations of authoritarian rule take place through already existing commerce and security frameworks rather than spectacular displays of force.

Presenter(s): Luciana Chamorro

Guarantee or Threat?: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Double Life of Occupational Diseases Certificates in Turkey

Drawing on eighteen months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in occupational diseases hospitals, courtrooms, workplaces, and households, this paper analyzes how state power circulates through seemingly mundane documentary practices—barcode labels, medical certificates, legal filings—that mediate interactions among doctors, patients, judges, and institutions. Although occupational disease certificates are framed as "obligatory points of passage" (Callon 1984) for accessing care and legal compensation, their submission to employers often results in workers being dismissed due to reductions in bodily capacity. The slippage of these documents between legal guarantee and punitive outcome not only unsettles monolithic conceptions of the state power but also raises pressing questions about the limits and contradictions of biological citizenship (see also Mathur 2016, Poole 2004). Focusing on the entangled dynamics of sovereignty and biopolitics, I argue that these documentary artifacts simultaneously function as instruments of entitlement promised by rights and techniques of surveillance and exclusion, rendering laboring bodies visible yet institutionally illegible within medico-legal regimes. By taking up the documentary and diagnostic infrastructures that shape the governance of worker health, I theorize authoritarianism not as top-down command but as a dispersed assemblage of techniques that blur the boundaries between care, control, and abandonment.

Presenter(s): Zeynel Gul

Lessons from Migrant Russia: Navigating Legal Ambiguity, Informality, and Precarity under Authoritarianism

Russia is the world's fourth top migration destination. In line with global trends, officials have restricted labor migration, on which the economy is dependent, further marginalizing migrants. In contrast, officials have made it easier to obtain citizenship. The same individuals who experience legal and economic precarity—Russian speakers from other post-Soviet countries—are often eligible for Russian citizenship in as little as three months. To learn more about these opportunities,

migrants turn to online forums and social media to exchange information, document their journeys, and provide civic oversight on opaque and often corrupt bureaucratic processes. In this paper, I turn our attention to one such site, the online forum "Home to Russia [Domoi v Rossiia]." Based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted with migrants and officials in Moscow and Vladivostok, between 2014 and 2017, I examine the forum as a site for responding to mechanisms characteristic of Putin's brand of authoritarianism, a system that thrives on ambiguity and informality (Reeves 2017). How do individuals utilize the forum to mitigate uncertainty and increase their chances of obtaining Russian citizenship? How do they build community to document bureaucratic challenges? How do they return to the forum to navigate censorship after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022? And what strategies might we learn from migrants and officials in Russia to navigate emergent forms of authoritarianism?

Presenter(s): Lauren Woodard

Discussion

8797 Members of the Association of Indigenous Anthropologists Welcome Reception

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Audubon

Type: Special Event

This is a reception for members of the Association of Indigenous Anthropologists to gathering to reconnect and welcome our new members and allies. We want to keep in tradition with an informal gathering that affords people the ability to network and engage in a more intimate setting. We look forward to seeing you there.

8526 Society for the Anthropology of Work (SAW) Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Special Event

Annual business meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Work

8852 SCA Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Special Event

Please join us for the annual business meeting of the Society for Cultural Anthropology. We will share section news and updates, invite members to share their perspectives, and present the winners of this year's Bateson Prize and Cultural Horizons Prize. This will be a hybrid meeting. Please join us in person in New Orleans, or if you are not attending the annual meeting in person this year, join us virtually via this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91071621682>

8775 CHAT Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Special Event

During the Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism Business Meeting, board members will update the general membership on ongoing activities. Discussion will include a report of the past year's activities, plans for next year's annual meeting, progress on our book awards program, the expansion of membership activities and opportunities, and other new business.

8662 The Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) and Integrative Medicine (IM)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Special Event

The Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) and Integrative Medicine (IM) special interest group of the Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) was organized to encourage the anthropological study of CAM and IM as emergent socio-medical phenomena having global ramifications in the 21st century. Members of this special interest group recognize that CAM/IM is a contemporary example of medical pluralism, influenced by processes of globalization and hybridization, scientization and commodification. CAM/IM is a global phenomenon and needs to be studied as such.

8691 GAD Distinguished Lecture by Danilyn Rutherford: The World in Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Special Event

The General Anthropology Division Distinguished Lecture proudly features Danilyn Rutherford, President of the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Dr. Rutherford has led the foundation since 2017 in its mission to advance diverse anthropological knowledge and to safeguard the future for anthropological ways of knowing. Dr. Rutherford is also the author of four books, including the recently published *Beautiful Mystery: Living in a Worldless World* (Duke UP, 2025). The lecture is open to all.

497 Poster Overflow Lunch Session

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Poster

Presenter(s): Maddison Clarke, Coco Plasencia, Faith Herd, Laura Cipruse, Yzza Sedrati, Susan Pickard, Milica Milic Kolarevic, Gabriel Plata, Valentina Revollo Támara, Yidi Feng, University of Texas, Austin, Department of Anthropology, Maryani Palupy Rasidjan, New York University, Department of Anthropology, Haya Mortada, Dina Garber, Katherine Kirkeminde-Harris, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, Jasmine Pierce, Ana María Navas Méndez, Illinois State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Robert Chesnut, Jenell Paris, Teresa Velarde, Florida Atlantic University, Andrea Roman, Marybeth Eleanor Nevins, Middlebury College, Department of Anthropology, Madeleine SenGupta, Lakshmi Ananya Nakka, Dublin High School, Alex Calloway, Jonathan Maupin, Arizona State University, Lijun Zhang, George Mason University, Lydia Donohue, Ezriella Tang, Robert Schrauf, Pennsylvania State University, Brinlie Benson, Jennifer Cash, Brenna McCaffrey, SUNY, College At Geneseo, Department of Anthropology, Colleen Lane, Museum of Anthropology California State University Fullerton, Peter Kyriacou, Debra Bolter, Ingrid Lilly, Aden Branstetter, Angelo Boujaoude, Moorestown High School, Samuel Bachrach, Michael Tropeano, Ezekiel Kempster, Caroline Elliott, Naoki Asada, National Museum of Ethnology, Johann Sander Puustusmaa, Claire Fitch, Florian Grundmüller, Phineas Fleming-Smith, Brittany Blomquist, Isabelle Soifer, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Clayton Van Woerkom, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, sriram balasubramanian, Jennifer Rideout, Katie Hwang, Brenda Yagmin, Austin Duncan, Lehigh University, Queen Cornish, Kaylee Appleton, Dierdre Lockette, Washington University in St. Louis, Kashif Rustamani, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Chandler Miranda, Coralie Chamois, Yeon-ju Bae, Emory University, Jamie Methven, Juliet Kelso, Renata Fontoura, Gia Dreyer, Hunter College, Floris Bosscher, Yuhao Ding, Sara Sobhani, SUNY, University at Albany, School of Education, Montita Sowapark, Elizabeth Lynch, Pedro Lacerda, Hamilton College, Zhiyan Jiang

Presentation(s): Board # 68 Anthropological Poster Title: Reproductive Freedom and The Politics of the Womb

The cultural and political landscape of motherhood has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, challenging traditional narratives surrounding family planning, gendered expectations, and the social responsibilities of women. While motherhood has historically been framed as both natural and socially obligatory, increasing numbers of Millennial and Generation Z women are choosing to remain childfree. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of "reproductive refusal," defined as an active and ongoing decision not to birth or raise children. Recent policy changes, particularly the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, alongside economic stressors such as the rising costs of childcare, have intensified the pressures and constraints shaping reproductive choices. At the same time, advances in contraceptive technologies and the growing visibility of sterilization discourse have created both

opportunities and barriers for women seeking permanent reproductive autonomy. Despite the legality of sterilization in the United States, women especially those in their twenties often face resistance from medical professionals who cite concerns about youth, marital status, and presumed future regret. This study investigates the experiences of women in their twenties actively seeking voluntary sterilization, as well as the perspectives of physicians who provide or withhold these services. Through interviews with both women and medical practitioners, this research explores how social expectations, political shifts, and economic realities influence women's decisions to pursue sterilization, and how medical gatekeeping shapes the accessibility of permanent reproductive autonomy.

Presenter(s): Maddison Clarke

Board # 69 Anthropologies of Digital Health: Inequity, Biocitizenship, and the AI Clinic

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the medical landscape through the widespread adoption of wearable devices, genomic analysis, and telemedicine. These technologies promise increased precision and efficiency in healthcare, but their integration raises urgent anthropological questions about equity, surveillance, and responsibility. As health becomes increasingly algorithmic, it is important to question who benefits from these innovations, who is excluded, and how this shift reconfigures notions of care.

Building on Safiya Noble's analysis of algorithmic oppression, this poster examines how AI-enabled medical technologies reproduce structural disparities tied to race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Case studies of consumer wearables, AI-driven clinical decision tools, and direct-to-consumer genomic testing are referenced to reveal how digital health infrastructures extend forms of biocitizenship, positioning patients both as data producers and as objects of governance. These technologies shift responsibility for health management onto individuals, often under the guise of empowerment, while embedding assumptions shaped by cultural and algorithmic biases.

I argue that the promise of personalized health often masks uneven distributions of risk, access, and accountability. Drawing on Michelle Murphy, Natasha Schüll, and Deborah Lupton's work on technoscience and self-tracking technologies, I contend that the naturalization of constant monitoring obscures political dimensions of surveillance. This poster will situate digital health innovations in conversation with actor-network theory to further illuminate how patients, algorithms, and devices co-constitute sociotechnical assemblages that are far from neutral. My findings suggest that while medical AI offers unprecedented opportunities for personalization, its deployment amplifies inequities and reframes expectations of care.

This research positions digital health within broader anthropological conversations on the politics of data. Amid current debates over AI regulation, data privacy, and health equity in 2025, anthropological perspectives can reveal hidden infrastructures of inequality, while envisioning more inclusive digital health futures.

Presenter(s): Coco Plasencia

Board # 70 Black Out Survival

The preservation of Gullah Geechee culture of the Sea Islands and Southeast US is not fairly represented within the American museum ethnology of the Smithsonian Anthropological collections. Like the diasporic movements of slave populations traceable in North American literature, the works of this community can be found in four various archives and six Smithsonian museums. From my exploration of all ethnology objects, William Pollitzer collection, & Sturtevant Archives listed under the NAA, all Gullah Geechee connections can be traced to communities of struggle and assimilation. Delineations like this presents the culture void of their literature, imaging, music, and media; at the same time, this ultimately allows anthropologists, the Smithsonian, and academics the right to capitalize on the labor, language, and lifestyle of the Gullah Geechee people. As such, this research will tell the story of the how accessible resources juxtapose autonomously cultivated stories, lineages on how their culture continues to thrive using the five-senses, and celebration of their stories from someone with adjacency to the cultures aligned.

Presenter(s): Faith Herd

Board # 71 Bodies Behind War Production: The Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Colorado

In countries where war is raging, human and nonhuman bodies are at risk; the dead and injured are counted, quantified, and reported. In home front sites, where active warfare is not taking place, but weapons hazardous to health are produced and stored, this count is often not done. Colorado's Rocky Flats Plant was such a production machine that ignored the potential life threats from the use of plutonium to create nuclear weapons triggers during the Cold War. Today, this place has been transformed into the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge (RF), which activates topics in the community about the safety of bodies and the impact of the still potentially contaminated environment. Concerningly, Rocky Mountain Greenway (RMG) construction is being carried out to connect RF and two other front range wildlife refuges with Rocky Mountain National Park. Furthermore, the question arises about which bodies are significant and important: those people who live in certain areas affected by pollution; people who are outside these boundaries but believe their health has been affected by the plant; nonhuman bodies that have free access to RF. This study was conducted in the summer of 2025 using participant observation at RF and among people involved in the development of RF, as well as interviews and archival research.

The production of nuclear weapons at the RF Plant, located in the Denver metro area, has affected the bodies of humans and nonhumans both inside and outside the production area. The contamination has spread far beyond the plant's boundaries. The now-revitalized wildlife refuge influenced the continuation or emergence of several organizations/groups that share different opinions about the future of RF. Although RF has been cleaned up, some groups question the quality of the environment. Information about the health risks from the plutonium and other dangerous chemicals and their effects on human and nonhuman bodies has long been hidden from the community. Even now, the different opinions and scattered information are not easily perceived and shared. Not only has public awareness of historically classified information increased, but the construction of RMG has also sparked discussions about the impact of contamination on bodies,

many of whom may not even be familiar with the history and potential risks, especially those who would accidentally enter the RF zone via RMG. Those who have worked or lived near the RF Plant or within its impact zone have been granted free healthcare by the state. However, the "impact zone" is ill-defined, as bodies beyond its boundaries have been damaged by several types of tumors. The study also focused on nonhuman bodies, whose potential health concerns have been less emphasized by the community. Nonhuman bodies are essential for promoting wildlife refuge, and they add value to this area.

Presenter(s): Laura Cipruse

Board # 72 Borders Beyond the Grave: Hauntings and Border-Making in Morocco's Cemeteries

This poster is about how black migrants from West and Central Africa experience borders and articulate their collective subjectivities while visiting and working in cemeteries in Morocco. Cemeteries are charged with meanings, imaginaries, and, expectedly, hauntings. For the living relatives of the dead, the people working in cemeteries, or the unknowing tourists, cemeteries provoke different sorts of border crossings where unsettled spirits, ghosts, and pasts and futures come haunting the present (Hertz 1928; Scheele 2006). Similarly, the literature on migration is increasingly representing cemeteries as borderscapes where the necropolitics of border regimes are intensely made visible, but also where death is in turn a driving force for the living. Death and the cemetery redefine boundaries, subjectivities, as well as senses of belonging and modes of contestation (De Leon 2015; Alonso and Nienass 2016; Kobelinsky and Furri 2022). In this poster, I argue that hauntings and the configuration of cemeteries in Morocco participate in border-making processes and in articulating collective forms of subjectivities among black migrant communities. Drawing from my own ethnographic observations in Morocco, I describe three cemetery visits, each in a different city with a separate migrant community. I explain how specific kinds of hauntings influenced the borders and collective subjectivities that my interlocutors articulated in unique yet resonating ways: For the first visit, I describe Tangier's largest muslim cemetery and how migrants who work informally as groundskeepers spoke of their anxieties and ambitions about crossing to Europe and the racism of Moroccan visitors. While haunted by the risk of crossing to Europe, they negotiate their pay with Moroccans by leveraging their work ethic as a sense of duty toward the dead, and, in doing-so, they reject the racist representations that Moroccans project on them. The second example is set in Rabat's Christian cemetery where I accompanied my co-workers, DRC immigrants, to the burial ceremony of a community member. Passing by Mobutu's tomb and surrounded by the graves of European colonists, my interlocutors reflect ambivalently on the juxtaposition of the past ruler and colonists next to their loved ones, revealing their enduring discomfort with the past and tensions in their own sense of belonging and otherness. And finally, in Casablanca's rapidly expanding muslim cemetery, I accompanied a group of Christian Congolese migrants to a casket-viewing in the cemetery's morgue that prohibited noise and lengthy viewings. In a room uncannily decorated with a large portrait of Morocco's king facing, haunting the viewing, the performative acts of mourning also claimed and invested the space of the morgue. Although the hauntings were not always explicitly acknowledged, their acts indicated that "something" was felt. And its presence prompted them to articulate their selves and their worlds.

Presenter(s): Yzza Sedrati

Board # 74 East is East? Exploring the lived experience of frailty and wellbeing among South Asian older people living in the UK

Frailty has been conceptualised in two divergent ways: clinically, as a measurable biomedical diagnosis, and experientially, as the subjective sense of bodily and existential vulnerability. While both dimensions are interlinked, research has largely been based on White, middle-class populations in the global north, neglecting the perspectives of minority ethnic older people whose experiences of ageing are configured by migration, cultural hybridity, and structural marginalisation. In the UK, South Asian women are significantly more likely to experience frailty, and at earlier ages, than their White counterparts. Yet little is known about how frailty is lived and made meaningful in these communities.

This paper reports on a qualitative study of South Asian older adults using longitudinal biographical narrative interviews and photovoice methods to capture the dynamic interplay of illness, culture, family, and migration over the life course. I present four case studies, chosen for their representativeness, which reveal starkly gendered patterns. Women's lives in these communities were marked by constrained opportunities, including domestic abuse, and the collapse of expectations of intergenerational care, resulting in severe frailty and existential isolation in later life. By contrast, men, though not immune to loss and hardship, more often expressed transcendence through cultural bricolage, community engagement, and hybrid models of "successful ageing" that balanced South Asian and British cultural values.

To interpret these findings, I draw on two framings. First, frailty resonates with the concept of the syndemic (Singer 1996, 2009; Mendenhall 2016), where biological vulnerabilities, chronic conditions, and social inequalities interact in a negative feedback loop, producing compounded suffering across the life course. Second, I deploy Simone de Beauvoir's existential and phenomenological concept of the 'situation', understood as the totality of material, social, and symbolic givens through which a person engages the world. Framing frailty as both syndemic and situation enables us to grasp its biological, social, biographical, and ethical dimensions in interaction, while highlighting the tension between individual choice and cultural and structural constraint.

Presenter(s): Susan Pickard

Board #73 Contention and Citizenship: Current Protests in Serbia and the Resurrection of Resistance

Most recent anti-corruption protests in Serbia started in November of 2024, immediately after the collapse of the canopy of Novi-Sad's railway station. This architectural failure resulted in 16 deaths, and sparked a powerful and heated public debate on issues of corruption, lack of transparency, absence of appropriate monitoring practices in public (and private) construction. The protests initially started in Belgrade and rapidly spread across Serbia, with near 400 towns participating. The protests are ongoing, with no sign of slowing down. The peaceful expression of civic rights has

dramatically shifted over the summer months into a culmination of despair, hope, fear, oppression and violence.

Serbia has a long and complex history with civic movements that is shaped by ideas of futility and lethargy. Socio-economic transition from socialism to capitalist democracy has frequently been understood as a never ending process that is closely tied to political inertia in Serbian context. Brief and turbulent protests in 2000 that resulted in the most recent political shift in, at the time, Yugoslavia have been remembered as "the last time where we believed something can change", as framed by my informants. After that, protests and voicing of civic dissatisfaction has been sporadic, temporary and framed as "futile".

Since November 2024, the conversation shifted, and protests, led by mostly students, have cultivated an ongoing debate about public safety, health, potential for change and something I loosely frame as neoliberal mobilization of romanticized socialist ideology. The conversation is bringing out surprisingly concrete assumptions about institutional responsibility and contrasting it with frequently vague, and mostly affective dissatisfaction with the current regime, growing anticipation and fear related to public construction and a saturated need for change: whatever it may bring.

It is in this context that I did my fieldwork this summer in Serbia. I have spent 3 months having daily conversations, participating in protests and reflecting on the changing dynamic of the protests themselves. From mostly peaceful and safe gatherings, protests have evolved into passionate political activism, one that triggered an incredibly aggressive and violent response from the police. Even the grossly underreported numbers of injured citizens are reaching hundreds across Serbia. Testimonials of police beatings, treats of sexual and physical assault of those arrested are cementing the commitment of many protesters. My research closely engages with the concrete and the illusive desires of those invested in protests and I ask: In what ways are contemporary Serbian attitudes about civic and institutional responsibility paving the road to Serbian future? How do ordinary citizens in Serbia translate protest participation into everyday practices of civic engagement, skepticism, and hope? How is the memory of past protests shaping the narratives of today's?

Presenter(s): Milica Milic Kolarevic

Board #75 Excavating Absence: Andalusi Heritage, UNESCO, and the Politics of Memory in Menorca

This poster presents findings from ethnographic research conducted during the Menorca Archaeological Project's (MAP) 2025 excavation season at Torre d'en Galmés, the largest Talayotic site on the island of Menorca, Spain. Because this is a university-led excavation that operates only during the summer, the research could not have been undertaken before the April 16 AAA deadline. My fieldwork coincided with both the 2025 dig season and Ciutadella's Sant Joan festival, which provided a rare vantage on the intersection of archaeology, heritage, identity, and tourism at a moment of heightened activity.

Since 2020, the MAP team at Torre d'en Galmés has begun excavating contexts from the medieval Andalusí period, a chapter of Menorca's history that remains strikingly underrepresented in Spanish archaeology despite nearly four centuries of Muslim presence on the island. Drawing on participant observation at the excavation, archival work, site visits across the island, and more than thirty interviews with archaeologists, heritage officials, tourists, and residents, I trace how these new discoveries are (and are not) incorporated into Menorca's heritage narratives. Museums continue to privilege Talayotic and Roman periods, and in some cases omit the Andalusí era entirely. Even when Andalusí contexts are integrated, such as necropoleis unearthed during road construction, their presentation remains uneven and partial.

Instead, heritage institutions frequently deploy nativist framings, portraying Menorcans as a resilient people continually contending with "outsiders." This narrative resonates with two contemporary pressures: first, anxieties about mass tourism, which increasingly strains the island's UNESCO biosphere reserve; and second, the prestige of Menorca's 2023 UNESCO World Heritage inscription of its Talayotic culture. At the Sant Joan festival, these tropes of endurance and belonging were dramatized for both residents and visitors, intertwining with expressions of Catalan pride and Menorca's ambivalent relationship to Catalonia. The festival thus becomes a stage where heritage politics, tourism, and regional identity converge, revealing the island's precarious negotiation between local distinctiveness and external pressures.

I argue that archaeology in Menorca operates simultaneously as a scientific practice and as a cultural process of memory-making and erasure. By foregrounding the marginalization of the Andalusí past in favor of narratives more compatible with heritage economies, this project highlights urgent questions about patrimony, tourism, and the selective narrativization of history in the twenty-first-century Mediterranean.

Presenter(s): Gabriel Plata

Board #76 Ghostly Crossings: Neocolonial Libidinality and Gendered Encounters in Medellín

This poster examines how Medellín has become a city of ghostly crossings where transnational gender relations, libidinal economies, and urban imaginaries converge under the neocolonial production of space. Based on ethnographic research between 2023 and 2024, extended with new data in 2025 on recent transformations of the urban space, the project traces how U.S. masculinities relocate their desires to Medellín, a city historically entangled with global narratives of sexuality and power.

With the concept of neocolonial libidinality, desire is seen as a structural force organizing unequal exchanges between North and South, foreign masculinities and local femininities, global imaginaries and everyday practices. Spectrality underscores the presence of urban stigmas and fantasies of Colombian femininity that haunt encounters in the city. These ghosts, never fully visible, orient how men and women relate, shaping possibilities of intimacy, and power.

Methodologically, the research combines participant observation, interviews, and autoethnographic reflection. Through fieldwork with sex workers, tourists, police, vendors, and

local women, deepened affective challenges of inhabiting the field as both researcher and participant, drawing on my own position as a local woman entangled in these dynamics.

Findings reveal that these gendered encounters often exceed transactional logics. Most of the U.S. men who return repeatedly to Medellín seek not only sex and companionship but also the recognition they feel denied at home: the traditional position of masculinity as a locus of power and control in intimate relations is unsettled with the rise of feminist movements and shifting gender norms. In Medellín, these men pursue relationships that appear to restore that control, often framed in more conventional or patriarchal terms. Women, in turn, negotiate visibility and vulnerability: some cultivate affective ties with tourists who establish recurring visits or semi-permanent stays, others choose short and bounded encounters that minimize risk and dependency-yet even these limited engagements can yield significant economic, social, and symbolic capital. The city thus becomes a relational arena where intimacy, power, and space are constantly renegotiated under global disparities, operating as a site through which neocolonial power is reconfigured in libidinal terms.

Ultimately, what unfolds in the Global North reverberates in the Global South as neocolonial afterlives: gender asymmetries intersect with the spectral histories of Medellín's urban history, creating fertile ground for unequal intimacies to flourish under the guise of pleasure, and control. By situating Medellín as a haunted urban site, the project contributes to debates on space, gender, and colonial afterlives. The poster format allows a visual evocation of these dynamics, inviting viewers to engage with the spectral nature of these encounters through images, and ethnographic fragments.

Presenter(s): Valentina Revollo Támara

Board #77 Governing Encounters in Shanghai: Raccoon Dogs, Residents, Organizations and the State in China's Urban Wildlife Politics

Cities are increasingly sites of multispecies contestations. This presentation draws on ethnographic research with raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*) in Shanghai to explore tensions between everyday urban encounters and conservation frameworks shaped by both official and unofficial efforts. Based on my work at an NGO for the past four years, in close collaboration with the Shanghai Forestry Station and Fudan University, I show that raccoon dogs have established homes in over 200 residential communities in the bustling metropolis of Shanghai. They complicate urban biodiversity narratives: unlike charismatic or famous protected species such as snow leopards and pandas in western China, raccoon dogs in the east occupy an uneasy position between "wildlife" and "nuisance." While the government, biologists and NGOs in general regard raccoon dogs as symbols of ecological resilience, residents express ambivalent feelings, ranging from affection to fear. Municipal forestry authorities, meanwhile, manage raccoon dogs through fragmented governance structures-balancing state mandates with neighborhood complaints. By combining deep ethnographic description with survey data collected in 2021–2025, I show how urban wildlife governance in China is negotiated through uneven but collaborative explorations among citizens, scientists, NGOs, and the state. By tracing conflicts over management strategies,

from rescue and relocation to informal (anti-)feeding practices, I highlight tensions between top-down governance and bottom-up exploration by different actors. Comparative cases from Wuhan and Nanjing, where raccoon dogs and wild boars appear, further illuminate the varied politics of multispecies cohabitation across different cities and species. This presentation situates contemporary China's urban wildlife controversies within broader anthropological debates on human–nonhuman relations, environmental governance, political ecology, and the politics of multispecies urban nature in a rapidly transforming global South.

Presenter(s): Yidi Feng

Board #78 Murky Medicine: High Risk Pregnancy Care Post-Dobbs

In the aftermath of the Dobbs Decision, the dangers that abortion bans add to the already existing risks of pregnancy become especially amplified for people experiencing any number of complications or emergencies when abortion is determined to be the safest treatment. Interviews with providers of high-risk pregnancy care, including Maternal-Fetal-Medicine, general OB-GYN, and Complex Family Planning physicians two years after Dobbs reveal how navigating the landscape of abortion (il)legality creates a new kind of medical murkiness. Building on the growing literature around medical uncertainty (Buchbinder et al. 2024), we illustrate the real-time processes of navigating cases that are not obviously legally defensible due to bans, but could be interpreted as such. With the reduction or complete disappearance of skilled abortion providers in states with bans, high-risk pregnancy physicians and their teams find themselves at the helm of deciding which abortions are legally defensible in court (should it come to that), which ones are not, and under what conditions. Our research is an intervention into a precarious world in which providers do not consistently communicate across institutions about their responses to these issues for fear of being targeted by the state (Andaya and Mishtal 2017). Thus, they are operating in a murky field of professional standards post-Dobbs that are actively being worked out, hospital by hospital, state by state. Through the promise of confidentiality, our interviewees have entrusted us with their strategies without having to expose themselves to their hostile legislators. Thus, we contend that this data serves as an intervention into the murkiness, to help them understand how members of their community have managed to practice to the fullest extent of state law and how they have addressed the predictable chilling effect on safe obstetrics.

Presenter(s): Maryani Palupy Rasidjan

Co-author(s): Lori Freedman

Board #79 "It's all Money Laundering:" Return Migrants' Investments in Lebanon's Collapsing Economy

Lebanon's recent history is often chronicled as a series of overlapping political and economic crises, culminating in what is colloquially referred to as "the collapse." Beginning in October 2019, this collapse marks an ongoing period of rapid currency devaluation, hyperinflation, the breakdown of state services, and banks' effective confiscation of depositors' savings. As cash-dominated transactions became the norm, Lebanon was added to the global Financial Action Task Force's

(FATF) "grey list" for money laundering in 2024, and to the European Union's "black list" in 2025. These measures have rendered international financial transactions increasingly costly and cumbersome. In this context, where local financial institutions mostly fail to provide credit, investment, secure cash storage, and international transfer services, return migrants to the northern city of Tripoli are striving to create alternative systems for moving, storing, and investing money.

Through preliminary ethnographic fieldwork among these returnees, this study explores their informal financial practices as they resettle in their home city, move capital across borders, purchase property, and invest in businesses and personal projects. I examine how returnees navigate a "grey zone" that mediates between formal institutions abroad and semi-legal or illegal practices in Tripoli. Additionally, I analyze how locals interpret these financial practices, often viewing returnees' investments as inherently tied to illicit activities. In the absence of formal mechanisms to regulate capital's mobility, Tripoli's residents circulate rumors and raise questions about the origins of returnees' investments, frequently suspecting connections to money laundering or other illegal activities abroad. As a result, returnees' kin, neighbors, and acquaintances often take on a vigilant role in scrutinizing these informal financial operations and questioning the morality of returnees as strangers who enter the city's social world as materially privileged investors. Starting from Tripolitans' accusations of illicit financial activities, I trouble the money laundering category as used by financial regulatory bodies. I ultimately show how deployments of money laundering tie the legitimacy of money to certain geographies rather than illicit practices.

Presenter(s): Haya Mortada

Board #1 Postwar Reconstruction of Anthropology and Racial Science in Vienna's Natural History Museum

In 1948, Vienna's Natural History Museum reopened after World War II with a new exhibition: "Die Menschheit, Eine Familie" (Humanity, One Family). Framed as a moral and institutional break from Austria's fascist past, the exhibition sought to denounce Nazi ideology and promote democratic values by emphasizing global human unity and shared cultural heritage. It marked a sharp rhetorical turn from the museum's prewar exhibitions, which celebrated Austrian scientific achievement and actively supported Nazi racial policy—including a 1938 display of stolen Judaica and human remains. Through an analysis of the exhibition catalog and related archival material, this project explores how the museum attempted to re-legitimize the field of anthropology while avoiding a direct confrontation with its role in using science to support fascist and racist ideology. Despite its commitment to inclusivity and equality, the exhibition upholds many of the tools and assumptions of Nazi-era anthropology, such as racial typologies, anthropometric measurements, and historical racial mappings retained from 19th- and early 20th-century frameworks by figures like Blumenbach, Pösch, and Eugen Fischer. The resulting exhibition narrative attempts to display moral progress and discredit racial supremacy, relying on the museum's postwar dedication to scientific complexity and global scope, all while maintaining prewar worldviews. This project

highlights the shortcomings of institutional reform without epistemological change and examines how museums can reshape public memory while obscuring their own pasts as agents of political power.

Presenter(s): Dina Garber

Board #2 A Black Dog in the Bottomlands: Folk Tales as Cultural Negotiation in Carroll County

Caught between a history that is sometimes difficult to resolve and a future that is uncertain, the people of Carroll County look to imaginative storytelling to solve the conflicts between the past and the present. These narrative traditions serve as a means to confront uncomfortable truths while ultimately preserving local identity. By reimagining painful historical episodes as metaphors, ghost stories and fables these folk stories create a shared language for coming to terms with troubling or disturbing historical events without wholly erasing them. This project endeavors to better understand how storytelling can function not only as entertainment, but also as a sophisticated and adaptive means of cultural negotiation that holds space for processing historical trauma and providing a pathway towards reconciliation.

Presenter(s): Katherine Kirkemide-Harris

Board #3 Bald Knobbers, Bluegrass, and the Beverly Hillbillies: How an American Amusement Park Shaped Cultural Memory

Since its founding by the Herschend family in 1960, the popular American amusement park, Silver Dollar City, has drawn visitors from around the world, sharing Ozarks culture well beyond the region. The site first began to draw visitors when the former mine, Marvel Cave was bought by Canadian businessman, William Henry Lynch in the late 19th century. After selling the cave to the Herschend family in 1946, the site expanded to eventually include an 1880's style Ozarkian style town, known as Silver Dollar City, at the cave entrance to entertain visitors as they waited for their cave tour. Over the following decades, the city grew to become a popular amusement park filled with roller coasters, shows, restaurants, and demonstrations. Meanwhile, the focus on Ozarks history and culture never faltered. This is best illustrated by the great fame and popularity of the rollercoaster known as "Fire in the Hole", which celebrates the history of real-life masked vigilantes of the Ozarks, the Bald knobbers. Over the years, Silver Dollar City became imbedded in popular culture, even playing a significant role on the Beverly Hillbillies tv show. In this presentation, we discuss how Ozarkian cultural memory was not only maintained but even created through Silver Dollar City. From the introduction of cultural memory concepts by sociologists Maurice Halbwachs and Emille Durkheim to theoretical discussions by anthropologist Victor Turner and historian Benedict Anderson, we explore how the amusement park served to spread Ozarks culture across America, while also indirectly dictating what it means to be an Ozarker. This study serves as an interesting case study combining history, anthropology, and political science to explore how popular entertainment can create a feedback loop creating and maintaining cultural identity and memory.

Presenter(s): Jasmine Pierce

Co-author(s): Daniel Pierce

Board #5 Communities of practice, kilns, and ceramic production in Panamá Viejo

We discuss the transformation and emergence of competing and complementary communities of practice for the production of ceramics in Panama Viejo. Extensive research since the 1950s in Panama Viejo allowed the identification of pottery types and kilns associated with the production of colonial pottery. This paper is based on the compositional and technological characterization of pre-Columbian and colonial ceramic samples recovered in Panamanian colonial contexts including two different kilns in Panama Viejo. Neutron activation analysis (NAA) and thin section analysis of 267 samples allowed the identification of four recipes used to produce ceramics in Panama Viejo. The results contribute to understanding the adoption of pre-Columbian recipes and the creation of new recipes to produce colonial ceramics. The comparison of the ceramic samples recovered in the two kilns gives insights into the use of different recipes developed in the colonial town. The analysis contributes to the study of the configuration of communities of practice in colonial Panama.

Presenter(s): Ana María Navas Méndez

Co-author(s): Whitney Goodwin, Daniel Pierce, Mary Ownby, Brandi Lee MacDonald

Board #6 Death to Santa Muerte: Church and State Repression of the New Religious Movement

The meteoric rise of the new religious movement of Santa Muerte has sparked fierce opposition from the Catholic Church and state authorities throughout the Americas. Once a clandestine folk devotion, Santa Muerte now commands a global following in the millions, attracting devotees from the marginalized fringes of society, including the urban poor, LGBTQ+ individuals, prisoners, and even cartel foot soldiers. Yet, her rapid ascent has drawn fire from the Vatican, which has branded the movement as satanic, and from law enforcement agencies that frequently associate her with criminality. This paper examines the ecclesiastical and governmental crackdown on Santa Muerte, analyzing the ideological and political forces driving this opposition and the broader implications for religious pluralism in the Americas.

Few religious movements in contemporary Latin America have ignited as much controversy as Santa Muerte. With roots in Mexican folk Catholicism and Indigenous death veneration, Santa Muerte has transcended her underground origins to become one of the most potent spiritual figures of the 21st century. Yet, while her image graces millions of home altars and street-side shrines, she remains a pariah in the eyes of institutional Catholicism and the secular state. Church leaders in Mexico and the U.S. have condemned her veneration as an affront to Christian doctrine, while Mexican and U.S. law enforcement agencies have framed her as a narco-saint, a patroness of criminals. This paper explores the conflict between Santa Muerte devotion and these dominant institutions, exposing the intersection of faith, fear, and power.

The Church has mounted a full-scale rhetorical assault on Santa Muerte, with top-ranking clergy denouncing her as a satanic aberration. In 2013, the Vatican's top expert on exorcisms, Father José

Antonio Fortea, likened Santa Muerte veneration to a "cult of the dead" that stands in direct opposition to the Christian faith. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, head of the Pontifical Council for Culture, condemned the movement as a "blasphemous devotion." The Church's reaction, however, is nothing new. Throughout history, it has battled folk Catholicism and unregulated religious expression, seeking to maintain control over the spiritual landscape. Santa Muerte represents a challenge to this hegemony, offering a direct, unmediated relationship between devotee and saint-one that bypasses the institutional Church entirely.

Beyond theological objections, Santa Muerte has also been targeted by the state. In Mexico, Central America, and Ecuador authorities have demolished her shrines under the pretense of combating cartel influence, while in the U.S., law enforcement has used her iconography to profile suspected criminals. While some devotees are members of organized crime, the vast majority are everyday people seeking her protection in a world of systemic violence and economic precarity.

Presenter(s): Robert Chesnut

Board #7 Engaging Polarization Productively: An Applied Anthropology Film Project

This project in applied anthropology involved consulting with The Colossian Forum, a non-profit focused on conflict transformation. The project included twelve pastors from diverse theological and political views, engaging them in a year-long process of discussion and relationship-building. The resulting film is "Leap of Faith" (director Nicholas Ma). It encourages friendship and understanding across difference, even in the face of deep and deepening social divides. Applied anthropology brings vital perspectives and techniques to organizations working at impasses related to political and sociocultural polarization.

Presenter(s): Jenell Paris

Board #8 From Repression to Remembrance: Exploring the Transformation of ESMA as a Detention Center to a Site of Memory

Microhistories examines localized or narrowly focused cases to illuminate broader cultural, social, and political dynamics. This poster explores the controversial history of ESMA, or the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (Naval School of Mechanics) in Buenos Aires, Argentina as a case study. By tracing the institution's perverted role during the last military dictatorship and its subsequent transformation into a memory site, it analyzes the evolving discourse surrounding memory, trauma, and reconciliation in Argentine society from the late twentieth century to the present. In doing so, it highlights how efforts to reckon with the past remain ongoing and politically contested, as successive governments-including the current administration-continue to grapple with, reinterpret, or even undermine human rights discourses.

Presenter(s): Teresa Velarde

Board #9 Genetic Prevalence and Socio-Cultural Impact of lactase persistence/non-persistence among Mexican Populations in the United States and Mexico

Within mammals, lactose digestion does not persist after weaning due to the biological consequences of decreasing intestinal lactase activity. However, in most humans, milk digestion persists even into adulthood as a result of gene-culture co-evolution, resulting in the genetic mutation at the Minichromosome Maintenance Complex Component 6 (MCM6). However, the predisposition to the cultural and genetic forces that drove the mutation at the MCM6 complex has been primarily studied in European and African pastoral populations. Thus, this study aims to analyze the prevalence of the MCM6 mutational adaptation in Mexican individuals who speak a Mayan language/ with Mayan ancestry living in Chiapas, Mexico, and individuals of Mexican ancestry living in Los Angeles, California. As a result of pastoralism being a driving force in the selection of the MCM6 mutation and the historical colonization of Latin America by Europeans, these two populations will be studied to assess the prevalence of the single-nucleotide mutation before colonialism and after colonialism (including diasporic factors). Data from the 1,000-Genome Project and data from Dr. Abigail Bigham's Laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles (Quality Controlled and Phased) will be used. Considering the MCM6 mutation promoted the production of the Lac enzyme (lactase) in pastoral populations, this study will hypothesize that the prevalence of the MCM6 mutational gene is not present in Mexicans of Mayan ancestry but will be prevalent in individuals of Mexican Ancestry living in Los Angeles. Furthermore, the presence of lactase non-persistence (no production of lactase enzyme) has cultivated discourse surrounding the production of what is the homogenized standardized expectation (normality) for the consumption of lactose. These "normalities" stem from the push to drink milk to the encouragement of drinking milk alternatives. So, this study will further assess the current socio-cultural effect of the phenotypic conditions of the MCM6 mutational gene in Mexico and the United States through experience-based surveys and interview data from parents and their children aged 10 to 17.

Presenter(s): Andrea Roman

Board #10 Ghost Dances and Mobile Labor: Mapping Indigenous Legacies in the Roads, Railways, Language and Communication Networks of the American West

This poster maps roads and railroad networks that spread what became

known as the 1870 and 1890 "Ghost Dance;" even as the same transport channels spread migrant laborers amassed by the California Gold Rush to towns of the Northwest. This poster illuminates post gold-rush linguistic and social conflict zones, placing settler, immigrant and indigenous languages, and mobility styles on the same landscape and within colliding world systems. After the goldrush, indigenous terms and social movements traveled along newly constructed railroads to late 19th century Washington and British Columbia. Here, an indigenous pidgin, Chinook Jargon, is taken up in the civic experiments of self-ascribed hobos, and by an incipient labor movement. By focusing upon languages, mobility and communication networks in the gold-rush contact zone, this poster reveals a legacy brought into being by early indigenous-immigrant mobile labor networks.

The many linked mobile religious movements that were reported upon the United States Press as "Ghost Dances" take on a transformed history-making meaning when considered as a decolonial movement contributing to the social environment that births an incipient labor movement in the railway and mining towns of the West.

Presenter(s): Marybeth Eleanor Nevins

Board #11 Haunted by Plastic: Recycling and Pollution in the Anthropocene

In the Anthropocene, plastic pollution lingers as an uncanny presence, ubiquitous, immortal, and out of place. This project explores plastic as a spectral material, haunting landscapes and ecosystems through its resistance to decay. Drawing on theories of materiality and the agency of objects, I intend to frame plastic waste as a ghost caught between worlds: manufactured for utility, often abandoned without purpose, and endlessly persisting in the shadows as a byproduct of human consumption. Recycling, often imagined as a form of redemption, attempts to exorcise these material spirits. Through ethnographic and visual analysis of everyday encounters with plastic waste and recycling in Austin, Texas, this work considers how the immateriality of responsibility collides with the hyper materiality of pollution. In doing so, it positions plastic pollution not just as a symptom of an environmental crisis, but as a haunting reminder of the social, economic, and ideological systems that gave rise to its proliferation.

Presenter(s): Madeleine SenGupta

Board #12 Haunted Inheritance: Eugenics, and the Afterlife of Scientific Discrimination

The American eugenics movement was one of the most robust and deeply integrated eugenics movements in the world. Since its formal development in the early 1900s, the movement relied on pseudoscientific claims about heredity to bolster its rise to widespread popularity and implementation. Eugenics became a way for oppressive systems to control the bodies of women they felt were "undesirable" and a "threat" to society. The movement quickly targeted women of color, disabled women, and women with mental illness. Today, the movement is often imagined as a closed chapter in the nation's history. This work begins with the unsettling premise that the American eugenics movement never truly ended. Instead, it mutated, and took on new forms as it absorbed into modern-day procedures, policies and institutions. The movement persists primarily through the practice of forced sterilization, one that became widely institutionalized during the early decades of the eugenics movement. The movement remains in practices of forced sterilization, which were widely established in the early decades of the eugenics movement and continue to take place today. Akin to the eugenic definition of "undesirable" bodies, contemporary sterilizations disproportionately impact the same groups of women who faced abuse at the height of the eugenics movement. This work focuses on how power endures, and asks how the political, societal, and cultural structures of the American eugenics movement continue to harm minority populations and their rights to bodily autonomy. The purpose of this research is to examine how power reproduces historical violence under new guises. Drawing on case studies from modern-day prison systems, care facilities and legislation, it demonstrates the continued discrimination

towards marginalized people. These instances are not isolated incidents, as they are often presented, but part of a larger historical continuum. This work places them in the framework of American eugenics, and explores how the movement's legacies continue to shape and violate the lives of women in the modern day. The effects of the movement are analyzed in diverse lenses, particularly from the perspectives of feminism, disability justice, BIPOC rights, and prison system reform. The women most impacted by the movement historically continue to remain the subject of the widespread mistreatment perpetuated by oppressive, coercive institutions. Structural changes to these institutions is necessary to address the lasting injustices brought by the movement. By revealing the reality that women's bodies continue to be controlled without their consent, this work calls for a radical reevaluation of bodily autonomy and its unequal distribution. In tracing the lines between past and present, this work argues that historical afterlives must be treated as material continuity. Such analysis pushes for an awareness of the ways in which deeply rooted historical violence permeate contemporary society.

Presenter(s): Lakshmi Ananya Nakka

Board #13 Acquiring Meaning: Motivations, Tensions, and US-Korean Relations in the Smithsonian

This poster details how US-Korean museum infrastructures were used as both an imperializing and indigenizing tool by anthropologists in the latter half of the 20th century. In 2007, the Smithsonian Institution was gifted an ornate box by the National Folk Museum of Korea containing a gold, dragon-shaped replica seal. The seal celebrated the (re)opening of the Korea Gallery at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH.) As both a token of goodwill between museums and an implicit assertion of South Korea's right to withhold "real" heritage objects, its existence questions the roles authenticity, ownership, and curation play in defining contemporary anthropological practice. What type of relationship, then, does this seal symbolize?

This object and the many "ethnographic" Korean materials within the NMNH's collection speak to the complex systems of extraction, exchange, and translation that have governed the interactions between American ethnographer-curators and their Korean counterparts within postwar museums. Examining these lineages of contact through this imagined 20th century prestige replica, this poster argues for the power of individual actors and researchers within museums to shape historical narrative through subtle decisions of display and archiving.

This work is especially pertinent in the wake of the Trump Administration's desire to "comprehensively review" and censor items across the Smithsonian Institution's cultural heritage sites containing "divisive or partisan narratives." This object, held in the Smithsonian, highlights that museums—and anthropologists—exist in tension somewhere between two possible purposes. As extensions of infrastructural arguments, they are each defined by their proximity to colonial violence, censorship, and assimilation, yet also by their capacity to iterate, restore, resist, and indigenize colonial spaces.

Examining this tension, I will address the work of two past scholars within NMNH's East Asian Anthropology Department, Eugene I. Knez and Chang-su Cho Houchins. I highlight how Knez's role

as a military-appointed postwar supervisor of the eventual South Korean National Folk Museum contributed to American and Korean ontologies of ethnographic collection and authority in the Cold War period. Conversely, Houchins's identity as an anthropologist and Korean immigrant to the US empowered her to correct the flawed NMNH records of Korean material culture and repatriate stolen national seals through her knowledge and access, driving support for the re-opening of the Korea Gallery in 2007.

The legacies of these anthropologists animate not only the histories of Korean objects within NMNH like the seal, but the role of ethnographic collections themselves. A case study of tensions animating a single acquisition offers a valuable perspective on how material objects record anthropology's histories, and how critical reevaluation of said histories might function in an era of "shuttered" archives.

Presenter(s): Alex Calloway

Board #14 Haunting Categories: Guatemalan Adolescents and the Ghosts of Ethnic Labels

In Guatemala, ethnic terms are more than demographic descriptors—they are haunted by the legacies of colonialism, racial hierarchies, and contested meanings that continue to shape everyday life. While academic discourse often frames ethnicity in terms of a Maya–Ladino binary, individuals use several different labels to identify themselves and classify others, such as natural, indígena, and mestizo. These terms are historically contingent and ideologically loaded and their shifting and sometimes ambiguous meanings may defy rigid classification. This poster draws on a "draw-and-write" methodology with adolescents in highland Guatemala to examine how youth interpret and engage with these labels. Findings show that ethnic terms function as ghosts-spectral remnants of colonial and postcolonial regimes of power that continue to inhabit contemporary social life. Participants often associate these terms with phenotypic traits, clothing, language, and place, reflecting the persistence of racialized logics inherited from colonial hierarchies. Yet these same youth also question and rework the labels, revealing their contradictions and exposing the instability of ethnic boundaries. By centering adolescent voices, this research highlights how the past continues to haunt the present—not only through institutional structures, but in the very words people use to describe themselves and others.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Maupin

Board #15 Heritage Tourism and Community Culture: The Case of Fujian Tulou in Southeast China

In 2008, the vernacular architecture tulou (rammed-earth building) in China's Fujian province was designated as UNESCO World Heritage. This recognition, along with the development of heritage-inspired tourism, has profoundly transformed local community culture and everyday life. As key stakeholders in both heritage and tourism, local people's relationship with their living world and the outside world have dramatically changed since tulou and local Hakka culture were transformed into symbolic capital for and in heritage tourism. My ethnographic research at the UNESCO Fujian Tulou World Heritage sites examines the dynamic ways in which local people navigate cultural and

social changes and explores how community members negotiate tradition, identity, social relationships, and daily economy in the context of heritage tourism.

The touristic development that followed the metacultural transvaluation of tulou permits local people to make a living on the basis of newly recognized heritage assets; it also enables them to generate a new sense of cultural pride and to recognize new forms of cultural expression. While tulou residents are experiencing more frequent cross-cultural and intergroup encounters through the heritage process, they have become much more conscious and mindful about how they present and represent their culture and tradition. This leads to the museumification of domestic and public space in the community.

Presenter(s): Lijun Zhang

Board #16 How We Might Live: a Collage of a Possible Future

I have spent the last several years (2018-2024) speaking with, stitching and immersing myself within the quilting community in northwest England, recording through sound, photography and material media the storytelling that emanates from these communities of practice.

The patchwork quilt is a material object constructed from the fragments, remnants and scraps of everyday life. As a craft practice, it is organised around many centres, put down, picked back up, returned to at a later date or forgotten about. It is partial and interrupted, temporally marked by the meander of life, faded from use, creased from being folded away.

In response to this creative practice of world-making, I argue that there must be a more creative and poetic way to write and conduct research, one redolent of the patchwork quilt. This poster presents the composite biography of the quilting communities' diverse visual culture. In this poster presentation, I display the saved scrapbooks of one of my interlocutors that materialise the ethnographic data of how she imagined her future through assembled images, employing it as a device to explore patchwork/assemblage as a conceptual device that narrates the vibrant and diverse community of women. The pages record Margaret's imagined married life to come and envisage a future full of colourful quilts. Assembled before she became a quiltmaker, it visualises colourful handcrafted domestic scenes, which, fifty years later, she materialised in her own home through her textile pieces.

Presenter(s): Lydia Donohue

Board #17 Immigration Diaspora: Perpetual Foreignness in Unofficial "Chinatowns"

This paper seeks to understand the experiences of immigration diaspora among Chinese nationals and Chinese American individuals in unofficial "Chinatowns." It focuses on the individual and community experiences of residing in regions around the San Gabriel Valley of Southern California where Mandarin Chinese and/or Cantonese fluency is sufficient for day-to-day living. This paper examines the diaspora experienced by intergenerations of Asian immigrants and seeks to explore the variations in practice through the lens of social networking, common languages during day-to-day conversations, as well as underlying ingroup and outgroup attitudes. By tracing through well-

developed business areas and cultural streets surrounding the San Gabriel Valley region, this paper looks at the positionality of immigrants with Asian ancestry in colonial and post-colonial America. By exploring the overlooked and unofficially-coined "Chinatown" of local socialization and community gathering, this paper seeks to understand how localization of concentrated communities of similar ethnic background attributes to the development of individual identity and experience of diaspora in the politically unstable postmodern US. As such, this paper aims to disrupt the race and ethnicity-based identification and associations of social groups by examining the differences in diasporal experiences across multi-generations within local communities and household units. Specifically, it traces the progression and challenges in identity formation throughout generations of migration and seeks to explore how perpetual foreignness continues to accompany individuals of Asian ancestry despite spending more than half of one's life, or even more, being born and raised in the US.

Presenter(s): Ezriella Tang

Board #18 Indignation as Moral Sentiment: Perlocution in Peril

There is an unsettling paradox about humanitarianism (Fassin 2012). While initiatives of aid and assistance are grounded in genuine human solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, victimized, or vulnerable, the conduct of such assistance tends to perpetuate the very structural inequalities that make people disadvantaged, vulnerable, or victimized in the first place (see also Korf 2007). Aid recipients are not unaware of these implications. In sum, the mix of moral sentiments that swirl around disaster aid include not only compassion and gratitude, but also indignation.

The conundrum is writ large in ethnographic studies of the aid response to the tsunami of 2004 in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, in that case, disaster aid was immensely voluminous; Gamburd's ethnographic account is entitled *The Golden Wave* (2014; see also (Holgersson-Ivarsson, 2015; Korf, 2007; Samuels 2012, 2013, 2019).). Interestingly, however, while the triad of compassion-gratitude-indignation is easily read in the big-picture case of external "foreign" aid as it meets with tortured landscape of loss and expectation, the same play of moral sentiments may be found in quite local gestures, arrangements, and programs of "aid" and "assistance." That is, compassion, gratitude, and indignation are just as inextricable without the machinations of foreign philanthropy.

To explore this, we present a close analysis of two stories of disaster aid that took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in September 2017 in a small city in the central mountain range that bisects the island. Of particular interest, these are stories of failed disaster aid. That is, these are two stories in which aid-recipients refused the donations. Further, both giver and recipient enjoyed more or less the same social status, with the same moral challenges, moral sentiments, and moral response-options. In short, we find that the conundrum of disaster aid comprises a highly recursive set of values, practices, moral discourses, and sociopolitics that span seemingly minor tussles to rebuilding whole cities and indeed nations.

We bring to this analysis a re-reading of moral sentiments through the lens of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Enfield & Sidnell, 2017). Of particular importance for our analysis of moral

affect are perlocutions and passionate utterances as developed in recent philosophical treatments (Cavell, 2005; Laugier, 2018, 2020; Lorenzini, 2020). Our data show a much more complex interplay of affects and moral sentiments than the simpler picture that we painted above of the conundrum of disaster aid. In fact, our narratives are told, not from the perspective of the aid-recipient but rather from the perspective of a local activist who is providing the aid and assistance. We see how she sees the mobilization of affect by aid recipients, and we see how she manipulates the narrative to serve her ideological purposes.

Presenter(s): Robert Schrauf

Co-author(s): Patria Lopez de Victoria Rodriguez

Board #20 Morality, Body Conceptualization, and Subsistence: Food Pathways in the Toledo District of Belize

In recent years, scholars have studied how food procurement has changed in post-colonial Belize, particularly within. Studies have found an increase in the consumption of purchased food in the Toledo District of Belize but have failed to acknowledge how this change impacts Q'eqchi' Mayans' concepts of the body, self, and their own morality. Through ethnographic research done in the village of Agucate, I will explore how purchased, or "outside", foods have been villainized, while local foods are seen as fuel for, and of, hard work. The narratives and experiences of the villagers in Agucate will highlight how food can be imbued with moral and economic meaning. Ultimately, this research will identify the ways economic, political, and cultural changes in Agucate have influenced the Q'eqchi' conceptualizations of the body and self.

Presenter(s): Brinlie Benson

Board #21 New Heritage Entrepreneurship and the Challenge of Sustainability in a Digitizing World: Examples from Singapore

This poster draws on new research into heritage entrepreneurship in Singapore. The larger project takes seriously the decades-long research findings of folklorists, anthropologists, and other heritage specialists that heritage (like culture and folklore more generally, and in particular intangible cultural heritage [ICH]), is defined by the transmission of values, skills, knowledges, and practices; by processes of communal valuation; and by transformation in this dual process. In other words, the revival of heritage may share much with "entrepreneurship" in other domains – through a focus (beyond commoditization) on capitalization, investment, and re-valuation.

The connection between heritage and entrepreneurship is especially relevant in pro-tech and hyper-modern landscapes (like Singapore, but not only), where there is substantial social and economic support for innovation, but less explicit support to "preserve" or "maintain" vestiges of the past.

The poster draws out examples of new initiatives in Singapore, and outlines the opportunities, challenges, and choices faced by heritage entrepreneurs in navigating systems of financial, professional, and technical support, as they make choices about their institutional form, (e.g.

freelancer/charity/private company); access to funding streams and professional networks (e.g. as commercial or social enterprises, educational or arts organizations, sustainability initiatives); investment into new technologies; and the cultivation of local or international partnerships – among others. Indeed, the languages of "sustainability" and "digitization" exert strong influences on the shaping of new heritage. Special attention is paid to initiatives focused on botanical knowledge, plant use, and food.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Cash

Board #22 New York as a Safe Haven for Abortion Post-Dobbs

After the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* overturned the constitutional right to abortion in the United States, reproductive justice activists working in New York state prepared to meet an influx of patients. They knew the immediate bans on abortion in states with "trigger laws" would send floods of new clients into New York, where abortion is legal up to 24 weeks gestation for any reason, and after 24 weeks if the pregnancy threatens the life or health of the pregnant person. New York has become a top destination for people from states impacted by abortion bans, and its clinics and access organizations are more important than ever. Support staff at the clinics who are receiving these patients are also becoming key figures in ensuring that a person seeking a legal abortion is able to get the care they need, especially when they are traveling to New York from another state and require extra support to pay for travel and lodging. Yet this increased volume of patients from Texas, Georgia, Florida, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina was not met with an equal increase in staffing, funding, or resources. Therefore, this moment is one dominated by strained resources and capacity in the "sanctuary state" for abortion. This study uses ethnographic research across the formal (hospitals and reproductive health clinics) and informal (abortion funds, local reproductive justice organizations) spaces where abortion access is facilitated in the Empire State, to document the material and social impact of abortion bans even on states where laws have not changed. Through participant-observation, in-depth interviews with over 30 abortion access workers, and systematic qualitative content analysis, we explore how the changing political and legal climate for abortion access on a national level impacts reproductive healthcare access, workplace conditions, and social meaning at the state and local level. This research was conducted with advanced undergraduate research assistants from SUNY Geneseo's Anthropology and Sociomedical Sciences program.

Presenter(s): Brenna McCaffrey

Co-author(s): Olivia Jaworski

Board #23 Operation Wandering Soul: An Analysis of the Supernatural and Psychological Warfare in the Vietnam Conflict

The utilization of ghost imagery as a tool of psychological warfare during the Vietnam War underscores a complex interplay of folklore, collective trauma, and cultural memory, which significantly influenced the ways in which both Vietnamese and American actors experienced, interpreted, and internalized the conflict. In the Vietnamese cultural context, ghosts-often

understood as the spirits of deceased soldiers and civilians-function not only as potent symbols of ancestral presence but also as psychological instruments embedded within broader wartime strategies. These spectral figures occupy a central position in Vietnam's collective memory, embodying unresolved historical traumas that continue to shape public consciousness and postwar reconciliation processes. The use of shamanistic practices and the commissioning of 'ghosts' as psychological agents highlight the profound interweaving of traditional beliefs and modern military operations, revealing an evolutionary path in which fear of the unseen became a central tenet of warfare. The enduring relationships that many Vietnamese maintain with the dead reflect ritualized engagements with history, wherein spiritual beliefs offer both solace and susceptibility-conditions exploitable through U.S. psychological operations aimed at destabilizing enemy morale.

U.S. psychological operations during the war actively engaged with local spiritual cosmologies, including beliefs in ghosts, as a means of manipulating both enemy perception and public sentiment. The integration of ghost narratives into psychological warfare thus exemplifies the strategic mobilization of cultural belief systems as tools of influence and disruption. Ultimately, the spectral dimension of the Vietnam War-both as culturally embedded spectral phenomena and metaphorical expressions of trauma-reveals the enduring entanglement of warfare, memory, and identity, highlighting the ways in which cultural symbolism can be weaponized in both literal and psychological terms. This analysis not only enhances our understanding of the psychological tactics employed during the Vietnam War but also illuminates the enduring legacy of cultural beliefs in shaping military strategies. The use of ghosts serves as a compelling case study in the broader field of psychological warfare, suggesting that the intangible can be as influential as the tangible in the hierarchy of combat. This analysis calls for more comprehensive studies into the integration of cultural psychology in contemporary military operations, revealing opportunities for targeted psychological strategies in the face of modern conflicts characterized by cultural asymmetries and diverse belief systems. Through this conference poster, I aim to engage scholars and practitioners alike in a nuanced dialogue regarding the intricate interplay between cultural narratives and psychological warfare.

Presenter(s): Colleen Lane

Board #24 Over a barrel: A biography of remittances sent to the Caribbean

In the past fifty years, transnational movements of capital, people, and ideas have proliferated across the globe. Remittances are a prominent example of this trend. In 2023, 155.4 billion dollars worth of remittances were sent to Latin America and the Caribbean, with informal remittances estimated to be 50 percent higher. Understudied in the literature, material remittances are utilized widely by Caribbean migrants. These objects are sent back to home communities, blurring the line between gift and commodity. This paper seeks to understand how these remittances are acquired, how their value is assessed by senders, and what their expected value will be when sent to home communities. Using the "biography of things" as a theoretical framework, this paper will analyze the

past, present, and future trajectories of remittances sent to the Caribbean. This research will be conducted in Florida, in the cities of Tampa, Orlando, and Miami.

Presenter(s): Peter Kyriacou

Board #25 Paleoanthropology Updates from South Africa.

New developments from fossil finds in South Africa are having an impact on interpretations of hominin and human evolution. With the first discovery of the Taung fossil in 1925, South Africa has taken a leading role in producing fossils from *Australopithecus*, *Paranthropus* and extinct *Homo*. This presentation will summarize the latest South African discoveries from the Cradle of Humankind up through the present and review key debates surrounding the new finds. Hominins from four Plio-Pleistocene sites will be highlighted: *Australopithecus* from Malapa; *Paranthropus* from Kromdraai; *Paranthropus* and *Homo* from Drimolen, and *Homo* from Rising Star Cave. The scientific evidence will include data from this author's research on *A. sediba* and *H. naledi* fossils. The presentation ends with recommended articles that overview recent topics in paleoanthropology, with special reference to scientific works that are foundational to our undergraduate teaching.

Presenter(s): Debra Bolter

Board #26 Possessed by David: Conjuring the Spirits of Reception History with Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is probably the most widely recognized biblical text in American culture. It is cherished in the diverse spiritual practices of Jewish and Christian communities, of course. For example, both Jewish and Christian liturgies recite it at funerals, and its poetics play a therapeutic role in many people's lives. In the study of religion, these rituals and practices take on new significance when we recognize the unique status Psalm 23 holds in Western artistic lineages. Over several centuries, Psalm 23 has frequently been referenced in literature, film, poetry, public speeches, visual art, and other contemporary media.

In biblical studies, studying the many afterlives of a text is usually called reception history. Indeed, the practice of "reading" scripture has predominantly been theorized in American and European philosophical tradition as a hermeneutical/interpretive practice. In this poster, we present the view that "references" to Psalm 23 in artistic lineages function more like ghost-practices: excavations, exhumations, possessions, and conjuring rites. These various practices with the mediated ghosts of David's most famous Psalm offer a new pathway for theorizing the Bible in American culture, especially in relation to power, spirituality, and subjugation.

Presenter(s): Ingrid Lilly

Board #27 Queering Nicotine: An Interdisciplinary Study of Community Perspectives on Alternative Tobacco Use and Smoking Cessation in LGBTQ+ Populations

LGBTQ+ individuals use tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, vape pens, and smokeless tobacco, at higher rates than the general population. This disparity stems from a range of social and

structural factors, including chronic stress linked to discrimination, targeted marketing by the tobacco industry, and the role of smoking in LGBTQ+ social spaces. While public health efforts have sought to reduce tobacco use in these communities, the perspectives of LGBTQ+ individuals on alternative tobacco products and cessation strategies remain underexplored. This study aims to bridge that gap by using qualitative methods-focus groups and in-depth interviews-to explore how LGBTQ+ individuals perceive and experience nicotine use and smoking cessation.

Grounded in medical anthropology, public health, and queer theory, this research will explore three core questions: (1) How do LGBTQ+ individuals understand the role of alternative tobacco products in their daily lives and communities? (2) What factors make quitting nicotine particularly challenging-or more accessible-for LGBTQ+ individuals? (3) How do LGBTQ+ community networks, including physical social spaces and online platforms, shape tobacco use and cessation efforts?

Data collection will take place in a metropolitan LGBTQ+ community with a documented high prevalence of smoking and alternative tobacco use. Participants will be recruited through LGBTQ+ community centers, advocacy organizations, and social media outreach. Focus groups will allow for discussions on shared experiences with tobacco use, while individual interviews will provide deeper insights into personal perspectives on nicotine and quitting. Using thematic analysis, this study will identify key patterns related to identity, stress, coping strategies, and attitudes toward public health interventions. Findings will be placed in conversation with existing research on LGBTQ+ health disparities and used to inform culturally competent, community-driven smoking cessation efforts.

By centering LGBTQ+ voices and experiences, this study will provide a richer, more humanized understanding of tobacco use and cessation in this population. The goal is to move beyond one-size-fits-all public health models and toward strategies that acknowledge the specific social and cultural realities shaping LGBTQ+ nicotine use. These insights will be valuable for public health professionals, policymakers, and LGBTQ+ advocacy groups working to support healthier futures for queer and trans communities.

Presenter(s): Aden Branstetter

Co-author(s): Steven Branstetter

Board #28 Reshaping Death in the United States Through Static and Dynamic Digital Technology

This research paper looks at how death-a traditionally taboo subject in the United States-is being brought into the everyday digital sphere. It addresses how the integration of new technologies into mourning practices is affecting how Americans deal with death. Building on recent scholarship, I examine two categories of online communication platforms-static (Facebook memorial pages) and

dynamic (interactive artificial intelligence chatbots)-to ask: How are emerging technologies reshaping contemporary mourning practices and understandings of death in the United States? What do these innovations reveal about shifting ontologies, beliefs, and values regarding the relationship between the living and the dead?

In my research, I analyzed users' reviews of the dynamic platforms Replika and Project December, coding reviews using a four-point magnitude scale to determine their perceived emotional states while they used the technology. These emotional states mark the positive and negative aspects of the user experience. I applied the same coding system to users' posts and comments on Facebook memorial pages, a static platform. I also analyzed whether Facebook posts are in the first, second, or third person, which reveals the user's implied audience (i.e., living-to-living or living-to-dead).

I found that static technologies enable predominantly positive engagement among mourners that declines in frequency over time. While Facebook memorial pages foster strong communal support, they primarily serve as traditional transitional tools (helping the living to "move on" following the death of a loved one) rather than fostering strong living-dead relationships. These pages are spaces for shared remembrance rather than digital stand-ins for the deceased. However, the conversations that the living have with the simulated dead using dynamic technologies create more complex interactions. They blur the boundaries between life/death, presence/absence, and real/unreal, which elicits mixed reactions among users. I argue that these conflicting experiences may be proof that dynamic technologies are reshaping how people in the U.S. think of death and interact with the dead. My work is significant in light of American social realities, namely that major advances in dynamic technology are underway.

Presenter(s): Angelo Boujaoude

Board #29 Revisiting Ujamaa's Ghosts: Rituals for the Construction of Statehood

This presentation reexamines Tanzania's Ujamaa villagization program (1967–1976) not simply as a failed economic initiative, but as a symbolic ritual of statecraft. Drawing on archival records, planning documents, and ethnographic accounts, we argue that villagization operated less as a practical policy and more as a performative enactment of modernity and national unity, systematically isolating local cultural and economic practices. While existing scholarship has critiqued the epistemological limitations of centralized planning, this study extends beyond high-modernist critiques to frame state planning itself as ritualized performance. It contends that the deep cultural incongruity between elite planning visions and grassroots values was not a byproduct, but a necessary condition for asserting state authority through spectacle. Through case studies from Dodoma, Kilimanjaro, and Rufiji, the presentation illustrates how geometric village layouts, technocratic blueprints, and politicized community education functioned as theaters of state power. This helps explain the leadership's persistence despite overwhelming evidence of economic failure. By interpreting development planning as ritual rather than merely failed technique, the presentation offers new tools for understanding how postcolonial states legitimize authority through the aesthetic and symbolic subordination of existing structures, even when doing so undermines their own economic aims.

Presenter(s): Samuel Bachrach

Co-author(s): Brayden Myers

Board #30 Scripts of Commerce: Language Choice and Translation in Chinatown Storefronts

This ethnographic project investigates the written language on signs, storefronts, and menus in Manhattan's Chinatown, and how that reflects the identity of writer, viewer, business-owner, customer, native, and tourist in one of New York City's most prominent cultural enclaves. Through the lens of linguistic and semiotic anthropology, this research explores the decisions to translate signage and the choices in how to translate culturally embedded terms. The project examines the effect of Chinese-owned businesses that translate their signage into English and American-owned businesses that translate their signage into Chinese. It examines the effects on visibility, reputation, and identity.

Fieldwork takes place in lower Manhattan's Chinatown and involves photo documentation, structured interviews with business-owners, and informal conversations with Chinese and English-speaking passerby. The project also engages with various other writings and academic projects in regards to the Chinese language in the United States. Research is still in progress, and is expected to be completed by June 2025.

Preliminary observations show that those businesses that choose not to translate signage are forced to battle against an economy that relies entirely on the anglophone tourist industry, and those stores who center their business strategies on tourism risk losing business from the Chinese cultural community that makes up Chinatown. The ethnography homes in on businesses that are stuck between these two extremes, trying to hold on to the authenticity and comfort of the Chinese immigrant community and balance the anglophone mass that keeps New York City afloat.

This ethnography contributes to broader studies of linguistic anthropology, social-cultural anthropology, semiotics, and sociolinguistics by studying how written language interacts with culture and economy. The poster will present discoveries through photographic data, detailed field notes, and reflections on discussions with on-site interlocutors.

Presenter(s): Michael Tropeano

Board #32 Talking to Migrants Like Children: Linguistic Indexing of Childhood at a Migrant-Focused Adult English Literacy Program in North Carolina

The information presented on this poster is an analysis of the use of features of motherese and other baby talk speech registers with non-native English-speaking adults at a migrant-focused adult English literacy program in North Carolina. The ethnographic and linguistic data was gathered through attending 3-hour classes once a week over a 9-week period, across the offered 4 levels of literacy education at the Rural County Literacy Council (pseudonym). The data suggests that through the use of language and physical signs, the instructors, staff, and program director at the Rural County Literacy Council, both directly and indirectly, linguistically indexed their adult students as children. The findings are significant because across the existing adult SLA literature,

the use of motherese and baby talk registers is not being suggested as best practice for adult language instruction, implying that the use of this register is not out of necessity for instruction, but rather a result of something else. This data possibly speaks to a larger cultural phenomenon of viewing non-native English-speaking adults as less capable or intelligent than native English-speaking adults, hence the choice to speak to them as if they are young children.

Presenter(s): Ezekiel Kempster

Board #33 The "Backside" of the Kentucky Derby Racetrack: The Social World of Working with Horses Which Makes Possible "The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports"

The thoroughbred horse racing industry in the United States, particularly at renowned venues like Churchill Downs, relies heavily on expansive, and traditionally low-cost, backside workforces to maintain day-to-day track operations. At Churchill Downs, aside from jockeys and trainers, approximately 1,000 individuals - primarily Latin American immigrants - work to manage the horses' welfare, their responsibilities ranging from facility and stable maintenance to grooming/exercising the horses. The requirements for these jobs typically involve long hours, difficult physical labor, and exceptional horsemanship skills. To spectators in the grandstands (i.e. the "frontside"), backside workers are virtually invisible, carrying out their work on the opposite side of the track. Churchill Downs's frontside is a display of extravagance and elite sports culture, where individuals bet on and watch horses compete from a distance; international audiences flock to the site annually to witness the Kentucky Derby, a race many regard as the crux of the state's horse racing culture. Meanwhile, the backside lays the foundation for Churchill Downs' traditional horse racing culture to thrive. This study aims to contribute to backside discourse through peering at the factors that shape the backside's social atmosphere as a knowledgeable community engaging with horsemanship, specifically exploring how backside workers understand and view their multispecies interactions with horses, and the extent to which horses enter into the social lives of backside workers. The majority of workers live on Churchill Downs' campus in purpose-built dormitory buildings or rooms atop stables throughout its racing seasons; their day-to-day lives encompass the caretaking of race horses. This study will take into consideration theories of reciprocity on the backside, exploring the intersection between human-animal interactions and social identity formation. Racehorses are exceptionally expensive, competitive beings that require consistent management; the intrinsic nature of a backside worker's lifestyle revolves around their wellbeing. Employing methods of semi-structured interviews with individuals I meet volunteering at the Backside Learning Center, this study explores backside worker social identities - specifically how they view themselves, each other, and their daily interactions with race horses, and why. It seeks to understand the extent to which the backside is a distinctive social community where multispecies interactions, migrant experiences, and horsemanship expertise intersect, with a broader goal of unveiling lesser-known relationships and legacies within Kentucky horse racing culture.

Presenter(s): Caroline Elliott

Board #34 The Call of Strigoi: A Study of Romanian Ghostlore and Its Realism

This study examines Romanian tales of ghosts and analyzes its effects for Romanian people. In his analysis of Dracula tourism, Duncan Light (2007) criticized a hierarchy between the representing and the represented; the West and Romania. It seems true that Romania is still represented as a place of fantasy and/or wilderness.

The representational hierarchy is ambiguous since it is Objectification of Romania and their culture but, simultaneously, it provides economic chance, for example, to promote tourism, as Light (2019) called it dilemma. However, from an anthropological point of view, what is concerned is how they, Romanian, represent and recognize their own culture and themselves. In fact, Romania has rich stories of supernatural entities such as ghost, werewolf, and demons even though it was a Western creation that Vlad III was a vampire.

Furthermore, such folklores are not just an entertainment, they still have social impact and power to make people actually do rituals against these creatures. In 2005, in a village named Marotinu de Sus, six local people were arrested by illegally exhuming a corpse. According to a news source, they took the heart from the corpse, burnt it, and let his niece drink the ash in order to heal her illness (McLaughlin 2005). There, the dead, Petre Toma, was blamed as a ghost (strigoi) which caused harm to a living person, and these villagers performed a traditional ritual against it. Here, the Romanian concept of ghost is not merely a tradition of the past nor the imaginative figure represented by the West. Rather, it is a possible factor to explain some kinds of phenomena. Therefore, ghost 'can only be understood within their own proper historical and ethnographic context' (Spooner-Lockyer and Kilroy-Marac 2021, 27).

Following the necessity to understand Romanian ghost in their own right, this study points out how the tales of ghost constitute a part of what Montell (1975) called "deathlore." As Shinmen (1990) clarified, the story of Romanian ghost occupied a part of the Romanian funeral rites, and a human soul turned to a ghost by failing ritualistic transition from the world of life to that of death.

Though it is often recognized such paganism as a failure of Christianization of local people (Shinmen 1990), the ethnographic data collected by the author demonstrates its commensurability and complementarity with Christian belief. The ghostlore is portrayed by those who identify themselves faithful Christian, and the ghostlore provides them a certain spiritual security and stability in the moment of precarity. Thus, this study insists that ghost in contemporary Romania is not just an entertainment which was created by the West or Romanian themselves but also a clue to understand their cosmology where Romanian actually live.

Presenter(s): Naoki Asada

Board #35 The fleeting city: density, sound, and atmospheres in the everyday of urban spaces

What happens when nobody is around? Studying the city, is in many ways about presences, of things and beings, researchers and others. I follow narratives of encounters and making sense of the sensory environment across three cities – Toronto, Tallinn, and Reykjavik. What starts in the dense, busy, and fast-moving Toronto, switches to pockets of activity in Tallinn, and continues onto the empty streets of Reykjavik.

The city is made up of fragments (McFarlane 2021), overlapping, side-by-side, and superimposed (Moretti 2015). There is always something happening, a reaction or aftermath of something else. The city is evidently eventful (de Certeau 1984; Low 2009). With this work, I wonder how we can study the gaps in-between, or places, where seemingly little happens. This is not to suggest that these places are in any way dormant, or outside of the sociopolitical logics and working of the city. Rather, I draw attention to the vitality and possibility of the mundane, and the creativity which revels in it (Stewart 2007, Bennett 2010) .

With this poster, I explore a simple question which arose out of fieldwork encounters, or lack thereof:

What happens when nobody is around? Using walking, waiting, wandering, and wondering as ethnographic methods, I found myself faced with empty streets. Rather than seek out that which is not there, I focus on the emptiness of these spaces. Not an emptiness of meaning or purpose, but quite literally an absence of other people. There are, of course, cats, birds and other beings, circling above me, interacting with, or ignoring, the howling wind. The city is by no means empty. I juxtapose these movements of solitude with conversations, casual exchanges, and recorded interviews. I look to comparisons not as ways of finding similarities or establishing hierarchies but instead seek porosity and multiplicity (Choy 2011; Le Breton 2020; Low 2023) within the spaces and encounters which emerge through an attention to the everyday and ordinary.

"Field devices" (Criado and Estalella 2023) – an assemblage of ethnographic encounters and the practices we study – act as guide posts for the researcher and the reader/listener/viewer. Attunement, as an "everyday way of attending to" (Peterson 2021: 45), figures in this work as a way of engaging with everyday encounters as they happen, sometimes fleeting and passing, and coming to terms with the contingencies of change.

I do not problematize the lack of people but instead look to sound. Using field recording and readings in and of the city, I use sound to examine how density, air pressure, and atmospheric elements feature in the everyday of urban spaces. This poster will include a multimodal aspect through links to sonic elements, which do not merely illustrate, but act as ways of doing ethnography and anthropological theory.

Presenter(s): Johann Sander Puustusmaa

Board #36 The Future-Ruins of Snailbrook, TX in Two Parts. [Poster 1]

In technocapitalism's fast-paced, pseudo innovation-driven environments, expansionism is one of the ostensible tactics of gaining influence over local communities, politics, and social (urban) fields. Massive production sites, like Tesla's Gigafactory and Elon Musk's other company projects (Starlink, Boring) on the outskirts of Austin, TX, create unhinged land-grab politics that cater to technocracy's needs. In vast farmland areas, these expansionist urges seem to happen undetected, with little to no visible change in the landscapes and the fallow lands recently acquired by private companies.

With the highly volatile economic disposition of those fast-growing tech companies, speeds of expansion and development happen asynchronously, raising questions of economic sustainability and spatial futures. With the notion of future-ruins our project addresses this apprehended asynchronicity. Future-ruins refer to a temporal rift: Whereas ruins point to a completed history that is merely carried into the present through remnants and remains, holding a ghostly, uncanny aura of failure, future-ruins can be understood as a projection of present turbo-capitalist economics into a (not-so-distant) uncertain future. They materialize in the present as absences, rifts in the landscape, and voids holding failed promises: Empty office buildings, uninhabited residential neighborhoods, and unfinished factories are scattered across urban and rural landscapes.

This first poster thinks with a day of collaborative fieldwork done in Snailbrook, reflecting on the methods of attunement made (un)available when the field is designed for displacement from the present. When we got there, no one had the feeling of having arrived anywhere. Snailbrook was half-built and half-alive, a construction site hidden behind walls of fake ivy. It was a blueprint for a future existence, mostly signs naming the location of things that didn't yet exist, impenetrable factories and prefab buildings, modular facades chunked in the middle of a fallow field.

This poster explores the relations to self, world, and future that form from the middle of a field that forces us out of the present before we can speak into it. It asks how we might keep ourselves situated as our attentions get strapped to the vague shape of an imaginary future, one defined mostly by its distancing from the present. To challenge these mechanisms of displacement, it grounds itself in the terrain technocapitalism has enrolled as its new frontier, the Terra Nullius it produces and terraforms with promises for the future, the future-ruins it builds.

As a method of situating myself in the materiality of Snailbrook, I created paints from colors found on its grounds, distilling the pigments of local materials. With them I painted reproductions of Snailbrook's construction plans, representing the tension between the techno-utopian logics productive of future-ruins and the very material effects that they instantiate.

Presenter(s): Claire Fitch

Co-author(s): Florian Grundmüller

Board #37 The Future-Ruins of Snailbrook, TX in Two Parts. [Poster 2]

In technocapitalism's fast-paced, pseudo innovation-driven environments, expansionism is one of the ostensible tactics of gaining influence over local communities, politics, and social (urban) fields. Massive production sites, like Tesla's Gigafactory and Elon Musk's other company projects (Starlink, Boring) on the outskirts of Austin, TX, create unhinged land-grab politics that cater to technocracy's needs. In vast farmland areas, these expansionist urges seem to happen undetected, with little to no visible change in the landscapes and the fallow lands recently acquired by private companies.

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This second poster explores the possibilities of imagination and representation of the future-ruins of Snailbrook based on fieldwork around the company town. Despite the place's early media coverage and its incipient narrative as a "utopia town", neither the neighborhood nor the companies surrounding it exude a notion of splendor, homeliness, or community. On the contrary, the surroundings produce a constant sense of dislocation and disorientation, their alleged exclusivity resonating as a haunting isolation on the fringes of technocapitalist urbanism.

Foregrounding the scale of this technocapitalist utopia and its future orientation, the poster draws from ideas on landscape representation, photography, and operational imageries to visualize the dystopian ramifications of dwelling in the shadow of the factory. Employing design and visual anthropological methods, this contribution uses openly accessible imaginations of development plans and in situ photography to speculate about the future-ruinous becomings and future specters facelessly haunting these landscapes today.

In addition, our project utilizes the place-making abilities of postcards to envision a future Snailbrook community and its quotidian life. In postcards from Snailbrook, the imagined future-ruin sends greetings back in time to a present where they only exist in mediated simulations or as anticipation of economic failure.

Presenter(s): Florian
Grundmüller

Co-author(s): Claire Fitch

Board #38 The Haunting of Real Connection: Touch, Technology, and the College Experience

As physical touch becomes less common in our technology-driven world, research suggests that college students may be especially affected by touch starvation. This project explores how students experience and respond to a lack of physical contact, especially through their use of dating apps. While apps like Tinder and Bumble have reshaped the way people connect and date, it is still unclear if they actually help students feel closer or simply offer the illusion of intimacy. This pilot study was conducted at the University of Alabama and surveyed 33 students using a combination of three validated tools: the Touch Deprivation Scale (TDS), the Tactile Nurturance Scale (TNS), and a modified Longing for Interpersonal Touch Picture Questionnaire (LITPQ). The survey also included questions from the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS), focusing on why students use dating apps. Findings showed a strong desire for affectionate touch, such as hugging and kissing, even among those who reported positive early experiences with physical affection. Only eight

participants in the sample reported actively using dating apps, which complicates interpretation of the data. With such a small number, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions about app users, and results can easily be skewed or distorted by individual variation. Among these eight, emotional validation and the hope of forming romantic relationships were the most common reasons for app use, rather than seeking physical contact. Regression analysis showed that two specific aspects of touch deprivation, feeling a lack of touch and using sex as a way to access touch, were linked to dating app use. However, general feelings of touch deprivation did not always lead students to use these platforms. This suggests that while many feel deprived of touch, only some turn to dating apps to cope, and even then, the experience often feels emotionally disconnected or unfulfilling. The study also revealed some demographic trends. All app users in the sample were white, and a large portion identified as LGBTQ+, raising questions about how identity and marginalization shape how students seek out or experience touch through technology. Though limited by a small and non-representative sample, this study opens the door for further research. Future work will include a larger and more diverse group of participants and use interviews or focus groups to better understand personal experiences. In the end, this study adds to a growing conversation about digital life and physical connection. As colleges face rising concerns around student mental health and well-being, it becomes increasingly important to recognize and respond to the often invisible effects of touch deprivation. This work calls for a broader, interdisciplinary effort to understand how technology is shaping the way we feel, connect, and care for each other in a world where real touch is harder to come by.

Presenter(s): Phineas Fleming-Smith

Co-author(s): Christopher Lynn

Board #39 The Identities and Relationships of an Educational NGO in Guatemala

Guatemala is an economically poor country, with a rich culture that makes it a destination for foreign assistance through non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and tourism. The history of conflict and foreign economic development within the country has created a dichotomy of identities, divided across economic wealth, ethnicity, and urban/rural landscapes. NGOs, their presence as transnational actors, and their organizational identities augment the identities present within the spaces in which NGOs work. Additionally, these identities are fluid and relational. I argue that the identities and relationships that form within the NGO space are reflective of NGO work and development structures. The identities and relationships that are present within an educational NGO reflect these power structures, as well as the identities and relationships of those working within the NGO space, such as community members, volunteers, and donors. The relationships formed from the identities present in the NGO space have the potential to sustain or alter these structures in the future.

Presenter(s): Brittany Blomquist

Board #40 The Ivory City: redefining community, world, and purpose

Urban universities sequentially and over time develop the Ivory City, a knowledge economy space that caters primarily to people from privileged socioeconomic and white ethnic backgrounds. Using Columbia University as an exemplary model of the Ivory City, I show how the university adopts an allegedly hands-off approach to local community affairs, even as its real estate agendas and research practices continually serve the interests of the dominant elite class. Drawing from Columbia and the Rockefeller family's archives, participant observation of university-community land and resource negotiations via the Community Benefits Agreement, and interviews with university administrators and housing activists, I argue that universities attempt to recreate cities according to their own imagined culture of wealth and its pertinent ideologies. The Ivory City thus serves as a space of moral retreat from the destructive effects of university land policies while simultaneously enabling universities to lay claim to moral, legal and economic authority over, and entitlement to, city land, resources and accessibility to public-private partnerships.

Key words: critical university studies, race, urban anthropology, real estate

Presenter(s): Isabelle Soifer

Board #41 The Taste of French Islam: Muslim Foodways and the Semiotics of Belonging in Republican France

In France, the significant relationship between food and national identity is well documented, as are the ways in which Muslim belonging to the nation is often called into question by the state, the media, and people with whom Muslims interact in their everyday lives. Here, I explore the ways particular French Muslim foodways afford possibilities for the negotiation of Muslim belonging in the face of Islamophobic overdetermination. These foodways include le tacos, a kind of hybrid of shawarma wraps, burritos, and paninis that first emerged in immigrant neighborhoods in Lyon and has come to dominate the French fast-food scene, la charcuterie halale, halal versions of traditional French meat dishes sold everywhere from supermarkets to organic farms, and the sale of le pain marocain, Moroccan bread, in some traditional French bakeries. I consider various sensory engagements with these foodways drawn from ethnographic fieldwork in France and Morocco and examine the semiotic uptake of these foods in relation to discourses about Muslimness, Frenchness, and national belonging. From this analysis, I demonstrate how each of these foodways affords a unique site in which Muslim subjectivities can be negotiated and renegotiated in relation to racializing and Islamophobic discourses that might otherwise place Muslims outside the boundaries of the nation. In this way, I demonstrate that even as the semiosis of food can reinforce axes of differentiation, it can also trouble overdetermined notions of subjectivity and open space for political possibilities.

Presenter(s): Clayton Van Woerkom

Board #42 Transcultural prevalence of afterlife expiation and contextual transmigration at a civilizational level- notion of a universal anthropological ghost

The notion of the afterlife and associated aspects of its cultural philosophizing are a fundamental basis of anthropological evidence of the 'ghost phenomenon.' The occidental and oriental difference in the notion of afterlife, transmigration, and thaumaturgy is emphasized.

Historical aspects of prevalence indicate a transcultural motif of shamanic conceptualities defining afterlife and post-mortal consciousness. These are progenitors of the 'afterlife ghost' as a universal anthropological entity.

Animistic references as artistic and philosophical renditions in expiation are culturally universal and feature expiation in the manner of articulations of afterlife concepts. These refer to a psychic reality of life beyond the bodily existence in its scope of transmigration.

The notion of expiation is an afterlife inference with shamanic overtures in its animistic reference, thus making animism a progenitor of afterlife theories. Universal and transcultural shamanistic references to ghost-like phenomena as spirit helpers, guardian totems, and angelic influences, all refer to a ghost conclusion in terms of an animistic footprint in the principle of post-mortal existence.

These concepts form a skeleton of themes implying the contextual reality of ghosts as depicted in literary and religious motifs.

The occidental mention of the 'ghost phenomenon' has a true religious emphasis and constriction of spiritual manifestation in religion, while the oriental viewpoint admits a freestyle acknowledgment of ghosts as a natural consequence in religion and spirituality. The shamanic and meta-shamanic (i.e., conceptually influenced cultures) viewpoints attest to a natural setting of 'ghost phenomenon' by application of philosophical concepts such as karma, maya, and rebirth. These make a plausible case for an intrinsic ghost (spectre) manifestation at the level of rebirth and appearances, attesting to philosophical concepts central to religious ideas and ghost phenomena.

Thus, these assertions make a suppositional claim about ontology in the theory of ghosts and their relation to death and the afterlife expiation in a universal manner.

Presenter(s): sriram balasubramanian

Board #43 Uncovering the Jordan: A Flood of Data

The Jordan Creek Valley in downtown Springfield, Missouri has been occupied for millennia, but the intensity of the valley's use and modification increased exponentially beginning in the 1830s when industrial ventures were established (e.g., mills, tanneries, factories). Unchecked urbanization and industrialization in the following decades culminated in rampant pollution and a series of devastating floods. The solution to these problems was to encase the creek in a concrete box culvert (built ca. 1929-1933).

The Renew Jordan Creek project is an urban revitalization initiative aimed at recreating the historic valley's landscape adjacent to the extant box culvert. The Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at Missouri State University has been at the forefront of the project's cultural resource management

for nearly two decades. Fieldwork has revealed that the construction of the box culvert inadvertently sealed a palimpsest of occupational events throughout the valley, thus creating an exceptional preservation environment.

Here we present a preliminary overview of the results from the 2024-2025 construction monitoring, highlighting the discovery of two exceptionally well-preserved nineteenth century industrial complexes--the Jessup Tannery and the Springfield Wagon Company.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Rideout

Co-author(s): Jennifer Rideout, Micah Phoenix, Christopher Bodine, Kevin Cupka Head

Board #44 What the Body Carries: An Exploration of Identity, Trauma, and the Struggle for Wellness Among Queer Students in Southern California

This ethnographic study examines how identity-based trauma shapes the understandings of identity and community, and the experience of wellness and overall quality of life for queer undergraduate students studying in Southern California. By specifically focusing on how intersectional identities, including race and ethnicity, gender, and class, inform these experiences, this research aims to understand how these intersectional factors both contribute to and help heal marginalized individuals who have been informed by queer trauma.

Through a series of in-depth interviews, this study explores how queer participants navigate the cumulative effects of the abjection, pathologization, and systemic oppression and discrimination they experience due to their intersectional identities, and how this impacts their conceptualization of community and their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health, as well as their access to care.

In a time where anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and legislation has escalated throughout society, this study also works to understand how this trauma becomes internalized and embodied at levels of both the body and the psyche of younger generations of queer individuals.

Overall, this study and its findings will contribute to broader discourses in medical, cultural, and queer anthropological studies through the centering of voices who are most impacted by intersecting systems of oppression; ultimately, answering the questions: How does identity-based trauma reconfigure one's sense of community, livability, and self-worth? And what does it mean to pursue wellness in a world that routinely limits it for people living in the margins?

Presenter(s): Katie Hwang

Board #45 Resistance Magic in 2025: From 'No Kings' to Charlie Kirk: Hexing, Healing, World-Building

The 'No Kings' march in June 2025 engaged millions to take action against the current political regime. The initial march was a successful protest on many counts. This was the first large-scale, single-day march since the Women's March in 2017, with reportedly 5 million people taking part across the US in urban and rural communities. Many activist groups united to support the march

which increased the visibility and attendance. The initial action spurred many, including magical practitioners, to publicly take a more public stance against the regime and continue resisting in their own ways. This Poster will present the resistance magic that emerged due to this event.

Magic can be understood as a way to view and interact with the world, different from other modes such as 'scientific' (seeking cause and effect), 'religious' (relying on faith-based connections), or artistic (working with performative and aesthetic connections). Magical thought and action is focused on the subtle and metaphysical connections between the inner and outer world, and the personal self to the social whole. Predominantly, culture functions in the scientific mode of tangible and physical connections, therefore magic is not often discussed openly or practiced in public.

However, one effect of the No Kings march and the developing public resistance to the current regime is that some magical practitioners have retooled their practice toward resistance efforts. Magical practitioners offer a unique study because their practice involves articulating intentions and effecting changes toward a specific end. The 'No Kings' movement provided a clear and imaginative intention, with a specific end in mind.

This poster will present emergent types and methods of resistance by magical practitioners. Magical practitioners represented are diverse: from elder witches of the 1960's who have written books on revolutionary and resistance magic, to chaos magicians who have never applied their craft toward societal goals, to younger Gen Z witches who are learning their craft from TikTok, and more.

Types and samples of magical efforts include Healing (of the self, organizations), World Building (imagining and articulating solutions), Hexing/Cursing (removing, eliminating obstacles), Binding (restricting, silencing harmful efforts).

Methods of Resistance include: Teaching, Leading (Sharing rituals, spells, chants, opinion pieces), Public Actions (rituals, marches); Networking (community organizing, supporting non-magical efforts); Care-Giving (healing others physically/emotionally/spiritually) & Self Care.

The Poster may include the unfolding reactions to the assassination of Charlie Kirk, since the website Jezebel.com had recently posted the article: "We Paid Some Etsy Witches to Curse Charlie Kirk". Initial responses of magical practitioners are wide-ranging and topical to this Poster.

Presenter(s): Brenda Yagmin

Board# 46 Disability Visibility in Small Cities: The Influence of Urban Infrastructure and Design on Disability Sociality, Health, and Wellbeing

Despite the CDC's well-known claim that ¼ of US adults have some form of disability, the disabled rarely figure prominently in public life. This is especially true after the rescinding

of Executive Order 13989, removing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility from NIH and other federal funding considerations. Disabled people are particularly invisibilized from public life in small cities, which often lack the resources of larger cities and the social cohesion of rural

communities. In response to the recent federal funding changes, our team, which included several disabled members, set out to explore the relationship between disability visibility and the health and wellbeing of disabled people in our own small city of Bethlehem, PA. Recognizing the importance of including more disabled voices than our own, we adopted community-driven methods that fused urban design with ethnographic and social network analysis. From May-August of 2025, our team of faculty and students in Lehigh University's departments of community health, anthropology, architecture, and psychology conducted community mapping workshops and interviews with the disabled and those they depend on.

As we present in our late-breaking poster, many disabled people in the city rarely leave their housing due to fear regarding safety concerns with antiquated infrastructure and urban design. Moreover, given the systematic attacks on accessibility in public services, they rely on few outside their immediate families, placing them at risk of personal catastrophe when even the little things go wrong. For our participants, the lack of affordable or publicly-provided services, combined with poorly funded and inconsistently applied disability accommodations in transportation, information, and service provision, thus restricted their access to and participation in public life. They turned to informal care, what we call Distributed Care Hubs, as they and their others in their social networks help each other to maintain their health and wellbeing. These were often precariously small, in some cases only related to a single caregiver who visited them at home a few times a week. In response, we have developed and present with our poster several targeted policy recommendations to help Bethlehem and other small cities reduce the precarity faced by disabled residents and create the conditions for us to improve our own lives and wellbeing.

Presenter(s): Austin Duncan

Co-author(s): Julie Wright

Board#47 Ethics of Crisis and Care: Navigating African American Sites of Resistance as an Environmental Anthropologist and Hoodoo Practitioner

The ethics of crisis and care are applicable tools used traditionally for environmental communication. These tools may also become transferable skills for anthropologists and other researchers alike. At its core, the ethics of crisis and care holds researchers accountable when addressing a collective concern that poses a risk to the environment (e.g. natural disasters, environmental degradation, and land acquisitions), and mitigating harm by honoring the Land, its Waters, Spirits, and People. The ethics of crisis and care enables the affected and interested parties to cultivate strategies to prevent further disrepair.

As an environmental anthropologist and Hoodoo practitioner, part of this work requires navigating sacred sites of resistance in a fashion that centers negotiation and reciprocity. For context, the Chesapeake Conjure Society defines Hoodoo as "a tradition, a generational heirloom that is simultaneously medicine, magic, and religion. Born on North American soil to African parents, Hoodoo is a system of survival, adaptation, resistance, and reclamation." Miller Grove and Lick

Creek are prime examples of what embodies the Hoodoo tradition, and what constitutes Black resistance.

As part of the U.S. Forest Service's Sites of Civil Rights and Resistance (SCRR) program, I advised National Forest staff in their pursuit of managing, interpreting, and preserving African American heritage sites. Miller Grove (Shawnee National Forest, Illinois) and Lick Creek (Hoosier National Forest, Indiana) were pre-Civil War settlement communities founded by newly liberated Black individuals and families. The Land witnessed the construction of community dwellings, abolitionism, travelers of the Underground Railroad, and the final resting place of its stewards.

The SCRR team conducted site visits, consulted with descendant communities, pulled GIS data to avoid adverse effects on cultural resources in accordance with Section 106 and NEPA requirements, and drafted interpretive plans and community context analyses. These are multi-year, complex project agreements that remain in-progress with two main deliverables: a virtual interpretive walking trail plan, and a sustainable trail for user safety to boost outdoor recreation and learning opportunities.

Through negotiation, we offer the Land, its Waters, Spirits, and People pathways to ensuring access for future stewards to honor, preserve, protect, and reclaim its sacredness.

Presenter(s): Queen Cornish

Board#48 Freedom or Fallout? Neoliberalism and Florida's Vaccine Rollback

This poster explores the intersection of public health policy, political ideology, and biopolitics through the lens of medical anthropology, focusing on Florida's recent repeal of vaccine mandates. Drawing on ethnographic theory and medical anthropology, this work situates the policy shift within broader neoliberal frameworks that prioritize individual freedom, and market logic.

The poster will examine how the dismantling of vaccine requirements reflects a neoliberal idea of personal choice over collective responsibility, often at the expense of marginalized communities—such as immune compromised individuals. It also investigates how biomedical authority is negotiated in a climate of political polarization and distrust. By focusing on public voices from both healthcare workers and vaccine-hesitant individuals, this analysis reveals how structural violence, and historical inequities shape contemporary debates around bodily autonomy, state intervention, and public trust.

This project aims to examine how health policies—driven by frameworks that focus on deregulation and privatization—can exacerbate existing inequalities and disrupts equitable access to care.

Presenter(s): Kaylee Appleton

Board#49 From St. Louis to the Sahel: Unraveling the Braid of Racial Capitalism and Building a New Economic Architecture

Despite narratives of progress, white supremacy and its resulting racial hierarchies persist as the core logic of racial capitalism. This system, historically legitimated by Christian authority and

enforced through government and markets, has positioned the African diaspora as a permanent underclass. This project exposes how this deeply entangled "braid" of religion, state, and capitalism operates both locally and globally.

The city of St. Louis illustrates the local manifestation of these dynamics, from Christian institutions and their mission-based asset accumulation to local government policy and policing that reinforces racial inequality. Simultaneously, this work examines a powerful counter-narrative emerging in West Africa. The Alliance of Sahel States (AES), and other nations like Burkina Faso under Colonel Ibrahim Traore, provide a global counterexample, as they are actively reclaiming control over their natural resources and revenue streams by expelling foreign interests. These sovereignty efforts aim to build infrastructure and economic systems outside of the interference of European banks, the IMF, and the Global North.

This research argues that reparative justice for the African diaspora requires the creation of an economic framework that operates entirely beyond existing models of capitalism, socialism, or communism. It tests the viability of a new model: diaspora-led logistics and financing networks. Potentially supported by resource-sovereign African states, these networks could channel resource wealth into infrastructure, trade, and cultural production without reliance on Western-controlled financial institutions and governments. By bridging a local U.S. case study with these global examples, this project not only contributes to scholarship on racial capitalism but also proposes a tangible, forward-looking intervention to dismantle it.

Presenter(s): Dierdre Lockette

Board#50 Ghosts of Hurricane Ida: Resilience and Renewal in Five Finger Bayou Communities, Southeast Louisiana

In this research, we explore the Bayou communities' relationship with place, infrastructure, and nature. It highlights the long-term disruptions to local lifeways caused by hurricanes (recently Hurricane Ida) and protracted infrastructural recovery. The stories we have collected manifest emergent tensions post-natural disasters contributing towards the decline of the seafood industry, mom-and-pop businesses, crippling infrastructure, and higher home insurance prices.

Places that once played an important role in supporting a thriving rural community in coastal Louisiana are vanishing. Emerging from a collaborative process with the Five Finger Bayou community, this research centres the voices of local leaders and community members to untangle the top-down approach of resilience and focuses on the place-based narrative of resilience. The resilience of the community emboldens residents to safeguard their family land, culture, traditions- old and new- by not just staying in a place but also constantly negotiating and engaging with changes brought by natural disasters in coastal Louisiana.

The research uses visual (photo-voice), ethnographic, and collaborative research methods to explore the everyday lives and interactions of community on what exists and what's ghost, particularly how that defines their long-term choices of staying at place. By visiting places that contribute to community building and provide a sense of attachment to a place, we ask what

significance it holds for an individual or a group. Some of these places are gone, and some are expected to be demolished. Community members who have stayed and expressed a deliberate choice to remain despite external pressures share their stories and lived experiences. These stories are more than just memories of loss. They are statements and reflections of resiliency and adaptation to perennial disasters, economic hardships, unsustainable homeowner insurance prices, and crippling local infrastructure such as buildings and bridges.

Presenter(s): Kashif Rustamani

Board#51 Ghosts of the Dreamers: DACAmended Educators and the Haunting of Immigration Policy

This flash presentation examines the ghostly presence of Dreamers, undocumented immigrant students given status through an Obama-era policy, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). By centering the experiences of educators who often navigated high school and college without status, and then relied on this tenuous policy for their ability to work and remain in the country, some for more than 20 years, this flash talk speaks to the urgency of immigration reform in the U.S. While interviews for this oral history project took place over the last two years, data analysis conducted in summer 2025 revealed a striking and timely finding: because no high school students and just a few college students remain eligible for DACA, an entire new generation of undocumented youth have been rendered ineligible for status, effectively transforming the category of "Dreamers" into a political ghost.

Drawing on interviews with mid-career educators who grew up undocumented, received DACA in young adulthood, and later entered teaching, I explore how the specter of their undocumented pasts continues to haunt their professional lives. Their narratives reveal how educators carry memories of fear, invisibility, and bureaucratic exclusion into their classrooms, even as they occupy positions of authority and belonging within schools. These haunting experiences remain painfully relevant for today's undocumented youth, who now face schooling and life choices without the temporary protections once afforded by DACA.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in precarity (Castro 2022) and the anthropology of policy, situating DACA as both a neoliberal fix and a form of racialized labor regulation whose absence now haunts the future of immigrant communities. Precarity here is understood as a process, condition, and ontological state: educators live with professional insecurity, grapple with the socioeconomic burdens of uncertain status, and embody the existential toll of lives suspended between belonging and exclusion. Their oral histories highlight the ways policy failure reverberates across time, producing ghostly traces that structure how individuals imagine their futures and how entire communities navigate aspirations.

This work makes two urgent contributions. First, it documents the afterlives of the Dreamer generation, showing how DACAmended educators act as both witnesses to the past and guides for youth navigating increasingly impossible futures. Second, it illustrates how policies, even when rescinded or frozen, persist as ghosts-shaping the horizon of possibility long after their material protections have eroded. As the U.S. enters a new era of immigration policy uncertainty, these

narratives of haunting remind us that the past is never past. For undocumented youth currently deciding whether to stay in school, remain in the United States, or return to countries they may not remember, the ghosts of DACA continue to shape their choices and imagined futures.

Presenter(s): Chandler Miranda

Board#52 Haunted by Care: New Ethnographic Insights into the Rural Backlash against Animal Activism in France

Over the summer of 2025, I conducted a new series of ethnographic interviews with livestock farmers in the Île-de-France region, amid a growing wave of tension in the French agricultural sector. This poster presents some of the first analyses of this fresh fieldwork, collected at a particularly volatile moment following the passage of the Duplomb Law in May 2025 - a measure criticized for weakening protections for sustainable farming practices. In parallel, the animal rights group L214 filed legal complaints against eight pig farms, triggering intense public and media scrutiny.

In this context, farmers express a heightened sense of moral vulnerability and a deepening perception of being socially delegitimized. Through their narratives, they evoke a form of haunting: the erosion of recognition, the weight of historical memory, and the feeling that their profession is no longer understood or respected. At the same time, the activist discourse revives moral ghosts - repressed forms of violence against animals and the environment - that challenge traditional agricultural identities.

This poster argues that the current rural crisis in France cannot be reduced to a conflict of interests or ideologies. It is also a conflict of perceptions, where two competing moral imaginaries - one grounded in care, the other in accusation - generate a struggle over the meaning of farming itself.

By presenting excerpts from interviews and visual materials from the field, this poster offers an anthropological reading of the emotional, symbolic, and historical forces that haunt contemporary farming in France.

Presenter(s): Coralie Chamois

Board#54 Radiating Gaze: Environmental Stances and Coalitions in South Korean Presidential Debates

This paper examines how coalitions are proposed and projected through environmental stance-taking in the recent South Korean presidential debates in May 2025. After going through the unlawful martial law, protests, and impeachment of the former president that was endorsed by the constitutional court's adjudication through late-2024 to early-2025, South Korea was scheduled to hold a special election to fill the presidential vacancy in June 2025. A series of three presidential debates took place, each of which was focusing on the topics of economy, society, and politics. I observe that the issues of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons appeared in every debate session, as they are concerned with industrial costs, climate change, and international relations. Under the multiparty system, the presidential debates hosted four candidates. Two of them are identified with

the conservative side and the other two with the progressive side, although their stances were not identical with one another and the four showed disagreement towards all the other on a variety of topics. This paper analyzes moments of coalitions when a candidate recruits another one who shares similar eco-political stances, in order to attack a candidate from the other side. The coalitions as an emergent alignment of stances are not only performed referentially but also indexically, through patterned use of gaze and posture. Attention to gaze behavior reveals another kind of coalition that candidates attempt to project onto the imagined audience. By looking directly to the camera with a scornful facial expression when disagreeing with the immediate interlocutor, candidates in the presidential debates actively recruit a potential audience to be aligned with them and partake in the metacommentary, as part of the invisible but meaningful participants.

Presenter(s): Yeon-ju Bae

Board#55 Rationalist Rituals: "Smoothness" as a Form of Agency in the Technolibertarian Intimate Sphere

Over the last year, technolibertarians have seen an increase in their ability to openly shape the state at the federal level in the United States. With Elon Musk's foray into governance and the advent of the Department of Government Efficiency, Americans have witnessed the values and beliefs of technolibertarians justify the rapid gutting of many of the functions of the state. My recent fieldwork in a living/working community of technolibertarians adjacent to the "rationalist" online/offline community explores the intimate life of some of these values. This poster focuses on the value placed on "smoothness" as the sign and indicator of the "agentic" subjectivities that form the "optimal" experience of actors living in not a democracy but a "do-ocracy" (as my interlocutors say). It explicates this value through a case study of ritual practice aimed at helping these individuals recognize, attain, and prioritize experiences of smoothness in their everyday lives.

Presenter(s): Jamie Methven

Board#56 Sanctioned Participation: Migrant Advisory Councils in Berlin

This paper examines contradictions of migrant political participation through Berlin's district-level Councils for Integration and Participation (Beiräte für Partizipation und Integration). While framed as inclusive institutions intended to incorporate migrant voices into political decision-making, these councils often reproduce exclusionary logics embedded in German migration governance. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in summer 2024—including observations at nine council meetings across six districts and fifteen interviews with council members, district officials, and integration commissioners—I argue that the councils exemplify a mode of sanctioned participation. This concept captures how state-structured spaces of "inclusion" operate less as platforms for empowerment than as disciplinary mechanisms that condition belonging on conformity to state norms. Follow-up interviews conducted in summer 2025 trace how narratives in the participatory landscape have shifted after the fall of Syria's Assad regime in a context of increasingly restrictive migration policies and conversations about potential return.

Councils were marked by high barriers to entry, including linguistic and bureaucratic demands, and mediated structures that favored citizens and "model migrants" over asylum seekers, refugees, and perspectives critical to the state. Access to participation was often framed as contingent on prior "integration." Council dynamics revealed three key mechanisms of sanctioned participation: the selection and molding of mediators who embody state ideals; the construction of "ideal citizens" through expectations of conformity and educational interventions; and the silencing of dissenting voices, particularly evident in conversations about Palestine and Gaza. Even as councils invoked anti-discrimination and equal rights, and regardless of the individual intentions of participants, they frequently marginalized Muslim and refugee perspectives, encouraged self-censorship, and enforced political alignment with dominant state narratives.

This paper demonstrates how Berlin's councils extend state power through participatory rhetoric that is performative rather than transformative. Not merely symbolic, these councils justify exclusion under the guise of inclusion. The findings contribute to broader debates on citizenship, belonging, and the governance of migration by showing how sanctioned participation sustains structural inequalities while claiming democratic legitimacy.

Presenter(s): Juliet Kelso

Board#57 Spectral Expertise: The Ghosts of Epistemic Violence in Corporate Environmental Science

This paper ethnographically explores the non-harmonious, haunted space of the construction, implementation and sustenance of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). Moving beyond their technical façade, EIAs are revealed as arenas of spectral conflict where the past haunts the present. Drawing on fieldwork with environmental professionals in Brazil, I argue the field is governed by a "corporate environmental science"-a specter that legitimizes certain knowledge while rendering others ghostly, enacting a form of epistemic violence that reverberates in broader political crises.

This specter manifests in hierarchies that privilege quantitative, "hard" sciences and marginalize qualitative social knowledge, dismissed as unscientific "activism." It appears in the ghostly labor of precarity, where consultants navigate censorship and the tyranny of billable hours. Crucially, the unheeded ghosts of the Mariana and Brumadinho dam mining collapses loom over daily practice, spectral reminders of the catastrophic costs of epistemic failure.

I contend that this internal epistemic violence within technical governance is not isolated. It actively fuels and is fueled by the external specters of ultra-right negationism and ecofascism. The systematic devaluation of reflexive, social knowledge within EIAs mirrors the political playbook of denying climate science and expert testimony. By examining how consultants become brokers mediating these haunted landscapes and your own professional subjectivities, this analysis reveals EIA praxis as a key site where the ghosts of technocratic supremacy are conjured, foretelling a future where sustainability is built on the silenced knowledges. This framework transcends its

specific case study, offering a critical lens for understanding the global rise of anti-environmental politics rooted in epistemic erasure.

Presenter(s): Renata Fontoura

Board #58 Vendedores Ambulantes: Resistance Against the Soundscape of Capital in New York City

Since November 5th, 2024, following the Trump presidency and NYC Mayor Eric Adams's ballot proposal II, legal options for street vending have been drastically curtailed and the policing of subway stations has simultaneously intensified. Though efforts towards decriminalization have been attempted, including the recent bill proposal by District 25 Councilman Shekar Krishnan, Mayor Adams espouses this systemic criminalization—a racialized, xenophobic, and class-disavowal practice, consequential to the sociopolitical manifestations of late-stage capitalism with the rise of white supremacist fascism in the United States. However, on September 10th, 2025, the New York City Council overrode Mayor Adams's veto of Councilman Krishnan's proposal. In this paper, I provide an ethnographic documentation of the labor practice of Latin-American pushcart fruit vendors [vendedores ambulantes o fruteros] that work primarily in the NYC subway system. I position this current legislative action in relation to the local acts of resistance by vendedores ambulantes.

The soundscape of the New York City subway system is a confluence of social experiences disguised within the everyday cacophony. An active contribution to this environment is a community of Latin-American street vendors [vendedores ambulantes]—in particular, there is a subsection primarily selling fruit cups such as mangos. I observe the vendors' vocal patterns of vending as related to semantic satiation, considering such dissipation of phonemes as relevant to musicking and music ontology. The locus of sonic production is the vocal iteration of the commodity, which effloresces into semantic satiation, arriving into the aural space as a musical signifier for the act of vending. I analyze how their vocal practices act and react to the phenomenological conditions of an exploitative gig economy. Reflecting on the instances of musicking apparent in the labor practice, as well as the soundscape of the subway, I find this coalescence being ineluctable and consequential to the machinations of capitalism, which not only inform our aesthetic experience through commodification, but actively proliferate a burgeoning lumpenproletariat to further fascist hegemony—following the reformulation of Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels's neologism by Clyde Barrows. The larger scope of this paper is to document the resistance of the vendedores ambulantes against institutional subjection and to assist in the destigmatization of their labor practice.

Presenter(s): Gia Dreyer

Board#59 Street Politics: Political Engagement in Street Culture amid the 2023 and 2025 Dutch Elections.

Media and research often state that political engagement among marginalised ethno-religious minority youth in (Western) Europe is limited. The street culture emerging from this demographic is

equally labelled as apolitical, with media and (some) academics focusing on supposed characteristics such as glorifying violence, crime and drug (ab)use. The academic study of street culture has significantly nuanced this understanding, appreciating its complexities and cultural contributions, such as through hip-hop music. However, studies of political engagement within street culture remain sparse, especially when it intersects with the (equally understudied) religious identities present in street culture. My anthropological study of these religious identities in a marginalised part of Rotterdam, as part of my PhD, partially overlaps with the early 2025 and 2023 elections in the Netherlands. In 2023, the far-right and anti-Islam PVV party booked a landslide victory, followed by the first far-right led government in Western Europe since the Second World War. My fieldwork thus addresses political engagement among ethno-religious street cultural youth amid the increase of electoral success of far-right parties hostile to such demographics. My findings show a, to some, remarkable and varied political engagement in street culture, though this does not always translate into traditional patterns of political activity (e.g. voting). As such, my study begins to appreciate the political engagement of a group that is both vilified by mainstream politicians and accused of political passivity in the Netherlands and beyond.

Presenter(s): Floris Bosscher

Board#60 Surreal Excitement and Reversed Temporality: How "Trade War" Changes Responsibility Distribution of Economic Downturn Afterwards

During my fieldwork in China, the "trade war" between the USA and China once raised the tariff up to 145%. This paper will demonstrate people's reactions to the daily renewed tariffs in China. The effects of time are mainly two: 1) At the micro level, the difference in time zone makes the "news" become old within about 2 hours. In those days, the CCTV, the most important tele-media, often reported the tariff disputes at 7:00 pm, Beijing time, which was already morning in the USA. The news was about what happened in the USA yesterday, and it will probably change soon. Many people read news in the morning, and they will see very different, but both authentic-sourced, information in the same information feed. Such temporality reinforces the shaken and turbulent feeling of temporal stability. 2) At the macro level, the economic "downturn" in China has become a thing even before the 2025 tariff issues. However, the tariff issues, especially when revealed in such a dramatic way, call back to the "trade war" since 2018, a time point before the pandemic. Consequently, the 145% tariff has become accountable for the "downturn" before the tariff itself. By analyzing the public reaction in China, it illustrates how responsibility and accountability could be distributed from the reversed temporal direction. It further challenges the naturalization of the responsibility/accountability: If actor A is accountable for (normally bad) event Y, A must have done an action X, which is temporally ahead of Y and causes Y. The social experiment of dramatic tariff performance shows how the organization of time can be non-linear, and so can responsibility distribution.

Presenter(s): Yuhao Ding

Board#61 The Phoenix Metaphor and Collective Agency Among the Iranian

The phoenix occupies a central place in Iranian cultural imagination as a symbol of hope, endurance, resilience, and immortality. In contemporary reformist and modernist discourse, which envisions fundamental political and social transformations in Iran, this metaphor is mobilized to inspire collective perseverance: Iran, like the phoenix, eternally rises from the ashes of hardship to regenerate itself.

This paper examines how the phoenix metaphor and related symbolic resources are invoked in relation to collective agency among Iranians in the United States during and after the twelve-day conflict between Iran and Israel in June 2025. Drawing on in-depth interviews with twenty members of the Iranian diaspora, the study explores how participants articulated their experiences of collective trauma and shifting perspectives on political and social change across two temporal frames: the wartime moment and the immediate post-war aftermath.

Findings suggest three dominant orientations: (1) those who advocate for fundamental change and regard myths such as the phoenix as critical to fostering hope and agency; (2) those who resist change, dismissing symbolic narratives as ineffective, given the history of external interventions in the Middle East; and (3) those ambivalent toward change, who acknowledge the symbolic appeal of such myths but question their capacity to generate practical transformation or mobilize a collective will.

By exploring the phoenix metaphor through the lens of diasporic experiences and collective trauma, this study sheds light on how cultural symbols influence emotional resilience, and mediate complex attitudes toward Iran's social and political possibilities.

Key words:

Phoenix metaphor, Collective trauma, Hope, Resilience, Agency.

Presenter(s): Sara Sobhani

Board#62 "We Are Not Family Anymore": Nationalism, Indigeneity, and Racialization at the Thai-Cambodian Border

In February of 2025, military tensions heightened at a temple in Surin Province in Northeast Thailand (Isaan) after a group of Cambodian visitors singing the Cambodian national anthem were reprimanded by Thai soldiers, resulting in confrontations between members of the Thai and Cambodian militaries. At the Thailand-Cambodia General Border Committee meeting held a few weeks later, Thai activist groups submitted a letter to the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, "urging the military to defend Thai sovereignty vigorously." In May of 2025, troops were temporarily withdrawn on both sides, with a Ministry of Defense representative stating that they "request that citizens of both nations avoid arranging symbolic actions that could have an impact on border areas." In July of 2025, armed conflict between the two countries broke out, resulting in deaths of both civilians and soldiers alike, amid the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

This poster investigates the relationship between citizens' "symbolic" – or rather, broadly semiotic – actions, as they negotiate fashions of speaking and forms of life in so-called border areas. Ethnographically tacking between discursive contestations of language, dress, architecture, and registers of national patrimony, I show how deep antagonisms among citizens of both countries especially unfold in provinces in Thailand with large Khmer-speaking ethnic/indigenous minorities. Political claims over national authenticity and heritage are essentially semiotic claims regarding peoples' character and disposition. Building on semiotic anthropology and affect theory, I also consider how AI-generated images reflecting these contested domains of national patrimony operate as semiotic-affective machines which concentrate and amplify nationalist fervor. This war of words and images is both pretext and justification for military violence.

Presenter(s): Montita Sowapark

Board#63 Apparitions and specters in cultural heritage: The haunting legacy of archival politics in post-disaster contexts

The complexity of archival spaces, although not a new concern in anthropology, is reemerging as relevant to managing diverse collections in globally complex situations, especially those in countries affected by severely changing weather patterns. Cultural heritage in the form of landscapes, archaeological materials, and museum archives is often overlooked in disaster management and shifting climate priorities. In the small island setting, collections may or may not find a permanent home where they can be curated, analyzed, and displayed to a local audience. These collections often become specters that shift secretively among the shadows of collections, rarely seeing the light of day, and remembered only by a disparate few.

Our poster follows the haunting images of a small island archaeological collection as it navigates the climate politics, shifting government permitting processes, and diplomacy of decay. Although we have been involved in a long-term research project that mitigates post-hurricane resource recovery (mangroves, pine forests, and water) through the dual lenses of citizen science and socio-hydrology, the anthropologists taking part in this interdisciplinary effort have been increasingly haunted by this unique collection. Since May 2025, the participants in this poster have become embedded in this global archival conversation. In our poster we discuss the origins of these collections, and similar types of cultural apparitions, and how they have mitigated both the ravages of mother nature and the complex discourse of modern small island politics. We also explore how interdisciplinary scholars can contribute to reframing global conversation on climate change to reimagine heritage management.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Lynch

Co-author(s): Emily Cole, Caitlyn Streseman, Yubitzy Truong

Board # 64 Mythological Memorializations of Slave Trade History: The Ghost Story of Ibo Landing

In May 1803, African captives aboard a slave ship landed in the coastal island region of Georgia, in the United States, and committed a mass suicide by walking into the water, chained together, and

drowning. The exact sequence of events remains somewhat unclear. The location of this mass suicide was marked as "Ibo Landing." The story of Ibo Landing developed into a popular folktale in the region, the archipelago along the Atlantic coast of South Carolina and Georgia, known as the Sea Islands or Gullah region. Ibo Landing has become a site commemoration of the slave trade to St. Simons and the Sea Islands, and the story of this historical event is remembered and memorialized in many distinct ways, as a tale of freedom, of resistance, and of tragedy, as well as an ever-present haunting. The mythological remembrance of Ibo Landing represents the difficulty of establishing a fully realistic commemoration of the slave trade, given the lack of written accounts from enslaved people who experienced the bulk of the suffering during the slave trade. It also emphasizes the desire for a fantastical, heroic tale of the slave trade to reformulate the trauma and pain of the trade into something powerful and potentially even hopeful. Finally, the myth of Ibo Landing implies a metaphysical connection between the Americas and Africa, as a result of the slave trade. The story's memorialization further propagates this ideological relationship. This research and analysis builds off of Black studies and slavery studies scholars like Orlando Patterson, Vincent Brown, and Terri Snyder, working with theories of slavery's ghostly legacies, Blackness and social death, and enslaved rebellion and resistance.

Presenter(s): Carlotta Harold

Board#66 "Pero mi cuerpo reaccionaba": The Body as a Channel for Abjectivity Among Migrants in the Paso del Norte Region

Migration has become a central policy concern in Donald Trump's second administration. Consequently, the borderlands have been subjected to increased militarization. Migrants crossing the border have also been met with escalating prosecution. This research project is concerned with how the campaign of migrant criminalization at the US-Mexico border impacts the migrant bodily experience. Drawing from participant observation in one of the country's busiest courthouses, unstructured interviews with public defenders, and semi-structured interviews with migrants in shelters, this project argues that the body becomes a channel through which the carceral state and other economies of violence transform the migrant from agent to abject. As a theoretical framework, this project utilizes Patricia Hill Collins' concepts of the matrix of domination and controlling images for comprehending the connection between state-sponsored violence and embodied suffering. Through this theoretical framework, I provide a critical situated feminist perspective on the material circumstances of lived experience in the borderlands. First, I demonstrate that the carceral state aims to significantly limit the agency of migrants, either painting them as 'poor things' or criminals. Second, I argue that the degrees of abjectivity are embodied differently through lines of race, gender, and nationality. Third, I argue that embodied trauma is sentient; it travels across time and space alongside migrants, even after processes of deportation. Lastly, this project concludes by considering how migrants embody resilience in the face of abjectivity through memory and kinship as a practical method for futurebuilding.

Presenter(s): Pedro Lacerda

Board #67 What's So Funny: Performing Regional Accents in Contemporary Chinese Media

In recent years, regional accents have become deliberate performance tools in Chinese media, particularly in reality shows where linguistic difficulty is converted into amusement. TV shows like *Keep Running* and *Ace vs Ace* invent the "Cantonese Guessing Game" that feature Mandarin-speaking celebrities attempting Cantonese pronunciation awkwardly. Their failed articulation and linguistic incompetence are demonstrated as a performative spectacle, generating entertainment value for audiences. With the question "What's so funny" lingering on my mind, this paper analyzes accent as a cultural semiotic, one that reflects the ongoing interplay between regional identity, class stratification, and the production of modern Chinese nationhood. How do such performances of regional accents emerge from and represent everyday language, class, and identity categories? How does entertainment shape public sensibilities about what is authentic, who is articulate, who is rural, who is modern, and what is laughable?

This study draws on Michael Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy to explore this contradictory dynamic where mispronunciation, considered embarrassing in public, serves as a gateway to invoking shared identity for insider audiences. These performances rely on the audience's recognition of linguistic error as shameful and familiar, allowing viewers to laugh at what embarrasses them while reaching a consensus for a shared "imagined community". From this perspective, accent humor is not merely a site of symbolic power or cultural capital, but a deeply affective practice where embarrassment, laughter, performativity, and positionality converge. Furthermore, mainstream media commodifies such performative linguistic inadequacy, complicating the intimacy and revealing how structural hierarchies of language and region are naturalized through emotionally charged, ordinary events. This analysis treats accent performance as a cultural technique of both inclusion and exclusion that reveals the affective infrastructure of national identity in contemporary China.

To investigate how performative accent influences social opinions on class, modernity, and belonging, I combine close reading of selected reality shows with online ethnography of viewer responses on main social media such as Bilibili, Weibo, and Douban, tracing how affect and regional belonging shape audience reception.

I argue that the transformation of accent from a marker of locality to the object of comedic consumption reflects broader shifts in China's post-reform era: accelerated internal migration, the collapse of rural communities amid modernization, and the rise of performative nationalism in mass media. Not all viewers find it funny, not all laughter is consent. By examining how staged moments of comedy work through symbolic asymmetry and reversely contribute to constructing cultural intimacy, this study offers insights into TV shows' banal but subtle presentation and people's reactions.

Presenter(s): Zhiyan Jiang

8802 Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology (SLACA) Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Special Event

SLACA Business Meeting

8721 Society for Psychological Anthropology (SPA) Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Special Event

The annual business meeting of the Society for Psychological Anthropology is open to all current members as well as those interested in the society. We will discuss SPA events and achievements during the past year, provide announcements and plans for the upcoming year, and present awards. Please join us!

8684 History of Anthropology Interest Group Luncheon- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This History of Anthropology Interest Group (HOAIG) will once again host its luncheon during the annual AAA meeting. Operating under the banner of the General Anthropology Division, the HOAIG provides a gathering place within the AAA for all those interested in the history of anthropology and the human sciences.

If you are interested in attending, please contact the group Convener, Nicholas Barron (nicholas.barron@unlv.edu). As we get closer to the date and we have a better sense of the number of attendees, we will provide more details including location and directions.

When: Saturday, 11/22, noon

Where: TBD

If you are unable to attend the lunch gathering but are interested in learning more about the interest group, please contact the Convener so that we can add you to our email list.

8741 SANA Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 1:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for the Anthropology of North America encourages all members and friends to attend

our annual business meeting. Topics to be discussed include: SANA publishing futures; Building a SANA mentoring program and other support for student and early career members; Planning the 2027 SANA Spring Meeting in Mexico City; Celebrating the 2025 SANA Book Prize; and Inaugurating new leadership. We will also open the floor for other member initiatives and concerns. Please join us!

8850 ALLA Intergenerational Mentoring Session

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

Association of Latina/o & Latinx Anthropologists invite senior, mid-career, early career, graduate and undergraduate students to join this inter-generational mentoring session. Participants will discuss writing and publication strategies, strategies for getting your research funded, and best practices for building a career in Anthropology in and outside of the academy.

8789 Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges (SACC) Membership Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 12:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

The Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges is composed of teaching-focused anthropologists, especially those engaged with the courses that introduce students to our discipline in the first two years of college. Members include community college faculty as well as instructors at 4-year universities. We support each other in our pedagogy/andragogy, host annual national and regional meetings, and have produced several OER for introductory classes. This meeting is open to members, potential members, or anyone who may be interested in the work we are doing.

8815 A&E Graduate Student Mentoring Workshop -Day 3

Start Date: 11/22/2025 11:45 AM **through** 11/22/2025 1:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Students will submit either: a dissertation proposal, dissertation chapter, or journal article for consideration. Students selected to participate in the workshop will receive feedback from an A&E member mentor and receive comments on their work before the AAA conference.

During the last and third session, we will focus on how to effectively incorporate peer reviews into academic writing and how to structure responses to reviewer comments during the peer-review process.

8573 Field Recordings: African American Burial Grounds in the River Parishes

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Installations

This film will be shown at the A&E screening Saturday Afternoon, and offsite at Treme Market.

Field Recordings is an expressive and documentary project that aims to preserve digital traces of African American burial grounds in the River Parishes through 3D scanning, 3D printing, and immersive soundscapes. These burial grounds are an invaluable part of the historical geography of the Louisiana River Parishes. Originally built peripheral to plantations along the Mississippi River, today these sites occupy remnant parcels of isolated land surrounded by corporate agricultural and industrial facilities. Climate change, industrial development, precarious land-tenure records, and dwindling populations of descendant communities continually threaten these cultural landscapes. Aiming to preserve a material trace of the remaining sites before they are lost to history, we used airborne and terrestrial scanning methods to capture high fidelity spatial records of the canefields, lonely cosses of trees, and rows upon rows of box tombs. We also recorded their soundscapes to capture an element of these burial grounds' phenomenological character, documenting the rustle of leaves, songs of cicadas, crackle of burning cane, and the clamor of construction. For the exhibit, we will 3D print a set of tombs in aluminum to give our immaterial, digital archives a material presence. Tactile transducers embedded in the prints will transform the tombs into speakers, immersing the audience in the soundscape recordings from each site. We will also show a point cloud animation that reacts to the soundscape. Since we are based in Baton Rouge, we can easily provide everything needed and handle the logistics of installing this work. Field Recordings explores how machine vision sees and unsees our cultural landscapes, rendering material traces immaterial, and how these immaterial virtual artifacts can be rematerialized through digital fabrication. This project fits the spectral theme of the conference by investigating the authoritative, yet imperfect nature of data captured through the lens of machine vision, asking how algorithms mediate meaning. With the spatial audio of each tomb blending together into an eerie composition, this installation will have an haunting aesthetic perfect for the theme.

Organizer(s): Brendan Harmon, Carlos Román, Joseph Brooks, Hye Yeon Nam

4680 Predatory Politics: The Wily Animal-Human Relationships of Hunting and Fishing, Part Two—Land

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Experiences of hunting and fishing across diverse cultural contexts have been central to the analysis of human environmental relationships in environmental anthropology. Hunting and fishing

have been investigated as generative social spaces of place-making, environmental perception, and relationship formation. But these practices have also been critical sites of colonial and state interventions that aim to shape and regulate relationships between humans and their material environment. These efforts to regulate hunting and fishing-and the embodied relational practices that join the lives, and deaths, of humans and non-humans- also work to reshape the relational worlds of indigenous and socially marginalized communities in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Yet the complex socioecological life of hunting and fishing seems to consistently exceed, and often undermine, efforts of state control or regulation. These two linked panels explore ethnographic accounts of human relationships with animals that are cunning, wily, or tricky-relationships that challenge notions of human agency and that resist the bounded categories of colonial and postcolonial life. Part two explores unruly relationships on land, ranging from culling raccoons in the Bay Island of Honduras to hunting "exotics" in Texas, trophy hunting for cunning jaguars in Belize and "Man-Nature" encounters in southern Africa. In each of these contexts panelists foreground the ways in which hunting creates human-nonhuman social assemblages that unsettle the boundaries of fundamental anthropological categories: the human, gender, race and citizenship, among others.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Melissa Johnson, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Patrick Gallagher, University of Texas at San Antonio

Presenter(s): Keri Brondo, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Alexandra Holdbrook, Melissa Johnson, Southwestern University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Rebecca Witter, Appalachian State University

Discussant: Jamon Halvaksz, Georgetown University

Presentation(s): Grieving the Land Crab: Ecological Loss, Conservation, and the Politics of Killability in the Caribbean

This project explores the near-total disappearance—and recent return—of the blue land crab on Utila, the smallest of Honduras' Bay Islands, where ecological loss has provoked profound grief. The decline of this culturally significant species was linked to invasive raccoons, whose introduction disrupted the island's delicate ecosystem. A recent culling program successfully reduced raccoon populations, leading to a resurgence of the crab, return of the whale shark, and an unexpected shift in conservation sentiment: the principal trapper has become a local hero, and hunting raccoons has emerged as both a sanctioned and unsanctioned practice. Drawing on political ecology, political ontology, and decolonizing methodologies captured in "rubber boots" methods offered by Anderson, Bubandt and Cypher (2023), this paper interrogates the colonial and neoliberal histories embedded in conservation policy, asking: In what contexts are certain species deemed killable, and why? How can colonial, postcolonial, and colonizing species – human and nonhuman – unsettle and rework understandings about and experiences with hunting practices? Who and what can hunt in protected places, and how do these practices reshape notions of

belonging for the many identities represented among island residents, including their non-human residents.

Presenter(s): Keri Brondo

Flourishing in Limbo: Hunting, Conservation, and the Wild Lives of Texas Exotics

Scimitar-horned oryx and axis deer—just two of more than one hundred species of hoofed mammals from Africa and Asia introduced to the Texas Hill Country over the past century. Classified as neither game nor native wildlife, Texas "exotics" occupy a political-legal limbo that resists state regulation outside of public lands. Roaming across the vast matrix of private ranches dominating 97% of the Texas landscape, the lives of these animals are governed almost exclusively by hunters and landowners—or by no one at all. Yet far from peripheral, Texas exotics are central to a lucrative hunting economy that has long shaped the region's political ecology. In the "exotic wildlife capital of North America," they are cultural icons, valuable commodities, conservation symbols, invasive pests, and agents of ecological change. This multiplicity emerges from their place within a dynamic multispecies assemblage linking people, nonhumans, and material infrastructures in relations that co-produce shifting ecologies and political frictions throughout the privatized landscape of Texas. This paper draws on multispecies ethnographic research to examine how such tensions unfold through everyday practices in the exotic wildlife industry. By contrasting animals like the locally extinct scimitar-horned oryx with the prolific axis deer, it reveals the unstable logics of care, commodification, and control that structure human-animal relations in a landscape shaped by the pursuit of huntable life.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Holdbrook

Tigah Camp: Unruly Multispecies Assemblages, Race and Gender in a Belizean Trophy Jaguar Hunting Camp

Tigah Camp, as Belizeans call it in Kriol, was a trophy jaguar hunting camp near the Afro-Caribbean Belizean Creole village of Crooked Tree that ran for about ten years in the 1960s. The dense concentrations of jaguars and unpredictable flooding make the multispecies assemblage of Tigah Camp unruly. Landscapes like this elude capital, thus allowing Black(ened) self-determined communities to develop. But the jaguars also attracted wealthy white men for trophy hunting. In the 1960s, Tigah Camp brought together Afro-Caribbean peoples living 'otherwise' with white hunting entrepreneurs and ultra-wealthy trophy hunters. In this paper, I combine ethnographic and historical research to show the historical development of jaguar hunting in Belize and the emergence of this jaguar trophy hunting camp. These multispecies encounters emerged from and reinforced global white supremacy while, at the same time, their manifestation in Belize provided openings that challenged white domination. In addition, these unruly assemblages fostered forms of shared masculinity across lines of race and cultivated a cunning cleverness that spanned across lines of race and species. In making these arguments, I aim to contribute to scholarship that shows how multispecies assemblages are always already racialized and gendered and how the specificities of place shape socioecological possibility.

Presenter(s): Melissa Johnson

African Wildlife Conservation & the Specter of Man-Nature Encounters

Forty years ago, Donna Haraway theorized interactions between settlers and African wildlife as Man-Nature encounters. In the early 20th century, Theodore Roosevelt embarked on a 11-month hunt through colonized East Africa, then lauded as the "greatest safari in history." Carl Akeley later taxidermized the skulls, bones, and skin of the hunted wildlife for exhibition in the U.S. Museum of Natural History. The curated displays positioned "white Man" as the evolutionary pinnacle and African wildlife (and people) as his primitive past. Thus, for museum visitors, the encounter foretold an embodied sense of evolutionary hierarchy wherein African wildlife became settler heritage to be protected and sustained for settler futures.

We reconsider the specters of Man-Nature encounters in the early 21st century based on what we have learned from men who have hunted, and those who have been surveilled, in southern African national parks. Drawing from an analysis of archived correspondence, interviews, and online conservation media, we examine two patterns. In the first, foreign visitors encounter African wildlife on African lands reliant on African labor. In the second, tourists become the trackers of rural African men suspected of hunting illegally in national parks. In both cases, wildlife conservation sustains settler futures with African wildlife at the expense of rural African futures. We reflect on the predatory implications of Man-Nature encounters gaining ground today.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Witter

Co-author(s): Taylor Ouellette

Discussion

318 Society for Anthropology of Religion Flash Session #2- Faith and Religion

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Kunal Joshi , Genn Ruan, University of California, Riverside, Monique Azzara, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Meghan Blust , Rhea Rahman, CUNY, Brooklyn College, Department of Anthropology & Archaeology, Khadeeja Majoka, Columbia University, Leah Mernaugh, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology, Thomas Long, University of Manchester

Presenter(s): Kunal Joshi, Genn Ruan, University of California, Riverside, Monique Azzara, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Meghan Blust, Rhea Rahman, CUNY, Brooklyn College, Department of Anthropology & Archaeology, Khadeeja Majoka, Columbia University, Leah Mernaugh, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology, Thomas Long,

University of Manchester

Presentation(s): Between Myth and Memory: North Indian Pilgrimage as Discursive Space

The North Indian town of Allahabad is perhaps best known for hosting the Kumbh Mela, a twelve-yearly pilgrimage-fair often said to be the "largest gathering of humans on earth", and whose latest iteration concluded earlier this year. While the event has received much scholarly and media attention in the past, the focus has typically tended to be on the extreme (though admittedly photogenic) acts of bodily mortification practiced by ascetics, the hundreds of millions of pilgrims who converge at the event, or the infrastructural challenge of erecting and dismantling the "ephemeral megacity" which houses them every twelve years. In addition to these 12-yearly visitors, however, the city also hosts a rather more ordinary constituency of pilgrims every year: householders who camp with local pilgrimage priests, often taking arduous vows-including celibacy, severe dietary restrictions, and exacting regimes of prayer and fasting-to live as ascetics for the duration of their month-long stay. While commonsense descriptions of pilgrimage priests as 'swindler-middlemen' preying on hapless pilgrims abound, this paper attempts to show, based on 18-months of fieldwork conducted between 2018 and 2025 over multiple iterations of the event, first, that taking pilgrims' ritual traditions seriously-as projects, say, of self-fashioning-affords a richer conceptual frame within which to view these interactions; second, that this 'periodic asceticism' challenges the seemingly-settled picture of the ascetic as existing apart from society; and finally, the role of pilgrimage itself as a discursive space, and the centrality of memory to questions of asceticism, in Hinduism and beyond.

Presenter(s): Kunal Joshi

DIY the Rituals: Performativity in Thien Hau Temple, Los Angeles

This study examines how the flexibility of popular religion enables participants at the Los Angeles Thien Hau Temple to design and perform their own rituals, a phenomenon I term "DIY rituals." Through my fieldwork, I observed participants challenging ritual conventions and employing bodily and speech acts to construct new ritual practices, achieving religious efficacy through these personalized approaches. Theoretically, this research engages with Judith Butler's concept of performativity and Roy Rappaport's theory of ritual enactment, demonstrating how repeated bodily and speech acts challenge and reshape conventions.

By analyzing participants' discourse, I reveal how they achieve religious efficacy through their speech acts, performing identities-some as believers seeking blessings, others as petitioners emphasizing their suffering. By examining cases of ritual innovation and resistance, this paper highlights the agency within religious practices, dialoguing with Clifford Geertz's scholarship on religion providing meaning to sufferings. It also expands on Mayfair Yang's studies on popular religion and grassroots agency, illustrating how performativity intersects with conventional frameworks to sustain or challenge the conventions. This research contributes to broader discussions of religion, ritual, and performativity by showcasing how participants' improvisational practices enrich the cultural and spiritual landscapes of diasporic Chinese communities. It also underscores the transformative potential of ritual flexibility in navigating displacement.

Presenter(s): Genn Ruan

Epistemology of Spirit: Black Baptist Women and “God’s Work” in Los Angeles

This paper draws on fieldwork with Black Baptists in Los Angeles to examine the relationship between women's labor and their engagement with the Spirit. I utilize the Spirit as a subject, a real actor whose presence is knowable, and also as a theoretical framework, an epistemology of spirit structured through a particular way of being in the world. I locate this discussion of the Spirit within ethnographic spaces of gendered labor that emerged in the midst of the COVID Pandemic and came to be understood within churchwomen's narratives of doing "God's work." In particular, I focus on their labor of bridging the physical and virtual space of the church, and the ways in which these women conjured the Spirit to forge meaningful bonds as they shaped an alternative space of social organization. I argue that being "filled" or "touched" by the Spirit becomes a performative practice of otherwise knowledge production, and the ways in which women labor to ground this relationality in spirit ultimately provides other ways of thinking and being.

Presenter(s): Monique Azzara

Ghosts of Imperialism: Alternative Spirituality as Resistance and Cultural Reclamation

This study explores the "ghosts" of cultural erasure and spiritual disconnection caused by Western imperialism, focusing on how contemporary spiritual practices serve as pathways to reclaim ancestral identities and rebuild community bonds. Through a comprehensive literature review along with qualitative interviews with pagan Americans disenchanted by mainstream American Christianity, this research examines how pre-colonial spiritual traditions help restore lost cultural roots. Drawing on phenomenology and decolonization theories, the study investigates how these practices not only heal cultural wounds but also foster resistance against ongoing cultural erosion. The concept of "ghost cultures" - lost traditions reconstructed through myth and memory - is central to this work. By analyzing the intersection of spiritual practices with decolonization efforts, the paper highlights how these practices can challenge cultural appropriation and empower marginalized communities. Ultimately, this research offers insights into the transformative potential of spirituality in decolonizing the Western mind, promoting community resilience, and reimagining identity in the face of colonial legacies.

Presenter(s): Meghan Blust

Mapping an Islamic Black Radical Tradition: Racial Geographies of Muslim Aid

A year after its founding in 1963, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies - one of the oldest Muslim organizations in the UK - sponsored one of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabaaz's final foreign tours. The trip included events in Manchester, London, and the famous Oxford Union debate in which Shabaaz took the affirmative of the motion, "Extremism in the defense of Liberty is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of Justice is no virtue." Two decades later, FOSIS would sponsor the trip that would inspire a young doctor to found what is today the world's largest Western-based Muslim NGO, Islamic Relief. As a UK based development organization, with the institutional constraints of Islamophobia and white supremacy that that entails, I examine how members of the organization navigate the pulls of moderation and liberation. Drawing from ethnographic research with Islamic Relief in the U.S., South Africa, and Mali, I map what I call practices of an Islamic Black Radical Tradition. In this presentation I emphasize the latter, the ways Muslims have organized otherwise, refusing the institutional constraints of white supremacy to show up for and with their communities in the name of self-determination and mutual aid. I theorize Blackness from anti-racist activists traditions in the U.K. and South Africa, a blackness that is not defined by pigment, but, in the words of Steve Biko of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, "those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group." These anti-racist traditions are examples of what Stuart Hall has recognized as the ways "racist interpellations can become themselves the sites and stake in the ideological struggle, occupied and redefined to become the elementary forms of an oppositional formation."

Presenter(s): Rhea Rahman

Panjtan Jo Bagh: A Garden Outside History

"There's no history here, this place is outside history, it belongs to Maula Ali – I have beheld him [dīdār kīya hai] here" said a malang – a transgressive Sufi mystic – at a garden in rural Sindh, Pakistan as I tried to enquire about the administrative and property aspects of this garden. Panjtan Jo Bagh – the Garden of Panjtan – lies on a hillside in the Kai valley in Sindh, its lush terraces watered by a hot spring near the top of the hill. Panjtan translates to "five bodies", and denotes the Ahl al-Bayt, the five family members at the core of Shi'i cosmology – Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law Ali who was the first Shi'i Imam, and Fatima and Ali's sons Hassan and Hussain - the second and third Shi'i Imams. Hassan was poisoned, while Hussain's martyrdom at Karbala animates annual mourning across the Muslim world for over a millennium. The violence unleashed upon the Prophet's progeny, and the stark injustice of it is often the prism through which worldly injustice and political cruelty are refracted and understood.

Amongst my subaltern interlocutors, most of whom identified themselves at some intersection of Shi'ism and Faqiri, an antinomian Sufi tradition of holy poverty, appeals for justice and salvation are directed towards Panjtan and other Sufi saints. "Maula Ali and Imam Hussain will return with their forces, battle the unjust government of Pakistan and all these landlords and thus era of suffering will end" the malang continued. Another malang confirmed this and showed me a printed card that identified him as part of "Hussaini Forces", an army of humans, jinns, and fairies with whom Imam Hussain is believed to return to redeem the world and set it right.

In the midst of massive state surveillance and control over land and the movement of people, Panjtan Jo Bagh is one of the few places where people in Faqiri can gather, sing, talk, and consume intoxicants with abandon. They speak of Panjtan coming to the garden after the events of Karbala, the many sightings of Maula Ali here, repeated visits from long-dead saints, as well as the presence of fairies. It is also one of the fourteen stops on the annual Faqiri pilgrimage on-foot pilgrimage. Drawing on my ethnography of this pilgrimage, as well as separate trips to the garden, this paper asks what it means to be "outside history" and contend with narratives that defy rationalized notions of time and space and invoke the agency of non-humans. I call on Marisol de la Cadena's notion of the "eventful ahistorical" to think of the world as imagined and inhabited in Panjtan Jo Bagh, and the otherwhises and elsethwens, to borrow from Elizabeth Povinelli and Anand Taneja, it offers. In the midst of severe state repression, religious nationalism, and bleak futures in Pakistan, perhaps the excesses of the world called into being within the subaltern Shi'i Faqiri community at Panjtan Jo Bagh ask us to expand our narrow notions of "reality" and "history".

Presenter(s): Khadeeja Majoka

Reclaiming What Was Lost: Christian Yoga and the Ghosts of "Ancient" Spiritual Practice

The ghost stories told about religious practice over time animate understandings of tradition within modernity. This flash presentation will give a snapshot of my current research among Christian practitioners of yoga in British Columbia, Canada by exploring how narratives around "ancient" spiritual practice animate how modern postural yoga, despite being rooted in another tradition, gets taken up as a Christian discipline. According to these narratives, not only does yoga facilitate healthy Christian spirituality in a modern pluralistic society, but it is also a way of reclaiming aspects of embodied spirituality that are seen as fundamental to earlier Christianity but lost over time. Not to mention that yoga has its own lingering ghosts-remnants of its entanglements with Hinduism that must be "exorcised" in order for the practice to be reimagined as part of a Christian spiritual lineage. Drawing from my ethnographic research, I will briefly consider how the reclamation of "tradition" is an orienting force for Christian yoga practitioners in response to both the challenges and opportunities posed by the forces of secularization and pluralism in contemporary Canada.

Presenter(s): Leah Mernaugh

The Stable Conflict of Thorned Flesh: Fracture and 'Side-B' Baptist Sexuality

This paper explores how celibate gay Baptists in Texas understand their sexual identity in relation to their faith and connection to God. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork with both progressive and conservative Baptist churches in Texas, I argue that many "Side B" gay Baptist men (who believe being gay is not inherently wrong, but acting on it is) live out what Joel Robbins (2007) has called a "stable conflict" in their identity: a permanent, unresolved moral contradiction that does not erode a stable sense of self, but constitutes it instead. Rather than seeing themselves as torn between two irreconcilable halves – their sexuality and their Baptist faith – Side B practitioners understand their sexuality as part of the way God made them, yet a sin nonetheless: a "thorn in the

flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7) that must be borne and endured. Through the story of one such man, an interlocutor I call Mark, I argue that this theologized notion of "thorned flesh" provides a way of inhabiting a morally and spiritually contradictory identity without the expectation of resolution. Celibacy here is not seen as a cure or a temporary compromise, but as spiritual praxis that affirms both God's love and the inherent brokenness of the self, while also emphasising the nobility of Christian suffering. I argue that what appears as internal fragmentation is in fact a generative ethical form, one that challenges linear models of spiritual growth and binary models of competing, internal identities. For these believers, to be gay and Baptist is not to live in between two selves, but to live through the enduring work of managing that contradiction.

Presenter(s): Thomas Long

536 Society for Medical Anthropology Flash Session #7

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Silvana Matassini, McGill University, Leslie Carlin, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Megan Grabill, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, H. Atuk, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Department of Science and Technology Studies, Cyril Clement, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Elis Borde

Presenter(s): Silvana Matassini, McGill University, Leslie Carlin, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Megan Grabill, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, H. Atuk, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Department of Science and Technology Studies, Cyril Clement, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Elis Borde

Presentation(s): "Diagnostic Trajectories: The Validation of Pain in Women and the history of women's sexual health in Peru"

This research delves into women's experiences navigating the medical diagnostic process in Perú. In this work, I investigate how gender biases and preconceived notions about the female body influence diagnosis, treatment, and, ultimately, the validation of women's pain. On one hand, it is an exploration about how women must often "unlearn" their bodies-which is a process that involves challenging culturally ingrained ideas and medical stereotypes that have historically undermined their experiences of pain. Women may start to question whether the pain they experience is indeed "normal" or if it should be taken seriously. On the other, this research aims to understand how medical professionals learn to approach female bodies and the dilemmas they face in diagnosing and treating women's pain. For these purposes, while having interviews with women I also trace the development of women's health care services in Perú from the early 20th century to present. I focus on how policies, medical education and healthcare access for women have evolved over time, particularly to reproductive health and gynecology. In doing so, I try to understand why some women's narratives about their health are often silenced or dismissed within the Peruvian medical system.

Presenter(s): Silvana Matassini

Co-author(s): Dafne Lastra Landa

'You knew that Friday was coming': the critical nature of community of practice in a peer-health coaching intervention for spinal cord injury

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger have argued that 'communities of practice' (CoP) are everywhere in daily life and that engagement in them allows for 'situated learning', or knowledge acquisition within a communal, non-formal (i.e. non-classroom) setting. The concept now extends into activism and the promulgation of social movements, but the recipe for creating such a community is vague and ephemeral. In the development of the peer-health coaching program SCI&U we observed the organic growth of a CoP. In this paper we explore perspectives shared by peer-health coaches (PHCs) on the development, value, and role of the community created while learning and practicing coaching for individuals living with spinal cord injury (SCI).

SCI&U is an online health self-management program developed by and for people living with SCI using a peer-health coaching model to promote health, well-being, and enhanced quality of life for people living with SCI. The data discussed here result from the feasibility phase of the program which ran for two years from 2020 (during the Covid-19 pandemic). Unlike peer mentoring, peer health coaches have both lived experience and professional training. The eight PHCs received training and certification in techniques of coaching such as motivational interviewing, brief action planning, and mental health first aid, and were paid for their time. In total they coached 60 community-living individuals with SCI from across Canada.

The design of the intervention focused on the dyadic relationship of coach and participant; however the coaches met as a group on-screen, every Friday, for trouble-shooting and sharing of experiences. At the program's conclusion we conducted in-depth interviews with all eight PHCs. Analysis of these interviews, along with reflections by researchers who attended 'Friday debriefs' revealed the crucial importance of the dynamic community that developed through these meetings. Learning about coaching occurred through the formal training sessions, but the "camaraderie" and "shared experience" of the 'Friday debriefs' became ongoing and powerful modes of maintaining and expanding coaching expertise. Said one coach, "The discussions are totally amazing and inclusive...they're a good meeting, we learn a lot but they're also fun. It's like you've got this group of people that you're working with that have become more than colleagues and we've only ever met each other online."

We conclude that Lave and Wenger's articulation of CoP and more broadly of situated learning constitute what one member of the team dubs the 'special sauce' that makes the practice of peer-health coaching beneficial both for coaches and for the coaching participants. SCI&U may be considered a case study for the juxtaposition of formal learning with an organic, unexpectedly essential community both of and for the practice of peer-health coaching.

The University of Toronto granted ethics approval.

Presenter(s): Leslie Carlin

Co-author(s): Sarah Skeels, John Shepherd, Barry Araña, Susan Jaglal

Ethical Negotiations in Hospital Pastoral Care Consults

Hospital chaplains work between disparate ontological spaces, providing spiritual support and counsel while also navigating the constraints and concerns of an interdisciplinary medical team. They are translators between spiritual and medical worlds, gaining a unique perspective on end of life care as they support people in multilayered and ambiguous ways which are often difficult to adjudicate as "effective." This stands in marked contrast to the technocratic focus on efficacy and metrics present in mainstream clinical medicine.

This presentation draws on preliminary results from fieldwork conducted in and around hospitals in Los Angeles County. Using pastoral care consults as a point of entry, it investigates how complex questions of suffering, dis/ability, and quality of life are negotiated within the care team, as well as within the patient's family. This research seeks to understand how chaplains support people making difficult decisions regarding the cessation of curative treatments or the withdrawal of life support. At the same time, it explores how chaplains balance spiritual beliefs and priorities with the highly regulated space of the hospital, constructing their work as meaningful and legible within hospital bureaucracy.

Presenter(s): Megan Grabill

Ghostly Technologies: AI, Telehealth, and the Ethereal Illusion of Access

This paper critically examines the role of AI-driven telehealth solutions in addressing healthcare accessibility, with a specific focus on virtual chatbots. While such technologies are often marketed as remedies for systemic inequalities in healthcare access, they frequently reconfigure existing disparities and introduce new ones. AI chatbots embody a form of technosolutionism, in which deeply social and historical issues—such as healthcare discrimination, stigma, and economic barriers—are imagined as solvable through technological intervention. I explore these dynamics by combining long-term ethnographic fieldwork with an analysis of Albert, a virtual chatbot launched by Gilead Sciences as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative in Turkey. Designed to provide information about HIV, Albert holds the potential to offer relief in a country where access to accurate and stigma-free HIV-related information remains severely limited. However, in practice, the chatbot fails to provide any substantive material or emotional support for people living with HIV. This case raises crucial ethical and political questions: What does it mean for a pharmaceutical giant to withhold PrEP—a proven HIV-prevention method—from the Turkish market due to financial disinterest, while simultaneously offering a chatbot under the guise of corporate care? By situating this case within broader debates on the neoliberalization of care and digital health governance, I interrogate the notion of the "spectral technology," i.e. how AI chatbots simulate care without truly offering it, or how corporate interventions in healthcare create an illusion of support while withholding material resources. Through this analysis, I challenge the assumption that AI-driven telehealth solutions offer a genuine pathway to health equity, arguing instead that they reinforce the

very disparities they claim to solve. Digital health tools like Albert ultimately serves as a means for corporations to claim ethical responsibility while evading material obligations.

Presenter(s): H. Atuk

Making Health Equity a Reality: The Role of Health Insurance Navigators in Expanding Healthcare Access for Immigrant Communities in Washington State

In December 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved a State Innovation Waiver under section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), allowing Washington State to provide health and dental insurance coverage to all its residents, regardless of immigration status, from 2024 to 2028. The goal of the Section 1332 waiver is to decrease the number of uninsured, minimize the cost burden of healthcare on individuals and the government, improve health outcomes, and address health disparities. Health insurance navigators, who help people select, enroll, and use health insurance coverage, are charged with implementing this policy change. Their contributions to improving access to health insurance for marginalized communities are often undervalued, even ignored, but will be crucial to ensuring migrant, refugee, and undocumented individuals are able to enroll for health insurance. This project presents key insights gained from over 30 interviews with navigators working in public health departments, community-based organizations, non-profit hospitals, and health clinics across the state, as well as, policymakers and activists focused on expanding healthcare access for immigrant communities. Using semi-structured interviews with insurance navigators, I explored their responsibilities and tasks, the process of enrolling immigrant communities for health insurance, and the training and resources that support navigators. Additionally, I analyzed official documents used for the section 1332 waiver application to examine the motivations and narratives used to justify this insurance access expansion. My research shows how navigators deal with punitive immigration policies, xenophobic political rhetoric, financial uncertainty, cybersecurity concerns, staffing inadequacies, and high demand. This project advances our understanding of the systemic constraints, decision-making processes, and navigators' discretionary power, relationships, and unique skills that immediately shape access to and use of healthcare and will inform policies that aim to codify health equity for immigrant communities.

Presenter(s): Cyril Clement

Who is afraid of decoloniality? On the implications of (urban) health research otherwise

This article examines the practice of knowledge coproduction from a decolonial perspective, emphasizing meaningful engagement and collaboration rather than superficial or extractive interactions. Grounded in a thorough exploration of decolonial theory, it investigates the political, methodological, theoretical, and practical implications of genuinely incorporating decolonial frameworks in research. Drawing from an international research project, the discussion outlines innovative approaches to budgeting, management structures, theoretical foundations, methodologies, and dissemination strategies and outlines the implications of assuming a decolonial approach in (urban) health research beyond merely rhetorical references to the

approach. The paper highlights the role and importance of community-based researchers to decolonize knowledge production and discusses different models of collaboration, identifies common challenges, and reflects on adaptable approaches tailored to the unique characteristics of social movements, community organizations, and individual or collective mandates. The experiences presented highlight both the transformative potential and the persistent complexities of developing decolonial approaches in (urban) health research as these efforts challenge traditional hierarchies, radicalize reflexivity, and reshape the formats and flows of research communication.

Presenter(s): Elis Borde

Co-author(s): Solimar Carnavalli Rocha, Lucas Barbi, Magdalena Haakenstad, Lidia Maria Morais, WALESKA CAIAFFA, Helen Pineo

535 Combined Flash Session #13

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Johnathan Frew, University of Arizona, Gabrielle Powell, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Albina Abzalova, Joshua Liashenko, Chapman University, Evgenia Fotiou, Lucas Baccetto, Sonya Fix, Hilary Symes, The College of New Jersey, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Johnathan Frew, University of Arizona, Gabrielle Powell, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Albina Abzalova, Joshua Liashenko, Chapman University, Evgenia Fotiou, Lucas Baccetto, Sonya Fix, Hilary Symes, The College of New Jersey, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Chronotope in Drum Corps: How Ideas of Tradition Create Gendered Tensions in Drum Corps Discourse

Since its origins in youth community bands in the early 20th century, the idea of tradition in American drum corps has been closely tied to the art form's militaristic roots. Their performances, which can be seen as a sort of military pageantry, are marked by aesthetic choices in uniform design, musical repertoire, and marching choreography. In 2016, however, the Bluecoats drum corps won their first championship since their formation in 1972 at the Drum Corps International finals by performing a show that radically diverged from drum corps' historical traditions - instead of their usual military-style jackets and shako hats, the Bluecoats performers wore tight-fitting spandex and their faces were on full display for the audience to see. This moment represented a shift in drum corps competition in which older notions of sticking to tradition and upholding the status quo of performance styles were no longer the only viable way for a corps to be successful. Since then, recent drum corps performances have embraced change and drastically altered their aesthetic choices. As one would expect, this change has been met with criticism from older alumni who feel that the valued traditions of the corps they marched with are no longer being upheld.

Changing ideas of tradition in drum corps can be seen in discourse from current and previous performers, as well as from the staff and educators who design drum corps shows. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope can be used to help us understand how people's language use implicates them in a specific time and place, demonstrating how they participate in a recognizable discourse. As recorded through interviews in my research, which particularly examines drum corps performers' gender identity and expression, drum corps discourse communicates the existence of a historical chronotope that reflects its rigid, hypermasculine, and militaristic roots and a modern chronotope that reflects its current push towards a more expressive and reflexive social environment where notions of gender fluidity are welcomed. Chronotopes are integral to understanding drum corps discourse because they reflect how the art form functions through the performance of tradition. As people involved in drum corps discuss tradition, they position themselves somewhere within or between the historical and modern chronotopes, which has a meaningful impact on their sense of belonging in drum corps.

Presenter(s): Johnathan Frew

Diversity Funding (in) Crisis: Reframing Collaboration & Partnerships, Reflecting on Models & Strategies to Re-Imagine Sustainable Research

Researchers in 2025 are reeling from the dissolution of USAID and cuts to many funding agencies and institutions, specifically those focusing on minority populations and diversity, equity, and inclusion. What can we learn from our own discipline's history and applied research colleagues to form a strategic response that is positive, generative, and focuses on all our stakeholders' and communities' assets?

We can begin by reflecting on where we are: Where is the support within our research institutions to prioritize and facilitate the creation of Community Based Institutional Review Boards? How can we support long-term research collaborative relationships to co-identify research priorities and jointly conduct research that shares the fruits of research with the populations studied? How can we continue to support practices where local ethnic minorities seeking to create local research projects struggle to find academic affiliations within their communities, are rarely encouraged or sponsored to establish labs there, instead they join their community's "brain-drain", taking academic appointments across the country or world?

The US reality is that locally-focused and minority scholars typically must travel to other cities, states, or countries for advanced training. Upon completion of their credentialing, they then compete against global candidates for an opportunity to live/work close to their community of origin, opposing with futility against the many departments valuing being cosmopolitan. US academics are often geographically dislocated scholars with little to no interest, stake, or incentive from the academy to understand local histories and align with local populations' or their minorities' research priorities. With widespread cuts to federal funding and elimination of research by/for/on minority populations, or projects outside of the US, and challenges to freedoms (speech, academic), now is the time for the academy to re-imagine and strategize directly with minority communities and scholars.

2025 US minority graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and many precarious faculty are dealing with the loss of fellowships, research grants, an uncertainty whether a career in the academy is viable. If these academic colleagues are also dismissed as stakeholders when universities and research institutions create a new course of action, let such valuation be known. US Anthropologists have faced this crisis before. Several fruitful case studies provide models of positive university-community research partnerships that inspire sustainable, diverse, and inclusive research. They include philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, the federal System of Care research program, Asset-Based Community Development, as well as African American and Indigenous Community Based Institutional Review Boards (CBIRBs). Although Anthropology is but one of many fields facing cuts, we are uniquely suited to demonstrate collaboration exemplars to the academy.

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Powell

Empowering Care: How Algorithms Influence Decision-Making of Dialysis Nurses

As healthcare increasingly embraces artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, understanding their implications for clinical practice has become crucial. The integration of these technologies has prompted significant concerns regarding their influence on decision-making among healthcare professionals. This paper explores the collaboration between dialysis nurses and algorithms, focusing on how trust in these technologies can both enhance and threaten the quality of patient care. By offering insights into the evolving dynamics between nurses and algorithmic systems, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the intersection of technology and patient care in hospital environments, while identifying critical factors that influence clinical decision-making.

Data was collected from three dialysis centers and two hospitals in the United Arab Emirates through immersive ethnographic observations over two months and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, roundtable discussions with senior and inpatient nurses highlighted the implications of algorithm-driven technologies in their daily practice. The study examined the impact of linking dialysis machines to electronic medical records on nursing workload, patient interaction time, and how algorithms change the nature of care in healthcare.

Presenter(s): Albina Abzalova

Equipping the Next Generation: Designing an Anthropology Program to Empower Student Anthropologists

What promise does anthropology hold for the future amid uncertain times? How can reimagining curriculum design and methodological training better equip the next generation of ethnographers? This presentation seeks to offer insight into pedagogy in consideration of these questions. Global political, economic, and social instability has forced students to contemplate their lives beyond undergraduate education and how to best contribute, thrive, and survive. This is the environment in which I am assisting in the design of a new anthropology major at a mid-size R2 university in Southern California. The confluence of attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion with an increasingly diverse student body inform our approach in this heady endeavor. Experimentation

with following students' passions and intellectual curiosity has been key in our preliminary success in generating widespread interest in anthropology. Beyond focusing on anthropological theory, history, contemporary work, and methods, we use our authority as educators to partner with our students in research agendas of their own design. Among our students, we conduct ethnographic research with communities intersecting racial, ethnic, class, gendered, and sexual diversity as we as faculty work to develop student research skills and professionalization within the field. I argue collaborative pedagogy has allowed anthropology to take on new relevance that is responsive to undergraduate students today. Furthermore, this work argues a student-centered curriculum prioritizing their growth over maintaining departmental legacy or faculty achievement is critical in determining our discipline's demand and hopefully, our longevity for years to come.

Presenter(s): Joshua Liashenko

Is Psychedelic Integration Necessary or a Western Concept?

Psychedelic integration is becoming increasingly discussed and considered as more people participate in rituals using psychedelic substances globally. While the concept is gaining ground, earlier ethnographic evidence can offer valuable insight into the ways that these substances have been used in different settings before the wide use of the concept. In this presentation, I will discuss different ways that ayahuasca experiences are integrated in the context of shamanic tourism in numerous retreats in Peru. Alluding to a lack of socially sanctioned spaces for altered states of consciousness (ASCs) in western cultures, contemporary seekers find structure and intentionality in ayahuasca rituals specifically geared towards westerners. I argue that the way that these rituals are framed assists in the integration of participants' experiences, something that was not necessary in a more "traditional" setting. I will show that contemporary ayahuasca rituals attended by westerners are designed to be liminal, transformative, meaningful experiences that aim to heal the body through emotional modulation. This framing not only separates the ritual space as liminal, but also frames the way that the experience is conceptualized by the participants, ultimately increasing its meaningfulness. Finally, these intentionally framed rituals assist in integrating the visionary and bodily experiences of the participants.

Presenter(s): Evgenia Fotiou

Magic and illusionism in modernity: the fakir Tahra Bey and the Mental Hygiene Service of Pernambuco, Brazil, in the 1930s

This presentation explores the debate on magic, religion, and modernity based on the work of the Mental Hygiene Service of Pernambuco, in the Northeast of Brazil, in the 1930s. The Service is known in the literature of Brazilian social sciences mainly for its mediation with the Public Security Secretariat of Pernambuco in granting operating licenses to the then-criminalized spiritualist and Afro-Brazilian religious groups in the region. In addition, some of its members actively participated in the establishment of anthropology and studies of Afro-Brazilian religions in Pernambuco, through the publication of books based on field research and the organization of the 1st Afro-Brazilian Congress in 1934. In this paper, I will address a case of public action by the Service that has not

been explored in the literature on the subject: the spectacle of the fictional fakir Tahra Bey, said to have supernatural powers derived from the occult sciences. Publicly accused of charlatanry by members of the Service for his magical and so-called scientific practices, and considered an "illusionist" by physicians, the fakir made headlines in local newspapers with news and advertisements about his shows performed in the city of Recife in 1933, during a tour of Brazilian cities. In the meantime, proposals for experiments were carried out not only by physicians from the Mental Hygiene Service of Pernambuco but also by an association of professional magicians during the fakir's visit to the city of Rio de Janeiro. Based on a comparison of the physicians' positions regarding Tahra Bey's magical powers and the so-called magical practices performed in spiritualist centers and temples of Afro-Brazilian religions (groups that, in addition to mediumship and the incorporation of deities, have healing practices as a central characteristic), I discuss the place of magic in the Service's modernizing project. In particular, I am interested in the relationship between "illusionist magic" and "primitive magic," and how the Service sought to discipline social space through the separation and containment of each type of magic.

Presenter(s): Lucas Baccetto

Passing, Transracial Identity, and the Embedded Other: Variation in Appropriation of African American Language and Black Gestural Embodiment

Sociologist Ann Morning (2017, 2025) argues that Jessica Krug and Rachel Dolezal, two white women camouflaging as Black women in 2020 and 2015 respectively, are utilizing two different identity formation mechanisms. On one hand Jessica Krug displays a contemporary form of passing in which white women present as members of historically marginalized groups in the US, in the case of Krug, as a Black woman. On the other hand, Rachel Dolezal views herself as a decidedly transracial Black woman (Dolezal & Reback 2017), inextricably linked to a race into which she was not born. The difference here is that when passing is uncovered, there is an admission of whiteness; which is not the case for transracial identity. In this paper, we extend this distinction to the linguistic and gestural and ask how these nuances in identity formation may relate to language usage and kinesics.

We propose a new multileveled schemata for linguistic appropriation of African American Language (AAL) and embodiment by white women, presenting a four-way distinction: 1) passing appropriation, 2) transracial appropriation and 3) affected appropriation (i.e., voicing someone else in negative stance taking). We argue that these varying forms of appropriation have different linguistic manifestations. Finally, we contrast Krug and Dolezal language use with the white women presented in Fix 2014, who are embedded in African American communities and social networks in Ohio, but do not claim transracial identity or pass as African American.

We demonstrate that varying orientation to racial identity yields use of differentiated use of African American language and Black gestural embodiment (cf Rickford and Rickford 1976, Barrett 1999, Goodwin and Alim 2010, McCaskill et al. 2011, Blake 2019). The women we consider use these features in different ways to different ends: Jessica Krug uses selected stereotyped features of Afro-Latinx English language, prosody, and embodiment that yield a performance of Black Latinx identity

that many view as inauthentic. Rachel Dolezal's use of AAL and embodied gestures associated with Blackness are rare –and when used, are subtle, aligned with topic-focused style shifts and affective stances in which she is affirming and defending her purported transracial identity. This is in contrast to white women in Ohio who use a subset of AAL features with relative consistency, albeit with instances of style-shifting to voice themselves using AAL as well affected appropriation of AAL to voice others, often with a negative stance. White women embedded in African American communities appear to use a wider range of AAL linguistic resources than either Dolezal or Krug.

Presenter(s): Sonya Fix

Co-author(s): Renée Blake

The Specter of Failure: Haunting the Path to Legal Professionalism

In the lives of aspiring lawyers, failure is not a singular moment but a spectral presence that shapes and reshapes the contours of professional identity. This paper draws on ethnographic research with recent law graduates studying for the bar exam to trace how failure manifests in three key forms: the anticipatory fear of failing, the actual experience of not passing the exam, and the bureaucratic impasse of a non-transferrable score across jurisdictions. Each form of failure lingers in the lives of would-be legal professionals, haunting daily rhythms, social worlds, and imagined futures.

Theoretically, this paper is grounded in Avery Gordon's (1997) formulation of haunting as "a constituent element of modern social life," one that reveals the structures of power through their ghostly effects. These hauntings, felt in the stomach-drop of uncertainty, the recursive rewatching of bar prep videos, the silence of an unopened score report, are not only affective but political. They make visible the bar exam's role as a disciplinary apparatus that polices access to professional legitimacy and reifies existing hierarchies along lines of race, class, and geography. Drawing also on affect theory and the anthropology of the state, I examine how bar study becomes an affective labor site where students engage in prolonged self-surveillance, internalizing responsibility for success or failure in a way that obscures the exam's structural violence.

By attending to the ghostly - what is sensed but not always seen - this paper argues that the bar exam does not merely assess legal knowledge; it produces a haunted subject: suspended between student and lawyer, legitimacy and exclusion, arrival and deferral. These not-yet-lawyers inhabit a professional purgatory shaped by absence, by what might have been, and by the felt weight of failure's possibility. In this spectral terrain, the promise of the legal profession is as much about managing proximity to failure as it is about attaining success.

Presenter(s): Hilary Symes

527 Combined Flash Session #9

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Rania Madani , Alexandra Sheldon, University of Texas at San Antonio, Xinyi Wu , Thomas De Pree , Mahsa Najafi

Presenter(s): Rania Madani, Alexandra Sheldon, University of Texas at San Antonio, Xinyi Wu, Thomas De Pree, Mahsa Najafi

Presentation(s): Complicating “climate refugeeism”: Social inequalities in the age of climate change

In the Jodah border area between Sudan and South Sudan-situated within Sudan-some individuals and groups have been classified as climate refugees, despite not having crossed an international border in response to climate change or environmental disruption. Many of these individuals have remained in the villages their families have inhabited for generations. In contrast, other groups who crossed the border from South Sudan into Jodah following the severe flooding that began in 2021 were denied recognition as climate refugees. Focusing on the communities of the Jenubeen-a term referring to particular groups identified as non-Arab, non-Muslims who have been historically marginalized, racialized, and dominated by Arab-Muslim groups generally known as Shumaleen-this paper examines how climate change intensifies existing social inequalities. It further challenges assumptions that dominant groups are inherently privileged, revealing the complexities of identity, mobility, and recognition in the context of environmental displacement.

In this presentation, I argue that the embodied differences of the Jenubeen-as racialized and gendered subjects-are mobilized in their classification as climate refugees, regardless of whether they have crossed an international border. These embodied markers are not merely read as indicators of vulnerability; rather, they are rendered analogous to environmental disruptions such as flooding, drought, and other climate events. Within this framing, Jenubeen communities are constructed not only as victims of climate change but also as emblematic of climate disruption itself. Conversely, individuals presumed to belong to dominant groups-Shumaleen-who do not fit the racialized profile ascribed to the Jenubeen, are often excluded from the category of climate refugees, even when their displacement is directly linked to environmental crises. This analysis reveals how climate change deepens existing social hierarchies and challenges assumptions about power, privilege, and racialized belonging in the context of climate-induced displacement.

Presenter(s): Rania Madani

Sentiment analysis of guest reviews highlights potential for ecolodges to support howler monkey conservation in Belize

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism with important implications for wildlife conservation. For example, in central Belize ecolodges maintain forest patches that represent important refugia for the endangered Yucatan black howler monkey (*Alouatta pigra*). To understand the relationship between ecotourism and primate persistence, I collected 3904 online ecolodge reviews from the 10-year period (2015-2024) for six ecolodges in the San Ignacio area of Belize. All of the ecolodges are home to one or more howler groups (Mean = 2.67; Range: 1-7).

Reviews we uploaded into R (version 4.5.0) and we conducted a sentiment analysis using the sentiment package, a subset of NLP (natural language processing). We calculated a sentiment score for each review to determine how guests felt about their overall experiences staying at the lodges. Sentiment scores range from -1 (very negative) to +1 (very positive). Most reviews came from the US ($p < 0.05$), followed by Canada, the UK and Belize and most reviews were five out of five stars ($p < 0.05$). The mean guest rating over the 10-years is 4.89 stars and the mean sentiment score is 0.28. Guest ratings and sentiment scores are slightly higher during the last five years compared to the first five years in the dataset.

Based on the sentiment analysis scores, we further analyzed the 10 highest and 10 lowest reviews (mean = 0.73, 0.01 respectively) for each lodge for content and themes to determine what visitors value, and what their complaints were. The negative reviews most commonly mentioned price, lack of air conditioning, insects inside the accommodations, and dissatisfaction with the lodge conditions. Positive reviews most commonly mentioned the friendly staff, proximity to nature, food, and wildlife. Reviews that mentioned howler monkeys had consistently high guest ratings and high sentiment scores ($N = 531$, mean 4.88 stars, mean 0.28 sentiment). In negative reviews where howler monkeys were mentioned, they were always described in positive terms.

Ecotodges must strike a balance between their desire to ensure guest satisfaction while also meeting the objectives of ecotourism (e.g., conservation of wildlife and habitats, support of local communities, education for tourists and locals, and preservation of local culture). Positive sentiment toward howler monkeys, even in otherwise negative reviews, provide evidence that ecotodges can contribute positively to howler monkey conservation in this critical habitat.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Sheldon

Co-author(s): Diane Lopez, Javier Ruedas, Thad Bartlett

Space for the Departed: Burial, Land Scarcity, and Alternative Practices in China

-Bone-Ash Apartments

This paper examines the emergence of bone ash apartments (骨灰房)-residential units informally repurposed to store cremated remains-as spatial and moral adaptations to China's urban funeral crisis. These units are not merely practical responses to land scarcity and rising burial costs, but hybrid sites where Confucian ethics, economic pragmatism, and ritual reinvention converge. Drawing on discourse analysis of over 2,500 social media comments and interviews with urban residents, funeral practitioners, and real estate agents, I trace how bone ash apartments reconfigure boundaries between the living and the dead, sacred and secular, property and kinship.

Some embrace them as modern ancestral halls, arranging urns hierarchically and drawing curtains to simulate feng shui protections. Others accept them conditionally-so long as death remains discreetly veiled. Online discourse reveals a paradox: growing openness to ecological burials coexists with enduring Confucian obligations of filial piety. Meanwhile, China's three-decade real estate boom has turned death into a housing question. Unlike cemetery plots, which expire after 20

years, apartments offer long-term security and resale value. Bone ash apartments thus emerge as informal extensions of the property market-commodities of grief forged in regulatory grey zones where formal governance fails and informal trust prevails.

Urban isolation further enables their spread. As traditional community rituals decline and neighbors grow estranged, ashes become less disruptive than living cohabitants. These spectral neighbors reflect, rather than threaten, the atomization of urban life. Ultimately, bone ash apartments are not cultural aberrations, but evidence of China's evolving moral economy-negotiating loss, belonging, and the right to remain in place, even after death.

Presenter(s): Xinyi Wu

The Afterlife of the Mt. Taylor "Zombie Mine" and the Continuance of Life around the Snowcapped Mountain

In May 2018, the New Mexico Mining Commission held a public hearing regarding a permit revision that would allow the Mt. Taylor Uranium Mine to change its status from "standby" to "operating." New Mexico Environmental Law Center contested the decision on behalf of two non-governmental organizations: Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) and Amigos Bravos. The mine would operate under the auspices of a company called Rio Grande Resources, a subsidiary of General Atomics, on a section of private property adjacent to a state designated Traditional Cultural Property for five nominating Native American Tribes. Because the mine did not appear economically viable, the petitioners characterized it as "a classic zombie mine scenario," indicating that the mine was not quite dead and not quite alive. Rather than dwelling in the ontological politics of the mountain as a sacred entity, MASE and colleagues forcefully enunciated an economic critique of "zombie mines." Based on my experience during the hearing, I will describe the different forms of vitalizing discourse associated with both the economic lifecycle of the mine and the vital relations of the mountain. By examining the competing logics of life represented at the hearing, I aim to contribute to a tradition of research on mining in environmental anthropology.

Presenter(s): Thomas De Pree

The Interconnection of Zoroastrian Beliefs, Burial Practices, and Environmental Stewardship in the Sassanian Era

In the Sassanian period, Zoroastrian beliefs profoundly influenced burial practices, reflecting a complex interplay between religion, health, and environmental stewardship. This study delves into the unique Zoroastrian approach to death and the afterlife, particularly the ritual of exposing corpses in Dakhmas, or Towers of Silence, designed to prevent the pollution of earth, air, and water. Central to this practice was the conviction that a corpse, once the soul departed, became a source of contamination, potentially leading to disease outbreaks. The meticulous design of Dakhmas, constructed in accordance with strict religious laws, ensured that remains could be purified by nature while preserving the sanctity of the land.

Zoroastrian texts emphasize the imperative of maintaining environmental purity as a divine mandate. Rituals surrounding the treatment of the dead followed by exposure to scavengers-served not only as spiritual acts but also as practical public health measures aimed at minimizing contamination.

Moreover, the Sassanian emphasis on pollution prevention extended to broader public health policies that prioritized cleanliness and ritual purity as vital components of community well-being. By examining Sassanian burial practices through the lens of Zoroastrian beliefs, this study highlights the intricate relationships among ancient traditions, religious doctrines, and environmental management, illustrating how these elements collectively shaped health and hygiene practices of the time. Such insights deepen our understanding of ancient Iranian society and challenge contemporary perceptions of health care as a solely modern phenomenon.

Furthermore, it is evident that Zoroastrian teachings regarding the treatment of the dead were deeply intertwined with public health considerations, as the prevention of contamination was seen as essential not only for spiritual purity but also for the physical well-being of the community. In this way, the Zoroastrian approach to death reflects a sophisticated understanding of the interconnectedness of health, religion, and the environment, offering valuable lessons that resonate with modern discussions on sustainability and public health.

Presenter(s): Mahsa Najafi

4271 Cosmographies of Comparison and Commensuration I: Equivalences, Proxies, Persons

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Are "commensuration" and "comparison" the same, but different? How do practices of equivalence-making show up in our fieldsites and theories, and what do they accomplish? This panel centers on the "tensional" (Dewey, 1938; see Savransky, 2021) relation between rubrics of commensuration and comparison used both by social scientists and the people we work with and learn from. We pursue a wide range of questions about equivalence-making from a reflexively "cosmographic" angle. Franz Boas (1887, 140) defined "cosmography" as the science which attends to individuality, on its own terms, in order to recognize "totality in the individuality" of social life (1887, 140). Quasi-naturalistic "comparative" methods, he argued, enable the opposite, locating "individuality in the totality." By working towards a "cosmography of comparison," members of this panel seek to extend Boas's critique by revisiting longstanding but underdetermined roles that "commensuration" and "comparison" play in ethnographic theory and practice.

"Commensuration" has long been commonly deployed as a rubric across the social sciences to characterize social (and nominally "economic") processes that bring two or more entities into enumerative (and thus evaluative) relation through reference to a common "metric," where the

metric in question may range from decibels to dollars. Building on the sociological work of Espeland and Stevens (1998), social scientists have more recently moved beyond scientific framings of "commensuration," approaching it instead as part of humans' everyday equipment for living.

Linguists have also conventionally framed "comparison's" grammatical categoriality with reference to paradigmatic relations between entities that share different degrees of the same gradable property (e.g., height). Comparison in these accounts is categorially and co-textually emergent, a discursive-semiotic phenomenon that inflects humans' aspirations or "navigational capacities" (Appadurai, 2004), and so helps configure the rhythms of everyday life. Anthropologists, while not fully engaging insights from formal linguistics, have nevertheless moved beyond a linguistic focus on sentence-level denotation, attending to comparison's co-textual dynamics or "social life," shedding light on how tacitly presupposed thresholds or context-sensitive "points of departure" (Sapir, 1944; see Kennedy, 2008) are ethnographically revealable through careful attention to the patterned, chain-like dynamics of everyday talk.

This panel moves beyond questions of "comparison" and "commensuration" as "impossible" (but indispensable) scientific "method[s]" (Evans-Pritchard; Candea, 2018), to more closely examine how people reflexively explore, evaluate, or otherwise enumerate and so reckon the tropological "more-or-lessnesses" of life.

In this, the first part of a two-part panel, we explore these issues through topics ranging from jujitsu, rock climbing, call centers, and Indigenous healing

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew M. Carruthers, University of Pennsylvania, Adrienne Cohen, Colorado State University

Presenter(s): Jay Schutte, Adrienne Cohen, Colorado State University, Kristina Nielsen, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Kaylani Manglona, University of Pennsylvania

Discussant: Andrew M. Carruthers, University of Pennsylvania

Presentation(s): Mediating Malleable Masculinities: Chronotopic Calibrations of Play, Danger, and Personhood in the Chimerican Jitsuverse

This paper identifies and analyzes a tension between real-time interactional, intersubjective learning practices in Chinese and American training rooms; and the 'virtual' – seemingly spatiotemporally remote – gendering of personae and icons of personhood that populate and animate the 'Chimerican jitsuverse' as a practice-based pedagogical chronotope (Bakhtin 1981, Bourdieu 1977, Wacquant 2004, Carr 2011). The study is based on participant observation, media ethnography, and analysis of instructional/pedagogical communicative events in competitive jiu-jitsu settings in China and beyond. Contributing to innovative recent work on sequence organization (Kendrick et. al. 2020; Lindwal and Mondada 2025) and gender stereotypification in kinesic social life (notably in anthropologies of dance and sport [cf. Sherouse 2016 and Cohen 2021]), I study competition-oriented jiu-jitsu instruction – and its imbricated ideologies of mobility –

as an intersectionally-sophisticated zone of metapragmatic and metasemantic activity (Silverstein 1976). In doing so, I hope to demonstrate the entanglement of 'human' communicative infrastructures and the not-necessarily-'human,' yet ultimately gendered, personae that populate them. This entanglement, I propose, prompts a transverse understanding of the roles of mobility, structure, and what Edward Sapir once termed 'form-feeling' in the learning process.

Presenter(s): Jay Schutte

Relational Objects

Commensuration features prominently in the practice of rock climbing as practitioners wrangle intensive magnitudes into lexical, numerical, and tangible objects in attempts to locate where or how they intersect. This paper is about the tangible objects. As climbers began to cultivate their practice away from real rock on indoor walls and in urban environments, new questions emerged around what is fake and what is real, what can be replicated and for which reasons. At first, indoor climbing mimicked the outdoor practice. Holds screwed onto walls were supposed to resemble rocks, and sometimes they were rocks. But over time, "hold-shaping" became a craft in its own right, and shapers quickly jettisoned the idea of making pretend rocks and, by extension, pretend rock climbing. Instead, they began to create intensive and affecting experiences, guided by relational objects. Shapers took a simple kind of iconism rooted in the visual and the tactile—(holds resemble rocks)—and asked what happens when we shift the presuppositions guiding the equation. What happens when what we are trying to replicate is the emotion of the endeavor, not its tangible surface? What about when what is replicated is a tensional corporeal attitude (to extend Dewey into bodies) achieved between physical objects? What about when temporality is at stake?

Presenter(s): Adrienne Cohen

Cosmographies of Neutrality

The call center industry in India trains agents to sound "neutral," but what does neutral mean, for whom is it neutral, and how does one become neutrally accented? This paper draws from 18 months of ethnographic observation of the accent training and hiring industry, where accent trainers and callers are taught to identify and index neutrality with their voices for industry professionals who belong to the class of urban-educated Indian elites. Accents are the association of regularities in speech sound with social replications of personae. Due to the nature of both sound and social personae, accents are always the result of partially overlapping recognitions and need to be commensurated through repetitive processes of enregistering the connection between ideas of person and sound. This is done with a combination of negation and grading, whereby individual instances of sound are ordered relative to ideas of neutrality. This data pushes back against binary theories of markedness to show how neutrality is an emergence of partial commensuration stemming from partially congruent thresholds of social difference. Further, upper caste and upper class aspirants are better primed to navigate industry thresholds of neutrality.

Presenter(s): Kristina Nielsen

Pacific Presences & Personhood: Intensities, Gradients, and Chamorro Medicine

In Chamorro, to say "I am Lani" is to say "Lani, intensely." This grammatical structure reveals an ontological framework in which personhood is not a bounded entity, but a modulated presence—shaped by kinship, cosmology, and recognition. This essay explores how Chamorro healing practices articulate personhood as emergent within gradient matrices inclusive of plants, ancestors, kin, and Catholic icons. I propose that Chamorro healing offers a theory of personhood where intensity—not identity—is the metric of visibility. The self is not claimed; it is measured through presence, in degrees, in gradients, and in the unfolding alignment of people, plants, and ancestors. This essay proceeds through a cosmographic method attuned to the spatial, ethical, and semiotic conditions under which persons appear, vanish, or return. Drawing from auto-ethnographic fieldwork—including the preparation of manglo' matrice (a vaginal nourishment medicine), spectral refusals in the forest, and familial negotiations of mourning—I examine how personhood emerges through intensities, forming gradients shaped by multiple cosmological grounds and an intensification of presences. I ask: How is presence staged, refused, or withheld across overlapping cosmological terrains? What happens when healing is delayed, when the medicinal plant disappears, and when the dead do not return to the forest?

Presenter(s): Kaylani Manglona

Discussion

512 Combined Flash Session #5

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM through 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Todd Nicewonger, Virginia Tech, Caroline New, Barbara Stiubiener Abrahao, Page McClean, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Worku Nida, University of California, Riverside, Willi Lempert, Bowdoin College, Alexander Fedorov, Jamie Davidson, University of California, Davis

Presenter(s): Todd Nicewonger, Virginia Tech, Caroline New, Barbara Stiubiener Abrahao, Page McClean, University of Colorado, Boulder, Department of Anthropology, Worku Nida, University of California, Riverside, Willi Lempert, Bowdoin College, Alexander Fedorov, Jamie Davidson, University of California, Davis

Presentation(s): Atmospheric Blue: Exploring Experimental Bookmaking and Speculative Design Storytelling in Alaska

This presentation reflects on a design anthropology experiment that combines experimental bookmaking with speculative storytelling, grounded in ongoing ethnographic research. It examines how metaphors drawn from fieldwork with cold-climate housing designers can disrupt conventional thinking and open new modes of understanding and being. The work builds on deeply

situated knowledge gained through observing and participating in design activities in Alaska, with a focus on housing disparities in remote Alaska Native communities.

Building on this research, the presentation includes reflections on the historical injustices in housing that motivate the work of these designers, as well as the challenges they face in developing design responses to housing insecurity. However, these narratives remain incomplete, just like many of the design projects reflected on in this research. This incompleteness arises because many of the projects and activities I observed and participated in are ongoing, set amidst multiple political, environmental, and cultural changes. In this sense, these stories represent one perspective of reality, entangled with diverse ways of knowing, creating, and becoming in the North.

Drawing on this framework, this presentation examines how combining anthropology with creative techniques from experimental bookmaking and speculative storytelling can reveal critical insights into design processes. It focuses on how this approach can enhance ongoing research practices by highlighting seemingly benign or taken-for-granted systems and forces that impact the world of cold-climate housing designers. Examples include barge networks that deliver housing supplies to remote villages and the implications of permafrost degradation on the structural integrity of homes in the region. By learning from and creatively experimenting with these perspectives, "Atmospheric Blue" demonstrates how cold climate housing design storytelling can emerge as collective, relational acts, bringing form and meaning to unseen dynamics in built and natural environments.

Presenter(s): Todd Nicewonger

Brackish Hauntings: The Southern Gothic of Extinction

This paper explores the triangulation of death, extinction, and grief in coastal Georgia and Florida, in order to examine how environmental ontologies and ethics arise in landscapes with ruinous pasts and perilous futures. To do so, I engage with the Southern Gothic—a literary genre characterized by themes of hauntings and decay, the uncanny and the grotesque—as a cultural context and a narrative mode that has evolved to enfold the ecological ghosts and monsters of the modern world: radioactive waterways, epidemics of mysterious illness, proliferations of invasive species, ghostly absences of the extinct, and spiritual interpretations of changing weather patterns. This study takes seriously how the literary genre of the Southern Gothic has been wielded as resistance to the image of the idyllic, pastoral South by exposing its historic underbelly of racism and class disparity. In response, I take a historical perspective to consider how forms of resistance have been shaped by the entanglement of humans with more-than-human entities—cypress swamps, hurricanes, barrier islands, and unique fauna—resulting in identities intertwined with the landscape's own precarity. In addition to archival and ethnographic research, I incorporate my own creative work as a poet and visual artist to contribute to the Southern Gothic as a collective voice of resistance.

Presenter(s): Caroline New

Carbon Longings: Quilombolas Between Climate Change and Financial Futures in

Amazônia

In 2022, a quilombo community of the Brazilian Amazônia decided to engage with a consultancy firm and an investment bank to produce environmental assets for large polluters interested in compensating their carbon emissions to claim themselves as morally superior corporations. The consultancy firm put in place a range of processes that aimed to translate the worlds of the quilombolas into the worlds of finance. This was rarely a straightforward process, and these interventions often created misunderstandings about the social transformation that would be generated after the arrival of the extra-ordinary financial revenues promised by the carbon project.

This paper analyses how the encounter between finance and quilombo was mediated by different promises as regard the future. I am interested in the playout of temporalities in the creation of financial value. For instance, the fact that the financial actors were operating in an uncharted territory meant that risk management became central to convince investors about the legitimacy of their financial operation. These risks had to do with assumptions of what racialized groups like quilombolas 'lacked', particularly management capacities or devices of economic governance. These assumptions were inherited from Brazil's history of colonialism and racial politics. In other words, the fact quilombolas are descendants from those who escaped cacao plantations and livestock production deeply shaped the practices and perceptions which took place in the present. To overcome the financial risks entailed by raciality, the consultancy firm and the investment bank had to predict and control what the future of quilombolas and their forests would look like. Nevertheless, quilombolas created a range of strategies to dispute their futures. Quilombolas wanted to use revenues to fulfill their immediate needs and desires. By doing so they challenged the idea of a specific expertise and form of financial planning that was necessary to create confidence in the project. This is because investors wanted to make sure that the social transformations promised by the project would not be ephemeral.

I suggest in this paper that transforming the quilombo was full of ambiguous meanings: transformation both allowed and threatened the creation of value. The playout of temporalities meant that the past, the present and the future were intrinsically linked, overlapped and in constant relation during my observation. Importantly, these conflicting temporalities became visible as, in capitalist frontiers, "speculation arises out of social difference" (Bear 2020:2). In this paper I disentangle the different temporal orientations and rationalities of this project. I show that beyond the fact that the local reality of the quilombo was affected by various financial practices, one should not ignore the dialectic dimension of this process: the quilombo deeply influenced what finance looks like in 'risky' territories.

Presenter(s): Barbara Stiubiener Abrahao

El Caleuche: Disappearance and Dispossession in Chilean Patagonia

El Caleuche is a ghost ship which haunts the archipelagoes around the island of Chiloé, Chile. It is also the nickname of a man of Chilote (from Chiloé) descent who disappeared during the Pinochet dictatorship, much farther south, in a small town in Patagonia. In this flash presentation I will

explore the metaphorical possibilities of the ghost ship to think through the rumors of the disappearance of El Caleuche. His spectral presence in landscape, memory, and story suggests the unresolved circumstances of his death. Ghosts have certainly haunted experiences and studies of Southern Cone dictatorships. El Caleuche opens the possibility for thinking through the experiences of post-dictatorship rural Patagonia, where loss often takes different forms than in central Chilean cities. The details of the story bring forth dispossession, police brutality, and forced Chilean nationalism that was experienced collectively in a fervently bicultural region. Not just any ghost, El Caleuche also highlights the connection that many of the town and region's residents still feel to their Chilote heritage and their histories of placemaking across Patagonia.

Presenter(s): Page McClean

Entrepreneurialism as nation-making: The Gurage Case in Ethiopia

Once considered an underclass, Gurage people have emerged as Ethiopia's quintessential entrepreneurial class over the last seven decades. Studies on entrepreneurialism often focus on factors contributing to entrepreneurial success, such as ethnicity. This Gurage case study rethinks entrepreneurialism as nation-making, demonstrating how Gurage entrepreneurialism was essential to the formation of Ethiopia's modern economy and nation-state in the twentieth century. Based on extensive ethnohistorical research, This paper tells a story about Gurage entrepreneurialism's input to the Ethiopian nation-building project, which contributes to larger theoretical discussions about entrepreneurialism, nation-making, the state-market nexus, and threats of foreign dominance in African markets.

Presenter(s): Worku Nida

Starman Waiting in the Sky: Songwriting as Method in Outer Space Ethnography

This talk brings together two unlikely ethnographic threads: emerging innovations in outer space anthropology and the use of songwriting as method. Over the past decade, scholars including Susan Lepselter and David Valentine have centered the poetic and speculative in the anthropology of outer space, an approach which has been featured in edited collections in journals such as *Cultural Anthropology*. This creative consensus is partly because extraterrestrial anthropology challenges the limits of what humans can conceive, where ghosts of colonial pasts and celestial futures haunt one another. When outer spaces have been imagined at a broad popularized level, it has also been through creative work such as science fiction cinema and writing. I argue that ethnographic songwriting--including the groundbreaking work of Kristina Jacobsen--holds vast potential for further unfolding the anthropology of outer space, with the unique ability of song creation and communication to transmit what Yip Harburg described as "thoughts that feel." Illustrating the importance of both talking and singing about this process, I share a song that I wrote for my next book, and how it has expanded my own thinking about contemporary outer space colonialism.

Presenter(s): Willi Lempert

Staycations and Habitus in Flux: Substitutional Leisure Practices in Pandemic Hong Kong

This study examines the transformation of Hong Kong's hotel sector during the COVID-19 pandemic through a 19-month autoethnography, tracing how staycations reconfigured urban recreation in a densely populated, globally connected Asian city. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and perspectives on tourism and urban adaptation, it explores how pandemic-related restrictions reoriented leisure consumption and travel. These constraints converted Hong Kong's internationally oriented hotel sector into localized spaces of resilience, escape, spatial repurposing, and cultural exploration. Staycations emerged as a contingent practice shaped by healthcare policies, industry pressures, and entrenched sociocultural norms. While offering a rare, socially accepted outlet for leisure amid normalized isolation, they ultimately reflected temporary adaptations rather than lasting shifts in travel behavior.

The findings reveal three key dynamics: (a) the hotel sector's evolution into a "quarantine metropolis," (b) its role as a liminal space blurring the boundaries between home and travel, and (c) the emergence of staycations as a socially embedded, culturally significant response. Framed through the lens of habitus in flux, the study examines shifting travel behaviors and domestic tourism patterns, highlighting Hong Kong's capacity to reimagine spatial and social infrastructures under prolonged crisis and mobility constraint.

Presenter(s): Alexander Fedorov

Strange Remains

"Strange Remains" is a work of literary ethnography written as a memory and as a conversation with the dead. It is about being "haunted by worldly contacts" (Gordon 1997) and "the return of unassimilated entities" (Klima 2019). It moves between familiarity and strangeness through southern Bahia's food and flora, Candomblé, literature, love and death. The uncanny here is reconsidered as a source of pleasure or an "atmospheric attunement" (K. Stewart 2011). And staying with the disturbance, the ethnographer's associative style is akin to walking through walls, encountering "evocative objects" (Bollas 2009) from skulls, cranial cups, and edible exoskeletons, to ideas and occurrences including the resurrection of St. Sebastian, flickering lights, living with a hanged man; giving things form by speaking (to) them, and the conflict between the desire to keep the dead close and to dispatch lingering spirits, a despacho de egun. Embracing uncanny resonance as an expressive modality (Lepselter, 2016), the narrator conveys sensation, generates affect, and offers portals for ways of nearing material.

Presenter(s): Jamie Davidson

541 Combined Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Megan Baker, Northwestern University, Kelly Fayard, University of Denver, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Smeeks, SUNY, New Paltz, Anthropology Department, Michelle Lelièvre, William & Mary, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Witt, Marshall University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Teresa Wilson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Carlos Tello Barreda, Charlotte Dawson, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Megan Baker, Northwestern University, Kelly Fayard, University of Denver, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Smeeks, SUNY, New Paltz, Anthropology Department, Michelle Lelièvre, William & Mary, Department of Anthropology, Rachel Witt, Marshall University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Teresa Wilson, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Carlos Tello Barreda, Charlotte Dawson, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Angie Debo's "Expertise": Choctaw Sovereignty and Settler Historical Production in *McGirt v Oklahoma*

In the State of Oklahoma's arguments in the 2020 *McGirt v. Oklahoma* Supreme Court case, their claims regarding the disestablishment of reservations in Oklahoma was predicated largely on the work of Angie Debo. Heralded as a "pioneer" of the New American Indian history and fierce advocate for the Five Tribes, historian Angie Debo has had a lasting legacy on not only their historiography but also the material conditions in which they lived throughout 20th century Oklahoma. The subject of her doctoral dissertation that turned into her 1934 *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*, Oklahoma Choctaws have had to engage and grapple with Debo's book and its arguments, particularly the incorrect claim that the Choctaw Nation "passed out of existence as a separate political entity" upon Oklahoma statehood. Debo's claim builds upon the famed southeastern anthropologist John R. Swanton's declaration that Choctaws were "unworthy of ethnological study," and contributed to the comparatively small body of scholarly writing on Oklahoma Choctaws. This thin scholarship stands in stark contrast to Choctaw people's robust work in engaging state political leaders and convening political conventions where they collectively decided how to handle issues like the disposition of their coal lands and developing economic development programs for individual Choctaws throughout the 20th century – the period in which the State claimed their government did not exist. This paper examines how Debo's historical scholarship shaped the state's political power, its jurisdictional claim over contemporary Choctaw Nation, and how that claim has impacted Choctaw assertions of sovereignty around the tribal gaming compacts and other major economic development projects.

Presenter(s): Megan Baker

Anthropology Needs Indigenous Feminisms. Here's Why.

While some disciplines are more engaged outside of their field, anthropology tends to be inward-looking and self-referential. Consequently, it rarely engages with theoretical frameworks from outside the field; this is why I believe it is essential to incorporate Native and Indigenous studies into its dialogues: to indigenize the field of anthropology-to take what we have and reinvigorate it

with Indigenous ways of knowing. The key to success here is for anthropologists to understand how to be good relatives to scholars outside our field, especially with Indigenous scholars and communities. Being a good relative is central to what Indigenous feminisms can bring to the academic table, including anthropology.

My work in anthropology critiques the conventions of cis-het white male-produced anthropology and centers the work of Indigenous women. The intersections of indigeneity and feminisms in my scholarly work and life—including the strong Native women who raised me—have shaped how I see the world and how I choose to write about my community. I employ an Indigenous feminist theoretical approach to frame my work, defined by Gearon as the "intersectional theory and practice of feminism that focuses on decolonization, and Indigenous sovereignty, and human rights for Indigenous women and their families" (Gearon 2021). Through this lens, my work, generally, seeks to (re)write and (re)right how Indigenous communities, including my own, have been presented in anthropological writings (Risling Baldy 2018). This talk will explore how to use IFs in anthropological practice through the use of relationality, belonging, and community.

Presenter(s): Kelly Fayard

Museums Haunted by the Ghosts of Archaeologists Past: The Fate of "Collected" Prehistoric Andean Artifacts in American Museums

This paper explores how American museum displays of prehistoric Andean artifacts are not only shaped but also constrained by the legacies of archaeological collecting. The "ghosts" of early archaeologists, treasure hunters, and typological collectors haunt the present-day narratives of museum exhibitions, where the immaterial ideologies of the past manifest in the tangible: the curators' display choices and the exhibition labels (or captions). Bearing in mind the important divide between artifact and artwork, this research considers the displays of two natural history museums (The American Museum of Natural History and The Field Museum) and two art museums (The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Denver Art Museum). I argue that the actions of collecting, which were founded on notions of progress, typology, and aesthetic supremacy, continue to structure which stories can be told and which must remain silent. Through this lens, the past does not simply inform the present; it intrudes upon it. Archaeological artifacts, removed from their original contexts, become silent actors in the performance of knowledge. Their meanings are reshaped to fit institutional missions, and their material presence is used to represent entire civilizations while simultaneously obscuring others. What was not collected remains ghostlike, detected in the gaps of displayed knowledge and the silences of certain narratives. I also consider how these practices influence public understanding of Andean prehistory. American museums often emphasize the apex achievements of dominant cultures (e.g., Inca, Moche, Nasca, and Chimú), reducing the Andean past to a succession of aesthetic and technological triumphs. In doing so, they overlook the rich cultural diversity of less "display-worthy" societies. Ultimately, this work questions how museums might break free from the hauntings of their colonial foundations. Can replicas or digital reproductions offer a path toward more inclusive storytelling? How might collaborations with descendant communities alter the ghostly presences of unrepresented pasts?

These questions point toward a future in which intangible memories, practices, and traditions become tangible, reshaping museum practice and public consciousness.

Presenter(s): Jessica Smeeks

Nominal Returns: analysis of a collaborative Indigenous data sovereignty project from Mi'kma'ki

Given that state- and church-sponsored nominal records often erase, obscure, misrepresent, and denigrate Indigenous lives, is it possible to identify and disseminate information about past Indigenous experiences from such documents in ways that honor Indigenous worldviews and language? The proposed flash presentation attempts to answer this question by offering a "report-from-the-field" on a digital and transnational collaboration between the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC) in Nova Scotia, Canada, and the Department of Anthropology and American Studies Program at William & Mary. Since 2021, faculty and graduate students from William & Mary have been collaborating with MDCC to develop MDCC's bespoke content management system by testing data management and entry protocols using nominal data from seventeenth-century baptismal records and the 1871 census of Canada. The presentation will describe how MDCC staff trained the William & Mary participants, the iterative process through which these participants helped to refine the data entry protocols, and our methods for addressing the misapprehensions, inaccuracies, silences, and erasures that plague nominal records and similar primary sources. Our critical re-examination of colonial records occurs collaboratively in dialogues between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. The presentation will also discuss the benefits and drawbacks of working collaboratively in both synchronous and asynchronous remote environments. While every public-facing digital engagement project is different, this presentation may provide guidance and cautions to other scholars and institutions seeking to implement projects requiring large, diverse teams working remotely. More broadly, the presentation considers the epistemological implications of this work: By interpreting nominal records to make them accessible to multiple audiences we do not simply transpose data from a paper to digital format, we are create the data themselves.

Presenter(s): Michelle Lelièvre

The Biopolitics and Necropolitics of Human Sacrifice in the Chimú Empire (1100-1470 AD), Peru

Biopolitics and necropolitics are two frameworks that broadly consider the ways in which power imbalances emerge and are sustained in modern societies. Michel Foucault devised the term biopolitics to denote the political effects that are produced, circulated, and enacted through new forms of power that monitor and control populations (Foucault [1978] 1990). By dividing the populace into discrete categories, the state increases its power through the marginalization of certain groups. Building upon Foucault's concepts, Achille Mbembe (2003) explores the relationship between power and death, or necropolitics. This framework emphasizes that the power to determine a life's worth resides within political systems. Necropolitics is killing in the name of sovereignty by differentiating between the categories of people whose deaths are considered acceptable and whose deaths are unacceptable. Biopolitics and necropolitics are readily integrated into discussions of power in modern sociopolitical systems but also have the potential to

shed light on the ways ancient empires consolidated and articulated political power through human sacrifice.

This paper discusses human sacrifice through the lens of biopolitics and necropolitics during the reign of the Chimú Empire (1100-1470 AD) in the Moche Valley on the north coast of Peru. Human sacrifice functions as a form of political theater during which the ideas and worldviews held by authority figures are communicated to spectators, participants, and the victims. The power and authority of those who govern is never assured and must be continuously justified in a manner that is tangible to the imperial subjects. Violent actions generate vivid images of coercion and demonstrate the immutable authority of those staging the event. For several centuries, hundreds of children and adolescents were systematically sacrificed by the Chimú Empire at various locations surrounding the capital city Chan Chan. Previous bioarchaeological studies revealed that victims share similar biocultural features (age, health profiles, and geographic origins). The logistics required for amassing hundreds of victims to stage these sacrificial events indicate that the Chimú wielded unprecedented forms of power to design which individuals were suitable victims for sacrifice and who should be spared.

To that end, this paper considers the ways in which human sacrifice was embedded in the imperial enterprises of the Chimú Empire through the lens of biopolitics and necropolitics. This novel approach has the potential to contribute to a growing body of literature addressing motivations for state-sanctioned violence by enabling us to consider the political effects human sacrifice in the maintenance of power in ancient societies.

Foucault, M. (1978) 1990. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by R. Hurley. Vol. 1, *An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.

Mbembe, A. 2003. *Necropolitics*. Translated by L. Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15(1): 11–4

Presenter(s): Rachel Witt

The Ghosts of Authenticity: Generations of Native Survivance, the Sherman Indian School, and the Afterlives of Assimilation

The enduring legacies of Native American assimilation policies continue to reverberate across generations, shaping contemporary Indigenous identities, kinship structures, and cultural expressions. Through a multigenerational lens, this paper analyzes how four generations of Paiute-Shoshone women have enacted survivance in response to, and in resistance against, the persistent legacies of assimilation. As both researcher and descendant, I approach this project as a critical Indigenous autoethnography. Through the theoretical frameworks of Critical Indigenous Theory (Moreton-Robinson 2009; Coulthard 2014) and concepts of Indigenous authenticity and cultural identity (Hokowhitu 2009; Simpson 2007), this narrative will trace how the ghosts of assimilation continue to shape lived experience, memory, and identity.

These ghosts are both metaphorical and material, residing in archival photographs, government records, obscure audio recordings, and 130 years of matrilineal memory and experience.

Indigenous practices of meaning-making and survivance (Vizenor 1999) are reexamined through the intersecting lenses of persistence, refusal, and resurgence. Experiences of forced relocation to a reservation, experiences at an Indian boarding school, self-imposed language erasure, tokenization, and unconsciously reinforced whiteness will be critically examined. This project contends that archival and personal Indigenous histories should be reinterpreted not as pathologizing narratives, but as generative frameworks for engaging with Indigenous existentialism.

Presenter(s): Teresa Wilson

Towards a (Trans)American Indigeneity: Understanding Hemispheric Indigeneity as a Somatic Mode of Attention

Academics from Anglo-North America have often privileged identity (particularly a self-identification as Indigenous) to define Indigeneity. My ethnographic research with a group of male dancers of Quechua descent in the Peruvian Andes exposes the limitations of those definitions. Despite being fluent Quechua speakers and preserving traditions widely understood in Peru as Andean Indigenous, the members of the Qhapaq Qolla dance troupe of Paucartambo, Cusco – one of the most prestigious and influential in the Peruvian Andes – do not use the term "Indigenous" to identify themselves. They don't use terms like "mestizo" (often employed to hide Indigeneity), either. In a sense, Qhapaq Qolla dancers are neither "Indigenous" nor "not Indigenous." If we were to exclude groups like the Qhapaq Qolla from the scope of the concept of Indigeneity, we would be invisibilizing a vast array of (trans)American ways of knowing and being. Thus, how can we expand the concept of "Indigeneity" to include them? I propose that, in addition of understanding Indigeneity in terms of identity and experience under settler colonialism, we also understand it as an embodied way of being in the world. Based on Thomas Csordas's concept of "somatic modes of attention," I argue that the Qhapaq Qolla, shaped by Quechua values like balance and reciprocity, have developed a somatic mode of attention that prevents objectification, developing instead fluid relationships of reciprocity that are always in the process of leveling. This mode of attention engenders a specific way of being in the world, one that understands all beings as relations, and demands for balance and reciprocity. A disposition to develop fluid relationships of reciprocity with all elements of the cosmos is a constant among peoples of Indigenous descent across the Americas and the Caribbean. Thus, I argue that this point of contact can help us develop an American (hermispheric) framework of Indigeneity.

Presenter(s): Carlos Tello Barreda

Unearthing Ethnobotanical Collections: The State of Indigenous Seed Holdings in U.S. Museums and Repositories

Indigenous communities and scholars are calling for archaeologists and museum professionals to critically assess the stewardship and potential repatriation of Indigenous-sourced agricultural seeds and ethnobotanical collections housed in museums and other institutions. Indigenous seeds and plants are not only items of cultural, personal, and religious significance, but importantly they are also nonhuman persons and relatives that retain genetic memory and can remain viable for

centuries under appropriate storage conditions. The fact that many historic Indigenous seeds held in institutional repositories can be germinated and hold extractable genetic information demands investigation into the risks and potential around these seeds. This talk presents results of a survey of U.S. museums and universities to determine the prevalence of Indigenous seeds held in collections and to evaluate practices surrounding cataloguing, care, storage, and researcher and descendant community access. Results demonstrate that vast amounts of Indigenous seed stock are currently stored in museums and other institutional repositories, often due to ethnobotanical collecting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as well as ongoing archaeological activities from the 20th century onward. These historic seeds retain their cultural and religious significance along with diverse genetic information that could facilitate the revitalization of Indigenous agriculture systems. Yet this also makes them vulnerable to appropriation and patenting by industrial agriculture corporations searching for climate-resilient seed varieties. Results of this survey demonstrate that failure to adequately steward these materials represents a significant risk for further disenfranchisement of Indigenous people from their cultural heritage. We propose pathways to enhance protections of Indigenous seeds and to the repatriation of these culturally significant materials.

Presenter(s): Charlotte Dawson

3536 Regrets: Ghosts of the Past, Spectres of the Future

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In times of political turbulence, tragedy, and despair-and likewise in "everyday" and even hopeful times and lives-regret is a moral sentiment and normative claim that often lurks in the background, sometimes foregrounded through haunting thoughts, warnings, or laments, acting like figurative and literal ghosts of our past, future, or present (non-)actions and imaginings. This roundtable invites participants to consider the multiple ways in which "regrets" are mobilized in fieldwork, anthropological theory, and beyond, asking: how might we build on the work of moral philosophers and a smattering of anthropologists who have theorized regret as the moral experience of feeling responsible for past actions (B. Williams 1981), even when the regretful individual could not have influenced that which happened (Kuan 2017)? In what ways might regrets shed light on the banality of evil (Arendt 1963), or perhaps open up a future otherwise and allow subjects to "reinhabit" the past that might have been (Throop 2018), or even spur people to new (or old) politics or (de)colonizing moves? What might be the affordances of approaching regrets as structures of feeling (R. Williams 1976) or sideshadowing narrative genres that may be muted or only gestured to (Shohet 2021; 2023)? How are regrets tied to an idea of a life well-lived or to notions of an afterlife or anticipated future anterior? How are claims of having "(no) regrets" politicized, and what fresh insights do they offer in our studies of self, subjectivity, society, and other collectives? When and in what forms do haunting regrets figure in our own and interlocutors' life course? What sorts of ghosts do regrets conjure or slay, and how?

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Annemarie Samuels , Merav Shohet, Boston University

Presenter(s): Teresa Kuan, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Anthropology, Katie Kilroy-Marac , Ziqi Xie, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Candace Lukasik, Mississippi State University, Webb Keane, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Merav Shohet, Boston University

Discussant: Jason Throop, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Daniel Knight, University of St Andrews

3926 Unraveling the Tensions that Haunt Queer and Trans South Asia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Writing and studying queer and trans life-worlds in South Asia reveals tapestries of tensions, slippages, and incommensurabilities. As queer anthropologists trained in North America and working in South Asia, we move within the registers and orientations of "theory," which, haunted by its own histories from the Global North, "orient[s] what objects, processes, and relations 'count' as queer within queer studies," (Amin 2016). Yet, laboring to address the specificities of the region, we find moments of (mis)translation, (il)legibility, and (in)authenticity as particularly generative sites for theorizing within and beyond "queer."

We are paralleled by the experiences of our interlocutors, who, in their negotiations of the global in the local, ponder over encounter and change and "accent" their styles of queerness (Khubchandani 2020). These adaptations, in "dubbing" identities for instance (Boellstorff 2005), are refractions of broader rapid and globalizing shifts in gendered expectations of labor in the region, which in turn generate new gendered subjectivities and "symbolic resources" (Vijayakumar 2013) available to create affordances. This roundtable seeks to explore these questions of adaptation from the position of incommensurability, not only within the realms of gender or sexuality, but also of region and area, rural and urban, digital and analog.

In thinking through how these tensions are embodied by queer and trans South Asians, we also seek to address the temporal as entangled with the spatial, whereby peoples, spaces, or communities have a pall of "backwardness," and thus not legible as properly "autological" (Povinelli 2006; Ramberg 2014). Alongside this, the queer and trans South Asian figure, imagined both as overflowing with history and also as devoid of any (Arondekar 2009), must also contend with the socio-political forces which seek to render them as inconceivable and foreign elements within postcolonial nations.

This roundtable explores the snarled relationship between queerness, time and space which gives rise to such paradoxes, tracing the looping, cyclical flows of desires and meanings that travel across transhistorical circuits. By posing these questions, this roundtable asks what it means for (queer) anthropologists to venture into the past to understand queer/trans presents while embarking on (mis)translations across queer regions. Our roundtable curates this conversation

from the South Asian subcontinent, by sharing thoughts from Assam and Uttar Pradesh in India, Karachi in Pakistan, and from Sri Lanka. We hope to perform avenues for comparison and connection in the hopes of creating viable methodologies for generating from shared tensions.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Hafsa Arain, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Medha Asthana

Presenter(s): Rishav Thakur , Themal Ellawala , Hafsa Arain, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Medha Asthana

Discussant: Sayan Bhattacharya

3570 Ghosts of Empire

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The empire has seen better times. Or so it would seem.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the US had been a continent-wide empire guided by an expressly white ethno-nationalist vision of Manifest Destiny. It was expansionist, protectionist, and mercantilist; isolationist with regard to European disputes but interventionist in its own hemisphere. A different sort of empire took shape at the end of World War II, when the US emerged from the war with global military dominance and its economy accounted for half the world industrial output. Under Pax Americana, the bipartisan consensus was liberal, internationalist, and constitutionalist. In the arsenal of imperial persuasion were not only forms of brute coercion but also various forms of soft power, the ideal of rule of law, and an outsized cultural influence. Anchored in a modern administrative state, the global policeman's internal policies were mildly redistributive -- organized labor was on a strong footing from the late 1930s until the early 1980s -- and increasingly guided by one variant or another of race-ethnic liberalism. Both parties tamped down social movements and political currents on the far right (such as Lindbergh's "America First" conservatism) and the socialist left (especially but not only the Communist Party during the McCarthy era).

These arrangements are presently being dismantled. What comes next? A diverse panel of discussants working in different venues at different stages in their careers, we will discuss aspects of a present haunted by the past, surveying military techniques, satellite states, soft power, race-ethnic imaginaries, labor organization, migration, and the role of law. Among the questions we consider: What conceptual models might be up to the challenge of the moment? How do earlier, pre-World War versions of empire inform the thinking of the contemporary right, and does the left remain trapped in later versions of Pax Americana? Do Cold War and post-Cold War frames continue to offer explanatory power under current conditions? Should we criticize today's right, which openly declares its dictatorial ambitions, with institutional logics that the left once called elitist or imperialist? Will present-day rearrangements and the evisceration of the administrative state reverse the empire's decline -- or hasten its demise?

Bertolt Brecht once said, "Build not on the good old days but on the bad new ones." Is the left trying to bust the ghosts of the past when we should be confronting the monsters of the present?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Roger Lancaster , Andrew Bickford, Georgetown University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jeff Maskovsky, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales, University of San Francisco, Rhoda Kanaaneh , Andrew Bickford, Georgetown University, Department of Anthropology, Roger Lancaster , David Price, Saint Martin's University, Department of Sociology and Cultural Anthropology

Discussant: Aziza Bayou

2548 A Spirited Roundtable: Comparing Anthropological and Parapsychological Notes on "Ghosts"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This interdisciplinary roundtable brings together four published researchers from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and parapsychology to explore the nature and significance of ghostly experiences based on the latest studies in this domain. Drawing on insights from mixed methods-including case studies, systematic surveys, participant observations, controlled laboratory exercises, and field investigations-panelists will discuss the strengths and limitations of an interactionist (i.e., a systems or biopsychosocial) view of these phenomena, i.e., the idea that "ghostly episodes" reliably manifest to "the right people in the right settings." The profile of the "right people" seems to be thin mental boundary functioning, whereas the "right settings" often involve periods of personal or social dis-ease or environments with Gestalt features or conventional physical factors that often characterize "sacred, uncanny, or enchanted" spaces and which also can exacerbate thin boundary functioning. These models are pertinent to an anthropological understanding of the nature, meaning, functions, and potential ontological reality of ghost stories and experiences. But controversial influences rooted in parapsychology are likewise considered, such as discarnate agency and psychic-type abilities in the living. This session therefore aims to foster a mutual appreciation of social scientific and anomalistic views that underscore the intersection of belief, experience, and empirical inquiry into "ghosts."

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: James Houran

Presenter(s): Christine Simmonds-Moore, University of West Georgia, James McClenon , Brandon Massullo , Brian Laythe

Discussant: James Houran

4640 Agrarian Hauntings: The Ghosts of Agricultures Past and Agricultures Yet to Come

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Agricultural systems are at a peculiar moment today. Radical changes have unfolded recently enough to be within memory. Globally, many producers can still recall what their families' livelihoods were like before, for example, the world became majority-urban, farming became something to optimize through data, or farmland became something in which to invest rather than plant. Simultaneously, the accelerating frequency of severe weather events, warming temperatures, evolving agri-tech, and looming trade uncertainties portend more sea changes within producers' own lifespans. On one hand, the ghosts of agricultures past haunt today's rural livelihoods through remembered histories, traditions, or habits that may be newly awkward fits for contemporary conditions of production. On the other hand, anticipated near-future agricultural realities also depart starkly from today's agrarian practices. For example, crops that reliably germinate at one latitude are likely to soon falter, subsidies and open markets that support (however tenuously) rural livelihoods may soon be eliminated, and salination and changing water levels may reconfigure fishing possibilities. These anticipated ghosts haunt agrarian settings as well. This panel combines anthropology's powerful history of studying agrarian change with interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approaches to consider how these "past and future ghosts" are reconfiguring agricultural livelihoods and landscapes.

Agrarian communities around the world have long faced historic manipulations and upheavals from forces including colonization, globalized trade flows, and agricultural industrialization.

Such powerful trends are frequently framed as fundamentally remaking how humans engage with, relate to, and gain sustenance from their ecosystems. Yet agrarian practices are notoriously "sticky:" scholars have predicted the demise of peasantries for over a century and still, most food is grown by peasants. Accounting for the tenacity of agrarian communities and the contexts in which they variously persist, adapt, or collapse has long been a particular strength of anthropological approaches. Here, we seek to put these insights into generative conversation with methods and ideas from other disciplinary approaches to understanding agricultural change and agricultural futures.

We ask: What past practices are remembered and which are forgotten? What imagined agri-futures are celebrated and which are feared? How do not only practices, but also the meanings they carry, change across mid-range time scales? How do diverse producers navigate their livelihoods in the face of such whiplash? What are the wide-ranging effects of naming certain practices 'the future of food'?

Section: Culture and Agriculture

Organizer: Andrea Rissing, Arizona State University, School of Sustainability, Sarah Franzen, Louisiana State University

Chair: Andrea Rissing, Arizona State University, School of Sustainability

Presenter(s): Hilal Alkan, Amanda Hilton, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Andrea Rissing, Arizona State University, School of Sustainability, Emma McDonell, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Department of Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies, Sarah Franzen, Louisiana State University

Discussant: Nicholas Kawa, Ohio State University

Presentation(s): Commodity Gardens: Uprooted Trees and the Reshaping of Turkey's Olivescapes

Uprooted olive trees, shaped as macro-bonsais, sitting in steel pots, are on sale in thousands in western Turkey, revealing layered transformations in the country's 'olivescapes.' These centuries-old specimens, pruned into ornamental forms for malls or poolside displays, exemplify a shift from farmland staples and family heirlooms to high-end commodities. Their altered trunks, lacerated branches, and encased roots reflect a ghostly and ghastly political economy where olive cultivation becomes entangled with extractivist dispossession, capitalist expansion, and ecological change. Approaching these olive trees as 'lively commodities,' objects whose market value stems from their vital status, I ask which aspects of life are commodified and through what processes, at this moment of transformation of olive farming in Turkey. Standing well alive but as ghosts of former agricultural practices, these trees allow analyzing the broader interplay of policy, labor, and cultural imagination in these evolving olivescapes.

Presenter(s): Hilal Alkan

Abandonment as Haunting in Olivicultural Sicily

Drawing on 10 years of ongoing research, this paper takes up the case of olivicultural landscapes on the Italian island of Sicily, and their abbandono, or abandonment. Young people in particular leave Sicily for so-called "greener pastures" in the north or abroad, seeking social and economic opportunities. Sometimes, leaving means leaving the land tended by others; other times, it means leaving the land untended, abandoned. Abandonment became an ethnographic object: it was a register used by participants to discuss the interwoven influences and factors that compel people to leave, leaving an agricultural livelihood and a particularly situated place comprised of social and other relations between people and a whole host of non- and more-than-human entities. Abandoned agricultural landscapes are material formations marked by the ghosts of farmers past as well as by the spectre of investors present and future. Absence is rife with presence, as the absence of the next generation on the land opens the door for multiple possibilities: for investment in the form of foreign capital or expatriates seeking a new life, for a less human-controlled landscape and so the presence of lifeforms that were previously discouraged or uprooted for, in the words of some, ruin. But these are living landscapes, rife with the dynamic tensions and contradictions of life, both biological and socioeconomic, and death. I consider these tensions using the frame of abandonment as a form of haunting.

Presenter(s): Amanda Hilton

Future Ghosts on the Land: Farmer Responses to Suitability Modeling and Predicting Crop Absence

Agriculture emerges at the intersection of overlapping biophysical, technological, cultural, and political-economic forces, yet most contemporary efforts to project future agricultural systems change focus narrowly on the role of biophysical conditions. This paper presents early results from and methodological reflections on a participatory modeling project that seeks to address this weakness. The project unites "big" data science with "deep" social science to, first, project near-future crops in Ohio, Nebraska, and Georgia under anticipated climate changes, second, invite food system stakeholders to iteratively respond to their state's naive models, and third, convene a strategic convergence event where updated model projections that integrate participant feedback are employed as boundary objects to facilitate the co-creation of new imaginaries and strategies towards more desirable agricultural futures. A key research moment thus occurs when diverse farmer participants are presented with the naive model's near-future predictions for their region's cropscape; often, cherished crops are projected to become less suitable, and less-familiar crops, more suitable. The paper analyzes producers' responses to these "future ghosts" haunting their farms and regions, explores the areas of consensus and disagreement between and among producers and agricultural experts when considering these models, and reflects on the practice of bridging research disciplines.

Presenter(s): Andrea Rissing

Neglected By Whom? Utilized How? "Neglected Crops" as the Future of Food

The discourse of the "neglected and under-utilized species" (NUS) developed in the late 1970s as a response to the excesses of the Green Revolution. The NUS paradigm suggests that species that have received relatively little attention from research institutions may actually be powerful tools to help us confront some of the most pressing challenges of our time, such as malnutrition, poverty, and climate change adaptation. While this discourse remained relatively fringe in international development circles for decades, starting in the 2010s, major international organizations began promoting NUS and investing in their "utilization." This presentation draws on the story of quinoa's transformation from bonafide NUS to global commodity to think through the complexity of promoting "forgotten" crops as the key to the future of food. For whom and what purposes should these crops be "utilized"? Who gets to decide? And how can we think about contradictions between different visions of these crops' futures? The presentation supplements discussion of ethnographic research on the quinoa boom-bust with other cases to think through different NUS trajectories.

Presenter(s): Emma McDonell

(Re)creating Louisiana Farm Traditions on Haunted Lands

Throughout rural Louisiana, smallholding Black and Creole farmers persist among large-scale, mostly white farmers who demand most state and federal resources. These farmers endure the legacy of a racial plantocracy that continues to shape how farmers gain access to agricultural knowledge, support, and relief. Within this space, some farmers have sustained their farms through familial and communal supports based in Louisiana's abundant ecosystems. Yet, recently, these

farmers have noticed shifts in weather patterns disrupting their tenuous existence. Changes in rain patterns have forced many to use irrigation to maintain crops and animals. Devastating extreme weather events, such as strong winds, floods, droughts, increased ice storms, tornadoes, and more intense hurricanes threaten their annual production. Despite combined social, economic, and environmental pressures, many farmers are committed to what they consider to be their heritage as agriculturalists. For many, farming is not simply an occupation, but an identity and way of life. This heritage, however, is a mutating tradition, responding to the haunting of an oppressive past and adapting to the specter of an uncertain ecological future as farmers shift practices, produce, or land. This paper draws on interviews with smallholding farmers facing climatic shifts to understand what aspects of farming are essential to their way of life, what they change in response to past and future pressures, and what can be let go.

Presenter(s): Sarah Franzen

Discussion

2814 Bearing "freedom" in dark times

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Liberty girds the principles of liberalism, in the classic sense in which Enlightenment thinkers set out normative notions of rights within the context of the logic of freedom vs. tyranny. In this roundtable, we ponder concepts of liberty in the current global moment of growing authoritarianism-of illiberalism. Twenty-first century authoritarianism arrives under a banner of freedom; but how much freedom would people trade for stability, for security-whether spiritual or psychological or physical, whether national or collective or individual? Who and what would they sacrifice in the pursuit of lost greatness? As Latin/Americanists and Caribbeanists, we consider liberalism itself a cultural category, a way of knowing the world, with many vernacular variations from south to north. We know from the start, liberalism promised "freedom" only to propertied white males, as Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills reminds us. The metaphorical social contract functions, he argues, as "an intrawhite agreement that-through European expansionism, colonialism, white settlement, slavery, apartheid, and jim crow-shapes the modern world." Indeed, we know that notions of freedom are always socially and culturally circumscribed, politically policed, legally cordoned. In this context, how to imagine freedom today? "I have met only a very few people-and most of these were not Americans-who had any real desire to be free," James Baldwin writes in *The Fire Next Time* (1963) at the height of the Cold War. "Freedom is hard to bear. It can be objected that I am speaking of political freedom in spiritual terms, but the political institutions of any nation are always menaced and are ultimately controlled by the spiritual state of that nation." This session's opening gambit is simple. But right now we believe it is crucial. Can discourses or beliefs about freedom be made into tools, or even weapons, to resist authoritarian power? What role does this word, embraced by fugitives yet proclaimed in the declarations of slaveholders, have in actual liberation?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Ellen Moodie, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jennifer Ashley, George Mason University, Keith McNeal, University of Houston, Kathleen Millar, Simon Fraser University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Lourdes Gutierrez Najera, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Ellen Moodie, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Yana Stainova, Diana Fox, Bridgewater State University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Carwil Bjork-James, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology

2531 Critical Reflexivity, Autoethnography, and Self-experimentation

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

When Raymond Firth first used the term "autoethnography" in 1956, he was explaining a key debate between Jomo Kenyatta (first president of the independent Kenya) and Louis Leaky (Kenyan-British anthropologists) (Anderson 2006; Sherick and Julie 2017). For Firth, the heart of the debate was about representation, and who has the right to represent certain cultures and communities. Feminist scholars (Strathern 1987; Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar 1997; McClurin 2001) pushed these debates further by providing critical analysis around the limitations of framing autoethnography through binaries of self and "other." Recent books and essays, from within the last decade have added other dimensions to the conversations. For instance, contemporary examples of critical reflexivity, autoethnography, (Bessire 2021, Ralph 2024, Garcia 2024), creative nonfiction memoir/autotheory (Huerta 2021), and fieldnote reflections (Carter 2019; Diaz 2020) bring different questions to the surface around writing styles, genre, dissemination, and access. When considering the role of self-experimentation in addition to conversations on autoethnography and interpretive anthropology, reading culture as text becomes phenomenological and embodied (Valdez forthcoming). This roundtable panel gathers scholars whose work intersects with these themes to explore the changing landscape of critical reflexivity, autoethnographic methods, and the ways in which anthropologists teach and write on these topics.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Natali Valdez, Fordham University, Angela Garcia, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Chelsey R. Carter, Yale University, Emily Yates-Doerr, Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, Natali Valdez, Fordham University, Sophie Chao

Discussant: Laurence Ralph, Princeton University

515 Society for the Anthropology of North America Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Alexandria Pollock, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Jesse Dart, Derek Ludovici, Margaret Wehrer, Le Moyne College, Department of Anthropology, Criminology, & Sociology, Regan Gee, Case Western Reserve University, Department of Anthropology, Erin Routon, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Miye Sugino, Camille Samuels, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Katie Donlan, University of Colorado, Boulder

Presenter(s): Alexandria Pollock, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology, Jesse Dart, Derek Ludovici, Margaret Wehrer, Le Moyne College, Department of Anthropology, Criminology, & Sociology, Regan Gee, Case Western Reserve University, Department of Anthropology, Erin Routon, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Miye Sugino, Camille Samuels, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Katie Donlan, University of Colorado, Boulder

Presentation(s): Challenges and Opportunities for Libraries as Centers of Discourse in Rural America

Public libraries in the US are sites of social upheaval, and the need for political action has grown exponentially for them in recent times. Campaigns for book bans have nearly tripled in the last two years, and boycotts and adverse legislation have moved to eliminate library functions and criminalize librarians. Since 2023, three states have completely left the American Library Association, a nonprofit organization that has provided funding and training opportunities for libraries across the country since 1876. Several additional states have introduced or passed legislation that make library materials subject to "obscene material" laws, and could result in librarians who offer any material deemed "obscene" to face up to 10 years of incarceration. Furthermore, an executive order issued in March of 2025 called for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the national library funding organization, to be "eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law." The purpose of these legislative moves is to police the identities of the LGBTQ+ community, women, and minorities. In rural settings, the impacts of these policies are even more detrimental, since mass-media is limited to the most accessible spheres for generally the lowest income sources. Libraries have the power to contradict the controlled mass-media discourse used by political actors who call for erasure of certain social structures to eliminate rights in ways that fit their agendas. The existence and support of public libraries represents everyday protest to campaigns of misinformation and disenfranchisement, as well as attacks on intellectual freedom and community engagement. Libraries represent the unextraordinary political involvement of daily life and hidden pathways of resistance.

Presenter(s): Alexandria Pollock

Haunted Hospitality: Ghost Tours, Memory, and Meaning at The Elms Hotel

This flash presentation explores ghost tours at The Elms Hotel and Spa in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, as a site where cultural memory, historical narrative, and economic enterprise intersect.

Through ethnographic case study, interviews, and literature analysis, this research examines how haunted hospitality becomes a space where the supernatural is not only experienced but commodified.

The Elms Hotel-rich in regional lore, historical upheaval, and repeated renovation-serves as both a literal and symbolic vessel for stories of hauntings. Guests and staff describe apparitions including a Prohibition-era gambler and a woman searching for her child. These narratives, repeated on guided ghost tours, function not just as spooky entertainment, but as living folklore: expressions of cultural anxiety, historical trauma, and the preservation of memory. The tours contribute to what scholars like Eaton (2019) and Hanks (2015) describe as a modern myth-making process, where interactive experiences and local legend blend to authenticate supernatural claims and foster shared cultural memory.

Framed through the anthropological lens of dark tourism-travel to sites associated with death, tragedy, or the macabre (Lennon and Foley, 2000)-The Elms exemplifies the dual nature of ghost tourism as both heritage and commerce. Echoing findings from Houran et al. (2020) and Mathe-Soulek et al. (2016), the hotel leverages its haunted status to attract niche tourists and enhance its brand, while also raising ethical questions about the commodification of loss and the boundaries between authenticity and performance.

Paranormal narratives at The Elms offer a way for communities to process the past, shape identity, and connect with place-what Hanks (2015) calls a "re-articulation of heritage." At the same time, ghost tours navigate tensions between preservation and spectacle, remembrance and tourism. The dark tourism frame highlights how haunted spaces become arenas where memory, morality, and marketability are negotiated.

Ultimately, The Elms Hotel shows how the past continues to "haunt" the present-through spectral storytelling, economic structures, and cultural longing. Ghost tours offer a compelling anthropological lens into how people experience, perform, and sell memory in an age of haunted heritage.

Presenter(s): Jesse Dart

Imagining a World of Abundance from the Ground Up

This paper interrogates the notion of abundance and the different ways a society of abundance is envisioned. On the one hand I look at abundance through the recently published book *Abundance* (2025) by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson, which sets out a political agenda of a society of more production and consumption. "Abundance" as a political agenda has also gained traction with urban political constituencies in groups like Abundance New York, which advocate for more housing, public transit, and public space. This advocacy is done in a language that, while calling for certain policy changes, eschews political labels, rather focusing on technocratic aspects of urban governance. I compare this notion of and path towards abundance with the work of local activists who provide "mutual aid"-engaging in acts of direct distribution of aid to various communities (newly arrived migrants, homeless, food insecure residents, and more) in New York City. For these

groups, distribution becomes protest by providing direct aid when the government refuses or is actively harming these populations. In this paper I compare the rhetoric, actions, and political stances of these two radically different notions of abundance to analyze the politics of distribution and its possible futures in NYC.

Presenter(s): Derek Ludovici

Immigrant Rights Advocacy: Ghosts of the Past, Demons of the Future

How have unexamined race and nationality privilege hampered US citizen volunteers' efforts to support Central American migrant workers facing immigration harassment and deportation, and how have these same volunteers, by becoming more aware of their race and nationality privilege, become better advocates for migrant workers? In this flash presentation I will describe how a Central New York immigration advocacy group struggled and succeeded in identifying and challenging their race and nationality privilege in order to better assist Central American migrant workers in surviving in a highly repressive immigration climate.

Presenter(s): Margaret Wehrer

Knowledges, care, and settler-colonialism: A CBPR study at an Indigenous-serving school

In settler-colonial contexts, the navigation of multiple systems of knowledge is inevitable and laden with legacies of exploitation and hegemony (Fanon and Markmann 1968). This holds true for systems of medical knowledge, as individuals draw on diverse medical dialogues to define social identity, leverage power, and enact social change (Crandon-Malamud 1993). These actors navigate overlapping knowledge/power systems, creating new assemblages of care, healing, and agency within unequal landscapes. This presentation shares findings from a community-based participatory research (CBPR) study conducted between July 2023 and May 2025 at an Indigenous-serving school in the Southwest United States. It examines the school's Wellness programs and how both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems are utilized by staff in their Wellness work. Drawing on interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors, this paper argues that staff engage Indigenous knowledge in varied ways to interpret the past and shape the future through Wellness programming. Indigenous knowledge is employed to resist and repair historical and ongoing settler-colonial realities while also manifesting more hopeful futures for students through cultural empowerment and education. Staff positionality influences their temporal orientations: non-Native staff often emphasize restitution, while Native staff foreground cultural resurgence. Yet within the settler-colonial present, Western wellness knowledge is also viewed as essential- linked to economic success and biomedical health by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. The value of these knowledges for staff is primarily relational- enabling them to 'care better' for students by simultaneously disrupting systemic inequality and aligning with Western notions of opportunity. This throughline highlights how care itself can operate as a tool of resistance and restitution within settler-colonial contexts, shaped by the knowledges of both settler and survivor.

Works Cited

Crandon-Malamud, Libbet. 1993. *From the Fat of Our Souls : Social Change, Political Process, and Medical Pluralism in Bolivia*. Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care. University of California Press.

Fanon, Frantz, and Charles Lam Markmann. 1968. *Black Skin, White Masks*. First Evergreen Black Cat ed. Grove Press.

Presenter(s): Regan Gee

Talking Across the Void: Remote Interpretation and Crisis in Migrant Detention

This flash presentation examines the exceedingly important, challenging, and ultimately undervalued labor of remote interpreters, in particular those offering services for im/migrants held in detention facilities in the U.S. The work of such interpreters-accurately described by scholars as forms of "invisible labor" (Kunreuther and Rao 2023)-is also increasingly under attack, made evident in part through things like programmatic funding cuts and shifts in policy. Institutional denials of access to both interpretation and translation services have deep impacts on detainees' abilities to navigate complex carceral and legal processes, each engendering isolation in different ways. Reaching, or rather speaking, across the multiple boundaries that set incarcerated individuals apart from connections and resources, remote interpreters are themselves otherworldly; their continued presence in these spaces, spectral or otherwise, is crucial.

Presenter(s): Erin Routon

Transgressing Borders: Japanese Americans and their Inheritance of Empire

This paper explores how diaspora communities reshape reckonings with imperial violence, focusing on how Japanese Americans navigate their position between Japan and the U.S. to claim or deny historical responsibility to the comfort women issue. Confronting Japan's "history problem" with its imperialism, Japanese American identity-based groups have drawn from their collective memory of wartime incarceration to claim victimhood within the U.S.--asserting distance from Japan, and kinship with comfort women. In response, Japanese Americans have faced mounting pressures from Japan to remember their shared bloodline--and silence their activism. Navigating different boundaries of belonging that activate or suppress their implication in Japan's imperial legacy, Japanese Americans shift memory politics to negotiate victim/perpetrator labels across generations and geographies.

While scholars of memory studies have explored the intergenerational transmission of victimhood, less attention has been given to the perpetrator's side. Although these studies imply that perpetrator labels would also be passed down by bloodline, this paper explicates the competing categories of belonging that define diasporic subjects--like gender, class, and nationality--and redraw their lineages of responsibility. Weaving in historical shifts in Japanese American experiences into analyses of interviews with key players in Japanese American identity-based groups, this paper reveals that the rise of Asian American identity enabled Japanese Americans to evade responsibility for Japan's imperial legacy by claiming racialized victimhood within the U.S.

This paper interrogates the transnational dimensions of Japanese American history, which is often studied as a subcategory of U.S. history. Through following Japanese Americans' entanglement in both Japan's imperial legacy and U.S. wartime incarceration, this paper unravels victim-perpetrator binaries drawn from studying the two histories separately. Between two empires seeking to write out their histories of imperial violence, Japanese Americans' rearticulations of belonging to both illuminate contradictions within the amnesic hegemonies they occupy.

Presenter(s): Miye Sugino

Vying for Black California Gold: Black Angelenos struggle for ecological and social protection against Los Angeles's most haunted industry

Although California maintains an external facade as an environmentally conscious and politically liberal state, and Los Angeles, more specifically, is promoted via Hollywood and social media as a scenic beach city lined with a laid-back atmosphere, something more sinister lies beneath the surface. The truth remains that Los Angeles is a city built on oil, or "Black Gold." Among the state's most marginalized residents, it does not take long to notice the hauntings of industries past (and present). This paper examines the relationship of Black Los Angeles residents to one of the state's most formidable industries, oil drilling, to better understand how the history and present relationship impacts Black placemaking and the built environment in the city.

South Los Angeles is home to the Inglewood Oil Field, which operates on over 1000 acres of land in the heart of Los Angeles, and is the largest active urban oil field in the country. Right next door to the Inglewood Oil Field lies Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area, a sprawling green space and one of the largest parks in LA County, built on top of and adjacent to portions of the Inglewood Oil Field after an environmental disaster made land available for repurposing in the 1960s. Both of these locations are situated right in the middle of one of Los Angeles's last remaining predominantly Black neighborhoods, colloquially referred to as the Black Beverly Hills. The juxtaposition between wellness, environmental consciousness, and community recreation is confounded by the visible resource extraction looming around the edges of the park.

Building on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation with a Black women-led non-profit organization in South Los Angeles, this paper asks, how does the history and relationship between the Inglewood Oil Field and Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area impact the way Black residents navigate the built environment to this day? Further, how is the ongoing campaign against neighborhood oil drilling in Los Angeles informed by a Black sense of place? How could it benefit from a deeper attention to the conditions and knowledge of the city's Black residents? By unpacking the relationship between these competing forms of ecological and social resource extraction, the findings demonstrate lessons to be learned from centering Black spatial and ecological epistemologies in an analysis of one of Los Angeles's most haunting industries.

Presenter(s): Camille Samuels

Written in Invisible Ink: Restoring Wabanaki Treaty Rights in the Maine Constitution

In 1875, the State of Maine voted to redact several sections of its Constitution from official printed copies, with the intent that they remain in "full force." The omitted text--Article X, Section 5--includes the Articles of Separation from Massachusetts upon Maine's 1820 statehood. Notably, this section stipulates Maine's inherited treaty obligations from Massachusetts to the Indigenous peoples within its newly formed boundaries. For nearly 150 years, these treaty obligations have remained obscured, rendered "invisible ink" in the Maine Constitution. However, over the last decade Wabanaki activists and allies have advocated for the restoration of the redacted treaty language. This paper follows the grassroots campaign to make this obscured text matter in the present. It highlights the material consequences of textual erasure and (re)presence, made particularly meaningful in the Maine Constitution--the living document guiding the relationship between the State of Maine and Wabanaki Nations. Ultimately, I demonstrate how the absence of Article X, Section 5 has enlivened state-wide discourse on truth, memory, and history, with potential implications for Wabanaki sovereignty.

Presenter(s): Katie Donlan

8552 Ethnographic Field and Data Analysis Methods: One-on-one Mentoring Event

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

Many anthropology students and professionals are expected to conduct ethnographic research and implement analytical methods, yet some are not formally taught these skills, nor have an expert available with whom to consult. To help bridge this gap, the Society for Anthropological Sciences invites all students and professionals to engage directly with experts about their research and analysis questions. Mentors will be available to discuss research design, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, dissemination, and career paths. Supporting session materials are posted on the SAS website (<https://www.societyforanthropologicalsciences.org/p/mentoring.html>).

3306 Haunting Root and Branch: Future Memory, Colonial Specters, And Imperial Ghosts Among Ethnographers In Plant Studies - Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This two-part session focuses on how plant studies ethnographers attend to hauntings - colonial, imperial, intimate, and otherwise. In it, our participants address how plant-human relations, and our studies of them, hold the potential to unsettle quotidian temporalities of nationalism, settler colonialism, and empire. Panelists consider how plants and relations with them call our attention to the conditions of possibility of that growth, the soil, and the ways they burst their borders.

Plants topple notions of purity and control within the enclosure of the garden (Shotwell 2016; Subramaniam 2016, 2024), and spectralize past relations and future possibilities. With plants, we consider temporalities and impacts of imperial-colonial ghostliness. As lively beings and symbols of "life itself," plants are commonly conjured into the present tense. Might we also conceive of plants – and discourses surrounding plants – as time machines? They may transport the reader to the origin stories of nation-states, highlighting what Ann Laura Stoler calls "the durabilities of imperial formations" (2016: 17, 25); stories often sanitized by the genocidal process of colonization. They might also attune us to the planetary afterlives of enslavement "in the wake" of transAtlantic enslaver ships (Sharpe 2016: 22), as these relations manifest in the subtle as well as not so subtle soils of the plot, plantation, forest, field, swamp, desert, and garden (see also McKittrick 2013; Wynter 1971).

Critical plant studies ethnographers in this double panel ask: what kinds of memory can a currently living plant – or, in the archival sense, the *idea* of a plant – hold for people enacting social relations with reference to specific or imagined pasts? What are the theoretical frames ethnographers often take for granted as the most useful way to analyze plant-human relations? We provoke our colleagues to consider how the frames of economic botany, folk medicine, "magic" practices, and the notion of a settler-colonial and imperial "center" haunt our ability to see what is actually in front of us ethnographically. What kind of ethnographic work can be produced with and alongside plants? Do the frames of economic botany, folk medicine, etc., foreclose other possibilities? Ethnographic work with plants is haunted by the specter of capital, the wake of enslavement, and the mind-muting force of the "settler public sphere" (Lalu 2009) and "settler common sense" (Rifkin 2014; 2017), all the while planthropologists try to reach escape velocity on the available narratives.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Jessica Caporusso, York University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jessica Caporusso, York University, Department of Anthropology, Charis Boke, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Çağla AY, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Sumin Myung, Victoria University of Wellington, Kenneth Chau, University of Edinburgh, Kristi Onzik, University of California, Davis, Charis Boke, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Mara Dicenta, William & Mary, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Citrus Cultivation in Imperial Ruins: An Inquiry into Finike Oranges in Southern Turkey

Attending to the botanical properties of crops and capturing their "plantiness" (Head & Atchison, 2016) in shaping resource politics (Fleming, 2017), this paper discusses socio-ecological encounters shaping small-scale orange production in southern Turkey's Finike. Oranges in Finike have been known as "Finike oranges," a name once referring to Finike yerlisi ("Finike native"), the most-produced orange variety until the 1970s. The paper follows Finike yerlisi from the Turkish War

of Independence into the Cold War, tracing its interactions with the country's first citrus scientists, whose environmental imaginaries were entangled with cosmopolitan citrus assemblages and articulated within national scientism. It explores these assemblages through ethnographic and archival research at the Antalya Citrus Station in Turkey and the Citrus Experiment Station in Riverside CA, revealing their entanglements across Finike's ecologies. Outlining the hauntings of Finike yerlisi, and using a feminist-anticolonial analytic (Murphy, 2020; Liboiron, 2021; Subramaniam, 2024), the paper highlights continuities and ruptures across supply chains and environmental imaginaries, and Turkey's developmentalist projects in relation to the U.S. citrus agroindustry during the Cold War. Emphasizing the political and analytical utility of plant ethnography, it argues that Finike oranges today reproduce colonial inequities in food systems and offer ways to address them.

Presenter(s): Çağla AY

American Trees in Korean Forests: Spectral Ecologies of Reforestation in Times of Geopolitical and Ecological Transition

In the wake of massive deforestation driven by Japanese colonial extraction and the Korean War, the pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) emerged as a botanical witness to the imperial and nationalist histories of forest regeneration in South Korea. Originating from the U.S. East Coast, the pitch pine's journey across the Pacific reflects shifting imperial networks from its initial introduction by Japanese colonial foresters (pre-1945) to its extensive embrace by Korean forestry programs as an "American" pine considered superior to Korean pines under U.S. imperial influences (1950s and 1960s). Recent climatic and environmental changes, however, threaten the pitch pine forests already in decline due to

ecological succession. Drawing on archival research and ethnographic fieldwork with forest scientists, this paper explores how the American pine interrupts linear histories and postcolonial teleologies, holding within its morphologies and soils the ghostly presence of botanical dispersal, ecological degradation, and remediation. By attending to these arboreal specters in archives and forests, I argue that the pitch pine reveals the durabilities of imperial powers that still haunt forest landscapes. I also suggest that the shifting bio(geo)graphy of the pitch pine offers a critical vantage point on the intersection of imperial encounters, scientific forestry, and ecological remedies, while serving as a living

repository of forest futures in times of geopolitical and ecological transition.

Presenter(s): Sumin Myung

Liminal Vision: Autoethnography, Cyanotype, and Indigo as Ethnographic Methods of Haunting

As a visual artist and anthropologist, my practice engages with alternative photography and autoethnography as tools for investigating spectral traces and material absences. This research examines haunting as an ethnographic condition, exploring liminal temporalities and the unseen. It considers how epilepsy, cyanotypes, and indigo cultivation could intersect – each contributing as

mediums of rupture, imprinting and lingering absence. Through autoethnography, I reflect from experience how epilepsy is an embodied haunting—an unpredictable rupture of time and spectral perception. Seizures are interruptions of presence—consciousness lost and regained, like hauntings that leave resonances rather than fixed events. Postictal states further emphasise this temporal residue of absence.

To engage and interpret temporal instability, I use cyanotype printing—a light-sensitive process mirroring my epileptic experience. Cyanotype enables us to record the ghost of an object, not the object itself. Historically used to document plants, it preserves spectral imprints as original subjects decay. The process inverts presence and absence, revealing what lingers beyond original subjects. As a time-based medium, cyanotype captures fleeting moments—mirroring the liminality of epileptic states and photography. This research asks how seizures and artistic practice rupture time and engage with the spectral.

Presenter(s): Kenneth Chau

A Paranoid Plant Science: Exorcising Past Lives to Re-member Plant Futures.

This paper is an ethnographic study of the sciences of plant neurobiology, cognition and behavior (PNCB). Through stories of the struggles of scientists risking their careers on the possibility that plants can think, remember, and communicate with humans and non-human selves, I explore the possibility of PNCB scientists—and their greater scientific nervous system—as haunted by the ghosts of their colonial pasts (Subramaniam, 2015). From within the language of debates surrounding the emergence of the PNCB sciences, it becomes possible to trace hauntings of their racialized and gendered pasts, in which the fears and dismissals of the animate lives of plants are oft relegated to practices of 'pseudo-science,' 'oriental mysticism,' and 'witchcraft.' I refer to this phenomena as a "paranoia of the paranormal" and work to show how such "paranormal" categories are deeply scientific, working to authorize the boundaries of scientific pasts and continuing to haunt and distribute the power of present scientific boundary production to some and not others. I conclude with a transformative ethnographic encounter, in which a scientist details a somatic release of those oppressive relations which had long limited her career as a woman in science. Together with her students, this scientist and I explore some remedies for re-membering a future plant science, in which the ghosts of its past are actively transforming the phenomenal politics of who plants and their scientists might become.

Presenter(s): Kristi Onzik

Chasing Origins: Plant Medicines at the Heart of U.S. Empire's Narrative

Situated in the heart of American empire, the Benjamin Rush Medicinal Garden at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia was first proposed in 1787 by College co-founder Rush himself. When he suggested a "botanic garden," he was thinking with a place that didn't exist and with a way of practicing medicine that was only just becoming legible as specifically American. "His" garden continued only as an idea until 1911, when a plot of land donated adjacent to the College's new home made room for plants. Embedded in Lenape haki-nik in the dual reality of the "wake" of

slavery (Sharpe 2021) and the formation of a "settler public sphere" (Lalu 2009) this garden has emerged unevenly among 20th century American settler aspirations to "multiculturalism," "diversity," and being "a nation of immigrants."

The Rush Medicine Garden, therefore, offers an incisive site from which to tendril an analysis of plants, gardens, and unfolding settler colonial imaginaries. Examining the institutional and interpersonal labor (historical and current) involved, we argue that the material incursions of plants, archival documents, and oral histories can unsettle grand narratives, reorienting settler senses in the institution, the garden, and the broader settler city "of Brotherly Love." The stories that are told, and those that are forgotten, about plants, people, place, and formations of the garden, serve as an aperture onto the machinations of nation and empire, between paving stones and moist dirt.

Presenter(s): Charis Boke

Discussion

4730 Reproductive Justice in the U.S. South: critical analysis and possibilities

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel examines the barriers, inequalities, contradictions and possibilities involved with reproduction in the U.S. South. While there have always been severe legal restrictions on reproductive autonomy in this region, states with conservative administrations have used the overturning of Roe vs. Wade to further restrict and criminalize important forms of healthcare including, but not limited to, abortion. Southern states have long emphasized the value of authoritative knowledge and the medicalization of birth-including limiting the role of doulas and midwives in prenatal care and delivery-and have relatively high rates of C-section and other interventions alongside higher maternal and infant mortality. Particularly striking are the disparities in outcomes between people racially coded as white and people of color. Finally, there is limited public discourse around reproduction including in the form of sex and reproductive education and acknowledgement of pelvic health and pain.

Likely because of this institutionalized hostility to reproductive autonomy, the South is also characterized by vibrant movements to decolonize pregnancy and birth. These include efforts by radical birth workers, non-profit and activist organizations and alternative healthcare organizations, among others, and involve efforts to provide alternatives to the medical industrial complex and associated birth models. The papers in this session will explore some of these efforts in Tennessee and Mississippi and the possibilities around radical transformation of reproductive justice and autonomy.

Papers in this session will discuss anthropological research across the reproductive cycle, from contraceptive decisions, pregnancy, and birth to post-partum care, covering topics of LARC (Long-Acting Reversible Contraception), pelvic floor physical therapy, breastfeeding, and reclaiming birth joy. As a collective, the papers focus on reproductive experiences and desires and center questions of autonomy, reproductive rights, and well-being. What forces lead to the valuation of some forms of contraception over others? How do Black birthworkers counter dominant narratives of trauma? What factors shape motivations, experiences, and outcomes for pelvic care? How can the embodied, intuitive practices of hands-on pelvic floor physical therapy offer a foundation for reimagining pregnancy and birth care? How does the fragmented and technocratic nature of biomedicine shape whether prenatal providers prepare mothers with "high risk" pregnancies for breastfeeding?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Micah Trapp, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Kathryn Hicks, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Kathryn Hicks, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Micah Trapp, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Charlee Coker, Amareé Austin, Sally Zebrick, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology, Mary Moore

Discussant: Nikia Grayson

Presentation(s): Preparing for Birth: pregnancy care at the intersection of obstetric medicine and hands-on intervaginal pelvic floor physical therapy

In western biomedicine, pregnancy and birth are often viewed as medicalized events in need of surveillance and routine intervention. Davis-Floyd (1987) identifies this as the technocratic model of birth, where the body is viewed as a machine and biomedical interventions are justified. Pelvic floor physical therapy (PFPT) has supported post-partum recovery, but some studies suggest antenatal PFPT may shorten labor. This paper presents a case study of PFPT during pregnancy and considers its impacts on labor and birth. By supporting pregnant people who seek obstetric care and plan to give birth in a hospital, PFPT rests at the intersection of technocratic models and humanistic, holistic approaches to birth. In the Pelvic Care Pregnancy Program, licensed pelvic floor physical therapists work with OB/GYN practices to provide care throughout pregnancy and post-partum recovery. Therapists conduct an initial assessment followed by regular sessions to provide pelvic anatomy education, hands-on intervaginal pelvic floor release work, breathwork practices, and biofeedback. Drawing on interviews with physical therapists, OB/GYN doctors, and pregnant people (pre- and post-partum), this paper considers the potential of PFPT to disrupt authoritative approaches to pregnancy and birth and challenge patterns of what Davis (2019) has called "stratified reproduction." As an embodied, intuitive practice, can hands-on PFPT offer a framework for reimagining pregnancy and birth care?

Presenter(s): Micah Trapp

Co-author(s): Katharina Azim, Charlee Coker, Alison Happel-Parkins, Kathryn Hicks, Amy Moses

Birth and Pelvic Care in Two Cities: Motivations, Reactions, and Outcomes for Pelvic Care during Pregnancy in the Southern United States

Whether it is the topic of conversation at lunch or bible study, pregnant people in the mid-South are learning about the potential benefits of pelvic care during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. This research explores this emerging practice through the lens of patients, physical therapists, and physicians in two mid-south cities with different social, cultural and economic contexts. The ethnographic accounts from both cities cite diverse motivations, reactions to, and outcomes for pelvic care during pregnancy. One therapist, who has worked in both cities, referred to one as the "Wild West" and the other as "on the coming edge" of pelvic care. Further, the location for therapy may influence what pregnancy approaches are considered authoritative. One clinic advertises "state-of-the-art" technology, and another favors a more "holistic" or "natural" model of care. Finally, therapists report limited variation in racial identity in pelvic care in one city relative to the other. A deeper exploration of the influences of space and place reveals overlapping and opposing notions of birth care in the Southern U.S. In this comparative case study, we seek to further understand the factors that shape motivations, experiences, and outcomes for pelvic care, and consider the implications for reproductive justice and autonomy. Brigitte Jordan (1993) emphasizes, "birth everywhere is culturally marked and shaped," and so, too, is pelvic floor therapy for pregnancy, birth, and postpartum.

Presenter(s): Charlee Coker

Co-author(s): Kathryn Hicks

Joyful Eyes Below the Belt: A Visual Ethnography of Black Childbirth

Black mothers' birth stories are often coated in struggle and reveal culturally unresponsive health care systems. Anthropological discourse has increasingly examined how obstetric racism and structural violence impact the quality of care and outcomes for marginalized women. While contemporary maternal health literature has explored the work of Black non-biomedical caregivers like Doula and Certified Professional Midwives, more can be done to explore the range of black women's experiences (e.g. Davis, 2018). Lindsey Stewart's offering of joy as a method of decentering suffering in Black American women's experiences supports an inquiry into how Black birthworkers and Black pregnant mothers decenter racism through their kinship and othermothering (2016; Abdullah 2019). I investigate the childbirth experiences that Black women have with Black birthworkers. I ask, why do narratives of trauma dominate maternal health literature, despite the presence of empowering birth stories? Drawing on a photo exhibit co-produced with participants, the paper explores the visual representations of care offered by Midsouth Bipoc Birthworkers, the ways these images challenge dominant narratives, resist institutional violence, and reclaim joy in birth. By exploring Black maternal health through semiformal interviews, including photo elicitation and participant observation, this paper attends to the important often-overlooked themes of birthwork, womanist theology, and healing-centered narratives.

Presenter(s): Amareé Austin

Priming the Pump: How do clinicians prepare a mother with a “high risk” pregnancy to breastfeed her baby in the event of a possible NICU admission?

Biomedical literature has established a mother's own milk to be the optimum nutrition for her infant, with numerous health benefits that extend throughout both the mother's and child's life, in addition to the deep emotional bonding that often occurs in breastfeeding. The breastfeeding relationship becomes particularly precarious in the event of a NICU admission, which almost invariably involves the separation of mother and infant, but it is in these situations that the health and bonding benefits of breastfeeding can be even more dramatic. While the logistical challenges are great, it is often still possible for a mother to breastfeed directly or express her own breastmilk for her NICU infant.

Considering that some pregnancies are more likely to result in a NICU admission, there is an opportunity for prenatal care clinicians and birth workers to prepare mothers ahead of time to provide their own breastmilk to their babies, even in complicated circumstances, if that is something that the mother wishes to do.

Drawing on interviews with prenatal clinicians, birth workers, and mothers of NICU infants and using a framework that considers biopower, racial capitalism, and the fragmented and technocratic nature of biomedicine, I explore the ways that prenatal providers do or do not prepare mothers with "high risk" pregnancies for breastfeeding.

Presenter(s): Sally Zebrick

Factors in Contraceptive Decision Making

At a time when reproductive freedoms such as abortion services are increasingly restricted in the United States, equitable contraceptive access is more vital than ever to achievement of reproductive goals. This study seeks to explore how unseen economic and socio-cultural forces do or do not direct individual decision-making regarding specific contraceptive methods. Increasingly, many U.S. nonprofits have turned toward LARC as a more "effective method" to provide to low-income communities of color in recent years, rather than supplying people with short-acting methods such as the pill, condoms, patch, etc. By analyzing in-depth interviews with employees, clients, and partnering physicians of a not-for-profit organization which solely offers LARC to low-income communities (the majority of which are Hispanic or Black), I examine the subtle and less subtle forces that assign value to certain methods of birth control over others. Do individuals feel comfortable with their decision to use LARC, and what socio-cultural factors (including race/ethnicity, stigma, familiarity, history in countries of origin, level of sexual health education, etc.) shape this choice? This study contributes to a growing body of work on LARC usage, and sheds further light on the complex nature of cross-cultural contraceptive decision-making among residents of a diverse city in the mid-south.

Presenter(s): Mary Moore

2956 Classes of '25: Everyday Formations of Socioeconomic Class in the US

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

From W.E.B. Du Bois to Mike Davis, American interlocutors of Marx have observed that most Americans do not speak about their relations to labor and ownership using the Marxist categories of proletariat or bourgeoisie. Yet, the ways Americans live, socialize, identify, and mobilize collectively have always been entangled with how they understand their and others' relationships to labor and ownership. Recent developments, such as the turn of more low-income Americans to the Republican Party and high-income Americans to the Democratic Party, have highlighted the necessity of improving scholarly understandings of how different Americans conceive of their socioeconomic position and mobilize politically based on class. These developments have also highlighted the insufficiency of limited available class terminology, like "working-class" or "middle-class", to describe the multiplicity of different ways Americans experience social class.

This panel brings together five ethnographic papers describing how specific localized groups of Americans experience class in everyday life, and how these conceptions inform political action. The papers describe ethnographically how different conceptions of socioeconomic class manifest in different economic contexts and become socially legible and meaningful through speech and habitus. Papers consider 1) the vernacular categories Americans use to speak about class status 2) the different relationships to labor, e.g. manual, white-collar, or care work, or capital ownership, e.g. home, business, or asset ownership, shaping local configurations of class, 3) links between local class configurations and other social positions including race, gender, migration status, sexuality, or geographical location, 4) how local class formations become visible and meaningful through collective forms of habitus including food, fashion, architecture, and speech, and 5) how local class formations inform political action. The panel includes scholarship describing emerging class formations, e.g. Gabriela Olmos Rosas's paper on Latino migrant workers in Alaska, and scholarship describing how older class formations are transforming in the current period, e.g. Ellen Kladky's paper on white Appalachian mining communities.

The panel will collectively reflect on the following question: can we reconcile Americans' everyday experiences of class with Marxist ideas of working-class and bourgeoisie, and speak meaningfully of an American working-class and bourgeoisie? Or does the fractured picture of American classes demand a new language of labor and political action that departs fundamentally from Marxist terms?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Michael Angland, Northwestern University

Chair: Michael Angland, Northwestern University

Presenter(s): Ellen Kladky, College of Charleston, Department of Sociology & Anthropology,

Christine Walley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Gabriela Olmos Rosas, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Department of Anthropology, Michael Angland, Northwestern University

Discussant: Carolyn Rouse, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Class Amuck: Class Dissonance, Identity, and Change in Appalachia

In Appalachia, the figure of the coal miner—soot-stained, red-bandanaed, implicitly white and male—looms large over discussions of class. Despite its persistent mythos, this figure feels archaic, a relic of a time when class was a simple binary between owners and workers. Now, the compass points of class identity are scrambled as new types of work and new household financial products have upended both the structural and the social parameters of class. In light of these changes, familiar industrial class categories have transformed but not disappeared (as is sometimes assumed). Indeed, the figure of the miner as an avatar of uncomplicated working-classness increasingly fails to deliver even for miners themselves. This paper explores the sense of "class dissonance" that emerges as working West Virginians try to make sense of their classed identity and experiences. In everyday life, people rely on taken-for-granted expectations that certain markers (like income, personal style, occupation, politics, education, and race, to name a few) will reliably cohere into recognizable categories. When they don't, it can be profoundly destabilizing, especially in a place where being working class is central to regional identity. This paper charts the contours of class dissonance to examine the relationship between class and identity as industrial class categories are reshaped by new vectors of socioeconomic stratification.

Presenter(s): Ellen Kladky

Haunted Brownfields: Class, Deindustrialization, and Post-Post-Fordism in the United States

Nineteenth-century theories of capitalism emerged via an analysis of the plight of the "industrial working class." Our contemporary moment is built on decades of economic transformation in which finance has decentered industry, while economic inequality and precarity has radically increased. These changes require rethinking how class works within current capitalism. This paper explores the remaking of class subjectivities in a former steel mill region of the industrial Midwest. Historically, Southeast Chicago was home to a patchwork of white (often Eastern-European), Mexican-American, and Black steel-working families. Class dynamics were mediated, first, by histories of racial capitalism in which steel mill management pitted groups against each other to counter unionization and, second, by the tendency suggested by Sherry Ortner to experience class relations through the lens of "those we wish to be like" and "those we seek to differentiate ourselves from." Southeast Chicago is now majority Mexican-American and what I call a "para-industrial" landscape - one in which largely automated industries operate alongside defunct toxic post-industrial brownfields. In short, it remains a landscape haunted by industry but without workers. Racial capitalism has now shifted to a national stage in which oligarch-funded right wing "populism" once again seeks to divide groups and preempt possibilities for alternative multi-racial populisms. With the decimation of local news sources, for-prof

Presenter(s): Christine Walley

Treading on Thin Ice: Latino Labor and the Fragile Promise of Prosperity in Alaska

Latino workers have migrated to Alaska driven by employment opportunities, lured by the promise of economic prosperity in the State's extractive economies. However, upon arrival in the Circumpolar North, they often encounter an unfamiliar economic landscape that presents challenges, including a mismatch between the labor skills they possess and those demanded by the local market, difficulties navigating bureaucratic systems, and misalignments between their cultural values and those of the host society. Consequently, rather than securing high-paying jobs in mainstream industries, they frequently find themselves in low-wage, entry-level, or temporary positions or turn to small business entrepreneurship within side economies, thereby perpetuating and deepening the socioeconomic class gap.

Based on extended ethnographic research including participant observation and interviews, this paper investigates open and covert narratives of work among Latino immigrants in Anchorage. It explores how they make sense of their socioeconomic positioning, how their labor relations shape class identities, and how the resulting class formations both diverge from and intersect with mainstream conceptions of class. By examining how Latino workers navigate labor and social structures in the Circumpolar North, this study contributes to understanding the evolving dynamics of class in Alaska and reflects on the prospects for labor and class-based political mobilization within immigrant communities.

Presenter(s): Gabriela Olmos Rosas

An Island of Beauty: Liberal Aesthetics and White Class Distinction on the South Side of Chicago

My paper theorizes the relationship between white liberal political subjectivity and class distinction by highlighting the role a common aesthetic order plays in both for white upper-middle-class residents of the South Side Chicago neighborhoods of Beverly and Morgan Park. White liberal residents' efforts to make the Beverly/Morgan Park area beautiful invoke an aesthetic order that distinguishes their upper-middle-class neighborhood from "desolate" lower-income Black-majority neighborhoods to their east and the "neat" but "intolerant" lower-middle-class white-majority areas to their west. By ethnographically analyzing local aesthetic projects including historic home preservation talks and development of the local art scene, I illustrate that white liberal residents see local projects of aesthetic improvement as entangled with advancing positive moral and political qualities of open-mindedness and tolerance. I argue that being a white liberal in the contemporary US is a form of aestheticization of politics, theorized by Walter Benjamin as when politics manifest as a means of aestheticized self-expression that is indifferent to structures of power or ownership. For South Side Chicago white liberals, everyday acts of making the world beautiful combine a political project of managing hate with a class project of expressing distinction from a lower-class white other. For my interlocutors, managing the ugliness of hate requires increasing the beauty of one's material surroundings.

Presenter(s): Michael Angland

2606 Ghostly Memories: Landscapes and Objects Activating New Symbolic Horizons

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel interrogates how cultural objects and landscapes of memory formulate new symbolic horizons and frames of meaning that resolve problems of identity and change. It examines how objects and events are sorted and interpreted in order to create continuities in signification that draw upon the past as a resource for symbolic enactments and reconfigurations.

The collected papers deal with themes of engagement with the material world of objects and landscapes as they move through space and time. An unseen thread runs through these objects and landscapes in the form of comparative histories linking the past, present, and future in a way that leaves indelible semiotic traces, representing a potential to activate new and alternative symbolic horizons. Spectatorship -- the practice of viewing and engaging with landscapes and objects -- also involves engaging with "specters," the unexpected and often unseen traces left by the people and events that have previously crossed paths with these landscapes and objects, and the ways in which these traces make themselves known in the present.

Our presentations return to settings in Africa, France, and Eastern Europe that we have previously studied ethnographically. We strive to look beyond surface-level phenomena to interrogate what kinds of "ghosts" have informed, and continue to inform, our understanding behind the scenes. We define "ghosts" as the reflexivity, serendipity, and historicity that haunt our ethnographic settings. As we work to fit our understandings and observations into a cohesive model, questions that lie beyond the surface, periodically appear to unravel established paradigms, suggest alternative understandings, and lead in new directions. Encountering and engaging with these "ghosts" leads us to a new form of thick anthropological description. In conclusion, we argue that anthropology needs to become more "ghostly" in the sense of remaining open to the insights that can arise from these encounters.

Section: Association for Africanist Anthropology

Organizer: Bennetta Jules-Rosette, University of California, San Diego, J.R. Osborn, Georgetown University

Chair: Erica Fontana, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Bennetta Jules-Rosette, University of California, San Diego, Peter Bloom, University of California, Santa Barbara, Delinda Collier, J.R. Osborn, Georgetown University, Degenhart Brown, University of California, Los Angeles, Erica Fontana, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghosting, Haunting, and Appropriation in Circuits of African Art

Increasing concerns with the restitution of African artifacts to their places of origin emphasize the strong relationship between the spectral (spirit of the object) and spectatorship. This relationship builds on claims concerning object production and ownership as well as the provenance of objects in contemporary circuits, including private collections and distant museums. Inventories of objects and claims of ownership support processes of restoring objects to their rightful owners. While circuits of appropriation may be located in villages of origin and clans of craft makers, actual returns are mired in the ambiguities of anonymous art producers, faulty circuits of exchange, and improbable locations of return that contribute to the ghostly history of art exchanges in the contemporary market.

This paper explores the ways in which Western museums, such as the Musée du Quai Branly and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, serve as nodes of exchange for more profound re-imaginings of African art by contemporary creators who engage in what V.Y. Mudimbe has termed an act of reprise. The appeals of heritage sites such as the Cape Coast Museum in Ghana and the Île Gorée in Sénégal are examined as spectral simulacra that create new forms of aesthetic exchange, pointing toward an alternative future. This discussion concludes with an assessment of the relationship between contemporary artistic forms and the legacies of conventional African art.

Presenter(s): Bennetta Jules-Rosette

The Phantasmatic return of the fetish: Reactivating Congolese nkisi sculptures in contemporary museum repatriation debates

Ongoing debates regarding the repatriation of African art from Western museums to the African continent have become a source for "memory politics" in support of Western diplomatic efforts. Just as the colonial context of conquest, administration, and ethnography served as the basis for early collecting expeditions, the postcolonial context of museum displays has led to a wide array of troubling questions regarding community ownership and belonging. This paper considers the case of Congolese nkisi iron nail sculpture as a context for social interaction. Their activation as consecrated "power figures" has been associated with the interaction between the iron nails driven into the wooden sculptural templates and that which is bundled into its hidden compartments. These compartments were filled with medicinal elements including local minerals, trees and plants, animal remains, talismans, among other sources, which are part of a still contested historical catalogue about these works. As a missing link in the survey museum, I consider how the nkisi figure has been re-consecrated as an object of exchange through the production of its market value. Its reframing bears little resemblance to the process of its creation. Instead, its present form reimagines how the museum complex re-consecrates its historical value through new horizons of ownership as valuation.

Presenter(s): Peter Bloom

Spectral Media: Ghosts, Ancestral Presences, and Mediated Communication

in Baloji's Omen (2023)

This paper examines Baloji's 2023 film "Omen" through the lens of spectral media theory, exploring how ghostly presences function as both narrative devices and metaphors for communication across boundaries. While superficially a story of "a family riven by superstition," I argue that "Omen" represents a sophisticated engagement with how ancestral presences manifest through media forms.

Central to my analysis is how accusations of witchcraft function as contested sites of spectral engagement. The rejection of bodies parallels broader questions about which entities are permitted to communicate across boundaries of culture, geography, and temporality. Baloji's self-described synesthesia becomes particularly relevant, suggesting a capacity to perceive connections across sensory domains that mirrors communication with the beyond.

The paper explores family structures as haunted networks where media ancestors—from colonial photographic archives to digital platforms—continue to exert influence. The "zombie" imagery that pervades the film speaks not only to extractive histories in the DRC but to how media technologies create new forms of spectrality, where presences persist beyond their physical embodiment. By examining Baloji's transmedia approach, I demonstrate how his work collapses distinctions between spiritual mediumship and technological mediation, suggesting that all communication—whether with ghosts or through media—involves negotiating presence across absence.

Presenter(s): Delinda Collier

In Dialogue with Ghostly Presences: Visiting Drexciya with Ayana V. Jackson in From The Deep

African, African-worked, and African diasporic artifacts are haunted by the legacy of the Middle Passage. "From the Deep: In the Wake of Drexciya with Ayana V. Jackson" evokes these spectral memories. Created in collaboration with curator Karen Milbourne, the exhibition opened at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) in 2023. Jackson's multimedia works engage the legend of Drexciya, a mythical undersea civilization populated by the descendants of pregnant women thrown—or those who jumped—overboard during the transatlantic passage. Drexciya was imagined by the Detroit techno duo of James Simpson and Gerald Donald in the 1990s, and Jackson significantly expands this tradition through collaborations with a range of diasporic artists, including tailors, videographers, sculptors, and sound designers. The exhibition weaves a rich tapestry of ecological concern, Afrofuturism, histories of music, the transfer of technology, and the cosmology of African water spirits. Employing what she labels an "archival impulse," Jackson deconstructs archival collections in order to challenge the "racialization and sexualization of Black bodies." Casting herself in the role of historical figures, Jackson brings the ghosts of Drexciya to life, and she invites audiences to confront and enter into dialogues with these ghostly presences. In the process, "From the Deep" inspires both a reckoning with past injustices and the imagination of more just futures.

Presenter(s): J.R. Osborn

"Prepared" Bodies and the Tripartite Self: How Spirits Inform Notions of Being in Southern Bénin

The forests, towns, and villages of southeastern Bénin are inhabited by untold numbers of spirits and deities. This paper examines how indigenous conceptions of the human body are informed by daily interactions with these spirits and divinities. More specifically, I explore how numinous presences manifest in human lives and how Béninois bodies are modified to mitigate attacks by malevolent spirits and attract the affections of benevolent ones. Goun and Fon corporealities understand the human body as the amalgamation of three interconnected selves: the physical body (agbazà), the soul (sé), and the shadow (yè). The tripartite self allows one to commune with ancestors and deities in times of need but also makes humans vulnerable to malignant spirits (yè nya nya) and sorcerers (àzèto). As a result, Béninois embellish their bodies with various ritually-charged medicines, including powders, perfumes, soaps, scarification, and portable talismans. Power medicines, themselves created through collaboration with more-than-human agents, help people negotiate the often fraught and spirit-dense lifeworlds of southeastern Bénin. In analyzing how the omnipresence of spirits informs West African conceptions of being, this presentation provides a synopsis of the various types of numinous entities with whom Béninois communities interact and the ritual technologies used in mediating human-spirit exchanges.

Presenter(s): Degenhart Brown

Traces of the Past and Meaning-Making in Historical Tourism

Every environment where people have lived carries physical traces of the lives, activities, and worldviews of its past and present inhabitants – from markers placed there for deliberate purposes of remembering (e.g., statues, informational plaques, and memorials), to the forms of buildings and the layouts of streets, to the names of places. Some of these are deliberately emphasized and reconstructed in particular ways as evidence for stories; others persist although people may attempt to forget, ignore, or avoid them; and still others simply exist, invisible to some but holding the potential to take on significance in new and often unexpected ways.

In moving through such an environment, one encounters all of these kinds of traces, but the meaning one makes of them is informed by both cultural themes and idiosyncratic individual experiences. In this paper, I look at several sites where historical tourism takes place in formats such as guided walking tours or signage placed to direct visitors' attention to places, structures, and objects of historical interest. I compare the stories and themes emphasized in tourism materials with those that emerge in the experience and meaning-making of individual visitors (as told through public social media posts, blogs, and reviews). I also explore comparisons and contrasts between the two. How do the "ghosts" we encounter challenge and complicate, as well as reinforce, our understanding of the world?

Presenter(s): Erica Fontana

1089 Part I: Specters in the Sepulcher

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

Historian Arlette Farge (2013, 46) has argued that the archive is a "sepulcher," where one encounters "silhouettes of the past, be they faltering or sublime." Here, we take a broad definition of "archive" to include traditional archival documents, collections, archaeological record, ethnographic fieldnotes, and even the body itself. Following the "archive as sepulcher," we ask: what are the implications for our studies and our results when we encounter ghostly absences buried in these spaces?

Ghosts in anthropology have taken many forms, with "haunting" often metaphorically gesturing toward absence, longing, and troubled, violent, or unsettled pasts. They can also take the form of our recognition of what is missing, the loss of materials and knowledge unwittingly perpetuated by praxis, time, and historical forces. In our work, we encounter absences and the ghostly impressions they suggest in many ways. In collections and archives, we often open an empty box, note a missing document, see a space left blank on a form, or encounter a missing page from field notes or diaries. There is also the pause, the self-censoring involved, when asking ourselves, "should I write that experience down?" Whether such absences become a dead end, a frustration, or an obsession, they are often left out of our studies, never mentioned in the "materials and methods." Writing on agnotology, Proctor (2008, 3) tells us, "Ignorance can be made and unmade, and science can be complicit in either process."

In this session, we invite contributors to re-presence these absences and impressions. Welcoming scholars from across the subdisciplines, we ask that they interrogate the ways that the absences we encounter in the archive--that sepulcher where "silhouettes of the past" live--shape anthropological knowledge, or the lack thereof, even as they are rarely discussed in official publications or presentations. In other words, we will consider the double haunting of archival ghosts: first encountered as absence in our fieldwork, and second as present absences that continue to haunt anthropological knowledge even as we participate in removal of their work.

Organizer: Alanna Warner-Smith, American University, Meredith Ellis, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Shannon Novak, Syracuse University

Presenter(s): Alanna Warner-Smith, American University, Celia Emmelhainz, Smithsonian Institution (NMNH), Lucy Mulroney, Yale University, Paul White, University of Nevada, Reno, Meredith Ellis, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology, Tony Chamoun, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Morgue Afterlives: The Ragged Edge of Wrist Tags and the Fuzzy Boundaries of an Anatomical Collection

The Huntington Anatomical Collection (1893-1921) is comprised of the remains of immigrants and U.S.-born persons who died in New York City. They were subsequently dissected by medical students and curated in a comparative collection by the doctor for whom they are named. As a documented collection, each set of skeletal remains is recorded with demographic data, including name, age, assigned sex, nativity, and assigned race. This documentation imparted "value" in the eyes of its curators, making their bodies legible to comparative methods since its original formation.

The structural and direct violence of curation has been well-outlined. Here, I turn to process of documentation, which started from hospital and morgue records. For many individuals in the collection, the wrist tag, accompanying the body to the college for dissection, has been preserved. The tags are so closely associated with the bodies they marked that they are referred to as "wrist tags" after the part to which they were attached. The tags demonstrate that persons are not simply materially present in the collection as bone, but also through paper and ink. However, in turning the tags over, and considering the "reverse" side, we find that some tags were made from scraps of others' morgue records; fragments of persons whose skeletal remains are not part of the collection are nevertheless also present. Bringing forward their presence troubles the boundaries of the collection and our engagements with it.

Presenter(s): Alanna Warner-Smith

Afterlives In and Out of the Archives: Making and Unmaking Recognition in Anthropology

In recent decades, archivists and anthropologists have worked to uncover the contributions of women, local and unpaid collaborators, and assistants in the building of anthropological knowledge and practice, while critiquing and disassembling previously honored "ancestors," or preeminent anthropologists of the past, at times even considering what repatriation or destruction of disciplinary archival records might look like.

This talk examines how the structure of archival collections, which are often built around the institution or primary researcher as record-producer, contributes to the erasure of local knowledge-keepers, research and field assistants, and administrative colleagues. Through discussion of research into the women of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) and the Department of Anthropology at the Smithsonian, including the development of staff lists, scouring of administrative records, and review of #thanksfortyping-style acknowledgements of women's labor, we particularly attend to how women in archival, administrative, assistant, and student or volunteer roles continue to serve as the invisible "glass shoulders" on which other researchers' careers are made.

Drawing on archivists' experiences of appraisal, processing, and description, alongside fragments of poetry, prose, administrative, and other trace records of women as ghost scholars, we picture how the presence—and absence or erasure—of women can be made more visible in the anthropology archive.

Presenter(s): Celia Emmelhainz

Writing from the Archive of Silent Arias

American novelist and critic Cynthia Ozick recently declared the act of letter writing dead. "Dead as a doornail. Dead as the dodo. Dead as the hundreds of generations who had no other way to convey ideas and emotions over distances of land and longing." In this paper, I embrace the creative potential of writing from the archive of letters at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Taking up the personal correspondence of the deceased, I meditate on their haunting meanings.

The letters of the dead index scenes of longing, anger, and agony unfolding then—still, unfolding now. What rights do these dead letter writers have to their feelings and privacy? The original recipients are now dead too. By what ethics do we attend to this archive of past lives? Lives captured and cemented—yet absent, made one-dimensional. I am drawn to the letters that came to the archive by chance or accident, without their writer's knowledge or consent. Their words lurking. Little timebombs. As Ozick writes: "Letters, fragile shafts of paper and ink, can have the operatic force of stirring things up, making mischief, leaking lava, compelling notice, all the while hiding under an imposture. The writer of letters, these silent arias, can be present though simultaneously fully absent."

Presenter(s): Lucy Mulroney

Drawing Out Silence: Archival Summonings through Illustration

Illustration, be it manifested through hastily made field sketches or carefully constructed images, highlight one way that documents present a "kind of knowing that is all wrapped with showing, and showing wrapped with knowing" (Gitelman 2014: 1). A critical consideration is that the relationship between showing and knowing is iterative. Drawing, re-drawing, and appraisal all involve acts of framing, and such processes add dynamism to how we traditionally conceive of archives. This paper reports on a facet of a broadly scoped and decades-long project to document Alaska's historic gold mining landscapes. Archaeological fieldwork centered on the detailed measurement of sites where ore from the underground was crushed and refined to recover valued metals. The field maps generated through this work formed the basis for developing illustrative reconstructions of several gold processing mills. This paper details the ways that the drawing process came to interrogate the very data recorded, re-engaging with noted and un-noted field observations, and re-directing illustrations to include experiences felt and stored by the body. The illustrations that have resulted from this re-engagement seek to give voice to the complex, subjective, and multi-sensory experiences of archaeological fieldwork.

Presenter(s): Paul White

Naming and Forgetting: Agnotology in the Storage Room

This is a story about how names are forgotten, and then recreated. It is about how silence works its way into the historical record through actions in the moment, and then later, a second time, through actions by the researchers. In this paper, I examine how the label on the box containing two poorly preserved and commingled sets of skeletal remains dictated an entire research program, all predicated on an assumption. The 1928 Hurricane Victims 1 and 2 Belle Glade have no paper trail, no documented history, and very little biological information that can contribute to their identification. But through the conventional practices of naming, they have assumed an identity. The story of these remains is the story of the layers of choices and assumptions in the storage room. Such actions "haunt" the materials with which we work, invisible though they may be. They have the potential to both elucidate real aspects of history, as well as further silence other aspects of it. Researchers have termed this agnotology, and it is a key idea for this exploration. "Ignorance

can be the flipside of memory, what we don't know because we have forgotten, parts of which can be restored by historical inquiries but most of which is forever lost. (And we often cannot say which.) Ignorance can be made or unmade, and science can be complicit in either process," (Proctor 2008: 3). The process of forgetting and losing--and naming and remembering--is central to the story of Hurricane Victims 1 and 2.

Presenter(s): Meredith Ellis

Sectarianism in Archaeology's Archives

Academic, government, and public circles doggedly reify sectarianism as "the" principle of the Middle East—i.e., social worlds are transhistorically segregated and explained by sect (Makdisi 2017; 2019). This is despite social historians demonstrating sectarianism's historical contingency as process, discourse, and practice. Archaeology, I argue, is among circles that subtly reify sectarianism. This reification is directly related to imperial practices that racialized, Orientalized, and sectarianized Levantine landscapes. These claims are based on my reading of various forms of archival evidence: Ottoman and Euro-colonial imperial/military maps that identify Levantine cemeteries (ca. 1840–1930), archaeological publications discussing Levantine cemeteries (ca. 1921–2021), and site records of an excavated component of a cemetery near the port of Beirut, Lebanon (ca. 1730–1930).

Here, sectarianism in the archives more broadly and archaeology's sectarianist politics of knowledge specifically are taken as effects of what Ann Stoler (2016, 322) calls "imperial duress" that "more than 'haunt[s].'" They register sectarianism's capacity to facilitate forgetting other-than and more-than sectarianist worlds, as well as to enfold lives, deaths, and relations, such that multiple temporalities and spatialities of violence coendure. Ultimately, I call for a revision of the workings of archaeological knowledge, along with the politics and milieus that sustain it.

Presenter(s): Tony Chamoun

4540 "Honoring Ethnographic Relationships “After” the Field"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In an era of insistent yet seemingly intractable calls for "decolonizing methodologies," we gather students and scholars of Anthropology for a roundtable discussion about the considerations, challenges, and consequences faced in representing and "writing up" field-researcher relationships "after" the field. We explore "boundary-making" as a political and epistemic problem which often reproduces dichotomized views of the public versus private through ethnographic writing (Thelen and Alber 2018). How do we resist the temptation to essentialize human relationships from the field? How do we "write up" the ethnographic research assistant? The companions of everyday life? How do we account for quasi-kin relations, which often transgress and stretch the boundaries between field and home (Braukmann et al. 2020)? We welcome discussions about experiments in writing collaboratively and creatively with and about intellectual co-producers, interlocutors, and

family members. Yet we also complicate calls to "dismantle the subject/object dichotomy" (Bejarano et al. 2019) by debating the very real professional, personal, and political costs of such exposures of the self and other.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Mary Knipper, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Mary Knipper, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, Taryn Valley, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Department of Anthropology, Joyce Lu, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, Ross Perfetti, University of Pennsylvania

Discussant: Omar Al-Dewachi, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology

8212 Structural Determinants of Health in Border Colonias: Policy, Access, and Outcomes

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Colonias along the U.S.-Mexico border exemplify how borderland communities endure systemic health inequities while fostering resilience in the face of layered marginalization. These unincorporated settlements, predominantly home to Latino populations, are often excluded from municipal infrastructure and investment, resulting in persistent barriers to healthcare access. With over 1,300 colonias located in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas alone, the region is central to national conversations about public health disparities in the borderlands.

This roundtable brings together researchers who live and work in the Rio Grande Valley with these borderland communities. We will discuss how our research and teaching experiences have led us to examine and document how structural determinants of health, such as affordability, transportation, language access, and immigration status, interact with broader policy regimes, from zoning and land-use laws to healthcare eligibility and enforcement mechanisms. Through ethnographic interviews, policy analysis, and spatial analysis, our research traces how residents navigate fragmented systems of care while confronting overlapping legal and institutional barriers. Special attention is given to how health outcomes are influenced not only by healthcare policy, but by immigration enforcement, educational access, and housing law.

By grounding public health disparities in the legal and political structures that perpetuate them, our roundtable calls for cross-sectoral solutions rooted in equity, accountability, and community voice. The Rio Grande Valley offers a critical lens to assess how institutions respond, or fail to respond, to community health needs in border spaces, and how residents adapt in the absence of adequate care. In doing so, our research contributes to a multidisciplinary public health framework rooted in place, equity, and systemic accountability.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Andrik Gonzalez, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Milena Melo, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Presenter(s): Chantal Patino , Andrik Gonzalez, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Milena Melo, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Ricardo Carrera del Valle , Rolando Ocanas

Discussant: Jill Fleuriot, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology

3518 Narratives of Care: Medical Professionals and Their Lived Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable addresses how healthcare workers in the United States experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and how it shaped their outlook on care, trust, and the state of medical and public health expertise both during and after the crisis. All of the roundtable participants have conducted research related to the pandemic or medical expertise more generally. Contributors to the roundtable will address pandemic illness, death and dying, care, moral injury, and narrating loss through the perspectives of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. We will also consider the methodological implications of gathering testimonies from healthcare workers, posing the question of what analyzing these narratives might tell us about studying "life's ends" (Hawkins and Dawson 2018) ethnographically.

From ICU nurses and ER doctors to nursing home workers and hospice staff, at the beginning of the pandemic healthcare workers across the United States were celebrated as heroes and praised for their selfless dedication to fighting the virus and valiantly trying to save their patients. Within months, many were experiencing burnout and moral injury from the sheer number of cases. Utilizing media coverage, in-depth interviews, and healthcare workers' own publications on the pandemic, we can see how testimonies bring to light the struggles of becoming a proxy witness to death by giving dying COVID patients their last rites or being the last person they see. These narratives also shed light on how healthcare workers narrate the uncertainty of the COVID-19 virus, which brought drastic changes to how medical professionals practice and care for patients. With such narratives in mind, this roundtable explores the strains of care and experiences of moral injury amid shifting public discourse of mis/disinformation during the pandemic, and, more recently, as part of a federal healthcare system predicated on questioning, if not explicitly undermining, accepted public health and medical expertise.

Finally, we will consider the role of testimony in studying pandemic from the perspectives of healthcare professionals. This entails thinking through how to analyze (1) narratives that touch on a

growing medical mistrust, isolation from the social world, moral injury, and sacrifice; and (2) the methodology of personal interviews aimed at probing the significance of experiences felt in the hospital setting during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. How might listening to these narratives offer a means to care for the dead through the stories of the living?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Avery Nennmann , Paige Gavin

Presenter(s): Avery Nennmann , Paige Gavin , Ron Barrett, Macalester College, Department of Anthropology, Emily Mendenhall, Georgetown University

Discussant: Neely Myers, Southern Methodist University, Ruth Toulson

7724 Persistent Hauntings: The Complexities of Institutionalizing Racial Justice Projects in Education

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Objectives

Current assaults on minoritized communities, from the forced deportations of im/migrants to the dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across and beyond educational institutions, are part and parcel of dynamic attitudes towards people of color within the US. Yet, even in more progressive times, anthropological approaches to educational research have exposed deep tensions in everyday implementations of policies, programs, and pedagogies towards racial and linguistic equity for multiply minoritized communities. This panel traces tensions that arise in processes of codifying justice-oriented movements in schools.

Overview

Five papers underscore the myriad challenges educators, including teachers, parents, school and district leaders face on the ground. The first highlights experiences of teachers implementing the Ethnic Studies mandate in Connecticut to demonstrate how teacher practices may center the content without the ethos of a movement rooted in Civil Rights era activism. The second centers the experiences of teachers who teach newcomer youth in California to reveal the complexities of designing and implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogies that respond to the diverse needs of students as California's K-12 Ethnic Studies mandate goes into effect. The third traces experiences of district and school leaders as well as parents to figure how efforts to expand bilingual schooling, particular dual language immersion, for multilingual learners in California becomes misaligned with an underfunded district's DEI efforts. The fourth showcases how multiracial school administrators and staff attempt to actualize DEI at school in various manners within a progressive, multicultural, and high-income area to reflect and challenge its status as a "progressive" community. Lastly, the fifth showcases how district leaders in predominantly White school districts frame talking about race and racism in different manners than those in districts

with fewer White students, suggesting how certain forms of race-talk becomes cultural capital in everyday efforts to actualize racial equity.

Significance

Through five cases across three states, this panel brings together variegated perspectives on how educational stakeholders like teachers, district and school leaders as well as parents experience implementations of justice-oriented movements and programs like ethnic studies, bilingual schooling, or DEI. As such, this panel highlights confluences and contradictions in addressing issues of race, racism, and educational inequities in and beyond classrooms for minoritized students and their communities. We ask: how do the ghosts of race essentialism, racial capitalism, and Whiteness (re)appear in even the most well-intentioned attempts to achieve racial and linguistic equity? What can be done to confront these ghosts?

Structure

This panel consists of 15 minute presentations of five papers, followed by 15 minutes of Q&A.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: CATHERINE PARK

Chair: CATHERINE PARK

Presenter(s): Jia-Hui Stefanie Wong, Trinity College, Rita Kamani-Renedo, CATHERINE PARK, Gabrielle Hernandez, Bonnie Siegler

Presentation(s): Ethnic Studies Without Ethnic Studies Pedagogy?: Implications of Mandating the Teaching of Ethnic Studies

As of 2022-23, Connecticut requires high schools to offer a Black and Latine Studies course. Drawing on data collected as part of a larger ethnographic study, this paper analyzes the perspectives and pedagogical approaches of Black and Latine Studies teachers, and highlights the possibilities and limitations of mandating the teaching of ethnic studies (ES). I build on literature on ethnic studies education (e.g. Bonilla et al., 2021; Cabrera, et al., 2013), and particularly the concept of ethnic studies pedagogy, which emphasizes that ES should be centered on three components: access, relevance, and community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

I argue that when ES courses are mandated, teachers' pedagogical approaches vary. Specifically, I highlight how some ES educators support the course and curriculum, but teach without engaging in ethnic studies pedagogy. They focus primarily on the course content and skills development, without necessarily centering cultural relevance, community, and activism. However, I also argue that a state mandate for ES education creates space for teachers to embody ethnic studies pedagogy, and for students to engage in critical, transformative, and community centered learning. As Connecticut and other states begin requiring ES education, it is important to consider how to ensure high quality ES education. The findings underscore the need to recruit and train ES teachers in ethnic studies pedagogy, particularly when ES courses are required.

Presenter(s): Jia-Hui Stefanie Wong

Ethnic Studies teachers as policymakers: Imagining Ethnic Studies for multilingual newcomer immigrant youth in California

This paper examines the experiences of Ethnic Studies (ES) teachers serving a growing but overlooked group: multilingual, recently-arrived immigrant and asylum-seeking youth ("newcomers"). Most scholarship has focused on U.S.-born youth of color, not examining the experiences of newcomers whose relationships with the U.S. racial order are distinct from those who have grown up here (Bajaj et al., 2017). In light of the new K-12 ES mandate in California, we examine how teachers serving newcomers in three Bay Area schools make sense of and prepare to enact ES.

Our analysis draws upon Castagno & McCarty's (2017) anthropology of education policy framework to examine how educators make and "do" policy through their day-to-day teaching. We draw on ethnographic data from a curriculum co-design collaborative with six teachers of newcomers. Data sources include interviews, fieldnotes and videorecordings, and participant-produced artifacts.

We find that teachers highlighted the community-specific nuances of ES pedagogy, one that must attune to the needs of newly arrived immigrant youth. Thus, they reflected a more expansive understanding of ES than the official state policy. Teachers also raised the complexities of teaching race and racism to students who are not as familiar with dominant US racial logics, as well as how to teach language and content simultaneously. These findings reveal that teachers' sensemaking challenged the policy mandate's assumptions about race and migration.

Presenter(s): Rita Kamani-Renedo

Co-author(s): Eujin Park

Contours of equity: Asian Americanness and Mandarin bilingual schooling

California has taken steps to educate multilingual learners towards a global world through initiatives like Global California 2030, and the 2016 repeal of Prop 227 that had all but banned bilingual education in public schools. In hand, dual language immersion (DLI) programs have proliferated, leading to charges of the "gentrification" of bilingual schooling by more affluent, often White communities. Thus, scholars have appealed to the need to recenter the needs of heritage language speakers and equitably expand access to DLI for diverse and minoritized communities.

This paper traces how goals of "expanding access" to DLI and "equitably serving heritage language speakers" becomes misaligned on the ground through the case of a Mandarin-English DLI (MEDLI) in an underfunded urban school district. Amidst segregated educational opportunities, the needs of Asian American heritage language learners become relationally positioned against that of "high need" Black and Brown communities; thus, serving diverse student populations equitably often comes to be articulated in conflicting manners for diverse parents, school and district leaders. Drawing on thematic analysis of ethnographic data and interviews I trace the contours and misalignments of pursuing racial and linguistic equity amidst uneven schooling opportunities, who

is left out of considerations of DEI and how. This paper bridges across Asian American studies, race and language studies, and the political economy of education.

Presenter(s): CATHERINE PARK

Educational Opportunity For “All”: When Progressive Communities Adopt DEI School Policies

After 2020's social uprisings made plain the social and moral failings of civil rights era-policies to actualize the promise of racial equality, many schools and communities rushed to formalize a re-commitment to students and communities of Color by adopting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and practices. Just 5 years later, a backlash intensified by the second Trump presidency has many organizations retracting the DEI efforts they put in place just years before, or even withdrawing other forms of support previously earmarked for minoritized students. This paper asks how a progressive, multicultural, and high-wealth community in Los Angeles negotiated its commitment to DEI through its schooling institutions in the window between these two historical moments. I here draw on ethnographic research collected in schools and school district spaces in this community between 2022 and 2024 to consider the various, at times contradictory ways that multiracial school administrators and staff made sense of the charge to actualize DEI at school. In keeping with scholarship on racial capitalism and critical geography, this paper further asks how the DEI policymaking in this study may reflect or challenge the specific racial formations in the community that support the community's sense of itself as a "progressive place."

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Hernandez

Race-Talk as a Form of Cultural Capital in High-Income, Predominantly White School Districts

What can be learned from the public statements that school districts made describing commitments to racial equity in response to Minneapolis police officers' murder of George Floyd and global calls for racial justice in summer 2020? In predominantly White high-income school districts, leaders expressed shock at evidence of racial violence and framed race-talk as necessary both for addressing the discomfort caused by learning about racism and to prepare students for leadership roles in "diverse" and "global" settings in their futures, thus rejecting longstanding White norms of color-blindness and racial ignorance. By contrast, statements from similarly high-income districts with fewer White students also promote race-talk but describe these conversations as supporting racially marginalized students' immediate socioemotional needs, rather than as something needed for (White) students' future success. The findings suggest that comfort talking about race and racism may be emerging as a form of cultural capital for affluent White students, which I call race-conscious refinement: ease discussing racism beyond "diversity happy talk" as a mark of distinction that serves students' future advancement. The study raises critical questions about how the "racial contract" may be shifting to accommodate new, sophisticated mechanisms that uphold elite White dominance.

Presenter(s): Bonnie Siegler

7128 Mourning and Possibility: Exploring Hauntings in Care, Movement Building and Ethnography

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What are the material conditions that render grief and grieving possible (or impossible)? And what might particular acts of mourning render possible? This panel explores grief through distinct vantage points, exploring deeply intimate relations of grief encountered in the contexts of ethnographic research, care work, social movement activism, and kin loss. In the face of devastating loss, what is the role of grief in meaning-making and movement- building? How does grief both inspire and haunt practices of resistance and care, including in carrying out ethnographic work? Through a focus on grief, this panel also inquires into the broader question: what is the role of feeling in collective action?

Presentations draw from U.S.-based fieldwork across rural and urban settings. Ethnographic data from a residential drug treatment facility in northeast Ohio depicts experiences of interrupted grief constrained by institutional barriers to collective mourning that compound suffering. Along the Kansas River, unhoused residents mourn the tent city community that developed and the unprecedented sweep that followed. How might their repeated retelling and remembering demonstrate resistance to a state project of dispossession? Across health care spaces in Los Angeles and New York City, providers responsible for delivering care to people who use drugs perceive death differently, variably accepting death as a possibility to collectively contend with– as in harm reduction settings– versus something to be warded off, at the expense of more humane kinds of care for the living. In another context, facilitating mental health peer support to U.S.-based student protestors of Palestinian genocide, running grief groups for Black women, and coordinating crisis hotline services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, raises questions about surviving one loss while bracing for another.

Anthropologists often occupy multiple positionalities, as ethnographers and simultaneously as care providers, community organizers, and advocates. This panel explores the methodological implications of grief for these intersecting roles. Multiple presentations explore the experience of caring for the grieving while grieving.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Lauren Textor, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Rohit Mukherjee

Chair: Rohit Mukherjee

Presenter(s): Allison Schlosser, University of Nebraska, Omaha, Department Sociology of Anthropology, Daniel Kennedy, Akua Agyen, Rohit Mukherjee, Lauren Textor, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Matthew Hing

Discussant: Molly Hales, Northwestern University

Presentation(s): “I’ve got to move on”: Grief and Mourning in Collateral Afterworlds of the Drug Overdose Crisis

The mass loss of life in the United States "overdose crisis" has left many in grief. This grief is shaped by stigma and marginalization associated with drug use as institutions may invoke "care" to perpetuate structural violence (e.g., drug-induced homicide prosecutions framed as care for bereaved families). Meanwhile, people who use drugs are overwhelmed by the scale of loss of life in their communities. They are often exposed to competing discourses about drug overdose death embedded in health, social services, and criminal legal institutions. In this presentation, I examine lived experiences of grief and mourning overdose death drawing on a 20-month ethnography of clients' experiences of residential drug treatment in Northeast Ohio. I explore treatment clients' experiences of interrupted grief and mourning: situations in which they are unable to process their grief and collectively mourn overdose deaths due to institutional barriers. I analyze their bereavement as occurring in a collateral afterworld (Wool and Livingston, 2017) in which sociality is strained by the politicization of life but endures nonetheless. As clients attempted to grieve and mourn with others, they struggled against institutional discourses and policies that obstructed these practices, compounding their suffering. I close by considering possibilities for living, grieving, and mourning otherwise via care practices that center harm reduction principles and practices of solidarity and collective action.

Presenter(s): Allison Schlosser

Presentation(s): “They’ll always talk about Tent City:” Grief, Memory, and the Scars of Home on the Kansas River

In April 2020 the city of Topeka in Northeast Kansas deployed police and sanitation departments to destroy Tent City and displace its approximately 70 residents in one of its first largescale "sweeps" of unhoused people in recent memory. Started in 2018, Tent City, Kansas was a community along the Kansas River that growing numbers of displaced unhoused people called home. As in most homeless sweeps in the contemporary U.S., residents lost most of their personal possessions – family photos, cherished heirlooms, and important personal documents and identification – and were left to pick up the pieces. Many of Tent City's former residents rebuilt community and home near its original site only to face escalating state violence and displacement in the wake of *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, a June 2024 Supreme Court ruling that legalized the criminalization of homelessness nationwide. The people still living along the Kansas river remember Tent City as a tight-knit community and place of refuge for those displaced by worsening economic and housing inequality, and to this day grieve its loss and its aftermath. Based on recent dissertation work in the understudied Midwest, this paper examines how grieving loss, remembering community, and confronting the scars of home built on the Kansas river signifies resistance to contemporary state projects of violent erasure of unhoused people, and represents continued possibilities of meaningful life created in spite of precarity and dispossession.

Presenter(s): Daniel Kennedy

Presentation(s): “Tending to Loss: The care work of, and in, grief”

This presentation examines the unique challenges of surviving and responding to loss in this political moment under immense structural oppression. As a community healer, I am contending with experiences of grief that are marked by compounded and traumatic loss. I encounter these experiences when facilitating grief groups for Black women, providing mental health peer support to student protestors of the Palestinian genocide, and coordinating crisis hotline services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Amongst each of these groups, grieving people are asking themselves and their providers, "what is grief?" "How do I survive an initial loss while bracing for another?" And "where will this grief take me?" I provide this grief and care work, while navigating my own experiences of grief related to the untimely death of my father.

I will explore what it means to care for the grieving while grieving.

Presenter(s): Akua Agyen

Hauntings in healthcare: exploring conceptual frameworks of carcerality and liberation among the addiction workforce

In healthcare, practitioners are often haunted by the ghosts of their patients. In the midst of unbelievable death from the ongoing overdose crisis, grief among drug users and the people who work with drug users is understudied and underappreciated.

This paper explores bereavement in different addiction workforces, exploring the role of grief in conceptualizing care and advocacy for patients. Drawing from work in New York City and Los Angeles, I use the experience of working as a psychiatrist in traditional allopathic healthcare settings (inpatient hospitals, emergency rooms and outpatient clinics) and in harm reduction settings (syringe exchanges, safe consumption sites, and homeless outreach teams) to ask how bereavement informs discourses of care for people who use drugs. Bereavement in allopathic healthcare ultimately reinforces carceral approaches to "care" through an emphasis on monitoring, surveillance and coercive treatment. Death is to be avoided, even at the expense of warding off patients themselves. In comparison, grief in the harm reduction workforce is tied to action, with the processing of mourning reinforcing commitment to promoting alternative care systems. I explore how fear of death informs tension between harm reduction and allopathic care and end with a discussion on how bereavement impacts burnout in both care systems.

Presenter(s): Rohit Mukherjee

Co-author(s): Lauren Textor, Akua Agyen, Matthew Hing, Daniel Kennedy, Allison Schlosser, Maxwell Hellmann, Molly Hales

Between loss and grief: chasms, foreclosure and possibilities of ethnography and care

What does grief bring into or siphon out of ethnography? This presentation is a meditation on the deaths of two interlocutors who made up a romantic couple in their 30s and who died within two months of one another. Perhaps it was grief following their deaths that made their inclusion in a

dissertation untenable. Despite repeated attempts to revisit the "data," which consisted of field notes, audio recordings, an autopsy report, a poem written by their shared doctor, something got in the way of meaning-making and storytelling. Was it a sense of urgency to the task of writing on a deadline that led to their erasure? Was it a sense of total lostness with respect to where to begin or end? Was it respect, or perhaps disrespect? Grief? They did most things together. They visited the doctor together and shared one appointment slot. Program and outreach policies during the COVID-19 pandemic were bent for them so that they could stay housed together. She died of a sudden accidental overdose shortly after fentanyl arrived in their town; he died a slow death related to complications from injection drug use that ultimately caused his heart to fail. Shortly afterward, my dad died. Drawing on Rosado (2014) I explore how felt loss can break one's heart open to visceral understandings, and writing can be a healing endeavor. I also inquire into the differences between loss and grief, asking what sensorial and political distances transform a difference in degree into a difference in kind.

Presenter(s): Lauren Textor

"Good Grief"? Ontological (In)security, (Ac)complicity, and Methods of Grief across Geographies of Care

How do we as ethnographers remain present with interlocutors in the face of loss, while contending with social and physical distance and our own grief (Speed 2021)? What sorts of institutional reactions foreclose possibilities of mourning and what potentialities exist for collectivising affective responses to transform them into solidaristic action? Tracing a "topography of grief" (Mitchell-Eaton 2019) across two divergent field sites, this talk probes resonances between how we and interlocutors navigate threats to ontological security (Giddens 1991) and grieve subsequent lost senses of safety. Within residential care facilities in Los Angeles, social abandonment and austerity budgets have meant that more residents die unexpectedly in places meant to sustain life. Institutional silence on the matter leaves residents in the dark, afraid of who's next, and feeling haunted by the presence of deceased friends whose spirits have not been properly attended to. Meanwhile, as narco-conflicts spread into new territories in Chiapas, Mexico, encroaching violence upends rooted practices of communal life and care. Navigating displacement and lost futures, community health workers seek emotional and material support from their NGO employer, only to find that institutional "listening sessions" can be as careless as silence. As ethnographers, we reflect on grief's co-production of distance/proximity as we attempt care with interlocutors under circumstances of unevenly experienced loss.

Presenter(s): Matthew Hing

Co-author(s): Maxwell Hellmann

Discussion

326 Council on Anthropology and Education Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM through 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Xue Han, University of Chicago, Yang Chen , Gabrielle Oliveira, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Adriana Alvarez , Fatima Raja , Sally Bonet, Colgate University

Presenter(s): Xue Han, University of Chicago, Yang Chen, Gabrielle Oliveira, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Adriana Alvarez, Fatima Raja, Sally Bonet, Colgate University

Presentation(s): How Tibetans Cope with Ideological Tension between Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Marxism in Education Systems?

I am deeply interested in understanding how people behave and respond when authoritarian regimes compel them to act against their true beliefs. Academically, Alexei Yurchak's writing on the surprisingly rapid and unexpected collapse of the communist state in the Soviet Union captures this phenomenon as "the relationship of the subject to the hegemonic discourse of communist ideology and the meaning inscribed in ideological performance and representation" (Yurchak, 2003). In a similar vein, my research focuses on Tibetan Buddhist subjects under Chinese communist rule, investigating the hegemonic communist discourse reflected in the mandatory "Ideology and Morality" curriculum taught in Chinese government-run public schools in Tibet. How do Tibetan students and teachers cope with the ideological tension between their traditional Buddhist beliefs and Chinese Marxism indoctrination program with anti-religious elements and objectives in the contemporary Tibet Autonomous Region in China?

Through years of ethnographic work in Tibet, I found out that Tibetan teenagers do not typically feel the need to reconcile the apparent ideological conflict or choose between the two belief systems. Instead, some find ways to live a calm, peaceful, and happy life without taking sides or addressing the conflict. Whether consciously or not, they adopt various socially functional strategies while embracing two opposing ideologies. For example, they use tolerance to manage intolerance, choose to avoid sensitive debates, flexibly apply contextualization to dissolve apparent conflicts, maintain belief commitment while understanding opposing views, and establish clear boundaries between personal beliefs and overt behaviors. These represent forms of practical wisdom derived from the adaptive strategies of Tibetan teenagers for coexistence in our increasingly multilateral and multi-ideological global world.

Tibetan teachers typically do not defy state ideology in public to avoid serious consequences. Instead, they remain silent or inactive during ideologically charged activities. Alternatively, they comply performatively, for example, when they attend celebrational spectacles and shout the unified proper slogans to leaders loudly and collectively, but actually make Buddhist prayers inside to Buddha sincerely. More audacious Tibetan teachers may outsource their tasks, hiring strangers online to complete ideology training, rendering their apparent obedience irrelevant to its original purpose. Furthermore, those Tibetan teachers who actively become CCP members may exploit this

façade to enjoy "privileges," such as visiting Buddhist temples under the guise of "supervision." Tibetans describe these efforts as unwillingly paying taxes. I am developing their analogy and conceptualizing it as paying an ideology tax, a compulsory subscription to state ideology levied by those in power to achieve effective ruling control.

Presenter(s): Xue Han

Living Frozen: Experiencing Suspension, Anxiety, and Uncertainty in China's Gaokao Repeaters

In China, repeating the gaokao(复读)-where students who fail the national college entrance examination return to high school for another year of preparation-has been a longstanding practice since the exam's reinstatement after the Cultural Revolution. It offers the promise of a second chance, but also evokes the haunting specter of failure, lingering in students' lives and leaving them suspended in a liminal state between progress and paralysis. As a socially charged experience that disrupts normative youth trajectories, gaokao repetition embodies a culturally embedded tension between aspirations for higher education and social mobility, and the systematic constraints that inhibit their realization.

This paper, combining in-depth interviews with former repeaters and observations conducted in online repeater communities, explores how young people experience gaokao repetition as a temporality of suspension-marked by uncertainty, anxiety, and a sense of inbetweenness. I explore how these repeaters make sense of living "off-track" from an idealized trajectory of upward mobility within the education system -out of sync with age-based expectations of success. Repeating is not merely a delay-it constitutes an existential suspension, in which time is experienced as inert, unproductive, and illegible within dominant narratives of success.

Embedded in a broader sociocultural context where gaokao performance is tightly tied to moral worth and future potential, repeaters are often labeled-by themselves and others-as "losers." These self-perceptions are intensified through constant peer comparison, in a culture where familial expectations, educational ideologies, and national discourses valorize competitive individualism. Repeaters often described the repeating year as feeling "frozen in time," suspended while others moved forward. As former classmates transition into university, employment, or other adulthood milestones, repeaters are left navigating emotional dissonance, shame, and a feeling of belonging to nowhere. Living frozen thus becomes not only a disruption of the life course, but a deeply affective condition of dislocation-one that, for many does not end with admission to university, but continues to shape how they navigate higher education, often haunted by a lingering sense of being out of step.

Rather than framing repeaters as merely psychologically distressed or academically underperforming, this study foregrounds their subjective experiences of liminality and temporal suspension. It invites a broader reevaluation of how dominant regimes of success, time, and worth are constructed, naturalized, and contested in late-socialist China. By attending to the embodied and emotional dimensions of "living frozen," I argue that repeaters' narratives provide a critical lens

into the affective governance of youth, the fragility of meritocratic time, and the moral stakes of educational failure.

Presenter(s): Yang Chen

Co-author(s): Chang Liu

Migrating Conceptions of Childhoods:

Contesting Spectral Conventions through Child-Led Inquiry

Children comprise nearly half of all refugees and internally displaced people globally (UNICEF, 2022). However, children's perspectives remain marginalized in migration research and policy debates (Enciso, 2011). Many theorists and policymakers – like other adults (Yoon, 2022) – have trouble "seeing and hearing" children as individuals (Kwon, 2021, p. 102). As a consequence, migration scholarship primarily focuses only on adult decision-making and mobility (Bhabbha, 2009; Heidbrink, 2020). In this presentation I contend that the near-absence of children's voices often results in a seemingly singular, homogenized, and frequently inaccurate portrait of the spectral child. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, we foregrounded children's agency and transit experiences as worthwhile and necessary in their own right (Hage, 2020; Oliveira & Gallo, 2023). By engaging children as experts of their own experience, we developed more nuanced, ethical, and effective approaches to address their protection (Save the Children, 2021).

Importantly, I situate my work against the ongoing climate catastrophe because it permeates everyday lives and communities (Lee, 2013; Selby & Kagawa, 2010). Moreover, as climate impacts increasingly interact with social, economic, and political stressors to drive displacement, children will continue to comprise large proportions of cross-border movements (IPCC, 2022). Therefore, we first provided a theoretical and historical discussion of how literature about the intersections of the climate crisis and migration accounts for children.

Scholars have made significant theoretical contributions to understanding such linkages, which we detail in our paper. For instance, Hage (2020) outlined a framework for conceptualizing "climate refugees" and how environmental degradation intersects with social and economic factors to drive human (and children's) mobility. Whereas Hynie (2018) examined migration through a social determinants of health lens and highlighted the child migrant's particular vulnerabilities, McAdam (2012) theorized about the concept of "climate change displacement" and the need to recognize environmentally-induced migrants.

We draw on empirical data from one ethnographic classroom projects centered on children's sociopolitical perspectives on migration and the climate catastrophe with Venezuelan and Warao children's migration to Brazil. I use analytic snapshots to show the potential, promise, and precarity of using school spaces to disrupt spectral notions of (migrant) children. I used data from child-centered inquiries to illustrate how - through recognizing children's perspectives independently - adultist notions of childhoods might migrate away from the spectral.

Presenter(s): Shao-hua Liu

The Multimodal Testimonios of Latine/x Families' Experiences of Trust and Distrust in Schools

This qualitative study examined how Latine/x families from immigrant backgrounds have experienced confianza [trust] and desconfianza [distrust] in their children's schools, and the factors that contributed and shaped these experiences.

Drawing from scholarship that theorizes relational distrust in educational settings (Schultz, 2019) and critical race theory (Solórzano, 1997), we analyzed the experiences shared by eleven Latine/x mothers whose children attend the same school in a rural school district in the western U.S. We present our findings through a focal case of one family, a mother and her two sons ages 11 and 14, who shared and represented their testimonios (personal narratives of lived experiences) of trust and distrust in schools using visuals, imagery and photographs. We refer to the integration of multimodal forms of expression as resources in testimonio methodology as multimodal testimonio. Our analytical approach included multiple coding cycles that were both inductive and deductive, mapping themes and patterns from parent interviews to the focal family's multimodal testimonios.

Findings revealed that families experienced confianza [trust] through relationships characterized by genuine care, empathy and support beyond academics, including opportunities for convivencia [togetherness] that facilitated getting to know each other. These small gestures from educators, leaders and staff had a significant impact on families' experiences of confianza [trust]. Families' experiences of desconfianza [distrust] pertained to feelings of being ignored, lack of care and support, and actions that made families feel unwanted, judged and criticized, including not following up or keeping promises. Our focal family represented their experiences through imagery and photography. For example, the mother invoked an image of a deflated balloon, which was then recreated through photography, to describe her moment of distrust to represent how her son felt after a parent-teacher conference in which the teacher criticized him for using both languages (Spanish and English) to explain his progress and grades. The mother visualized a bright tree to represent her moment of trust because she described it as a strong support where you can rest and take cover, while it protects and provides oxygen to finally breathe.

We found that the process of inviting multimodality into the family's testimonios was very generative toward deeper and more nuanced expressions of their feelings and experiences of trust and distrust in schools. We posit that in order for schools to foster and cultivate relationships of confianza with families, there needs to be better understandings of how culturally and linguistically diverse families experience (dis)trust in schools, as well as a conscious attempt to listen, repair and heal distrust.

Presenter(s): Adriana Alvarez

Co-author(s): Leah Teeters

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE POLITICS OF BELONGING AND HYPERVISIBILITY
FOR MUSLIM COLLEGE STUDENTS IN AMERICA

This paper explores how Muslim college students negotiate belonging, citizenship, and hypervisibility within the context of an American university, with a particular focus on student engagement in student organizations such as the Muslim Student Association (MSA). Drawing on a two-year ethnographic study that included interviews and participant observation, this research uses the theoretical frameworks of the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Abu el Haj, 2015) and hypervisibility (Gordon, 1997; Ahmed, 2006) to examine how Muslim students navigate inclusion and exclusion within both institutional and intra-community spaces. I ground the study in the literature on belonging and hypervisibility, arguing for an intersectional approach that connects these constructs to broader national imaginaries of citizenship. Drawing on interpretivism and constant comparative analysis, I utilize a reflexive, interpretivist methodology and a multi-level qualitative design that centers student narratives. I then provide a detailed analysis of the three findings related to my research questions – hypervisibility, surveillance, and objectification of their Muslim identity; intra-community concerns; and community building. This study examines how visible markers of Muslim identity, such as the hijab, can subject students to surveillance and position them as "failed citizens" (Anderson, 2013) within the university's imagined community. Through an analysis of the intra-community dynamics within the MSA, this study explores how hierarchies of race, gender, and religiosity reproduce broader societal exclusions, with Black Muslim and non-hijabi students frequently feeling marginalized. This study also highlights the transformative potential of MSAs as counterspaces for spiritual support, ritual practice, and political advocacy, where students cultivate transnational solidarities and reimagine belonging on their own terms. I argue that students are not only navigating systems of marginalization but also actively reshaping institutional spaces through everyday acts of resistance, care, and leadership. This study expands existing scholarship on student belonging by theorizing belonging as a contested, intersectional, and agentic process. I call for institutional accountability and investment in student-led initiatives that move beyond symbolic inclusion to create meaningful and equitable environments for marginalized communities.

Presenter(s): Fatima Raja

"Living in America is Like Dying Every Day": Iraqi Refugees and the Burden of Gratitude

I sat in Fatima's living room, sipping the sweet cardamom tea that she always served me. It was then that Fatima informed me that she had recently returned from the hospital after her miscarriage. In her late forties, and already a mother of five, Fatima had never expected to find herself pregnant again. However, Fatima and her husband had welcomed this news with joy once they found out. "A child is always a blessing," Fatima told me. After tearfully sharing the experience of losing the baby, she spoke of another strange experience she had at the hospital. Through the aid of an interpreter, Fatima asked her doctor if the baby might have survived had she had access to better healthcare. With a look of consternation, the doctor, who Fatima had experienced as friendly and kind until that point, said, "You have access to the best healthcare here", before walking out with a scowl on his face. Aware of her status as a recently resettled Iraqi refugee, Fatima fell silent, thanked the doctor, and spoke very little until she was released from the hospital.

Drawing on a three-year, multi-sited, multi-lingual ethnographic study conducted among recently resettled Iraqi refugees, this paper explores the ways that implicit expectations of gratitude work to further silence and subjugate refugees, ultimately denying them of their democratic rights for full inclusion into their new communities. This paper questions the "gift of freedom" (Nguyen, 2012) given to militarized refugees fleeing continuous liberal war, disguised as access to a safe haven, only to reveal itself as pathway to endless labor among the working poor in a late-stage capitalist America. Hoping to leave the ghosts of war and immediate death in their native country behind, refugees find themselves faced with "slow death" (Berlant, 2009): the daily indignities of poverty, illness, and chronic instability. Through punitive encounters with state agents tasked with their care, refugees like Fatima, Nadia, and Ahmed receive an implicit citizenship education. They quickly learn the definition of a "good" refugee: one that is grateful, obedient, and hard-working. Critique of the state and its institutions will not be tolerated, especially from Iraqi refugees, whose tenuous connections to the US complicate their positionality and belonging.

Notably, refugees are expected to integrate into a context rife with increasing anti-immigrant and nativist sentiments, evidenced by draconian policies such as the suspension of the refugee resettlement program altogether--an immense blow to refugees and all the agencies that support them--as well as a series of illegal and unconstitutional deportations in an effort to silence protest. Given this dystopian backdrop, it is critical to better understand the ways in which expectations of continual gratitude, even in the face of deep suffering, shape the lives of refugees, as well as their capacity to become true citizens of their new communities.

Presenter(s): Sally Bonet

6994 Haunting environments in and beyond the Mediterranean: Restoring human and more-than-human relationalities

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In the face of top-down global political shift towards territorial claims and extraction policies contrasted by ongoing grassroots claims to the "rights to the city" or "rights to 'nature'", the past continues to haunt environments across urban and "green" (often considered near-to-intact) areas of the Mediterranean. Sacred sites and areas of cultural and biocultural heritage (Maffi 2007; Virtanen 2019), often located in historic urban spaces or seemingly "untouched" landscapes, embody this call for a reconciliation of historical legacies with contemporary challenges, echoed as a world of "polycrisis" (Henig & Knight 2023).

These sites are located either in near-to- uninhabited "antroposcenic landscapes" (Mattles 2017), such as wetlands whose legacies do not document intrusive extractive management, or in urban areas where specific visions of the city invoke various pasts inscribed in streets, buildings, and public squares (Hertzfeld 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2009). As these sites are variously affected by the neoliberal policies -such as extractive economies, large-scale infrastructural and/or urban

redevelopment projects, unregulated markets, and mass tourism-efforts at preserving existing natural and urban formations are often framed in relation to various pasts-such as invocations of and longings for "untouched nature" or of "the ideal Mediterranean urban space." Across these different environments in various sites, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, Pacific and back, we notice echoes of the planetary emergencies that bring into play the realm of human and more-than-human relations.

This panel aims to explore the emotional, sensory and spiritual relationships, knowledge and care practices that human and more-than-human, grow, nurture, maintain or neglect in specific environments around sacred places and biocultural and cultural heritage sites in the Mediterranean and beyond. We will examine the relationships between biodiversity habitats and sacred landscapes, heritage and urban sites, and ask how they are changing amidst today's accelerating polycrisis and territorial disputes.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Natasa Gregoric Bon, Institute of Anthropological and Spatial Studies, ZRC SAZU, Smoki Musaraj, Ohio University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Smoki Musaraj, Ohio University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Natasa Gregoric Bon, Smoki Musaraj, Ohio University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Matthew Rosen, Ohio University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Andrew Newman, Wayne State University

Presentation(s): Ecologies of care in anthropogenic environments

The political shift towards a neoliberal market economy in Southeast Europe after 1990 has led to extensive infrastructural interventions and other extractive activities. These threaten many anthropogenic (Mattles 2017) and protected habitats, including the Vjosa-Narta wetlands and the Prespa Lakes in Albania. People recognise these sparsely populated areas as sacred landscapes as they are believed to embody spiritual connections to various non-human realms. The presentation explores the emotional, sensory, and spiritual relationships, knowledge, and care practices that people experience in these areas. It examines the relationship between biodiversity habitats and sacred landscapes and how these are changing amidst accelerating climate and environmental challenges. How do people living in or near these areas perceive these changes and uncertainties? And how do they cope with various infrastructural interventions(eg. construction of international airport in the heart of the wetlands)to which these areas are exposed, despite their official status as National Parks, following recent amendments to the Law on Protected Areas? These new amendments allow "some interventions" which, according to current political rhetoric, tend to promote tourism development in the country. In response, local communities are calling for environmental justice by awakening affective landscapes of the past that inspire their efforts to restore ecologies of care for the future.

Presenter(s): Natasa Gregoric Bon

Reclaiming Marseille through Urban and Maritime Practices and Materialities

Moving through protests, artistic performances, and street talk, this paper reflects on claims to the "right to the city" in present-day Marseille. I look more specifically at two sets of human and non-human relationalities invoked in these claims: The first set consists of the annual commemorations of the 2018 buildings' collapse in Noailles, a neighborhood inhabited by migrants, artists, and working-class residents. In protests and artistic projects, claims to the right to the city are expressed in the language of material objects (such as the chains of condemned apartments), public spaces, and cultural heritage narratives that continue to haunt the spaces and imaginaries of Noailles. These material forms constitute "affective spaces and melancholic objects" (Navaro-Yashin 2008); they embody remnants of the social relations and the sense of belonging that the (unwanted) evacuated residents of Noailles seek to restore. The second set of spatial materialities involves the sea, which is continuously incorporated in daily practices such as city walks, beach trips, and sea-gazing. Through these practices, residents underscore their deep connection to the natural-urban environment, a relationality that rests at the heart of the imaginary of Marseille as a quintessential Mediterranean city. Thinking through these combined materialities, I reflect on a Mediterranean urbanism articulated through affective practices that enact relationalities between humans and nonhumans.

Presenter(s): Smoki Musaraj

Talking Summertime Blues: Conversations about the Social Effects of Out-Migration in an Unsettled City

This paper explores seasonal rhythms of out-migration as described by long-time Tirana residents. Grounded in the real social history of a country where half the resident population emigrated between 1990 and 2010, the account draws from conversations with interlocutors who came of age in Tirana in the early 2000s and chose to remain, even as waves of emigration continued. Most studies of Albanian migration focus on the stories of those who leave—their experiences of displacement and the remittances they send back. This paper shifts the lens to the experiences of those who stay, attending to the practicalities of getting by in an environment where the future remains uncertain and the pressure to leave persists. The image of an unsettled city offers one way to capture the shifting and often disquieting experience of life in a place where redevelopment at any cost exacerbates the social effects of economic precarity and out-migration. In my effort to understand the city as my interlocutors experienced it, I came to see Tirana as shaped as much by the absence of departed friends as by their cyclical returns—especially in summer, when returning immigrant-visitors reanimate old ties and disrupt established rhythms. In this sense, Tirana in summer is a site of transformation and a haunted landscape, where the social effects of departure and return permeate everyday life.

Presenter(s): Matthew Rosen

Discussion

5265 After the fire: Pyropolitics in Latin America. Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM through 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Forest fires have become contentious political issues, to the extent that some writers speak of an age of fire. Media images of fire capture public attention, sparking debates about their causes and how to best prevent them. In this two-part panel, rather than examining the causes of fires, we follow its effects to focus on the political afterlives of fire.

As an analytical framework, pyropolitics (Marder 2014; Carey 2023) examines the complex relationship between fire and political dynamics, intertwining with issues of climate and land-use change, disaster preparedness, power and property relations, and longstanding social and ethnic inequalities. We seek papers that explore how fires shape political relations in Latin America, from the chacra to the international stage. In particular, this panel invites papers that explore how fires ignite broader social unrest, fuel political polarization, persist in disturbed landscapes, or even reshape human-plant relations. We also welcome papers that critically examine the use of fire-related metaphors, which have long been prevalent in political anthropology about Latin America.

Political controversies, like fires, can flare up or fade away. Fires can also sometimes leave tangible and material, flickering, ghostly and lasting political effects. They may contribute to intensifying conflict and relations of political alterity. In this light, we ask: How do people live with the new normal of forest fires, in productive and/or destructive ways? And, what happens to politics in the wake of devastating fires, as people and groups navigate their aftermath?

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Cari Tusing, Stine Kroijer, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Stine Kroijer, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Cari Tusing, Nehemías Pino, Marcelo Gonzalez Galvez, Felipe Roa Pilar

Discussant: Adriana Petryna

Presentation(s): "Where can we go to escape it?" Pyropolitics in Mato Grosso

In Mato Grosso, the fire season means months of haze and smoke as burns flare and fade. This paper centers small-holder Brazilian farmers' experiences with fire to explore pyropolitics in the agricultural sector of Mato Grosso. From my fieldwork, I propose that forest fires, while disastrous, were not seen as exceptional events. While individual farmers may take precautions against devastating burns, none took precautions to guard against smoke exposure, shrugging, "Where can we go to escape it?" I propose that fires, large and small, are seen as unescapable. This parallels hazy uncertainties about who is to blame for fire season, as locals complain that legal framework to prosecute fires is classist and ineffective. This indeterminacy around the cause of forest fires, I argue, is a key facet of pyropolitics in Mato Grosso. While large-holder 'agro' has set the conditions for extreme burning seasons, I found that local fires reinforced individualized blame, as some

people continued with burning practices that were innocuous in a healthy rainforest. This smokescreen around how to address fires creates a new normal of living with fire.

Presenter(s): Cari Tusing

Gardening without fire in the Upper Amazonia

The absence of fire in gardening is noticeable. In Upper Amazonia, in the Napo region of Ecuador, people do not talk about fire, not even in the process of building their gardens. While fire is used in other daily contexts, in forest cultivation and production, fire's absence is quite remarkable. Amazonian gardening has been primarily known for its slash-and-burn practices. Yet among the Napu Runa people, fire practices and references for making forest gardens (chacras) are rare, and in some cases, non-existent. Conservation and organic production projects have been implemented in the last two decades in the same Napo region areas. Institutions, both national and international, have not developed policies and recommendations regarding fires in relation to their work with forest gardening projects, despite a problem with forest fires. Beyond the geographical characteristics of the Upper Amazonia (i.e. High annual rain frequency), this presentation asks to what extent the absence of fire practices and narratives is related to the political, local and global entailments of forest gardening programs in the Napo region.

Presenter(s): Nehemías Pino

Burned Phantasmagories: The Persistence of a Disaster in Quilpué, Chile

When does a fire begin and end? How does it live in the bodies and lives of those affected? What kind of revelations and relations does it trigger? In this paper, we explore how people and their infrastructures in Quilpué, central Chile —following the extreme wildfire of the summer of 2024— perpetuate both the risk perception regarding future fires and the collective memory of the disaster. Through a critical approach that focuses on infrastructure, disaster, social conjectures, and memory, this paper argues that bodily and urban infrastructures are not only marked by the immediate effects of fire, but also reconfigured by long-term dynamics of vulnerability and risk. The reconstruction of homes and public spaces, far from mitigating the danger, often reproduces it due to inadequate planning, the continuation of previous urban practices, and reliance on infrastructures that, despite being renewed, retain elements of fragility. Additionally, the paper addresses how 2024's wildfire continues to be present in the memory of those affected, who live with the traces of a traumatic event that persists both in their psyche and in the rebuilt landscape. This presence of fire, in infrastructure, in social memory, and in the ways it produces knowledge about the relations that constitute a social situation, generates a "phantasmagoria" that redefines the community's relationship with risk, space, and time, creating a perpetuation of the disaster that manifests across temporal regimes.

Presenter(s): Marcelo Gonzalez Galvez

Co-author(s): Felipe Elgueta A.

Fire in settler politics: joint colonization by Old Mennonites and Interculturales in Bolivia

The Lowlands of Bolivia burn annually, consuming millions of hectares of forest and grassland. In the Amazonian regions of the Santa Cruz and Beni departments, nearly ten million hectares were affected by fire in 2024, approximately 60% of which were forested. Studies indicate that large-scale monoculture plantations and campesino communities established on state-owned land are the primary drivers of these fires (Tierra 2024). Within the context of settler colonization led by conservative Mennonites, I explore the role of fire in opening previously inaccessible land for cash-crop agriculture and establishing permanent colonies. Their presence in remote areas attracts the attention of peasant and indigenous migrants from the Highlands of Bolivia, known as Interculturales, who view the Mennonite pioneering endeavor as an opportunity to claim fiscal land. Grounded in ethnographic research, I focus on fire to draw attention to the shifting power relations between Old Mennonites and Interculturales. I highlight their interdependence and collaboration in frontier practices, challenging narratives that merely depict Mennonites as reclusive and autonomous agrarian communities. In doing so, I reflect on how fire functions as a vehicle for land occupation, territorial claims, and land use transformations.

Presenter(s): Felipe Roa Pilar

Discussion

2894 Anthropology in Action: Cultivating Civic Literacy and Social Engagement

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In this roundtable, participants will discuss how four-field anthropology fosters an informed and engaged citizenry by integrating holistic inquiry, critical thinking, and methodological rigor into teaching, research, applied practices, and public service. The roundtable participants bring diverse perspectives both from within academia—representing different institutional statuses (e.g. adjunct, tenure track) in public and private universities that serve varied geographies/demographics— as well as K-12 education, healthcare, and policy both in the public and private sectors. Drawing on the participants' varied perspectives we will explore ways to expand anthropology's impact, highlighting how biological, cultural, linguistic, and archaeological anthropology can all contribute to civic literacy. We will address strategies for making anthropology accessible for non-majors and interdisciplinary students, ensuring its applicability to general education and public engagement. Emphasizing anthropological praxis as transferable skills, we will explore their value in policy, business, healthcare, education, activism, and more. This roundtable will invite the audience to engage in this discussion, allowing scholars, educators, and practitioners to share insights and strategies for positioning anthropology as a foundation for the critical inquiry and social responsibility needed to foster an engaged, equitable, and democratic public sphere.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Jacqueline Fewkes, Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Alexander Bauer, CUNY, Queens College, Department of

Anthropology

Presenter(s): Niklas Hultin, George Mason University, Rachel Scott, DePaul University, Department of Anthropology, Melanie Chang, Portland State University, Department of Anthropology, Anna Agbe-Davies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Gregory Borgstede, Tonya Taylor

Discussant: Megan Tracy

1892 Alternative Cosmopolitanisms in Transnational East Asia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

As the world becomes more multipolar in the twenty-first century, diverse forms of transnational mobility are resurging. Alongside inter-Asian and South-South flows, new East-to-West migration trajectories are reshaping social life across borders. In this context, historically marginalized or unsettled communities are developing alternative forms of cosmopolitanism that challenge and subvert hegemonic modes of belonging, identity, and citizenship. Moving beyond the colony-metropole dyad, this panel investigates how these alternative cosmopolitanisms emerge from and shape resurgent flows of people, discourses, labor, and media.

Drawing on fine-grained ethnographies, this panel explores diverse case studies across transnational and global East Asian contexts from the perspectives of anthropology, ethnomusicology, and environmental studies. Papers examine the marketing of cosmopolitan food and ethnic tourism in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands; shifting gender roles and moral economies among Hong Kong migrant couples in the UK; intimate labor and the emergence of a transnational Chinese-run sex industry across Kenya, Vietnam, and China; and vernacular musical appropriations of "Chineseness" in Kenyan gospel-reggae performance.

Key questions include: How do non-dominant practices of identity, kinship, and community shape alternative forms of cosmopolitanism? How do these practices challenge normative narratives of globalization and national belonging? What roles do emergent mobilities play in shaping these new forms of cosmopolitan personhood and vice versa? What roles do race, gender, and labor play in shaping these new forms of cosmopolitan personhood-and how do they emerge from them? How can ethnographic methods capture the complex lived realities of transnational mobilities, entrepreneurial strategies, and mediated imaginaries?

This panel moves beyond Euro- and elite-centric perspectives on cosmopolitanism and mobility, highlighting the grounded and improvisational forms of inter-Asian and South-South modern selfhood that arise in borderlands, diaspora, and sites of informal cultural production.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Zachary Howlett, National University of Singapore

Chair: Jennifer Estes, National University of Singapore

Presenter(s): Brendan Galipeau, SUNY, Binghamton University, David Kwok Kwan Tsoi, University

of Oxford, Xinlei SHA, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Jonathan Wu

Discussant: Zachary Howlett, National University of Singapore

Presentation(s): New Cosmopolitan Foods, Tourism, and Dining in the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands: The Case of Salmon and Trout Farming in Shangri-La

This paper explores the trend in Southwest China of marketing transnational and cosmopolitan food products and tourism to imbue them with an ethnic Tibetan identity. The research takes up salmon farming and rural restaurants as an illustrative example of this marketing process. In doing so, I analyze the recent development of small-scale salmon farms built around tourism promotion in Southwest China's Shangri-La region located within the historical Sino-Tibetan borderlands on the margins of these two social spheres. While the production of salmon is typically associated with locales in Europe, Japan, and North America, it is foreign in China and Tibet with salmon as an introduced species and no nearby oceans, which are typically associated with the fish's identity. Due to its cosmopolitan marketing appeal among upwardly mobile Han Chinese tourists, what local farmers are cultivating should be considered Steelhead or Rainbow trout given it is not migratory in saltwater. However, from a point of exoticism and Tibet being associated with green and healthy living, salmon production fits within the framework of the Chinese state's and corporate attempts to exoticize and market Southwest China and Tibet as locations of pristine and healthy items for touristic consumption. The research also focuses on the ways in which the locality of salmon production is being bound together and melded with its marketing as something distinctly local, ethnic, and transnational/cosmopolitan.

Presenter(s): Brendan Galipeau

Cosmopolitan Migrants: Shifting Gendered Roles and Moral Shock of Middle-Class Hong Kong Migrant Couples in the UK

This paper examines the shifting gender and moral dynamics of middle-class, heterosexual, married couples who migrated from Hong Kong to the UK for their children's education in the post-2019 era. Migration has nevertheless unsettled their gendered roles in a nuclear, urban, middle-class, and dual-income familial setting in an East Asian city; migration has thus created tensions but also new negotiating space of gendered expectations and responsibilities. Based on pilot fieldwork in London and Manchester in 2024, I found that these migrant couples observed and gossiped about other couples' changing gendered division of labor; and they framed these changes as moral shocks contingent upon migration. For example, these moral shocks include the shift of the breadwinner role from husband to wife, and the husband leaving his wife and children in public at nighttime. I juxtapose these insider framings of moral shocks with a feminist critique of patriarchal dynamics to reveal two emergent sets of entanglements between migration and gender. First, migration has created openings for the restructuring of gender, family, and economy. Second, however, the moral economy of these novel arrangements are scrutinized in a close-knitted diasporic community, which might foreclose rather than facilitate these openings. The paper

explores the implications of this emergent moral economy and its backlashes for gendered understandings of cosmopolitanism forged in the transnational migration nexus.

Presenter(s): David Kwok Kwan Tsoi

Transnational Cosmopolitan Sexual Culture: Sex, Work, and Business Across Kenya, Vietnam, and China

This presentation explores the transnational sex industry across Kenya, Vietnam, and China. In 2024, Vietnamese and Chinese female sex workers (VCFSWs) were flagged by the U.S. Department of State as forced laborers in Chinese so-called sham businesses and entertainment establishments emerging in the wake of the BRI (Belt and Road Initiatives). In 2018, eight CFSWs were arrested and deported as trafficked victims by the Kenyan Immigration Department. Opening the black box of this increased international scrutiny, I investigate business operations and labor structure of Chinese nightclubs in Kenya to tell us about transnational practices of gendered and racialized labor as well as a new cosmopolitan sexual culture emerging under Chinese immigration to Kenya. Based on my 15-month multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that these businesses are neither built on sex trafficking nor forced labor. Rather, they involve VCFSWs and Kenyan workers' daily negotiations between their cosmopolitan aspirations, cross-cultural differences, and hierarchies of race, gender, and nationality. I contend that the burgeoning transnational sex industry reflects shifting business opportunities in non-Western economic centers with greater migratory flexibility, urban modern environment, and changing trans-local socio-economic coalitions.

Presenter(s): Xinlei SHA

Reorienting China in Kenya: The Vulgar Cosmopolitanism of Jabidii's "China (Chinku)"

This presentation examines the 2018 music video "China (Chinku)" by Kenyan gospel-reggae artist Jabidii to explore how an imagined China is vernacularized in Kenya. The track features a dancehall beat over which Jabidii delivers multilingual verses in Swahili, English, Jamaican Patois, and Mandarin. Framed as an imagined dialogue with a Chinese pastor in Nairobi, the lyrics foreground salvation as a moral imperative overriding the pursuit of wealth, material goods, and martial arts prowess. Visually, the video depicts Kenyan actors in Chinese martial arts costumes striking kung fu poses. Drawing on interviews with the artist, ethnographic research in Nairobi, and media analysis, I conceptualize "China (Chinku)" as an instance of vulgar cosmopolitanism—a mode of cultural production that appropriates and recontextualizes global symbols in exaggeration, humor, and parody to comment on local social, spiritual, and political conditions. The video does not aim for cultural authenticity but mobilizes stylized "Chineseness," circulated through informal movie halls in Kenyan settlements, as a visual and sonic resource for gospel witnessing. This illustrates how Kenyan artists engage with China not just as a geopolitical force but as a malleable cultural signifier embedded in the vernacular aesthetics of urban youth. Ultimately, this case reveals how global imaginaries are remixed through performance, asserting moral authority and local belonging amid shifting Africa-China relations.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Wu

2647 Engaging with Contemporary China: Youth, Gender, and Popular Culture Across Online and Offline Spaces

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together five early-career scholars from diverse subfields within anthropology whose research engages with questions of gender, identity, and popular culture in contemporary China through anthropological inquiry. With a shared emphasis on their positionality as female Chinese researchers studying and living abroad, each speaker brings a unique lens to examine how gendered experiences are shaped, negotiated, and resisted in diverse cultural spaces, both offline and online in contemporary China—from ritual practices and music festival/listening, to online mourning rituals and digital matchmaking platforms.

Contemporary China offers a rich and complex landscape in which shifting gender norms, state ideologies, and popular cultural expressions intersect. This panel, however, does not define "China" solely as a nation-state bounded by physical borders. Instead, it situates China within a global context to reflect how the younger generation experiences a rapidly transforming social terrain shaped by the intersections of neoliberal consumerism, technological mediation, and enduring gender values. Drawing on anthropological methods—particularly digital ethnography and phenomenological analysis—the speakers examine sites where these dynamics intertwine, revealing spaces of affective expression, identity work, and subtle resistance. Across these domains, the panel interrogates how gender and sexuality are performed, disciplined, and reimagined under conditions of censorship, nationalism, and neoliberal transformation.

Drawing from distinct subfields within anthropology—including media studies, museum anthropology, performance studies, sociocultural anthropology and Sinophone studies—each panelist brings a unique theoretical framework and methodological approach to engage with the study of gender and popular culture in contemporary China. It explores how young people—particularly women and queer-identifying individuals—navigate the frictions between social expectations and personal agency in both online and offline spaces. Through this interdisciplinary and gendered lens, the panel highlights not only the diversity of youth cultural engagement, but also the creative, affective, and resistant ways in which gendered subjectivities are imagined, performed, and transformed amid the rapid social and political shifts of Chinese society.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Xinyao Li , Siyang Dai

Chair: Siyang Dai

Presenter(s): Ophelia Xu, University of California, Santa Barbara, Siyang Dai, Xinyao Li, Yeja Sun, Yuhui Li

Discussant: Sheng Long, Yale University

Presentation(s): Queer Echoes from Taiwan: Listening, Longing, and Identity of Chinese Listeners

Drawing on ethnographic research on queer female mainlanders' engagement with Taiwanese music, this study situates their listening practices within the framework of Sinophone studies, examining how music serves as a site of affective identification and imagined queer belonging beyond China's heteronormative order. This act of listening functions as a cathartic release, helping individuals navigate the tensions between personal identity and social repression. At the same time, it reveals how Sinophone cultural production offers a counter-narrative to China's hegemonic discourse on sexuality, enabling listeners to cultivate a sense of belonging that transcends national borders.

This article has three key objectives. First, it demonstrates how Taiwanese music differs from its mainland counterpart, offering listeners aesthetic and emotional tools for resistance. Second, it explores how Sinophone music enables queer mainlanders to imagine a future beyond China, creating an alternative Sinophone world where queerness is not marginalized. Finally, it analyzes how queer mainlanders negotiate the contradictions between their emotional attachment to Taiwanese music and the political realities of their lived environment. By alternating between pleasure and constraint, they use music to express longing, seek solace, and construct a Sinophone queer identity that challenges China's cultural hegemony.

Presenter(s): Ophelia Xu

Burning Paper Money: Vibrant Necromaterials in the Ritual Practice of Contemporary China

Burning paper money has long been central to Chinese ritual practices, serving as a medium of communication between the living and the dead. In contemporary China, it has expanded beyond traditional monetary forms to include replicas of modern commodities—iPhones, Lamborghinis, and condoms—reflecting consumer culture and personal desires. These offerings illustrate how popular culture shapes the imagined afterlife, turning it into a reflection of material life. Meanwhile, the ritual has undergone gendered shifts for the young generation: once dominated by men, it now increasingly involves women in both the production and performance of the practice, reflecting broader changes in gender roles in urban China.

Drawing on interviews with ritual practitioners, onsite and digital fieldwork, and a phenomenological approach, this paper challenges conventional interpretations of burning paper money that rely on the assumption of a coherent belief system in the Anthropology of Religion. By foregrounding the materiality of paper money, this study reframes them as necromaterials—objects that go beyond remembrance and forgetting, to engage in acts of presencing and absencing, giving and receiving. It argues that the evolving materiality of paper money is not only about imagining the netherworld, but also about articulating the desires, anxieties of everyday life, and the ever-changing social values, especially for gender, under rapid modernization and consumer culture in China.

Presenter(s): Siyang Dai

Silence Screaming: Alternative Gender Flags at Music Festivals in China

Since the emergence of music festivals in China, fans have formed a tradition of making flags, bringing them to festivals, signing them, and waving them at festivals. However, today, flags no longer solely revolve around music but also gender expressions. Numerous fans, mostly feminist and queer groups, create and carry alternative gender flags—feminist and queer flags—to festivals, constituting a unique landscape. However, given that such flags always face censorship, how do fans manage to create and carry them? What drives them to take such risks? What do such flags mean to fans themselves and official gender discourses?

Through participant observation at festivals, interviews with fans, and digital ethnography on relevant posts on social media, the study digs into how fans bypass censorship to make and display such flags and how such flags, as nonhuman media, intertwine with fans' affections and official gender discourse. First, it shows due to the blurred boundary of censorship, fans develop tactics to move between visibility and invisibility with agency. Second, it explores fans' motivation for their actions and demonstrates that such flags function as affective media that express their desire to be seen and to obtain identification. Finally, it reveals that apart from affective media, such flags serve as resistant media that breaks gender norms and engages in gender issues, challenging the patriarchal and heteronormative discourse at the official level.

Presenter(s): Xinyao Li

"In Death, on Cloud": Mourning Rituals Online in Contemporary China

When considering mourning rituals, traditional practices in China typically follow specific procedures such as burning rituals and other mourning activities. Since the 2010s, however, concerns about the environmental impact of carbon emissions from burning rituals, along with quarantine regulations during COVID-19, have led to a shift towards online mourning rituals as promoted by the Chinese government. However, the practices of online mourning rituals vary in different platforms and practices, such as postmortem marriage, personal profile creation, digital sacrifices.

In this context, several questions arise: What does it mean to die in the digital age? How does marriage in postmortem state form our identities? What does it mean to mourn someone online? And how do identities of oneself being displayed in postmortem contexts, such as gender, ethnicity, and age? This presentation will explore the representation of death in online mourning rituals using the theoretical frameworks of digital humanities and performance studies which shed light on how identity and sexuality are constructed in online mourning rituals in Contemporary China, raising questions on the ontology and identity of death in online mourning rituals.

Presenter(s): Yejia Sun

Love in the Digital Age: Virtual Matchmaking Corners in China

Since 2004, matchmaking corners (xiangqinjiao) have emerged as a cultural phenomenon in China, where elderly parents informally gather to seek partners for their adult children. During the COVID-

19 pandemic, traditional matchmaking corners found in urban parks transitioned into digital spaces. This study explores how historical matchmaking practices persist and transform in digital form, shaped by factors including feudal tradition, economic development, and state influence.

Drawing on interviews with five WeChat Official Account managers across five Chinese cities and content analysis of their platforms, this paper examines how parental involvement, gender stereotypes, materialistic criteria, and the commodification of intimacy continue to influence matchmaking practices. Findings demonstrate that these virtual matchmaking corners reflect a hybridization of public and commercial services, where psychological counseling, park activities, and matchmaking co-exist. The study also explores participant anonymity, inconsistent management, and situations where gender expectations are adjusted due to financial considerations. By tracing how virtual matchmaking platforms navigate traditional family structures and emerging digital forms, this paper offers new insight into the evolving relationship between technology, kinship, and romantic connection in contemporary China.

Presenter(s): Yuhui Li

Discussion

3302 The Specter of “Disruption”: The Haunted and Haunting Political Economy of Venture Capitalism and Startup Entrepreneurship

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The trope of disruption posits a radical overture to the future, but ethnography reveals that seeming innovations often perpetuate prior ideologies and hierarchies, haunted, as it were, by the past. Over the past few decades, the Silicon Valley model of venture capital (VC) investment and cultures of startup entrepreneurship has become embedded in state governance and business practices worldwide. At a political moment when prominent figures in venture techno-capitalism are taking center stage in global politics and governance, and as ghosts of wars past--both hot and Cold--come knocking, this panel critically reflects on a central question: what do technologies of disruption--be they financial, governmental, technoscientific or otherwise--perpetuate, and how? Under the guise of "disruption," what phantoms of the past still walk among us?

Taking seriously the theme of the conference, we draw from global field sites of tech hubs in Rwanda, the United States, Finland, and China to offer perspectives on how attempts at disruptive change and innovation do not simply shake off historical and political burdens, but instead resurrect and perpetuate them in new spectral forms. For example: how does Rwanda's history of genocide cast a shadow on the state's efforts to "leapfrog" these pasts and technologically transcend legacy systems still haunted by decades of colonial rule and ongoing resource extraction? How do histories of westward expansion and Fordist expectations of suburban domesticity among Silicon Valley's middle class quietly perpetuate inequality in the tech industry and beyond? How does Finnish startup culture attempt to recuperate from the effects of "techlash"

criticism to recast itself as a progressive force in society, capable of inheriting the legacy of the declining welfare state? And finally, how does Deng Xiaoping's legacy reverberate from the afterlife, fueling the VC-driven policy landscape in China? By looking at how the past haunts our present, we not only seek to decipher "old stories in new software," but also to reflect on how specters of VC-driven speculation may haunt our collective futures.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Jamie Wong, Princeton University, Sakari Mesimäki

Chair: Michelle Venetucci, Yale University, Alexandrine Royer, University of Cambridge

Presenter(s): Alexandrine Royer, University of Cambridge, Michelle Venetucci, Yale University, Sakari Mesimäki, Jamie Wong, Princeton University

Discussant: Karen Ho, University of Minnesota

Presentation(s): "Creating the Perfect Cosmos for Startups": Myth-Making, Genocidal Hauntings and ICT Ambitions in the New Rwanda

Under President Paul Kagame's leadership, Rwanda is set to become a regional ICT leader by 2050 (Vision 2050). The Government of Rwanda's (GoR) techno-utopic projects represent an ontological break between the country's present and its genocidal history, termed the 'New Rwanda'.

Encouraged by strong governmental will, bilateral donors, philanthropists and universities are now funding accelerators and incubators for the country's urban youth. In such programs, prospective founders are taught to devise impact-based, technoscientific devices that disrupt legacy systems and promise a digital, temporal leap toward the GoR's socio-economic targets. Growth charts, business plan exercise sheets and lean canvas methodologies help concretize these future projections. Yet, founders do not exist in a purely linear, future-oriented time-space. This paper will illustrate the heterochrony (cf. Bear) of multiple representations and experiences of time lived by the post-1994 generation in Kigali. Whilst enduring anxiety-inducing cycles of economic boom and bust, founders must equally contend with the affective spectre of past violence and ongoing regional insecurity. Techno-cynicism co-existed with techno-optimism as young founders increasingly came to express ambivalence towards their role in crafting the future of Rwanda, the country's generational divides, and the continuing expansive power of the Rwandan state.

Presenter(s): Alexandrine Royer

Silicon Suburbia: The Fordist Domesticity Haunting Silicon Valley's Flexible Economy

Silicon Valley has often served as an exemplar of the post-Fordist flexible economy, both in championing new corporate practices and in enabling a broader adoption of flexibilization through the production of new technologies. As anthropologists have highlighted how the economic and social are co-constituted, depictions of industry actors as dedicated to new entrepreneurial subjectivities and risk taking behaviors reinforce this idea of new forms of capitalist practice that reconfigure social and domestic life. And yet, Silicon Valley has continually reproduced structural inequalities, revealing continuities with socialities past rather than new horizons of possibility. This paper interrogates how cross-generational hauntings shape the expansionary impulses of Silicon

Valley, engaging with the suburban infrastructure that birthed the industry and the Fordist middle class practices of the tech workforce. By ethnographically tracing how risk averse aspirations for stable domestic life undergird flexible economic scale projects, I show how the industry's global growth is reproduced through local familial attachments to more modest economic growth. As workplace subjectivities are shaped by newer economic models as well as familial practices grounded in histories of westward expansion, this paper illustrates how future-focused regimes of flexible accumulation in Silicon Valley are facilitated by domestic contexts that stretch back across generations.

Presenter(s): Michelle Venetucci

Shareholder Primacy Resurrected: How Finnish Startup Professionals' Aspirations to a More Progressive Capitalism Sustain the Need for Investor Returns

In 2021 the Finnish startup conference Slush declared an "entrepreneurial renaissance"—a response to "techlash" critiques that sought to reorient startups around inclusivity, equality and sustainability, and to reject the pursuit of shareholder value above all else. This agenda reflected the values of many startup professionals, who identify strongly with the idea of Finland as a liberal and progressive society. In their view, businesses can realize progressive values by solving social and environmental problems, and sustain the beleaguered welfare state by creating economic growth. Based on my ethnography of the founders, investors and other professionals of the Helsinki startup ecosystem, however, I show how this progressive agenda rarely anticipates any need to compromise on profits. Instead, values like sustainability or diversity are discovered to in fact enhance profitability, seemingly transcending the conflict between progressive values and shareholder value. This paper examines how in seeking to empower a better capitalism, startup professionals end up returning to the shareholder value they disavowed as an end in itself—resurrecting it instead as foundational for the agency required to achieve progressive goals. Creating returns for investors is thus naturalised as a necessity for which there are no alternatives, but which simultaneously appears as that which makes alternatives possible.

Presenter(s): Sakari Mesimäki

Ghosts in the “Machine that is Learning”: Disruptions and Continuities in Modern China’s Scientific Governance

China's business-to-government (B2G) market brings venture capital investors, startup entrepreneurs, and local governments together to fulfill central state national mandates. Participants in these ventures describe their partnerships as nodes in a policy-generating algorithmic assemblage, for, as entrepreneurs and government officials alike rhetorically asked, "what is our nation but a machine that is learning?" As an ethnographer of these assemblages, I interrogate my interlocutors' claims that making policy through an analogy with machine learning is a continuation of the experimental philosophy Deng espoused during China's 1990s reforms. Considering a longer purview, I highlight consequential historical changes in China's scientific governance. In particular, drawing on Arunabh Ghosh's work on the early Chinese socialist state's

approach to state-building under Mao Zedong, I highlight how the current VC-driven policy landscape in China drastically departs from Mao's disdain of "bourgeois statistics." Reconsidering rhetorics of continuity and disruption, this paper explores a paradox: although the ghosts of leaders past paved the way for contradiction of CCP orthodoxy, contemporary forms of Chinese adaptive governance nonetheless align with broader historical patterns that reinforced China's one-party rule.

Presenter(s): Jamie Wong

Discussion

3929 Well-Being, Stigma, and Gendered Bodily Hauntings

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Drawing on the conceptual metaphors of hauntings and specters (Blanco and Peeren 2013), haunting as an affective state (Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi 2022), and ideas of bodies as relational (Blackman and Venn 2010), this panel provides an in-depth look at the ways women's and men's gendered experiences of social and bodily marginalization as a consequence of unwanted childlessness due to infertility, reproduction due to war-time rape, domestic violence, intergenerational trauma, caregiving, and wellness, and incarceration and criminal legal system impacts are shaped by hauntings and specters of the past. The panel examines how the manifestation of these specters in the present offer opportunities to act on inequities that intersect in their lives. Drawing on cases from Vietnam, East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the US, the papers on this panel examine how the navigation of gendered social inequities is informed and shaped by the intersection of complex pasts with the present.

Troubling and haunting experiences affecting people's well-being may be located deep in their own life, or as part of processes of rebirth, or the consequences of karmic relationships or other-worldly spirits. These and other processes may materialize as insults to their well-being, health, and dignity, as haunting remnants of violence and historical trauma for some, or manifestations of multiple past lives in the present for others. The panel asks: How do women and men navigate stigma surrounding socio-bodily circumstances not of their own making? How do they contend with structural, generational, and gendered social hierarchies in managing a present infused with memory and specters of their own past or past lives of others? How does the struggle to contend with specters of the past present opportunities for orienting toward the future? How do bodily scars, bodily pain, troubling bodily processes, emotional wounds, and traumatic memories haunt some people's everyday lives in a culturally situated manner, which may reinforce the persistence of their suffering? This panel will also examine how these material and immaterial specters may point to cultural and social conditions that present harm to people and stir them to embark on a journey of becoming that has the potential to transform their own and societal challenges. Haunting effects may become a source of inspiration for some to reinterpret their past and present experiences in ways that support their own dignity, remedy their situation and improve their well-

being, and lead others collectively to a place of hope.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Lynn Kwiatkowski, Colorado State University, Melissa Pashigian, Bryn Mawr College, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Melissa Pashigian, Bryn Mawr College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lynn Kwiatkowski, Colorado State University, Serena Cosgrove, Seattle University, Melissa Pashigian, Bryn Mawr College, Department of Anthropology, Nancy Chen, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Hauntings of Domestic Violence in Northern Vietnam

Domestic violence haunts many women in societies globally and in diverse ways in their everyday experience and as a lifelong experience for some (Bloom 2023). Drawing on the concept of "haunting" as an affective experience (Good, Chiovenda, & Rahimi 2022), I analyze ways some women in northern Vietnam are beset by the habitual violence their husband visits upon them and by troubling memories of domestic violence that materialize as scars or other remains of harms on their bodies, or manifest immaterially, notably as emotional distress and/or fear. Women in abusive marriages and other Vietnamese people may perceive the women's suffering to stem from their husband's violence in the recent or distant past, or from past lives of a woman and her abusive husband, reflecting ideas of rebirth. I assess how women carry the burden of memories of domestic violence physically, emotionally, and, for some, spiritually, both when the violence has the potential to reoccur and when it has ended. Still, haunting is always formative, not fixed, even as it is culturally and socially informed, and can be reflected upon creatively, leading to novel interpretations and narratives. Haunting can effect new interpretations of the violence that lead to more positive futures, such as motivating some Vietnamese women to achieve a sense of justice and well-being by changing their responses to the violence, helping other women abused by their husband, and/or influencing others to help the women.

Presenter(s): Lynn Kwiatkowski

Spectral Memories/Harsh Realities: Navigating the Stigma of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Global Perspective

In many postconflict countries, women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence juggle multiple priorities in the long postconflict present. Many may need medical attention and psychological services to move towards healing. It can be challenging to complete schooling, earn a living, and provide for their families. In this paper, I focus on the stigma that women face in East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Democratic Republic of Congo due to giving birth to children after they were raped during torture, detention, or forced to marry soldiers or rebels during periods of conflict and war. Part of a bigger project about women's activism after war, this paper focuses on the blaming of survivors by their families and communities. I unpack the ways women survivors face blame for their own rape, even decades after it occurred. This stigma can take the form of complete social shunning or more subtle forms of discrimination. Not only must these women process the awful things that have happened to them, but they must also raise their children in hostile, judgmental

settings, even after peace accords have been signed. As years pass, the trauma of rape becomes a spectral memory whereas the continued hardship and censure of community life becomes an almost unbearable reality. Some of these women, however, are beginning to find freedom from ghosts and present-day sexist prejudice in the long postconflict present thanks to solidarity among survivors and the support of their own children.

Presenter(s): Serena Cosgrove

Specters, Spirits, and Karma: Navigating Uncertainty and Stigma Amongst Women with Unwanted Childlessness in Vietnam

Women facing infertility in Vietnam live in a present state of uncertainty intertwined with longing for a child-full future, concerns about what might be causing their unwanted childless, and others' perceptions and stigmatization of their childlessness. This paper explores how women make sense of a multiplicity of possible causes of their childlessness, which is intertwined with spirits, karma, and fate in a space where daily life is infused with a spirit world that comingles deceased relatives and past lives with present forms of morality and behavior vested in bodies in which reproduction is absent; and the practices women employ to mitigate potential negative contributing factors. What is the experience of infertility in a space that is inhabited by spirits and moral choices made in previous lives? Drawing on the idea of inter-relationality (Blackburn and Venn 2010), how do these women navigate uncertainty that involves the potential relationality of their body to spectral others? I argue that mitigating uncertainty in the present can necessitate addressing unseen possible influences of the surrounding spirit world. I explore Buddhist ideas about karma and attracting good spirits for conception; realigning out-of-balance elements; concerns about occupations that may attract malevolent spirits; prayer and pilgrimage to attract good luck; and the constant specter of ancestors and their unknown deeds that may shape the present unwanted childlessness.

Presenter(s): Melissa Pashigian

Caring for Intergenerational Trauma

How might intergenerational relations coexist as sites of structural trauma and healing? Building upon previous field work, I engage recent medical anthropology and Asian American scholarship on unwellness and chronic living to explore care. I draw on examples of caregiving practices and medicinal foods in response to haunting generational narratives. Such forms of deep care may illuminate therapeutic practices across the life cycle for solidarity and compassion in such contexts. My research queries how such approaches may facilitate insights onto recovery, even thriving.

Presenter(s): Nancy Chen

2569 Murders and Ghosts: State Cruelty and the Haunting of History

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The modern state is fundamentally cruel. Its cruel banality is exercised in surveillance, torture, capital punishment, and warfare, all of which is regularly supplemented by extra-judicial killings, vigilantism, and paramilitary violence--the constitutive outside of the liberal state. What Walter Benjamin called the founding violence of the modern state articulates itself in the necropolitical arrangements of the 20th century and beyond. Murder, we propose, is a signature form of state cruelty, a unique kind of mediated violence where mediation includes mass media and everyday linguistic and semiotic practices. Cruelty survives and thrives as much through mediatized spectacles as through gossip, rumor, storytelling, and political rhetoric. How, then, is the modern state implicated in or reliant on murder? In what ways do past hauntings help invent and/or confront state enemies that are made killable? How and when does state violence, frequently disguised or hidden, gain visibility and how do these revelations consolidate or threaten the state's sovereign power to kill? And finally, how does a messy entanglement of state, media, and the "people" dictate the way we consider state cruelty as either political violence or cultural phenomena? Our panel meditates on these questions by sharing insights into the state's role in naming, enabling, and adjudicating extrajudicial deaths, sensationalized murders, serial killing, and the death penalty. Offering ethnographic understanding of informal censorship in reporting street murders in Mexico, spectacularized murders and the right-wing in India, the politics of naming the dead in the Philippines, emerging infrastructures of knowledge around serial killing in Kenya and Rwanda, and public secrecy around the death penalty in Bangladesh, this panel intervenes in anthropological conversations on mediation and its role in shaping the cruel intimacy of murder and the modern state.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology**Organizer:** Nusrat Chowdhury, Amherst College, Naisargi Davé**Chair:** Naisargi Davé**Presenter(s):** Marcus McGee, Louisa Lombard, Yale University, Nusrat Chowdhury, Amherst College, Scott MacLochlainn, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Naisargi Davé**Presentation(s):** The Popular Censor: Murder Reporting and Sovereign Indeterminacy in Mexico City's Press Linchamientos

When someone is murdered in the streets of Mexico City, crowds tend to gather, often as volatile mixes of strangers, forensic experts, spies from local gangs, family members of the victim, police, soldiers, and, of course, media workers. This paper explores outbreaks of violence at these scenes. It focuses on a particularly ambiguous and interpretively provocative form of violence: acts of censorship against media workers that appear as spontaneous acts of popular violence. It's common for family, gangs, neighbors, or some combination thereof to attack journalists at murder scenes, often as a means of disputing the forms and conditions of their representation. But it is also common for police, hoping to avoid politically incendiary media coverage, to incite crowds to attack journalists. These are disputes over how murder is represented that, in their mode of disputation, produce an indistinction between the state, organized crime, and "the people". These are also situations where genres like "the nightly news"—sociolinguistic infrastructures that

authorize murder's circulation and make it intelligible—are failing to authoritatively ground certain communicative gestures, like pointing a camera at a body. By closely reading one such situation from my fieldwork, I examine: (1) how representations of murder are disputed and negotiated, (2) what happens when our genres for representing murder break down situationally and (3) the sovereign indistinction that seems to

Presenter(s): Marcus McGee

Investigating Murder in Central and East Africa

Anthropologists of violence have found much to discuss and understand in African contexts. Studies of wartime killings, bodily disfigurements, and rape have helped people to see the dense symbolic meanings in even heinous acts, as well as how people struggle to heal and repair their societies. Careful investigations have also looked at how people use invisible forces (witchcraft) to kill, and how and why alleged users of witchcraft are killed. And yet the topic of murder – the premeditated killing of a person by another – has been relatively neglected. Drawing from my research in the Central African Republic, Rwanda, and South Sudan, this paper highlights some of the ways that murder has been affecting public life to show that this issue warrants greater attention. People in South Sudan have endured war for decades, but many feel that the violence that affects them the most is not battles, but murder, which causes even greater upheaval and heartache. In infamous cases in Rwanda and Kenya, serial killers have recently targeted women, and especially sex workers, sometimes seemingly with state security officers' complicity (or worse). While African police forces have generally had limited institutional investigative capacity, some are now prioritizing it. The Rwanda Forensic Institute is one of the continent's first dedicated DNA processing facilities (previously, all samples had to be sent to Europe, at great expense). Expectations about what it is possible to know are therefor

Presenter(s): Louisa Lombard

“That Executioner Life”: Mediating Cruelty in Bangladesh

In June 2024, the New York Times published an unusual feature story. More an obituary, it offered a snapshot of the life of a Bangladeshi hangman, Shahjahan Bhuiya. Bhuiya had gained celebrity after his release from prison as a man who claimed to have executed 60 prisoners on behalf of the Bangladeshi state, but more important, as an author of a much-talked-about autobiography. Among those he had hanged were the killers of the first prime minister, Sheikh Mujib and those convicted for collaboration and crimes against humanity during the war of independence. Both groups were deemed long-standing threats to Mujib's daughter Sheikh Hasina's political ambitions. Bhuyia's autobiography detailed the last living moments of these killers and collaborators while their ghosts hovered over the unfolding political drama in Bangladesh. A popular uprising toppled Hasina's government only a few weeks after Bhuyia's death in 2024. Among other revelations that followed was the 'discovery' of secret torture cells long rumored to hold opposition activists and so-called Islamist terrorists. As egregious crimes of the past regime came into view through a highly mediatized official tour of the secret prison, Bhuyia's autobiography homed in on the public secret

of ritualized murder. Reading his remembrances against the recent revelations, this paper ruminates on how publicity and secrecy at once make up the modern state and the media that help make and unmake its cruel banality.

Presenter(s): Nusrat Chowdhury

In the Naming Of: Killing, Specificity, and the Known Subject

The name, in particular the act of naming, is intrinsically attached to death, especially in the context of killing. Critical to the wide-ranging practices of evidence making, attribution, and an ethical reckoning of death, naming and anonymity are often key to how killing is semiotically made and unmade. Naming has its own logics: of specificity, of coherent personhood, and the promise of tracking the self and body across multiple publics, bureaucracies, and state technologies. At the same time, it is bound to logics of violence as well as its repairs, and is central both to the practice of protection and of threat. Naming also brings with it its own asymmetries in who gets to name and be named, and who does not. This paper highlights the multiple tenors and semiotic resonances of naming within the act and the circulation of killing in the Philippines. It does so amidst a recent history in which killing has been dramatically foregrounded in the Philippines, and in which the fraying of ethical norms in and of death have been profoundly marked by mass mediation and the nature of spectacle. Within this space, in which the right to kill is openly implemented and adjudicated, how might we think about how those killed come to be known?

Presenter(s): Scott MacLochlainn

Murder Raj: The Killing of Madhumita Shukla

On May 9, 2003, two gunmen rang the bell of a house in Lucknow's Paper Mill Colony. As 24-year-old Madhumita Shukla opened the door, she was shot and killed at close range. Shukla was seven months pregnant, and the father—hardly a closely guarded secret in Lucknow's elite circles—was the Uttar Pradesh politician, Amarmani Tripathi. Tripathi and his wife, Madhumani, were convicted of the murder and sentenced to life imprisonment but then released, in 2023, on orders from the Hindutva strongman, Yogi Adityanath. Activists and family members protested the release, but the Supreme Court, in 2025, dismissed their plea. Shukla was one of many victims of political impunity, and this paper explores her murder to develop an argument for understanding 21st century right-wing rule in India as a murder raj: government through the deployment of murder as a weapon against press freedom and towards the production of political terror through the circulation of near mythical stories about violent death and the consequences of resistance to right-wing (often male) power. Shukla was an artist—a kavitri, or poetess—like many other victims of high-profile state killings and this paper explores how and to what effect the murder raj operates specifically through the extinguishing of writers and writing.

Presenter(s): Naisargi Davé

3861 Life after Death: The Political Afterlife of Racialized Infrastructure in the United States

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Despite the 'death' of overtly discriminatory policy measures and racialized government-backed development projects, immaterial racialized ideologies live on through the deliberate and strategic infrastructural inequities created, establishing racialized geographies for nearly every racial and ethnic group within the United States. The apparitions of racialized intent not only show up in the physicality of inequitable city landscapes and racial covenants inked on still circulating housing deeds, but they haunt contemporary generations still, economically, socially, and politically. Dragging down property values, impairing health, and denying strategic access to jobs, hospitals, and stores, the multi-generational impact of dead policies and developments plays out, shapes, and haunts the everyday lives of descendants still today. This panel dives deeply into the afterlife of racialized policies and intentional infrastructural inequities that still shapes the geographic realities of Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans today. Beyond the physicality of racialized landscapes, these presentations analyze the ways in which historic policies and geographies carry over into modern-day inequities. From the loss of generational wealth to the inaccessibility of education and the stymieing inter-generational impacts of historical trauma. This panel interrogates the ways in which dead policies and infrastructures live on to haunt present generations through intentionally deepening class divisions, widening the inaccessibility of homeownership opportunities, and the strategic removal of community promoting green spaces. To worsen matters, racialized geographies that once offered the bare minimum of housing opportunities threaten to displace the very residents corralled into these disinvested landscapes in the first place, as the purposeful political and infrastructural neglect presents a cheap new market opportunity. For others, the effects of infrastructural neglect can be felt within their very lungs and heard in their children's raspy breaths.

Utilizing the metaphor of Ghosts and Hauntings, this panel investigates the legacy and manifestations of Proposition 13's racial impact in California's parks and schools, the post WWII Servicemen's Readjustment Act's hand in the disproportionate rise of white homeownership and generational wealth compared to Black Veteran families, and the impacts of redlining had on Latino activism, which is now being commodified and sold as gentrification threatens to displace them from the very places once deemed a financial 'risk'. Furthermore, this presentation examines the political afterlife of the Native American reservation system and boarding schools and the ways in which these systems have cast Native Americans as unseen and unrecognized ghosts within the education systems today and the ways in which political environmental decisions of the past pose health risks today for marginalized communities.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Jessica Gleason, University of California, Riverside

Chair: Yolanda Moses, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lydia Olivier, Jessica Gleason, University of California, Riverside, Sahar Foruzan,

University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Yolanda Moses, University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Alluvial Fans of Remembrance: Sediments of the Past Informing Future in Racialized Neighborhood Services in Los Angeles, CA.

Manifestations of the 1978 Proposition 13 in California, mandated a roll back to 1976 property tax rates has lingered as a racially unjust legacy. In challenging literature through the use of deconstructing binary geography ideologies, and examining, rethinking space throughout time, this presentation explores the reorganization of vital services targeted to groups of the subaltern in those families with children. An evolving result is due to the defunding of services like parks and school institutions relied upon by marginalized groups from these communities. The afterlife illuminates a physical world of racialized geographies on top of redlined communities with an ever expanding division between classes of rich and poor neighborhoods. Alluvial fans are used as a metaphor to highlight the enacted state legislation as residual sediments compounded by the backlash against rising property taxes.

Presenter(s): Lydia Olivier

How the Theft of Black Home Ownership Haunts the Present: The Costs of Redlining , Racialized Policies and Stolen Generational Wealth

U.S. Racial Ideologies and the devaluation of black bodies, specifically borne from the 1940-1960, has left a geographic imprint on the US landscape, haunting homeownership rates in the United States still today. This presentation demonstrates how key, now 'dead', policy measures and practices from the 1940-1960s still haunt black homeownership rates today. Despite the official political 'death' of redlining policies, housing discrimination, and segregated housing tracks, the legacy of racialized housing access lives on, not through overt policy measures, but through the loss of generational wealth, strategic school placements, and urban/suburban infrastructure divides grounded in 1940-1960 racialized policies. From the denial of deserving black veterans' Veteran Administration loans and reduced 'GI Bill' Benefits, to the rejection of home improvement loans from redlining policies, black homeownership was hard to obtain while white suburbs flourished. Over time urban renewal projects, inequitable highway infrastructure, and realtor instigated episodes of 'white flight', further diminished the value of property where Blacks were able to buy. The result is the compounding impacts of these 60-year-old-plus racialized policies continue to haunt black homeownership rates today, particularly through the loss of generational wealth and life opportunities.

Presenter(s): Jessica Gleason

Rearranging and Re-representing Nature: Ghosts and Hauntings within the Environmental Restoration of the Salton Sea in Southeastern California

The Salton Sea, California's largest lake, is shrinking. The consequences of allowing the Salton Sea to decline reverberate within and beyond the lake. They circulate within the lake causing habitat

collapse and algae growth. The receding shoreline blows fine particulate dust, fortified with decades of agricultural chemicals, into the homes and lungs of nearby communities. Both short- and long-term restoration efforts at the Salton Sea remain sites of debate between scientists, policymakers, activists, and residents. Meanwhile, local communities have largely been left to deal with emerging environmental health issues on their own. Using the concepts of ghosts and hauntings, this presentation discusses these frictions within the restoration of the Salton Sea that circulate around the ghosts of past environmental management paradigms and the hauntings of an imagined future. While eerie, these hauntings offer direction and assist in building coalition within and between communities. These ghosts and hauntings call into question the meaning and use of the words restoration, toxicity, and community engagement and highlight the importance of slow research within communities experiencing injustice.

Presenter(s): Sahar Foruzan

Discussion

8680 SAE Business Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 1:45 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Crescent (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

SAE Business Meeting

Presentation of SAE Book Awards

7184 Haunting Echoes: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Politics of Remembrance

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How do the spectral remains of those lost to mass violence unsettle the certainties of state-sanctioned belonging? And in what ways do their afterlives, neither fully past nor entirely present, reshape our understanding of remembrance? This panel offers a reflective inquiry into the ancestrality of ghosts – those spirits suspended between ritual, history, and politics. At its core lies a question of transformation: how does mass violence alter not only the lives of the living, but also the political lives of the dead?

In this panel, the figure of the ghost, often imagined as untethered and disruptive, emerges as a presence that insists on reentry – into history, into kinship, into the very frameworks through which remembrance is governed. These spectral forms expose the fragility of official narratives and unsettle the social orders through which the state claims to organize grief, lineage, and belonging. Through rituals that mourn and reconfigure ties between the living and the dead, ghosts may also be perceived as ancestors – though not without friction.

Historical weight of violence calls for a rethinking of the binary between ghosts and ancestors. In this light, this panel explores how communities reimagine ancestral ties in the wake of disrupted kinship systems and burial rites. It further examines what the conditions are under which the dead are recognized, what remains at stake in the rituals.

This panel gathers four scholars whose work traverses the ritual, the legal, the clinical, and the spiritual to engage these questions. Dr. Elena Lesley examines how Cambodians have reconfigured ceremonies such as Kathen, Pchum Ben, and Bangsokol to restore relationships with the dead, while simultaneously re-inscribing hierarchies of belonging. Youjoung Kim explores how ancestor-making becomes a contested process shaped by law, gender, and ritual, where the distinction between ghost and ancestor remains fragile and politically charged. Talia Katz turns to mourning rituals at the interstice of psychiatric care and spiritual invocation, showing how repair takes form beyond the clinical after mass violence. Dr. Jorge Alonso Gamarra reads "posthumous portraits" within activist networks in Peru, where the dead are not only remembered but mobilized in the service of justice and memory.

Together, these contributions suggest that the ancestral presence of ghosts is a field in which the politics of mass violence are contested and reimagined. Through them, we are invited to reconsider foundational anthropological notions such as death, kinship, violence, and the state – not as settled categories but as sites of ongoing negotiations. Remembrance, in this sense, is not only to preserve but to confront; not only to mourn but to reconstitute the social words that violence has ruptured.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Youjoung Kim, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Victoria Sanford, CUNY, Herbert H Lehman College

Presenter(s): Elena Lesley, University of South Florida, Youjoung Kim, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Talia Katz, SUNY, Binghamton University, Jorge Alonso Gamarra, McGill University

Discussant: Isaias Rojas-Perez, Rutgers University, Newark, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ritual Improvisation, Social Regeneration and Hierarchy in Post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia

The Cambodian genocide not only claimed the lives of roughly a quarter of the country's population, but also left huge spiritual disruption in its wake. In much of Buddhist Southeast Asia, people believe death should ideally occur at home, peacefully, surrounded by those a person loves. But during the Khmer Rouge, people often died violently and far from home. As a result, the living have often believed that victims of the Khmer Rouge remain trapped in a liminal state as ghosts, unable to transition to their next life.

This situation has led to widespread ritual improvisation in the country during the past several decades. While rituals often serve a foundational role in transforming "bad death" into "good death"

(or socially regenerative death), most societies are not equipped to accommodate death on a mass, anonymous scale. This paper examines how Cambodians have confronted this conundrum through modification of the Kathen offering ceremony, Pchum Ben festival of the dead and funerary Bangsokol ritual. It shows the mechanisms through which improvised ritual forms can help forge new, socially productive identities for the deceased while also recreating hierarchical relations that inspire loyalty to limited sources of authority.

Presenter(s): Elena Lesley

The Threshold of Mourning: Ancestral Belonging and the Afterlives of Jeju 4.3 (Sasam)

How does the South Korean state's selective recognition of victims construct the boundaries of legitimate mourning and ancestral belonging? The violence of Jeju 4.3 (1947-1954) – resulting in the deaths of approximately 30,000 islanders accused of communist associates – continued in the realm of mourning and remembrance, where official commemoration, while invoking national unity, simultaneously disavows certain deaths. Some spirits remain unclaimed, lingering at the threshold between ancestor and ghost – not only due to political rupture but also the exclusion from the ceremonial space of remembrance at the Jeju 4.3 Peace Memorial Park. This absence becomes more acute in families without male heirs, where daughters confront a Confucian family law that both constrains and compels them. Their efforts to honor the dead reveal a particular strain: the state, in privileging patrilineal ritual, paradoxically unsettles it through its regulation of claims-making for victimhood. I suggest that the process of ancestor-making emerges as a contested site, shaped by the entanglement of law, gender, and ritual. Within this unsettled terrain, the distinction between ghost and ancestor becomes porous - attesting to the living's ongoing contestation over kinship, legitimacy, and the fragile architecture of the nation.

Presenter(s): Youjoung Kim

Subjunctive Burial: Psychodrama and Healing the Bad Death

How does genocide push psychotherapists to re-imagine what liberating their patients from the agony of prolonged bereavement might look like? In 1917, Freud's seminal essay "Mourning and Melancholia," introduced a fundamental distinction between normal and pathological grieving processes. Freud eventually revised this normative claim, recognizing how the sedimentation of loss is constitutive of the self (Hollan 2022). Even so, for anthropologists who study the relationship between mass violence and ritual, a broader question endures around how everyday people grieve when violence has transfigured, if not severed, the relations between the living and the dead (Langford 2013; Kwon 2012). My talk intervenes in these debates by tracing the rise of "subjunctive burials" in the shadows of the Holocaust. The Israeli case is particularly instructive because the Holocaust appears not as abstracted event, but as part and parcel of the everyday clinical encounter and entwined with questions of poverty and migration (Zalashik 2008; Rolnik 2012). What therapeutic experiments does the Israeli therapist undertake in response to prolonged bereavement caused by mass killings that sever generational ties and disappear bodies? I concentrate on cases of Dr. Ada Abraham, one of Israel's first psychodrama therapists. Studying the

transformation of mourning rituals as they unfold at the interstices of the clinical and the spiritual offers a new way of understanding repair after mass violence.

Presenter(s): Talia Katz

The absence of their way of being": Notes on Posthumous Portraits from the 2022-2023 Peruvian Uprising

In December 2022, people from rural, Indigenous, and working-class communities across Peru joined a nationwide protest against the rise of the far-right ruling coalition that now governs the country. The demands of protestors were wide-ranging — challenging extractivism, precarious labor, and institutionalized racism — but many called specifically for the creation of a plurinational state and the dismantling of the project of statecraft established during Alberto Fujimori's dictatorship (1990–2000), amid the internal armed conflict (1980–2000). In turn, government officials falsely accused protesters of ties to "narco-terrorist groups" and responded with armed repression, leaving hundreds injured and claiming at least 50 lives by April 2023, deaths which preliminary independent investigations have identified as potential extrajudicial executions. This presentation examines the image-making practices of independent photojournalists documenting the aftermath of these executions among the families of the deceased, focusing on portraits that convey the enduring presence of the dead among the living. By approaching one of these images as a "posthumous portrait" and attending to aspects of its intimate life within a network of activists that includes photojournalists and the loved ones of those killed by the state, this presentation explores the attunements that enable the dead participate in, rather than merely serve as objects of, this emerging politics of memory.

Presenter(s): Jorge Alonso Gamarra

Discussion

8693 Get to know the Association for the Anthropology of Policy: A open, welcoming event

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Evergreen (4th fl)

Type: Special Event

What is the anthropology of policy? How can we use anthropological theory and methods to study policy? How can we use anthropological pedagogy to teach policy? What does it look like to be an anthropologist of policy working in a practice setting?

The Association for the Anthropology of Policy (ASAP) invites all AAA members to get to know our section members, and to help us get to know you! Please join ASAP board members, committee members, and section members including anthropology of policy students in a casual setting.

Feel free to bring a brown bag meal or snacks, arrive at whatever time you're available, and join us as we celebrate our 2025 ASAP graduate paper award recipient, share opportunities to get involved in ASAP, and start thinking about ASAP-sponsored panels AAA 2026, in St. Louis MO.

1916 Architectures of Spectrality I

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The discipline of anthropology, in many ways, was built on spectral grounds. It is a form of inquiry that involves itself with ghosts and asks: how do societies narrate the ineffable, and what categories of social thought cohere around the interaction between living and dead things? (Ochoa 2010; Stevenson 2014; Meyers 2021; Taussig 2025). Put differently, anthropologists have long involved themselves with-and thought with-phantasms, ghosts, hauntive obsessions, and spectral projections. Additionally, the discipline's enduring tether to the colonial requires that contemporary anthropologists continue navigating the spectral materiality of fieldwork; i.e., how the event, the aftershock, and (un/ mis)memory of violence is made apparent in physical space. This panel proposes to take up the question of the spectral, otherness, and space. We have termed this convergence "the architecture of spectrality." In doing so, we attempt to answer a simple, yet vexing question: How do we sense that we are haunted, or in the presence of ghosts-materially and in space? And, in order to recognize the ghost, must you be political, cultural, or personal kin?

By tethering our collective meditation to architectures of spectrality, we point to the conditions of (dis)appearance in hauntings. In an echo to critiques of archival power (Derrida 1994, 1996; Hartman 2008, 2019; Arondekar 2009; Stoler 2010), we consider how collective memory and its absences take shape in specific places, such as streetscapes, toponymy, memorial plaques, online spaces, and archival institutions. Etymologically, architecture involves authoritative discourse (arkhe) and the techniques of building (tekton). Thus, the panel considers how spaces of ghostliness are constructed and by whose authority, as well as the ways space may withhold, retain or foreclose access to certain forms of memory.

Finally, the panel coheres around a practical question of writing and interpretation- which situates ethnography itself as another form of architecture. How is it even possible to put the spectral into writing on spectrality? How do we approach the spectral when faced with its obliqueness and opacities? What is the method of finding, feeling, knowing, and caring for the ghosts and phantasms that alter a place with affective density? Our presentations will demonstrate the various ways an ethnographer may become ghostlike, and thus attentive to appearances and absences in order to know or learn. In situating the ghostly as necessarily material-in its physical trace as well as its narrative recounting-our methodological meditations consider how the architecture of spectrality may reveal the sociospatial.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Khalil Habrih, The New School, Natalie Reinhart

Chair: Aamer Ibraheem, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ana Croegaert, Field Museum, Margaux Fitoussi, University of California, Irvine, Robert Desjarlais, Sarah Lawrence College

Presentation(s): “This Garden is an Archive”

Spectral experiences gesture towards particular shapes and sets of relations that resonate in the moment of encounter. This paper explores such moments as traces of human life that are given space in Solitary Gardens, a social sculpture abolitionist project directed by artist jackie sumell. In creating and maintaining the solitary gardens, modern technologies of hierarchical separation and extraction that upheld plantation economies and generate today's prison industrial complex confront ecologies that prioritize relational connection and reciprocity through the exchange of personal story. I draw on my ongoing research with this project since 2018 and engage the gardens as an archive of storied relations that might re-shape perspectives on American modes of incarceration and their aftermath.

Presenter(s): Ana Croegaert

The Architecture of Jinn

For centuries, Jews and Muslims in Tunisia inhabited a shared moral and cosmological world—one animated by overlapping understandings of possession, exorcism, and the presence of jinn. This shared world came to an end with the mass emigration of Jews to France and Palestine-Israel in the latter half of the twentieth century. Today, fewer than a thousand Jews remain. This presentation interrogates the entanglement of spectrality, space, and alterity in postcolonial Tunisia through an ethnographic account of a Muslim photographer and his modest studio in downtown Tunis. In the near-total absence of a contemporary Jewish community, the photographer's affective and imaginative investments in Jewishness—especially the Jewish dead—reveal how absence becomes a medium of presence. In this configuration, the Jewish spectral Other is an intimate native Other. Through the photographer's relationship to the Jewish dead, we see not only an ethics of memory but a mimetic entanglement, as the anthropologist Michael Taussig might describe it—where alterity is inhabited rather than observed, and haunting becomes a mode of intimacy rather than rupture. This paper asks: What is the relationship needed for haunting? Is otherness a condition for the haunting and, if so, who may that other be? What gives the dead purchase over the living, especially when that involvement does not fit an expected taxonomy of intimacy?

Presenter(s): Margaux Fitoussi

Ghost Walk: Filmic Specters of Walter Benjamin's Life Death

With this presentation, I discuss a film project that I am currently undertaking, on the life and death of German philosopher and writer Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). In drawing from Benjamin's writings and archival artifacts drawn from the personal and historical contours of his life, I engage with intersecting aspects of Benjamin's life through the medium of digital filmmaking, set within a

palimpsestic expanse of place, memory, history, and political-cultural formations. For the purposes of the current presentation, I will show segments of a film that I am currently crafting, titled "Ghost Walk." This film focuses on the final days of Walter Benjamin in France and Spain. In tracing out Benjamin's efforts to cross the Pyrenees by foot in late September 1940 in fleeing Nazi-controlled France for safe passage through Spain, and then giving filmic thought to his final hours in Spain, I seek to show the ways in which the various landscapes, remnants, and trace formations of Benjamin's passage in this border region reflect significant spectral motifs invested in the places, architecture, and traceworks of Benjamin's life and death through interwoven strands of time and memory, actuality and virtuality, appearance and disappearance. In all, this project considers how one might invoke a sense of the spectral and ghostly reverberations through time through the prismatic medium of film. The very medium of film entails an architecture of spectrality.

Presenter(s): Robert Desjarlais

4561 On the Ruins of Liberalism: Ethnographies of Far-Right Regime Building, Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"This storm is what we call progress," Walter Benjamin wrote during the final days of the interwar liberal era, shortly before taking his own life in fear of the Nazis. Drawing on Benjamin's evocative image of relentless historical destruction as a continuous catastrophe rather than a lost utopia, this panel examines whether we are witnessing a similar transformation today. Specifically, we explore how the ghost of liberalism functions as a legacy upon which far-right regimes build, an ideology with which they contend, and an epistemic context that shapes the work of anthropologists studying these regimes. As more political leaders invoke the monstrosity of liberalism to construct far-right regimes, we seek to understand how this imaginary fuses material and ideological foundations into cohesive, hegemonic systems. Rather than treating liberalism as the normative baseline, we aim to interrogate the failures of the liberal order and ask whether right-wing regime-building should also be understood as a form of revolutionary politics. This moment of urgency demands an analysis that bridges the political, economic, and epistemic dimensions of far-right regime-building, moving beyond reductive binaries and normative assumptions. To this end, this panel brings together contributions that examine transnational networks of think tanks, national and cultural infrastructures, academic institutions, and grassroots political practices. How can ethnography help illuminate the economic and epistemic foundations of these emerging regimes? What methodological and ethical challenges confront anthropologists trained in liberal institutions as they conduct fieldwork in anti-liberal contexts? What is the future of ethnographic inquiry in a far-right epistemic hegemony? Ultimately, this panel explores the implications of the next stage of the continuous catastrophe, the dawning post-liberal era, for anthropology as a public voice.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Sara Swerdlyk, University of Toronto, Annastiina Kallius, University of Helsinki

Chair: Kristóf Nagy, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Olga Demetriou, Durham University, Annastiina Kallius, University of Helsinki, Maria Sidorkina, University of Texas at Austin, Tatjana Thelen, Fabio Zuker, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Douglas Holmes, SUNY, Binghamton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Unremarkable Contention: The Muted Presence of the Far Right in Refugee Reception Locations

The paper brings together ethnographic insights from multiple locations of refugee reception on the European periphery (Ceuta, Melilla, Lampedusa, Trieste, Evros, Greek islands, Cyprus) to explore the political contestations that give rise to far right nativist claims at the heart of European governance. It posits the seeming absence of apocalyptic manifestations of anti-liberalism in these locations against the effervescent affects that attend the rise and normalisation of the far right on a global theatre. How do anti-liberal intuitions play out in contexts that are at once plagued by the "border spectacle" (de Genova, 2016) and consigned to forging peace across agonistic lines on a daily basis? By straddling the small and grand scales between ethnographic fields and political pronouncements, the paper traces the non-spectacular ways in which the Benjaminian storm currently unfolding at the seats of power is lulled into the mundane of places neglected and spectacularised. Thus, the paper works towards an understanding of the far right in contexts where it appears not to be as visible as we might expect and consequently, also seeks to initiate a discussion around epistemologies of far right normalisation relevant beyond anthropology.

Presenter(s): Olga Demetriou

The Specter Unveiled: Reclaiming the Decolonial Claim from Illiberalism

A key aspect of far-right regime building in Hungary is the twisting of the liberal fantasy: illiberal Hungary, under Viktor Orbán, is presented as the true "end of history," with a political model of a white, homogeneous middle class clinging to traditional values and an epistemic culture rooted in Romanticism. In its political form, illiberalism breathes life into a racist authoritarian ideology that cloaks white supremacy under the guise of decolonialism, while Budapest has evolved into a ghost train of far-right thinkers from around the world. They depict Western liberal democracies as doomed to decline—succumbing to secularization, individualism, and the disintegration of ethnic homogeneity. Together, they claim to represent a decolonial front against colonial neoliberalism. How does the illiberal claim to decolonialism manifest in Hungary's public sphere? What intellectual and political legacies sustain it? By critically examining illiberalism's claim to decolonialism, I reveal that while both movements share a critique of capitalism and a Romantic lineage, illiberalism ultimately resurrects the very liberal colonialism it professes to oppose. Rather than nurturing a true plurality of epistemic regimes, it merely replays the fantasy of a linear "end of history," reproducing its specter while relying on neoliberal structures. At the same time, it seeks to purge the coexistence of multiple worldviews—an act that would be the true essence of decolonialism.

Presenter(s): Annastiina Kallius

Kholivar vs. Civil Turn-Taking: The Specter of Liberal Proceduralism and Russia's Illiberal Turn

How did everyday practices of public interaction become relevant for anti-liberal regime building in Russia? Drawing on ethnographic research with Siberian political and civic activists throughout the 2010s, this paper returns to a time when the Putin regime first mobilized anti-liberal sentiment through both street-level and mediatized activism. During this period, a process of contrastive co-constitution between activist groups divided former anti-Putin allies along culture war lines, with growing tensions around civic issues, reactionary legislation, and Russia's takeover of Crimea. Through detailed analysis of a 2013 civic activist meeting in Novosibirsk, I demonstrate how participants strategically deployed and contested communicative styles associated with "liberal" versus "authentically Russian" political subjectivities, revealing how interactional practices become sites for negotiating competing hegemonic projects. Drawing on longer-term engagement with Russian urban activists, I explore how illiberalism's coherence might have emerged 'from below,' at state peripheries, rather than through centrally positioned agents of ideological production. This analysis illuminates how ordinary Russian activists' understandings of liberal and anti-liberal values helped prop up the foundations of today's blindly militant regime, offering crucial insights into how emerging illiberal ideologies build upon the discursive remnants of liberal orders.

Presenter(s): Maria Sidorkina

Haunting Ghosts of Liberalism: From Critique to Becoming the (Authoritarian) State

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the liberal critique seemed to have turned the former socialist states in eastern Europe into a blossoming democratic landscape of NGOs. Based on my long-term ethnographic engagement in the region in this talk, I offer a perspective on how these liberal ideas and critique of civil societies can end up becoming an integral part of the (authoritarian) regime. I follow the rise of a Roman Catholic charity that started with a critique of gaps in state care for the most marginalized citizens. Representing an emergent civil actor, the NGO received and receives international support. However, the critical stance towards the state increasingly faded when the organization merged with the state in Hungary. Describing this development has two aims. First, when liberal ideas fail to improve the situation of the most marginalized citizens, new patron-client relations sometimes seem to be the only or even preferred option. This presents a situation in which both, the local residents but also researchers, might feel stuck, practically and theoretically haunted by the ghost of liberalism. The only sign of hope I have to offer is to demonstrate how these developments are always fluid and open. Avoiding an all too simple logic and totalizing interpretation, I secondly offer an analysis of the changing role of critique of the state in this process.

Presenter(s): Tatjana Thelen

The Political Ecology of the Far Right in the Brazilian Amazon: anti-Indigenous Agenda, Victimization, and Nostalgia

This presentation examines the political ecology of the far right in the Brazilian Amazon, focusing on anti-Indigenous agendas, victimization narratives, and nostalgia for the military-era (1964–1988) policies that promoted deforestation. Drawing on ethnographic research in the Lower Tapajós and analysis of public statements and government actions, it explores how far-right politics, agribusiness, and land dispossession intersect through legal and rhetorical strategies. The first part analyzes a 2014 judicial ruling that denied Indigenous identity and territorial claims in the Maró region. Though later annulled, the decision resurfaced in 2019 when the judge responsible was honored by the local government, foreshadowing Bolsonaro's "zero demarcation" policy. The second part examines how this legal framework enabled environmental degradation under Bolsonaro, reinforcing authoritarian governance through anti-Indigenous and anti-environmental policies justified by narratives of assimilation and national progress. This presentation invites discussion on contemporary environmental struggles in a post-liberal era, drawing on Benjamin's concept of progress as a storm to reflect on ongoing ecological destruction and the ghostly persistence of Brazil's military dictatorship in the country's environmental politics.

Presenter(s): Fabio Zuker

Discussion

3231 Currency, Climate Change and a New Carbon Commons: Turning to Anthropology for Environmental Policy Solutions

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable brings together a range of experts to explore and critique the grassroots policy proposal presented in Gustav Peebles & Benjamin Luzzatto's new book, *The First & Last Bank: Currency, Climate Change, and a New Carbon Commons*.

Throughout the ages, currencies have been based on all manner of objects—from tobacco leaves to salt to gold to collateralized debt obligations. The only thing that this odd assortment of objects shares is the communal belief that these objects could somehow harness and direct economic exchange—that they are, in a sense, fertile. Peebles & Luzzatto tap into the anthropology of money to propose that carbon could also be seen, in this same sense, as fertile; rather than loom as waste in our skies, carbon could instead be "drawn down" to the earth by currency users and the communally owned banks they rely on, where it could serve as a priceless foundation of new biological life. By offering a "monetary policy from below," the book asks if solid carbon could become a sacred reserve, tying together communities in and around new, local, and fecund commons.

To craft this policy proposal, *The First & Last Bank* draws upon different strands of anthropological research and theory concerning the digital revolution, climate finance, alternatives to capitalism, mining, monetary systems, and Annette Weiner's notion of inalienable possessions. Beyond its reliance on anthropology, the book also builds on a growing tradition of collaboration between

artists and anthropologists, who work together to find new tactics for reaching readers. Our roundtable will bring together anthropologists who have themselves made critical interventions in these fields, not only to probe the book's proposal, but also to further explore the broader capacity of art, anthropological theory, and ethnographic research to open up new fronts in the battle against climate change.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Gustav Peebles, Stockholm University, Elizabeth Ferry, Brandeis University

Presenter(s): E. Gabriella Coleman, McGill University, Ferda Nur Demirci Eryat, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Bill Maurer, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Caroline Schuster, Australian National University, School of Archaeology & Anthropology

Discussant: Elizabeth Ferry, Brandeis University

5651 Hope, Waiting, and Ethnographies of the 'Not Yet' from a Global Middle East

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

"I am going to marry her," boasts a 19-year-old man living in Gaza. When? I ask. "After the war." More than four-hundred days after Israel's 2023 ceaseless bombardment and blockade of Gaza had begun, he was anticipating its end. An end that would mark the beginning of the next chapter of his life. He waits, with hope for an end, to genocide. This roundtable considers "hope" and "waiting" as categories of analysis for everyday life in the Global Middle East—a transnational geography that accommodates the global circulation of people, ideas, and goods from this region. It explores what everyday actors in this global geography are "waiting for" or "waiting on", whether this waiting is active or passive, shedding light on their power and control over possibilities. It examines the temporal politics and poetics of waiting in a region that contends with authoritarianism, colonial violence, migration, and neoliberalism. Waiting in these contexts leads many to depression and hopelessness and also to creativity and innovation. This roundtable asks how people across this region (and its diasporas) experience and manage waiting and hope differently. Waiting, for some, hinges on the hope for better social, political, legal, and economic conditions. But what happens when waiting leads to perpetual deterioration of all of these conditions for everyday actors who are the subjects of neoliberal structural and institutional forces? What can one hope for? Can one organize around a politics of hope under such conditions? What does a consciousness of that which has not yet arrived look like for those waiting for a better future just beyond reach?

Section: Middle East Section

Organizer: Maral Sahebame , Negar Razavi, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Negar Razavi, Princeton University, Timothy Loh, Princeton University, Kyle Craig, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology, Mariam Durrani

Discussant: Maral Sahebame

6421 Transmission, Assimilation, and Resilience: The Journeyed Lens of the “Haunting” Past for Educational Anthropologists

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

First coined by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981; 1982) in Biology, Cultural Transmission disseminates cultural traits, norms, beliefs that build socialization, imitation, and social learning (Bisin & Verdier, 2005; Coleman, 1988) passed down through generations. Thus ripple historical precedent, or echoes that leave marks, structurally, foundationally, communally, and in praxis. These "haunting" ideas and practices of power permeate in the transmission of modes of being under the legacies of "ghosts" of various forms of a colonized past. This roundtable asks participants to discuss how these intergenerational echoes shape their work in exploring cultural practices, resilience in pedagogical practices, racism, and punitive policies that resonate today. The roundtable will focus on a set of questions pertaining to:

- How is cultural transmission echoed in your work as educational anthropologists, and/or scholars?
- What are some of the echoes of the past you see directly impacting your work directly or indirectly?
- What are some visions for the future? How can we learn from your work in respect to the current socio political climate?

These questions will be explored by participants as they offer their reflections on their research and experiences in the following contexts:

Jair Munoz PhD and Emiliano Villarreal PhD discuss the threefold echoes of zero tolerance policies- i.e., the drug war, the school to prison nexus, and crimmigration--as discursive and cultural practices that permeate and are normalized beyond schools.

Adrian Aragonés MA considers digital literacies in a majority minority economically disadvantaged community in the U.S., Mexico border, as 5th graders make sense of literacies via the echoed past of their community, their identity, and the interpretative practices of content creation in two languages.

Laura Mendoza considers the contexts of emergent bilinguals who are cross-border, using Anzaldúa's concept of "in-betweenness" to gain a better understanding of how cultural transmission and translanguaging is echoed in educational work and research.

David Saavedra discusses echoed "ghosts" of racialization among young people in the rural south by focusing on the case of Mr. Cabrera, a teacher falsely accused of inappropriate behavior. He

suggests that these discursive practices stem from past echoes relating to systems of racial domination in the American South.

Shiv Desai contemplates wounded healing and critical critical hope as culturally responsive spaces that reject echoed criminalized iterations of power dynamics that produce cultural transmissions that aim to criminalize democratic social activism. He advocates for counter-storytelling that can foster cultural healing, agency and democratic resilience.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Diane Hoffman, University of Virginia, Jair Munoz

Presenter(s): Jair Munoz , David Saavedra, Virginia Commonwealth University, Shiv Desai , Emiliano Villarreal, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Diane Hoffman, University of Virginia

3226 Skulls Who Talk Back: Recuperating Justice, Ghosts, and Thresholds

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Going back and forth between the past and present; space and time; life and death; ghosts and the thresholds from which they emerge haunt anthropology. This position of being "in-between" or in transition, what Victor Turner describes as liminality, is frequently likened to death and often seeks transformation (Turner 1969). Whether these liminal spaces are social, environmental, medical, infrastructural, or affective, they produce a moment that troubles temporality and attends to the psychic. Ghosts haunt these spaces of "in-between," often as memories, remnants of empire, histories of violence and racism, secrets, and those who are not yet born or dead. The presence of a ghost is more than horror, and "investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (Gordon 2008, 8). By bringing together scholars concerned with sovereignty and protest in Pakistan; border governance in post-Brexit Northern Ireland; affect and relationality in prison; lithium extraction in Chile; and Black Womanhood and medical racism; this roundtable seeks to be in conversation with Derrida's understanding of hauntology, the figure of the ghost, and the foreboding importance of the threshold where "this logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being..." (1994, 5).

In moments and at sites of trauma, in the face of injustice, how do skulls call (or cry) for their vengeance? How do we respond as conversations with these ghosts are ultimately conversations about justice, engaging the threshold, supporting their haunting and the "something-to-be-done" that emerges as a reckoning with our present (Derrida 1994; Gordon 2008, 183). Together we seek to address what is produced by haunting and how it impacts futures by asking the following questions: can haunting be recuperative? Can justice be found for the specters that haunt us? Is naming the thresholds from where most ghosts derive enough? Can people who were never considered human still be ghosts? If so, who, what, and how do they haunt? By posing these

questions, we seek to think through the impact thresholds and ghosts may have on conceptions of justice, and how working with haunting may challenge our ideas of the past, present, and whether Derrida's hope for a better future is still possible.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Jennah Thompson-Vasquez, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Cassandra Barnes, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Cassandra Barnes, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Abdullah Ali Jawad, Eddie Pesante Gonzalez, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Jennah Thompson-Vasquez, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Mar Ovalle-Meda

Discussant: Omnia Khalil, City College of New York

1864 Breath of Chaos I– Plant, rhythm, fungus, animal, elemental or word dust ... oh cosmodelia.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Plant pollen and fungi spores stir in the air with word and elemental dust we inhale and partake in the textures we exhale at varying rhythms, intensities, speeds and slowness. We can never tell when such a mixture suddenly overwhelms, takes over, lets something new emerge that perdures. In anthropology we often call these events "telling moments" or "serendipity", typically taking us by surprise. Artaud's "breath of chaos" is a force, a presence or an order that elaborates in a mystery or chaos beyond things; "... this sort of vital hunger, changing, opaque, whose currents sweep across the nerves, and battles with the intelligent principles of the brain. And these principles, in their turn, recharge the pulmonary breath and confer upon it all their powers" (2003[1979]:16). To reach this chaos or what he also calls the Marvelous of conscience, Artaud considers a cactus (Peyotl), to which he was initiated during his stay with the Tarahumara (Rarámuri) in Northwest Mexico, can indicate "where it is and according to which concretions of an atavistically repressed and obstructed breath the Fantastic can give rise and renew its phosphorescence and powdering in consciousness" (ibid: 38). It would be the breath of all poetry which pushes the hand to draw or write, and the same vegetal, by indicating the right way, can diminish the chances of falling into the obscure of a sensation that leaps out. We thus wish to retrieve the ancient Greek meaning of "psyche" which refers to life or its breath, thus expanding this sort of ode to "psychedelia" in as broad a sense as possible which brings it closer to something we might rather call "cosmodelia".

Following Deleuze, sensation is vibration, and when it is in direct contact with a vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all, it can feel like a wave passing through us; a unity of the senses (sense as event) which can be felt like a fall or a rise. This vital power he calls rhythm, more profound than vision, hearing, etc. (Deleuze 2002[1981], p.47). "We can seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed" (Ibid.: 44). It is not that order is

engulfed by chaos, yet chaos itself, or the power to affirm it which happens to us (Deleuze 1968). It is irrational and more powerful because of it; "a wave in the mind, a rhythm far deeper than words, that one must recapture and set working, find words to fit" (Woolf 1926 in Le Guin 2004: 1). This might modify a well anchored idea that 'Any classification is superior to chaos...' (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 24), since it brings us closer to what is going on in experience relevant for anthropology. We invite contributions done in a single breath, a wind, a performance, stretching out from a singular encounter with a "ghost", attending to rhythms without measure, or in other words to the potentials of life to renew itself.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Organizer: julie laplante, University of Ottawa

Chair: Paulo Barreiro Sanjines, University of Ottawa

Presenter(s): Nicolas Rasiulis, julie laplante, University of Ottawa, Emma Slaney Gose, University of Ottawa, Marie Firth, Valérie Seurin, Daniel Alberto Restrepo Hernández, University of Ottawa

Discussant: Misha Schroetter

Presentation(s): Articulating sui Conjuring (In)Security: Shamanic Registers, More-than-merely-Human Conspiracy, and Panopticonia in a Spirited Homeland

This presentation examines territorial mastery in light of the dynamics inherent to the shamanic landscape of Duha homeland. Drawing on my own experiences of more-than-merely-human spiritual enmeshment in the taiga, I portray how communication, landscape and weather are registers of Duha shamanism, and how engagement with them relates to security and insecurity. This exposition is done by outlining the following facets of a unified complex: how shamanic talk affects perceptions and actions within the shamanic landscape; the varying (un)predictability of outcomes of effects on shamanically emplaced perceptions and actions; the ontological diversity of spiritual potencies and places within Duha homeland; intercourse (or mitigation thereof) between different potencies and qualities of place; and measures taken to conjure security and thus territorial mastery in the volatile taiga under the eternal sky. Developing the concept of "panopticonia," I make several interrelated arguments: the ontological nature of places in the taiga is ambiguous and subject to change; security is enabled by place-appropriate behaviour and communicative worship, which are facilitated by effective perception, interpretation and communicative articulation of different places and spiritual potencies; perceptions and actions within the shamanic landscape are affected by shamanic talk among humans and in conspiracy between them and nonhuman spiritual potencies...

Presenter(s): Nicolas Rasiulis

Chaosmic Tree Thresholds - From African arboreal vitalities to Nordic larch resonance

According to the playwright and writer Antonin Artaud, certain plants can point the way to the "breath of chaos/souffle du chaos"; to a presence or order that works itself out in a mystery, beyond things, running through the nerves with its discharges and enter in struggle with the intelligent principles of the head to inspire a new breath. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, for his part,

considered that, in the face of the overwhelming question of "how to live", there is much to be learned from plants, which are deeply rooted in the soil without being in any way limited in their expressiveness. Suspended in the air and firmly anchored by its fibrous roots, capable, like its branches, of growing in all directions, larch, in its supple yet tenacious lightness, in and beyond my yard, offers a vanishing line that persists through the textures of this writing. The spiritual and cosmological relationship first passes through the body; a matter that contracts in the imagination, a fold upon a fold that leads elsewhere or nowhere, a sliding from one through the other in the breath, wind and rhythm of a becoming-larch whose creative potential takes shape through a kind of vital enchantment that helps navigate through the surge of the unforeseeable. How this occurred during a fieldwork course in Cameroon turned virtual due to the pandemic constitutes the thread to both ancestral and contemporary healing traditions that stem from vitalities of singular venerated arboreal presences.

Presenter(s): julie laplante

Co-author(s): Nina Tamara Barbosa Ponce

Chasing the Herbal Dream: mixing, dreaming, vegetating toward cosmodelia

Emerging from ethnographic engagement in a herbal apprenticeship in eastern Canada from 2019-2022, this work explores the role of dreaming and dreams in traditional western herbalism. This herbal tradition, understood here to be broadly encompassing and syncretic, is comprised of both lay and professional practitioners who often blend some degree of esoteric, experience-based, and scientific knowledge about the use of herbal medicines. Within this ranging set of practices and philosophies, I noticed that dreams emerged in discussions, texts and apprenticeship experience as either profound opportunities to connect with medicinal plants, or, in a clinical context, as having potentially diagnostic implications. Through exploring these interactions with dreams and dreaming in my herbal apprenticeship, I hope to dig into the complicated mattering of dreams as mixture (Bergson 1911 & 1914). Here Bergson evoked the dream as based both in the sensory stimulus in which our sleeping selves are ensconced, and our own unconscious embellishments and interpretations (Bergson 1914: 23). Despite such reasoned understandings of what constitutes a dream, he also acknowledged them as a "threshold of the mystery", evoking those "secret depths of the unconscious" (ibid 57). Here dreaming opens potentialities for vegetal interaction; after-all, just as "much of our psyche is swathed in the unconscious", so too is this "the medium of vegetal existence" (Marder 2013: 176).

Presenter(s): Emma Slaney Gose

Learning to Rot: Thinking with Fungi, Decomposition, Dispersal

Encounters with life are spore-like: bursting from their source, they drift through the air in all directions, until they land on a random substrate where conditions are ripe for germination. Each breath we take and each act of living brim with these diverse and invisible spores which contain endless potentialities for fractal proliferation. This paper explores the prospects of a mycelial anthropology. Thinking along with saprotrophic and mycorrhizal fungi, fungal anthropology takes on

a different sort of consciousness—one in which mycorrhizal ontologies blur distinctions between the self and other, exceptional performances in relational becoming and shared agency. Fungi push us to think beyond rationality in anthropology as they confuse categories and decompose dominant narratives and knowledge gathering processes, not only rejecting the rigid, wood-like institutional structures, extractive knowledge production methodologies and colonial histories of anthropology, but literally rotting them from within. Fear not, however! For in this rich compost of disciplinary decay, there is renewal, possibility and radically interdependent transformation: an anthropology that grows mycelially with and despite the worlds it inhabits. Through a series of ethnographic vignettes of human-forest entanglements, this paper digs into the dirt of the question: what would happen if anthropology learned to rot?

Presenter(s): Marie Firth

Silky Stories : Coping with Chaos in Brazil

Silk fabric is undeniably a "living heritage" as well as a "living object": epistemologically, the question arises of how to keep the living alive. How can anthropologists rethink structures and abstractions and get as close as possible to empirical and biological realities? Are human, and non-human, metamorphoses an interesting case study in this perspective? Do the life cycle of the silkworm, the economic cycle and the growth cycle of the mulberry tree have anything to teach us about the breath of chaos? About the impermanence of life? Like the work of Anna Tsing (2015:21), this presentation focuses on "activating interspecific entanglements". Indeed, Tsing's matsutake, but also silk, lends itself particularly well to the exercise and makes salient the connection between economy and environment that is also: "the human history of wealth concentration that makes both humans and non-humans resources in which to invest" (Ibid., 37). Georges Canguilhem (1949) for his part, develops a profound reflection on the relationship between man and his environment. He sees the environment as a dynamic concept, in which the organism and its environment are in constant interaction. Canguilhem insists on the "normativity" of living beings, asserting that organisms are not passive, but actively adapt their environment to meet their needs. This anti-deterministic, perspectivist perspective underlines the importance of creativity and invention in the lives of living beings.

Presenter(s): Valérie Seurin

A post-amazonian thermal intensification: refreshing heated anthropo(s)genic worlds through winds

Artaud's « mots-souffles » or « windy/blow-words » refer to a kind of organic and elemental excess that overflows any language. Just as plants as whole wor(l)ds exceed their reduction to pills and active alkaloids, the entire commitment of breathing and spitting into meanings decapsulates bodies, words and semiotics. A'i Cofán shamans and wind-instilled

anthropologists partake that intuition in the in-betweenness of a realm dominated or subsumed into plant pregnancies (a term inspired by Gilbert Simondon). In a world marked by different kinds

of violence, drug trafficking and ecological metamorphosis, the intoxicating and cosmological powers of yagé (B. caapi), Coca (*Erythroxylum coca*) and

tobacco are modulated and transmitted through windy gestures, sounds and enigmatic more-than-words in order to refresh the thermal irritations of anthropo(s)centric violences and changes. Thus, the healing/refreshing of heated territories and relations is inseparable from the healing of bodies through the expansiveness of human-plant breathing.

The wor(l)ds (in multiple dimensions) are thus somehow re-configured through wor(l)dly-breathing, translating a living cosmogony into a consuetudinary generative shamanic task. It is ultimately in the knowledge of a "science" of the plant that the A'i Cofán can continue to inhabit their wor(l)ds, despite the chronic colonial and anthropo(s)centric transitions that they must undergo on a daily basis living in a transmutating and disintegrating jungle.

Presenter(s): Daniel Alberto Restrepo Hernández

Discussion

2948 No Rest For the Revenant-: Conjuring Ethnographic Ghosts and Reckoning With The Haunting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Who do we summon when we do this work, and what are the stakes of our invocations?

Anthropology has long engaged with spirit worlds and hauntings, but as we navigate uncertainty in the present and the shrinking horizon of the future (Petryna 2022), the past returns with force—sometimes as critique, sometimes as corrective, sometimes as uncanny apparition. This panel explores the spectral nature of ethnographic and academic inquiry, asking how past presences—people, places, and objects—linger in what we do and how we do it.

At its core, academic inquiry is an act of conjuring. Through citational practices, we align ourselves with and pay tribute to 'ghosts'-intellectual ancestors who haunt our field sites and structure our thinking. Yet, as we engage with these inheritances, we must also ask "whether the pasts that [we] actively create in the present could or should endure into the future" (Harrison 2015, 33). This demands reckoning with what and whom we summon, and whether we are listening to voices calling for justice or keeping ghosts alive that long to be set free.

This panel engages hauntings in multiple registers: the lingering presence of anthropological forebears whose legacies we must confront; the afterlives of colonial and plantation violence that shape the landscapes we study; and the uncanny ways the past presses forward through time. From the revival of colonial-era commodities to the phantoms of early anthropologists who still haunt our field sites, we interrogate how anthropology both conjures and conserves its own history.

What are the risks of holding captive the spirits of our forebears, along with the ghastly imperial and racial violences that shaped their work and intellectual priorities? What methodological and analytical tensions arise through sustained engagement with these entities? Are we honoring, or are we binding? And if we release the weary-if we let them rest-what then?

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Alyssa A. L. James, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology, Camee Maddox-Wingfield, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health

Chair: Alyssa A. L. James, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Camee Maddox-Wingfield, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health, Andrew Sanchez, Alyssa A. L. James, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology, Hakimah Abdul-Fattah, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Justin Hosbey, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: Christen Smith, University of Texas at Austin

Presentation(s): Dancing with Her Shadow: Katherine Dunham's Legacy in Caribbeanist Anthropology

This paper examines Katherine Dunham's fieldwork in Martinique during the mid-1930s, a brief yet under-analyzed moment in her ethnographic trajectory. While Dunham remains a foundational figure in the study of Black dance, diaspora, and embodied knowledge, and her anthropological legacy is one cherished by Black feminist ethnographers, her work invites critical reassessment to fully engage with its complexities, limitations, and evolving interpretations. Conducted amid the interwar period's racial and colonial tensions and framed by the Herskovitsian model of African survivals, Dunham's Caribbean research sought to uncover the form and function of so-called "primitive dance." Letters and essays from her brief stay in Martinique reveal distinct methodological and ideological challenges, influenced by her perception of the island's "amalgamated" French Antillean cultural landscape. Drawing on archival sources and contemporary anthropological perspectives, this paper contextualizes the obstacles Dunham faced in accessing and interpreting Martinican dance traditions. In dialogue with my research on recent dance heritage revivals in Martinique, this paper interrogates the intellectual priorities that shaped Dunham's work, revealing how imperial dynamics impacting the region at that time influenced her ethnographic approach. It also urges us to consider the intellectual legacies that we inherit and transform by situating them in our political present and imagined futures.

Presenter(s): Camee Maddox-Wingfield

The Ghosts of the Other

Academic anthropology is a critical conversation, based on engagements with the work of one's peers, one's disciplinary ancestors, and one's research participants. In this context, Social Anthropology has critically interrogated the spectre of 'the other' in ethnographic fieldwork; its impact on how people are represented; and the way that knowledge is produced. However, the

discipline has accorded less attention to the role that 'the other' might play in our engagements with academic disciplinary ancestors. An exploration of this topic raises three questions: first, what does it mean to engage with the ghosts of colleagues whose identities, values and experiences are fundamentally different from one our own? Second, what limits are there on our ability to understand, and speak to those ghosts? Third, must an ancestor be somebody with whom we feel affinity? Building upon my work on Mixed-Race Thought, and the decolonisation of knowledge, this paper explores the place of dissonance, indeterminacy, and contradiction in the anthropological endeavour.

Presenter(s): Andrew Sanchez

L'Île des Revenants? Haunting, Return, and the Future of Ethnographic Engagement in the French Caribbean

Often called L'Île des Revenants ("The Island of Returnees"), Martinique is a place that calls people back. And yet, for anthropologists working in the non-sovereign French Caribbean, return is rarely the norm. Unlike other regions where scholars cultivate sustained, career-long engagements, Martinique often sees one-project ethnographic visitors whose presence lingers more in citation than in ongoing relationships with the site. Why these ephemeral ethnographic encounters? Are they shaped by the shifting theoretical and political concerns that guide ethnographic inquiry? Or do they reflect a disciplinary reluctance to return to spaces where the political stakes are less easily legible within dominant anthropological frameworks? My research on a coffee heritage project in Martinique examines revival to foreground the lingering presence of colonial pasts in Caribbean visions of the future. But alongside these hauntings, I encountered another kind of ghostly presence: those who have worked in the region and moved on. In this paper, I reflect on an ethnographic record shaped more by departure than return, particularly for the next generation of scholars. Rather than a dirge, I consider how return—both ethnographic and historical—reshapes the futures that can be studied, imagined, and theorized. How might revisiting a field site not only transform what we know about its past and ethnographic present but also expand what scholars can ask of it in the future?

Presenter(s): Alyssa A. L. James

The Specters In-Between: Self and Place, Departure and Return

This paper considers nonlinear narrative forms in ethnographic interviews and the ways historical events are experienced in-between multiple places. Taking inspiration from anthropologists that have theorized the many places of "the field" and thinking between places (Jackson 2013, Povinelli 2006), this paper will explore the implications of stepping in and out of fieldwork and conducting ethnographic life-history interviews between family and acquaintances in Antigua and Gorée and Saint-Louis islands in Senegal. I would like to consider how stepping in and out of place as both researcher and theorizing travel experiences of interviewees conjures specters. Building on the anthropological interventions of multi-sited fieldwork, this paper will consider what we carry with us when we step in and out of place and in and out of the field. I consider how historical moments,

like independence, ripple between these three islands through the narrative form of articulating 'gaps' in events and memories, read as pauses or changes in perspectives on significant historical markers experienced from afar. An examination of what lingers between our constant oscillation, making sense of events from different spaces, may offer alternative threads of connection between islands shaped by slavery and colonial violence.

Presenter(s): Hakimah Abdul-Fattah

Black Anthropology in Revanchist Times: Notes on Ethnographic Opacity

This paper reflects on a few key political crises facing the West at this moment: climate disaster, authoritarianism, and the global revanchism of those who consider themselves to be "White." Gathering in New Orleans provides an opportunity to consider how Hurricane Katrina's events continue to be revelatory. The hurricane itself, the man-made disaster that continues to unfold, the authoritarian violence summoned immediately after the storm, and the revanchist, market driven "recovery" imposed upon local communities presage the world that we currently inhabit. The violence thrust upon Black communities across southern Louisiana in 2005 has now become the condition of possibility for everyone except the most elite within our societies. Despite the identity crises that will render Western liberalism inert, and the real tragedies that our communities will face – Black people will survive, and there will be key political and cultural affordances for Black life and autonomy at this juncture. This paper argues that Black anthropologists should reconsider how we surrender the intricacies and intimacies of Black worldmaking into an apparatus that displaces Black thought and sublimates radical Black worldmaking. Using insights from 10 years of ethnographic fieldwork along the US Gulf Coast, this paper considers a few ways that our methodologies, our primary audiences, our political alliances, and our institutional fidelities should be transformed in the face of these crises.

Presenter(s): Justin Hosbey

Discussion

3619 Specters of Technology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Technologies haunt. They materially embody past beliefs and aspirations and, through their everyday use, propagate them into the future. Anthropologists and STS scholars theorizing technology have long examined this looping effect between future, past, and present in technological innovation (Brown 2003, Jasanoff and Kim 2009, Massumi, Rajan 2006). AI, as just one example, is the very definition of a haunting: past actions and decisions are used to train digital decision making and image and text generation systems. In academia, AI looms as a threat. It locks the present and future of intellectual life into the patterns of the past, whether they are harmful or not. And it threatens to deskill both faculty and students by incentivizing work that reduces to the lowest common denominator of thought and cultural production.

Against the backdrop of a resurgent global right wing agenda, this chrono-epistemological muddle looks more sinister. No longer are we only considering that pharmaceutical companies might be wasting insurance company and tax payer money developing marginally effective drugs for "lifestyle" diseases, as STS and medical anthropologists worried about in the 2010s (Rajan 2006, Dumit 2012). Now anthropologists also look on with horror at the beginning of the second Trump presidential administration, as technofascist Silicon Valley overlords throw Nazi salutes and resurrect 19th century anthropology to subjugate women and people of color through digital surveillance and the computerized collapse of the international liberal order. In this roundtable, we aim to perform an exorcism by which scholars surface the hauntings from their ethnographic encounters with technologies that can aid in our critical examination of the present moment.

We invite both anthropologists of technology as well as anthropologists who suddenly feel they have no choice but to reckon with technology to contribute to this conversation. In particular, we are interested in collisions of scholarship, pedagogy, and life that do not always take center stage in our published research. For example, with the stakes so high, can we move beyond dispassionate commentary on what we see in our field sites to examine how we personally grapple with student use of generative AI in their homework assignments or new incursions of digital surveillance on our campuses? How are such technologies shifting our pedagogical roles and responsibilities? What new opportunities or limitations do they place on how we teach our field and where we do our research? And how will we fight back against new, technologically-facilitated limitations on free inquiry, free assembly, and community support?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Danya Glabau , Lisa Messeri, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Taylor Genovese , Louis Romer, Vassar College, Christine Kim, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Daisy Deomampo , Emma Pask, University of Chicago, Adrian Godboldt, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Discussant: Luisa Rivera, Emory University

2574 Spirits, Stories, and the Affective Power of Place in Tourism

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This session, held in conjunction with "Ghosts of the Past, Spirit of Place, and the Politics of Memory," offers a cross-disciplinary exploration of how "ghosts"-understood as traces, metaphors, or spiritual presences-shape contemporary engagements with heritage and tourism landscapes.

The papers presented bring together empirical ethnographic research and theoretical reflection, conceptualising "ghosts" as figures of memory that embody the legacies of difficult pasts and their continued presence in the contemporary moment. The session focuses particularly on the emotional and political dynamics surrounding heritage sites and cultural landscapes in the context of tourism development. It investigates how places become "haunted" by both human and more-

than-human presences and how tourism practices give rise to new narratives and forms of heritage-making.

Finally, the session takes the concept of the "spirit of place" as a key framework for examining the tensions between the particular and the universal in tourism practices, challenging conventional categories such as heritage tourism or dark tourism.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Magdalena Banaszekiewicz, Jagiellonian University, Paula Mota Santos, Universidade Fernando Pessoa

Chair: Cristiana Bastos, University of Lisbon

Presenter(s): Rachel Giraudo, California State University, Northridge, Jovana Janinovic, Magdalena Banaszekiewicz, Jagiellonian University, Jacqueline Galica

Discussant: Naomi Leite, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Presentation(s): A Counterculture in Mourning: Legacy Cannabis Tourism as Heritage Protection

Voters began legalizing recreational cannabis use in states starting in 2010, reenergizing discussion on national policy reform and the potential of a fully legal market. For many long-term and multi-generational cultivators in California, the business and lifestyle of cannabis are enmeshed, so in an attempt to avoid being squeezed out of the legal market, they, looking to legitimize and get credit for their efforts in breeding, cultivating, and advocacy, work to identify and protect their heritage practices and sites, and build their brand as "legacy."

This paper addresses the precarity of the quasi-legal cannabis market in California, where, since 2018, the high cost of regulatory requirements, including excessive taxation, limits how many cultivators can reasonably participate in it, and the movement toward heritage branding to offset their exclusion. With dwindling returns, cultivators are hopeful to expand beyond the product itself to tourism development. This is especially important in the rural areas of the state that are home to countercultures and where most illicit cannabis was historically grown, and which are now significantly impacted by the financial and political challenges of regulation.

Many there mourn the deaths of both their lifestyle and their community elders. In developing tourism ventures, they focus on relaying to visitors their deep connection to cannabis and the heritage of cultivation in the region, the spirits and stories of their past.

Presenter(s): Rachel Giraudo

The Ghosts of Fieldwork: Ethnographic Reflections on Coping with Difficult Heritage Sites

The Gulag Museum. The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Kriesty. Stalin's Bunker.

These are just a few examples of difficult heritage sites from the former Soviet Union that have deeply influenced my memory. Paradoxically, these places, marked by suffering and death, both directly and as metonyms of the trauma of totalitarianism, are now part of the tourism map. At the

same time, they are subjects of the revision of meanings arising from the current geopolitical situation. Withdrawn over the years from fieldwork, my fieldnotes represent nothing but uncertain memory. These are places that continue to haunt me, even after many years. What they share is the impossibility of return, of confronting the spirit of the place after so many years. They evoke dissonant emotions due to their politicization—they are mine, yet so foreign and inaccessible.

In this paper, I want to ask the question: can/should invoking the ghosts of place be treated as a form of self-therapy and an important part of working through ethnographers' subjectivity? Are we paying enough attention to this in the search for new research fields? Does the impossibility of return pain us?

This presentation aims to engage once again in the discussion of the ethnographer's self-positioning and fieldwork. It will attempt to grapple simultaneously with the cartography of memory in anthropology and critical heritage theory.

Presenter(s): Magdalena Banaszkiewicz

Confronting the Ghosts of Heritage: An autoethnography of World War II intergenerational trauma experienced by Canadian Polish Diaspora

Poland is referred to the “bloodlands” of World War II (WWII) since it is the location where so much conflict occurred. As a result, the prevalence of WWII post-traumatic stress disorder is high among Poles who witnessed these traumatic events; however, little is known about how these events haunt successive generations, known as intergenerational trauma (IGT). Given that immigrants with severe exposure to violence have higher rates of trauma-related disorders than other immigrant groups, studying WWII IGT among Polish diaspora is important. As a first-generation Canadian of Polish heritage, I use Chang's autoethnography as method to document my IGT and IGT healing. I present a narrative summary of data collected from internal sources (i.e., personal memory, self-observation, and self-reflection) and external sources (i.e., interviews, archival records, photographs, visits to historically relevant sites, a scoping review) wherein I identify and confront ghosts of heritage. In my interpretations, I draw upon my nursing disciplinary knowledge and experience as well as national dialogues of IGT within Canadian society. Findings are presented for academic and clinical audiences to consider how cultural learning and expressive methods – integrated into an easily adopted, economical intervention – can be used to support individuals experiencing IGT.

Presenter(s): Jacqueline Galica

5602 What is Psychological Anthropology's Enduring Value for Anthropology and Psychology?

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Given over a century of rampant anti-psychologizing sentiment in social and cultural anthropology

and an anemic concern with global social, cultural, and historical variability in the psychological sciences, it is surprising that psychological anthropology is flourishing a century after its founding. Meetings of psychological anthropologists are well-attended and filled with crucial new research contributions. Its leading journal, *Ethos*, has published four complete quarterly issues of high-value scholarship for five decades. Premier academic publishers continue to publish essential volumes, such as the soon-to-be-published *Cambridge Handbook of Psychological Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 2025). These observations lead us to ask in this panel, "What is the secret to psychological anthropology's enduring value for anthropology and psychology?" This roundtable invites participants to speak to this question. In addition to reflecting on their own research contributions and expertise in the field, roundtable panelists are also invited to consider Robert Levine's provocative answer that psychological anthropology's project to include psychological and psychiatric topics in anthropology and evidence from all world cultures in the psychological sciences is necessary for these disciplines to create a valid understanding of the human condition. Moreover, Levine claimed that psychological anthropology radically challenges conventional thought in the social and biomedical sciences. Despite occasionally withering criticism, psychological anthropology endures because it retains these necessary and radical features. If so, panelists should also consider exciting new interventions for the future.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Edward Lowe , Tanya Luhrmann, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Daniel Lende, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Rebecca Lester, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology, Devin Flaherty, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology, Maddalena Canna , Bambi Chapin

Discussant: Edward Lowe

6973 Global Fascism: Anthropology at the Present Conjuncture

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The rise of the far right, the intensification of authoritarian governance, and the proliferation of increasingly militarized security states have generated urgent questions for anthropologists. As fascist movements gain momentum across the globe -- attacking migrants, waging genocidal wars, buttressing racial supremacist ideologies, dismantling democratic institutions and international legal norms, attacking higher education and free speech -- anthropologists become ever more intimately wrapped up in these developments. As our students, friends, colleagues, institutions, research sites and communities are targeted by such authoritarian regimes, it is increasingly urgent that anthropologists find ways to articulate (and build) political and intellectual anti-fascist opposition to such formations. Drawing on examples from Hindu nationalism in India and Zionism in Israel, authoritarian projects in Turkey, Hungary, the United States and elsewhere, to new formations of oligarchical techno-fascism, this round table grapples with the contours of the new global fascism. Discussion will critically examine both the genealogies of contemporary fascism

(its historical continuities with colonialism, counterinsurgency, nationalism, etc.) and its ruptures (as something radically new), which demand politically engaged analysis of the present conjuncture.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Zoltán Glück, American University, Manissa Maharawal

Presenter(s): Serra Hakyemez, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Manissa Maharawal, Zoltán Glück, American University, Don Kalb, University of Bergen, Department of Social Anthropology

Discussant: Junaid Rana, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

4016 In Excess: Ghosts, Accidents and the Forces Beyond the Plan

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Bureaucratic systems, urban and development plans, and other attempts to project order upon space, place and sociality not only allow for the projection of power but also reveal the limits of what we can and cannot control. There are indeed forces in excess of our calculations.

Here, we attend to the forces that demand recognition, but by alternative means. For Lauren Berlant (2016), the "glitch" is the moment when infrastructure fails and, in failing, becomes visible. We build upon this to ask what else also emerges when plans fail, when what cracks open allows something else to be visible. Here, we see not counter-plans along rationalized lines, but points of rupture that signal the possibilities for things outside of modernist rationality. These could be the entreaties of individuals paradoxically silenced by the very institutional mechanisms that are there to give them voice, or an enchanted geography of a city built with modernist ideals of efficient movement and production. "Haunting" here is not necessarily trauma, but rather a glitch, a response by a being ghosted – that being that resists transformation into the anonymity of numbers, trajectories and flows.

For Lisa Stevenson (2014), death comes with assimilation, and ghostliness lies in persistence. In the glitches in the system, the bumps on the road, the unearthing of what has been buried in the new plan, there are traces of what cannot be assimilated demand our attention.

Here, we approach new horizons in the anthropology of ghostliness and hauntedness. Together, we explore the potential of thinking through the tension between human projects of control and those who trouble it, and how those who speak through spaces of silence, death, and accident teach us differently about how we systemize our relation to others and to the world.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew Johnson, Stockholm University, Daena Funahashi, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Daena Funahashi, University of California, Berkeley, Andrew Johnson, Stockholm University

Presenter(s): Andrew Johnson, Stockholm University, Farid Zareie, Diana Espirito Santo, Andrea De

Antoni, Jen Clarke

Discussant: Daena Funahashi, University of California, Berkeley

Presentation(s): The Haunting of Phrakhanong: Humanity, Ghosts and Heritage in Bangkok's Urban Frontier

Underlying cityscapes memorializing the grand tragedies and victories of militaristic and political conquest, are the everyday experiences of life and death, love and loss. Drawing upon Benjamin's (2012) notion of the Parisian arcades as a ruin, where the remnants of a past way of being re-emerge to call into question a present order (see also Taneja 2017), here I explore in depth the microhistory of Phrakhanong canal in Bangkok, and what the canal, and its ghost, reveals.

Phrakhanong is best known for its ghost – Ya Nak, the mother spirit who laid waste to the community after she died alone in childbirth while her husband was conscripted for a distant war, an event that earned her status as Bangkok's most popular ghost. But she is venerated, too. And within her shrine are images of a riparian life: a tree trunk that floated down the river and whose spirit, too, became integrated into the shrine; a boat dredged from the canal, its wood blackened with time. Even her name, "grandmother otter," suggests the river. Her devotees call upon her not only for assistance in childbirth and love, but also in opposition to Thailand's ruling military. These ruins, and the spirit veneration that sustains and creates them, present a profound critique of hegemonic ideas of progress and order, but also, as a concretion of ruined things that is constantly being updated and added to, a new perspective on pastness (Gordillo 2014, Morris 2000) and its power to uphold – or subvert – power.

Presenter(s): Andrew Johnson

The Sleep of the Undead: Resignation Syndrome and the Excess of Governance

Bureaucratic infrastructures claim to master life through recognition and regulation, yet they generate their own excess—those who remain unassimilable. This paper examines resignation syndrome (RS) among unaccompanied refugee children in Sweden as a manifestation of this haunting. RS, in which children withdraw into a coma-like state following asylum rejection, is not merely a medical anomaly but a symptom of governance itself. These children do not simply resign; they are withdrawn—trapped within a system that first demands their visibility and then negates it. Drawing on Bataille's excess, Laplanche's enigmatic signifier, and Fanon and Marriott's work on abjection and petrification, I explore how RS reveals the psychopolitical logic of asylum regimes. These children's withdrawal is not an absence but an excess—an unbearable remainder that cannot be fully assimilated into the bureaucratic order. Rather than passive victims, they materialize the contradictions of a system that seeks to render them invisible yet cannot escape their presence. Their catatonia is not only a reaction to trauma but the lingering imprint of a world that exceeds governance, exposing the failures of recognition itself.

Presenter(s): Farid Zareie

Subversions of the flow: the production of the weird as asymmetric history in Chile

Most renditions of traumatic or spectral history assume that time rolls into a present that demands retribution. But there are asymmetries which contest this linear reading. With regards to narratives of the Chilean military coup of 1973 and subsequent dictatorship, asymmetries in the historical narrative can be produced from spectral technologies. These are not simply interruptions, but subversions of historical linearity. They produce an "excess" of history that can only be seen as "weird" in that they contradict the order of things in absurd ways. Thacker describes "weird media" as that which defies its imperative as communicational, leading to an impasse in signification. In this paper I will describe two cases of weird media. The first is the case of a man who used a Ouija board to communicate to Pinochet, while he was alive, to identify the dictator's eventual impunity. The second is the time-tricking element of the paranormal instrumentation that generates electronic voice phenomena, in this case, in places of torture and imprisonment. I will argue that the white noise spewed out into these spaces confounds layers of time and coalesces fragments of voices that are historically dissonant. In both examples, time is the element of subversion in that it does not behave as one expects. Instead of looking at the notion of the uncanny, which is symptomatic of a secular retreat (Fisher 2016), I propose instead the idea of the weird with regards to interruptions-in-the-system.

Presenter(s): Diana Espirito Santo

How to Not Disappear Completely: Affective Infrastructures and Ghostly Excess in Contemporary Okinawa

This presentation analyzes experiences with spirits among Okinawan shamans (yuta), focusing on affective correspondences with non-humans in the environment. I argue that certain environments function as affective infrastructures, facilitating the emergence of spirit and ghost worlds even as urbanization attempts to erase their histories. Okinawa's landscapes are layered with violence—from the colonial annexation of the Ryūkyū Kingdom to the devastation of the Battle of Okinawa and ongoing U.S. military occupation. These histories persist not only in memory but in haunted geographies, where certain sites oscillate between the sacred and the ghostly. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with yuta and spiritual healers, this paper examines how these practitioners attune to invisible forces that trouble human projects of mastery. Their enskilled bodies navigate the environment, encountering spirits of the dead, gods emerging from the land, and unexpected messages that exceed human planning. These affective infrastructures disrupt official histories, demanding engagement through ritual and embodied practice. In dialogue with anthropological debates on perception, haunting, and affect, this presentation rethinks ghostly excess as an alternative configuration of human and non-human relations, revealing how invisible forces shape and transform discourse beyond material and human control.

Presenter(s): Andrea De Antoni

Grounding Truths

Drawing from ongoing art-anthropology work in the transdisciplinary project "Agroforestry Futures," and my 2025 exhibition "Grounding Truth," this paper explores the tensions between control and

excess, abstract data and embodied knowledge, through the concept of turbid images. The exhibition reimagines the politics of landscape planning and invites multi-perspectival understanding: in a data-driven world where planning and modelling may yield multiple 'truths' that drive future imaginaries, I am curious about systems and visualisations that generate diverse narratives and how revealing these can expose the limits of human control. I will explore how 'turbid' images, characterised by complexity and evoking the material nature of their production, can embody 'forces' of embodied knowledge and aesthetic decisions that evade and deny. Through anarchival practices (involving bodywork, breathwork, film and collage) this paper examines artistic research-responses and interventions into representational and knowledge systems. By questioning established norms, this research advocates for a re-theorisation of knowledge production that accommodates complexity, excess, and the spectral nature of knowledge itself, suggesting new pathways for addressing environmental and social challenges bent on envisioning the future.

Presenter(s): Jen Clarke

Discussion

4350 From "Vibes" to Vibratory Specialists

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

From "vibe checks" to "good vibes only," the colloquial use of "vibes" is at an all time high. The term is often used to describe the intangible or ineffable qualities of a person's mental or emotional state or the atmosphere of a place or environment. "Vibing" with someone indicates some kind of instantaneous connection, but when the "vibes are off" it can indicate a lack of connection or a perception of wrongness with a person, place, or environment. While some may dismiss talk about vibes as a linguistic overgeneralization, it may rather be understood as a kind of vernacular bricoleur phenomenology: A way to talk about the nascent affective, aesthetic, and cultural information that we are constantly exposed to that we are not always consciously processing. We attend to their inherent re-combinatory nature.

Many elements come together to produce a vibe: from music and décor to the way a person talks to the way all of those elements come together to remind you of previous times, places, and encounters. It becomes shorthand for a lot of different kinds of cultural information. So much so that we have designated different kinds of vibratory specialists who are highly sensitized to the work of sensing and creating vibes: DJ's, marketing and advertisers, matchmakers, restaurateurs, and realtors are all experts in curating and creating a particular type of vibe for their audience or clientele. Our panelists will explore an array of just such specialists, including tarot readers in Mumbai and Los Angeles, clothing reuse practitioners in Detroit, public data communication experts in the US, and DJs in Cabo Verde.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Janaki Phillips, University of Michigan, Eryn Talevich, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor,

Department of Anthropology

Chair: Eryn Talevich, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Janaki Phillips, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Janaki Phillips, University of Michigan, Eryn Talevich, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology, Michelle Morgenstern, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Anthropology, Anne Birkeland

Discussant: Alaina Lemon, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Cultivating Vibrations: Exploring Tarot Reading Practices in a Digital Age

Tarot readers, sometimes called "sensitives," are one type of vibratory specialist: they are in the business of reading the energy or "vibes" around certain people or situations in order to offer situated moral guidance and help clients negotiate everyday aspirations and anxieties in the face of uncertainty. Drawing on ethnographic episodes from my broader dissertation research on global tarot reading practices in Los Angeles, California and Mumbai, India this paper will address two issues: first, how did talk about "vibes" descend from 19th century discourses about science and spirituality to become so ubiquitous in the present? And second, how are tarot readers in Los Angeles using these discourses around vibration, frequency, and energy in order to cultivate a digital presence? Practitioners often need to cultivate their personal brand across social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in order to gain likes, follows, and views that will hopefully translate to bookings and sales. Utilizing Ilana Gershon's concepts of "corporate personhood" I explore the pressures of self-branding and how the metaphors of corporate America spills over into contemporary digital tarot practices.

Presenter(s): Janaki Phillips

In/Vested Vibes: Clothing Reuse and Imagination in Detroit

This research details the colloquial aesthetics and terminology of a "bins" community in Detroit, centered at the pay-by-the-pound clothing reuse facility hosted by the Salvation Army. By wading through literal tons of donated clothing for their own desires and resale businesses, practitioners negotiate the "worth" of used things: Not just in terms of their brand name or condition, but also in relationship to their congealed personhood, residual affects, and conjuring capacity to transmit "a vibe". Through processing, interpreting, and transforming these goods into fresh iterations, practitioners look to old materiality to evoke new lives which propagate their DePop accounts, clothe their families, and attend to their own identity making. By reframing un/known histories in used things, they conjure seductive narratives of both imagined futures and pasts: Connecting new owners in the present. Exploring the ephemeral, creative power of donated things as part of larger chains of economic significance, we might understand how the "channeling" of vibes through used clothing facilitates imagination beyond frippery: Leading to cultivated assemblages that engender powerful, yet tangible action in sustainability practice.

Presenter(s): Eryn Talevich

"It's giving a PBS Magic School Bus vibe": Sensing and Sense-Making in Online

Encounters with Information Visualization

From jokes about "vibes-based politics" to "vibecessions," widespread commentary satirizes many young USAmericans for purportedly superficial and inaccurate sense-making practices grounded in "vibes," not "facts". In this paper, we explore how users of the social media platform Tumblr make sense of data visualizations in terms of vibes. We demonstrate that, for these young people, "vibe" functions as a local colloquialism for a semiotic phenomenon widely studied by linguistic anthropologists: indexicality. From typography to chart type, formal features of a data visualization carry echoes of previous occasions of their occurrence—and the contexts, people, and affects that marked those occasions. Moreover, assessments of a visualization's vibes mediate encounters with those visualizations—their perceived trustworthiness, validity, and authenticity. Through descriptions of visualization vibes, Tumblr users recognize how data visualizations communicate not only semantic, referential meaning but also social, indexical meaning. We thus argue that appeals to a visualization's vibe do not indicate data literacy failures but rather reflect a sophisticated metasemiotic awareness of indexicality cultivated the intensely aesthetic and intertextual forms of interaction that characterize Tumblr. Yet by reading social meaning through the lens of vibes, these young Tumblr users conjure narratives linking people, places, and events with immutable transcendental essences.

Presenter(s): Michelle Morgenstern

Co-author(s): Amy Fox, Graham Jones, Arvind Satyanarayan

Musical Hauntings and the Qualia of Remix: Interdiscursive Vibes of DJs in Cabo Verde

In the West African island nation of Cabo Verde, music is ubiquitous - it resonates in stores, homes, restaurants, public transportation, and textures social interactions and the soundscape of public life. While Cabo Verde has maintained a long tradition of vocalists and musicians performing, in recent years, the electronic tech scene has exploded with a proliferation of DJs sampling and remixing traditional songs. What is the vibe of these new remixes? What are the stakes of playing remixed songs instead of originals? In this paper, I examine the category of the musical "remix" to explore how rhythm distortions and instrumental layerings are an instantiation of musical haunting. Different from musical covers where a musician uses their own voice to sing someone else's song, DJs replay- and play with- the voice of another singer. Drawing on the notion of "shadow conversations" (Irvine 1996), I explore the slippages of musical authorship between the original singer and the DJ producer. Beyond professional DJs, this paper considers how everyday people - cafe workers, taxi drivers, etc. - are interpolated into a DJ subjectivity and are embedded in larger, interdiscursive networks. Utilizing the lens of vibes, this paper seeks to articulate the qualia of remix (Chumley and Harkness 2013). With attention to sonic properties, visual arts, and embodied performance, I explore the qualities that structure the experience and feeling of remixed, Cabo Verdean music.

Presenter(s): Anne Birkeland

4160 Summoning and Haunting: The Afterlives of Empire

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In mainstream culture, ghosts are often portrayed as unwelcome visitors from the world of the dead infiltrating that of the living. Anthropological, philosophical, and psychoanalytic scholarship, however, suggests that ghosts should be understood as a symptom of modernity. In this framework, ghosts reflect the legacy of unresolved violence that has received little attention or acknowledgment. Haunting then becomes a way to confront this repressed history and expose the harm inflicted by oppressive structures of power on individuals and communities. Ghosts that haunt are those uprooted, dispossessed, silenced, and left unburied by imperialism. Summoning ghosts or spirits, on the other hand, is a wilful act, signalling a different relationship to the past. In this roundtable, we explore haunting and summoning as two distinct modalities of engaging with history. Both modalities help address the absences and silences that Michel-Rolph Trouillot identified as inherent to the production of history.

Moreover, concepts like decay, debris, rot, ruin, and ruination have come to dominate the anthropological imagination of our current world. While these concepts reveal the legacies and durabilities of empires, they metaphorically foreground the temporality of inanimate objects. Ghosts, by contrast, complicate the temporal boundaries between the living and the dead. As such, haunting and summoning breathe life into what was once presumed lifeless, peripheral, and ahistorical. Ghost as analytic, therefore, allows us to engage with multiple imperial afterlives from the liminal space between life and death, including enslavement, environmental collapse, settler colonialism, colonialism, and neoliberalism to name a few. As Avery Gordon notes, haunting "is not about a return to the past, "but rather, "a reckoning with its repression in the present." In this roundtable, we aim to examine how haunting and summoning lay bare the ongoing afterlives of empire and offer new ways of relating to history in the present.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Ezgi Guner, University of Edinburgh

Presenter(s): Asli Zengin, Rutgers University, Alice von Bieberstein, Humboldt-University zu Berlin/DFG, Ezgi Guner, University of Edinburgh, Christina Carter, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Zainab Saleh, Haverford College, Department of Anthropology

8525 The Concept of Reclamation of Black Identities and Black Heritage in the Americas is Influenced by Politics, Culture, and Memory

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores collaborative efforts to reclaim Black heritage, identity, and space in the Americas through anthropological methods grounded in critical heritage studies and community-engaged research. Across various contexts - from rural towns to plantation sites, diasporic landscapes, and grassroots cultural spaces - participants examine how Black communities are resisting historical erasure and reframing dominant narratives through oral histories, ecological practices, and participatory heritage initiatives. In each case, communities challenge ways their stories have been silenced or made spectral within state-sanctioned heritage narratives, instead asserting living connections to place, tradition, and identity. These collaborations underscore how anthropology can support efforts to reimagine space and belonging, whether through reinterpreting presidential sites alongside descendant communities, using ethnography to amplify underrepresented Black neighborhoods in the U.S., or confronting the exclusions embedded in tourism-driven heritage discourse in the diaspora. Together, we ask: How can anthropologists work with communities to challenge dominant frameworks and co-create more just and inclusive representations of heritage? What ethical, methodological, and political considerations arise when engaging in acts of repair and memory work? And how might these practices reshape the role of anthropology in sustaining culturally grounded futures? This roundtable contributes to ongoing conversations about decolonizing heritage and anthropology by centering Black voices, histories, and ways of knowing in scholarship and practice.

Section: General Anthropology Division**Organizer:** Sherilyne Jones, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology**Presenter(s):** Lisa Armstrong, College of William & Mary, Sherilyne Jones, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Funmi Odumosu, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Alanah Cooper**Discussant:** Alisha Winn

3470 Spectral speech: The voices of political pasts in contemporary discourse (Part 1)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM**Venue:** Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)**Type:** Oral Presentation Session

From the echoes of long-dead leaders in populist rhetoric to revived ideologies in today's policy debates, language becomes a conduit for haunting. This panel explores how past ideologies and figures persist in contemporary speech to reveal how the past remains embedded in the present. Registers of speech gain social value through repeated associations with identities and histories (Agha, 2007), enabling political actors to evoke legitimacy, nostalgia, or resistance. In discourse, the past is made present--historical movements shape ideological landscapes, and speakers invoke past figures to justify, resist, or reshape power structures.

Political ghosts manifest in many ways. Leaders may appropriate the voices of long-gone figures to legitimize agendas, or revive the rhetoric of past regimes to maintain ideological continuity. Whether explicitly cited or subtly embedded, historical ideologies shape public debates by reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives. This panel brings together scholars to examine how political legacies animate language and how historical ideas influence governance, protest movements, and public memory.

We ask: How do political actors invoke historical figures or ideologies to gain legitimacy? How do citizens, activists, and marginalized communities engage with or reframe these hauntings in their speech? How does past political discourse shape public consciousness and action? In line with the politics of communicability (Briggs & Mantini-Briggs, 2003), we consider how discourse circulates and acquires authority across publics and historical moments. Using ethnographic and discourse-analytic approaches, our papers examine political speech in contexts including post-authoritarian societies, ongoing colonial struggles, and nations grappling with racial and economic injustice.

This panel sees ghosts as both disruptive and productive. Political language is imbued with past struggles, injustices, and aspirations. Legacies are not just echoes but active forces shaping present realities. In an era of rising nationalism, renewed conspiracy theories, and struggles over memory, recognizing the ghostly in speech helps us engage with the unfinished work of justice and transformation. Building on work in legal discourse and memory (Hirsch, 2006), the ideological circulation of speech (Schieffelin, 2007), and studies of voice, entextualization, and cross-chronotopic alignment (Perrino & Lempert, 2007), we examine how language resurrects, distorts, and reconfigures political pasts.

By focusing on discourse's role in political ideologies, this panel contributes to broader conversations about anthropology's role in contemporary crises. We consider how anthropologists might intervene in these hauntings-challenging the revival of oppressive pasts or amplifying voices whose struggles remain unfinished. Ghosts reflect our fears and hopes and show how the past refuses to be buried-still speaking through the voices of the living.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Nora Tyeklar, University of Maine at Augusta, Morgan Siewert, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Chair: Nora Tyeklar, University of Maine at Augusta

Presenter(s): Yazan Doughan, London School of Economics, Benjamin Puterbaugh, Morgan Siewert, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Nora Tyeklar, University of Maine at Augusta

Discussant: Anna Babel, Ohio State University, Kristina Wirtz, Western Michigan University

Presentation(s): Failing to Make the Past Present: Patriotism, National Historiography, and the Impasse of Popular Sovereignty in Jordan

Between 2011 and 2016, Jordan witnessed a large wave of protests against corruption with a focus on naming particular officials as responsible for the miseries of the People. However, as the movement directed its accusations of corruption towards the King, disagreements ensued between

its members, and it quickly disintegrated. This paper attends to the impasse activists faced as they tried to invoke a national collective "we" by drawing on a nativist pre-state past against the figure of the stranger King. I argue that the activists' inability to conjure a viable sense of patriotism and popular sovereignty had to do with the way their past has been enfolded into the national historiography of Jordan which bound any sense of their Jordanianness to the modern state and hence to the monarchy. Conceptually, the paper calls for paying attention to the narrative frame, both cognitive and practical, within which the populist performance takes place rather than the performative event itself.

Presenter(s): Yazan Doughan

The Haitian Invasion: Haitian Creole, Blackness, and other objects as semiotic threats

From 1822 to 1844 the island of Hispaniola was under the sole control of the Haitian government. Over the course of two centuries, this 22-year period has been seized by the Dominican political elite and constructed as a harrowing period that has the potential to repeat itself at any moment. Now occupying a prominent role in the Dominican consciousness, the Haitian Invasion forms part of anti-Haitian discourse that interdiscursively circulates the gamut of communicative spheres. If the "invasion" is a tangible threat, what or who becomes invasive? Drawing on ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic, including interviews with Haitians living in Santo Domingo, this paper investigates how certain signs associated with Haitian-ness have become stigmatized and impermissible. Undergirded by Peircean semiotics, I explore indexical and iconic links that attach social qualities to languages, racialized features, and other objects. In doing so, I consider processes of sign mediation in which Dominican perceiving subjects (Rosa & Flores, 2017) interpret and ascribe value to signs. Finally, I pay close attention to ideologies that construe Haitian Creole and Haitian identity as semiotic threats in Dominican public space.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Puterbaugh

Archives, settler voices, and Indigenous refusal: The role of the archive in disempowering settler voices and narratives of the American mythos

Audra Simpson describes Indigenous refusal as "having one's political sovereignty acknowledged and upheld" and questioning the legitimacy of entities vested with the power of recognition. Refusal is a powerful political act that denies settler authority in the recognition of Indigenous cultures as sovereign, distinct, and legitimate. Refusal disrupts nationalistic narratives that serve the settler state through discursive dispossession; refusal presupposes and prioritizes the power and legitimacy of Indigenous histories and voices. Indigenous refusal contributes a valuable perspective on the power of recognition as well as an actionable strategy for asserting agency through positionalities that are systemically denied a voice.

This paper positions refusal as a frame of analysis for projects of historical and linguistic reclamation that draw heavily from archive records produced by settler researchers and missionaries. One example is the Myaamia Center, an initiative of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma housed within Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. The Center supplements cultural and linguistic

revitalization work done by the Miami Tribe by hosting linguists who access archive records with the goal of repatriating historical and linguistic knowledge, which I argue is an example of refusing the authority of settler voices in shaping contemporary experience. Ethnographic examples examine the role of the archive in projects of refusal among Anishinaabe consultants in Ontario, Canada

Presenter(s): Morgan Siewert

Futures past and the evictability of voice: Roma protest and displacement in Miskolc, Hungary

This paper examines neo-pharrajimos—a contemporary formation of anti-Roma ideology—as a polemical force (Stewart, 1988) that fragments Roma life in Hungary through the racialized denial of futurity. Drawing from protest events in Miskolc and the narrative of a Roma family displaced across Hungary and Canada, I theorize neo-pharrajimos as the entangled material and temporal unmaking of Roma life. Coined from the Romani word pharrajimos ("fragmentation"), which also names the Roma Holocaust, neo-pharrajimos marks the afterlife of racial governance that silences, displaces, and erases through bureaucratic illiberalism and right-wing extremism.

I center protest banners used by Roma activists as chronotopic and polemical artifacts whose illocutionary force—asserting belonging and permanence—was denied by institutions. These denials transform speech into futures past (Koselleck, 2004): once-possible futures rendered obsolete by the state's refusal to hear. The banners, like demolished homes, are residues of counter-conduct (Foucault, 2009) that haunt national narratives of belonging and progress.

Neo-pharrajimos is a spectral, dialogically (Bakhtin, 1982) constituted process structuring exclusion through mundane practices—eviction notices, housing policies, self-governance schemes—that fragment Roma lives and temporality. I argue that Roma protest materializes counter-temporalities that challenge state erasures and insist on futures still possible, though relentlessly foreclosed.

Presenter(s): Nora Tyeklar

8356 Inequity Pre- and Post-Mortem, An Interdisciplinary Panel on Necroviolence

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Conversation/Debate

While the adage goes, "we are all equal in death," necroviolence reveals this is not true. We experience structural and symbolic violences both before and after our deaths, affecting our corporeal treatment, reputation, and perpetual care (or lack thereof). Research displays contradictions that in fact, people may become most vulnerable after death as they lose agency in their passing.

This panel brings together interdisciplinary scholars and professionals studying various death topics to show how inequality persists beyond life and affects history and memory of the deceased.

The panelists hope to open a conversation of how various injustices may better inform future care for all, and how necroviolence must be addressed with a critical eye to protecting the most vulnerable.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Henrietta Ransdell , Erin Kurtz

Presenter(s): Clover Smith , Evannrue Cox

5571 Too Late, Too Soon, Too Much, Not Enough: Ethnographic Ethics and Exigencies in Time

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropological work is realized at the precarious juncture between fidelity and harm, characterized by a sense of risk that becomes all the more acute when dealing with literal matters of life and death. In these papers, we consider how anthropologists, interlocutors, and institutions alike negotiate care as a practice and promise in relation to various temporal conditions. How do bureaucratic logics and their temporalities relate the dead to the deadline? How might we understand translation-in medical research and care, across languages and even lifetimes-through the impasses and incommensurabilities it navigates? How do toxic matter and mythologies inflect our imagination of a world that is variously out of time and timeless? Through these lines of inquiry, we attend to the affective, ecological, economic, medical, and technopolitical stakes of how we understand and act in moments of antecedence, urgency, belatedness, and posthumousness.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Justin Greene, University of California, Berkeley, Sarah Roth, Johns Hopkins University

Chair: Levi Vonk, University of Virginia

Presenter(s): Justin Greene, University of California, Berkeley, Sarah Roth, Johns Hopkins University, Levi Vonk, University of Virginia, Alexandra Kaul

Discussant: Ali Feser

Presentation(s): Conservation or Revolution?: On Fidelity and Posthumous Publication

The Brazilian philosopher Ruy Fausto's final essay, "Conservative Revolution and Neoliberalism," is prefaced by the following words: "there is no sort of substantial change whatsoever that alters its theses, format, or even its style." It first appeared online in [i]Revista Rosa[/i], the leftist "intervention organ" that Fausto co-founded, in the months following his death, and [i]Rosa[/i] would publish it twice more: as its first printed special issue in January 2022 and online in my English translation in May 2025.

In this example, textual interventions had been construed as largely self-effacing and thereby "reasonable," insofar as the text strives to remain, to quote from elsewhere in the preface, "near identical to what we found." At the same time, they are nonetheless still interventions; they work to reconstitute the text, not only in terms of its interface and language but also its ability to be read

and to act in the various political moments of its republications. In this paper, I read the published and unpublished iterations of this essay in constellation, which is to say through their interrelations and, as shaped by the historical, political, and affective impasses of posthumousness, irreconcilabilities. In doing so, I advance an understanding of fidelity—especially to the dead—as something that is not merely maintained but is itself realized through the interventive work of editing, translating, and other practices of publication.

Presenter(s): Justin Greene

Between Promise and Prognosis: Temporalities of Care at the National Institutes of Health

In translational research, time is both a structuring force and a source of ethical rupture. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at the National Institutes of Health, this paper examines the moral and affective labor of managing hope and uncertainty in rare disease research. Following the case of a young patient with an undiagnosed osteolytic condition, I explore how clinicians navigate disjunctures between institutional timelines, therapeutic imaginaries, and the lived urgency of suffering. Despite efforts to temper expectations, the patient's belief in the NIH as a site of last resort—and the team's affective investment—produces a cycle of rising and deferred hope, with each new test reinscribing the possibility of cure. Genetic counselors find themselves caught between bureaucratic boundaries and relational responsibilities, often assuming unacknowledged burdens of psychosocial care. This case highlights the "too much" of ethical attachment and the "not enough" of institutional capacity to care for the psychosocial. I argue that temporality in clinical care is not only about prognosis or delay, but also about ethical exigency: the ongoing need to respond, recalibrate, and hold space when resolution is not forthcoming. In doing so, I call for greater ethnographic attention to the layered, recursive timelines of care and the everyday negotiations through which clinicians attempt—and often fail—to ethically inhabit the space between promise and reality.

Presenter(s): Sarah Roth

Between [i]Savage Mind[/i] and [i]Wild Thought[/i]: Myth, Exigencies, and Atemporality in Trumpism

In this paper, I argue that, in a moment when the reemergence of Trumpism feels particularly exigent, anthropologists must not only attend to its urgencies—that is, the temporalities it produces—but also its atemporal qualities. To this end, I first explore the tension between the two English titles of Lévi-Strauss's [i]La Pensée sauvage[/i]: "Savage Mind" and "Wild Thought." Though the former is often deemed an unfortunate mistranslation—and the latter lauded as an inclusive correction—I claim that the tension between them is actually helpful for a (neo)structuralist analysis of contemporary western movements like Trumpism. I take seriously the idea that all human societies (especially imperial ones) are not only capable of "wild thought" but also possess a latent capacity for more savage forms of bricolage. Trumpism is a contemporary form of savage bricolage that consolidates its power in an atemporal politico-religious myth: the return to a country that never was. If one considers Lévi-Strauss's notion of myth as a meta-language functioning in the realm of the unconscious—and therefore operating in an atemporal realm

untouched by both Enlightenment notions of reason and the historicity of facts—it becomes clear that liberalism's attempts to "fact check" Trumpian ideals are futile. Instead, I argue, the only means of political resistance is a "militant Lévi-Straussianism" that prioritizes the generation of new myths capable of moving people at an unconscious level.

Presenter(s): Levi Vonk

No Birds, No Metaphor: Industrial Forestry, Pesticide Use, and White Supremacy in Rural Oregon

This paper uses the analytics of scale, fire, and spray to understand the history of pesticides and herbicides as methods of both industrial forestry and white supremacist war-making in rural Oregon. In its argumentation, it uses the imprecision of poetics to illustrate what Vincanne Adams has called the swirl effect of pesticides—especially when applied aerially—on civilian populations, animals, and the environment. Rooted in the materiality of these chemicals and their afterlives, it examines how what is thought to be possible is formed by the rhythms of their imprecise presence. By thinking with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, it interrogates the ways in which living with industrial forestry becomes a contemporary exegesis of Peter Sloterdijk's idea of a "terror from the air" in forming conspiracy and anxieties around truth, public health, and what to do about it all.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Kaul

Discussion

7640 Making Media of Value in Transnational Turkey, Greece, and Germany

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Papers in this panel draw on related work in semiotic anthropology and the anthropology of value to explore how social objects function as "media of value" (Graeber 2001; Munn 1986; Turner 1968) and "semiotic media of representation" (Turner 1968) through which people and institutions imagine, create, communicate, and contest social values.

Each paper analyzes a given object – the saz (a musical instrument central to Alevi ritual), the Muslim call to prayer in a German city, an encrypted messaging app and counterterrorism investigations in Turkey, art NGOs and cultural policy in Greece, and the documentation of genealogical claims to Iberian ancestry among members of Turkey's Sephardic community – whose mobilization and circulation as both objects and signs are analyzed to offer ethnographic accounts of the "social life of cultural value" (Agha 2024). And each paper describes how the semiotic properties and processes associated with its chosen object of investigation manifest within historically-conditioned "representational economies" (Keane 2003) and are shaped both by the things people and institutions do with objects and the meanings they ascribe to them.

Among major questions to be explored are the dialectal and processual relationship between commodified and cultural forms of value; competing processes of valorization and devalorization; and the interrelated forms of material and ideological work that is involved into making things into objects of value and media of social action (Gal and Irvine 2019; Graber 2023; Keane 2003; Kockelman 2006).

Agha, A. (2003). The social life of cultural value. *Language & communication*, 23(3-4), 231-273.

Gal, Susan, and Judith T. Irvine. *Signs of difference: Language and ideology in social life*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Graber, Kathryn E. "Textures of value: Tactility, experience, and exclusion in the cashmere commodity chain." *Economic Anthropology* 10, no. 2 (2023): 186-196.

Graeber, David. *Toward an anthropological theory of value: The false coin of our own dreams*. Springer, 2001.

Keane, Webb. "Semiotics and the social analysis of material things." *Language & communication* 23, no. 3-4 (2003): 409-425.

Kockelman, Paul. "A semiotic ontology of the commodity." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2006): 76-102.

Munn, Nancy D. *The fame of Gawa: A symbolic study of value transformation in a Massim (Papua New Guinea) society*. Duke University Press, 1992 [1986].

Turner, Terence. "Marxian value theory: An anthropological perspective." *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 1 (2008): 43-56.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Patrick Lewis, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Alex Kreger, Habib University

Chair: Patrick Lewis, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Alex Kreger, Habib University, Erol Koymen, Florida State University, Onur Arslan, Idil Ozkan, Northwestern University, Emily Kuret, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Patrick Lewis, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Pedagogies of Iconization: Making the Alevi Saz a "Stringed Qur'an" in Contemporary Turkey

The saz, a long-necked lute, is central to the rituals of Alevis, a messianic Sufi community comprising Turkey's largest non-Sunni-Muslim religious group. As is typical of musical instruments in religious devotional contexts, the saz is invested with multiple overlapping iconicities.

Based on thirty months of ethnographic fieldwork with Alevi reformists and participation in their musical assemblies, I examine three ways in which they manage the saz's sacred status: through prohibitions against playing in certain venues like bars and discretion against playing whenever

affects associated with these venues are present, regardless of the setting; through explicit pedagogy regarding the saz's function in Alevi ritual; and through carefully curated and circumscribed public performances of Alevi rituals that reinforce new associations of the saz with the sacred and human divinity. Drawing upon the concept of iconization developed in linguistic anthropology, I argue that the spiritual power of the saz as a sacred, sounding icon is dependent upon Alevi reformists' communicative work to stabilize and manage its indexical values—the associations the saz animates as a result of previous contexts of performance. This pedagogy of iconization focused on the "stringed Qur'an" is a primary *modus operandi* of the current Alevi reform movement.

Presenter(s): Alex Kreger

Noisy Oaths: Cologne's Central Mosque and the Sonic Limits of Transparency

Cologne's DITIB Central Mosque is pioneering on several fronts. As a large, architecturally distinct glass and concrete structure on one of Cologne's busiest intersections and the German headquarters of DITIB, the Turkish government's Directorate of Religious Affairs, the 2017 mosque claims a public face for German Islam even as it is maligned as a symbol of Turkish state overreach. Since 2022, the Central Mosque has also taken on a pioneering public voice in coordination with the Cologne city government through public Islamic call to prayer, or *ezan*. In this paper, I examine the urban *ezan* as site of semiotic contestation. While the *ezan* in Cologne might symbolize Muslim piety and belonging, German secular liberal tolerance and freedom of religion, or an attack on European identity and values, it is regulated through the legal framework of noise abatement and thus located seemingly outside semiosis. Drawing on intensive fieldwork, I ask what these different semiotic registers teach us about the contours of Islamic distinction under secular liberal governance. I argue that categorizing the *ezan* as noise amounts to a secularist suspension of the Islamic oath that reveals the sonic limits of architectural and ideological transparency deployed by the DITIB Central Mosque.

Presenter(s): Erol Koymen

Evidencing Terror: Counterforensics, digital traces, and the Semiotics of the War on Terror in Turkey

Since the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, more than 215,000 people have been investigated for allegedly using ByLock, an encrypted-message app. According to government officials and courts, the app was used exclusively by Fethullah Gülen's network, which the Turkish state classifies as a terrorist organization. Legal experts transformed ByLock data into vehicles of suspicion that could "testify" to past and future terrorism actions. They did so by combining counterterror doctrine and cultural narratives with digital and legal practices, including data extraction, analysis, legal writing, and courtroom confrontations. I call these practices evidencing terror, a technolegal method that, in setting up suspicion as an element of digital evidence, wields an extensive visceral and political force that suspends people's civil rights. The paper elicits how jurists and digital forensics examiners have reconfigured the unknowability of digital traces as indexical signs of a new terrorism threat and its esoteric nature. The paper draws on 30 months of fieldwork in Istanbul and

Ankara, conducted from 2018 to 2022, during which I followed digital artifacts from the moment they were extracted from different types of databases (phones, servers, surveillance systems) to their use in courts and media outlets.

Presenter(s): Onur Arslan

Curating Distinction: Signs, Aesthetics, and Representational Economies of Sephardic Ancestry

In 2015, five hundred years after the Catholic Inquisition, the Spanish and Portuguese governments extended citizenship to Jews worldwide, contingent on their ability to provide evidence of Sephardic ancestry. While the offer sparked reconciliation for many, it also raised questions about how to prove a 500-year-old connection to medieval Iberia—especially for heterodox groups, families with histories of religious conversion, or those without conventional archival ties. For these applicants, indexes of ethnoreligious ancestry were often scattered or submerged, appearing in unusual forms, such as oral testimonies, cemetery records, traces of heritage languages (like Ladino), or even family recipes. This paper examines how individuals from the Selanikli (also known as Sabbateans or Dönme)—a heterodox Jewish-Muslim community in Turkey—mobilized their Spanish and Portuguese ancestries through unusual records often in creative curations. I analyze the semiotic labor involved in curating ancestry and ethnoreligious difference. Doing so, I locate the "representational economies" (Keane 2003) within which objects such as wine, piano, or portraits operate as semiotic media of representation (Turner 1968), indexing intertwined social histories of Ottoman cosmopolitanism, ethnoreligious difference, and European taste. These curated forms of ancestry illuminate how value is not simply inherited, but actively materialized and mediated across generations.

Presenter(s): Idil Ozkan

Political Economies of "Doing Good": Arts and Culture Policy in Greece for a Europe in Crisis

This paper situates Athenian non-profit arts and culture work in a fractally complex, transdisciplinary, and

internationally networked discursive space oriented toward the doing of social good and societal change.

Drawing on ethnography conducted at the Greek European Capital of Culture in 2023, it focuses on cultural democracy, a prevalent though not-yet hegemonic arts discourse regarding the crucial role of art

and culture in mitigating the 'poly-crisis' (Morin 1993) threatening the European Union (EU) by producing

meaningful collectivities through citizen participation and facilitation of a common social project. This paper

draws on semiotic approaches to ideological work (eg. Gal and Irvine 2019) and political epistemics

(Glaeser 2011) to reflect first on how art becomes understood as a cultural category of communication and

viable channel for social intervention in the context of pan-regional arts advocacy in the EU. It

contextualizes and tracks fraught elaborations of the cultural category of "art for the public good" in Greece

as situated at an uneasy nexus of emergent local, national, regional, and global ideologies of action and of

representation.

Presenter(s): Emily Kuret

Discussion

2797 Cultural Relativism of Queer Loss and Trauma: Blueboy Magazine and the Hauntology of the 1980s AIDS Crisis

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Blueboy magazine, established in 1975 by Donald Embinder, was the first nationally distributed gay men's magazine in the U.S. It was a leading source for various aspects of gay culture and featured nude male photography. After Embinder's death in 2017, Miss Tiger founded the Blueboy Archives and Cultural Arts Foundation (BACAF) to preserve the magazine for historical, educational, and research purposes.

BACAF is a vital repository of queer history and cultural preservation. It occupies a liminal space where past and present converge, inviting shared remembrance. Through its archival efforts and collection of ephemera, the Foundation explores the spectral presence of the AIDS crisis and the LGBTQIA+ community's resilience. Blueboy magazine acts as both record and relic, embodying the power of ephemera-temporary objects shaping collective memory. Personal and collective memory manifests in the echoes of those no longer here, creating a haunting, reminiscent of a spectral presence, lingering in the artifacts, media, and spaces they once inhabited.

The Reagan administration's inaction during the onset of the AIDS crisis exacerbated the gay community's suffering, allowing misinformation and stigma to proliferate. In contrast, Blueboy stood as an affirming force, providing visibility and support. The opposition between affirming queer media and mainstream narratives underscores the power of storytelling in shaping perceptions and experiences.

The production of Blueboy coincided with the emergence of the AIDS crisis, a period of profound loss and disenfranchised grief, turning the magazine into a symbol of resilience. The void extends beyond personal tragedies, encompassing unrealized futures that haunt the queer community.

Through digital preservation, BACAF bridges past and present, archiving fragile materials to ensure narratives are not forgotten.

BACAF facilitates spiritual communication, weaving generations together across physical and digital realms. Channeling the memory of those lost to AIDS-evokes memory, transforms grief, and creates sacred spaces to honor, heal, and reclaim identity. By cultivating collective remembrance, BACAF offers a refuge where the living and dead reconnect through ritual and storytelling.

We explore the intricate process of connecting with spiritual energies, utilizing rememory and hauntology to reinforce community bonds. The presentation examines these processes as spectral, ethereal presences that necessitate social and political exorcisms as avenues for healing. These spiritual and energetic practices are crucial in addressing trauma. Through the collective perspectives presented, we highlight a journey that empowers the LGBTQIA+ community to confront their past and find solace in shared experiences. By engaging these haunted elements, our investigation seeks to honor memories of the deceased, confront shared histories and traumas, and foster deeper societal understanding of the AIDS epidemic.

Section: Society for Visual Anthropology

Organizer: Miss Tiger , Symon Braun Freck

Chair: Miss Tiger

Presenter(s): Miss Tiger, Symon Braun Freck, Anna Weiler, University of Southern California

Discussant: Anna Weiler, University of Southern California

Presentation(s): Ephemera and Hauntology: Investigating the Confluence of Queer Trauma and Memory Through The Prism of Blueboy Magazine and the AIDS Crisis

Miss Tiger is a non-binary, Visual Anthropologist and Curator whose ethnographic research investigates the interplay between gender performance, sexuality, hauntology, cultural memory, and the AIDS crisis that devastated the gay community. She serves as the Curator of the Blueboy Archives and Cultural Arts Foundation, and a Curatorial Research Fellow with The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Miss Tiger holds a Master of Arts in Visual Anthropology from the University of Southern California. Miss Tiger's anthropological investigation into the archives of Blueboy magazine explores the phenomenon of ephemera—items designed for temporary existence that demonstrate a potential for enduring significance. In analyzing the role of ephemera, particularly in the context of Blueboy magazine, it's crucial to recognize that such material possess their own agency and biography—enabling Blueboy to establish an identity, foster community, and act as a catalyst for the creation of a liminal space where the past coexists within the present. The magazine's production coincided with the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, thereby generating a psychic resonance that allows Blueboy to encapsulate the haunting experiences of both individual and collective trauma. This reciprocity evokes a spectrum of grief—spanning temporal and future generations, encompassing unrealized futures, rememory, and temporal disjunction, which manifest as spectral ghosts and a hauntological experience.

Presenter(s): Miss Tiger

Preserving Memory and Autonomy: Thanatechnology, Grief, and the Digital Afterlife

Symon Braun Freck is a Thanatechnologist, Filmmaker, and Entrepreneur dedicated to increasing accessibility to death care education and resources. She holds a B.A. in Thanatology and a Masters in Visual Anthropology from the University of Southern California where she conducted research on the diversity of death care professionals. Through her consulting firm, SBF Creative, and death-tech start-up, AI Death Doula, she combines film and Thanatechnology to help others find autonomy at death. Her work focuses on pre-death planning and advocacy, bringing death conversations to common spaces. The AIDS crisis left an indelible mark on the LGBTQIA+ community, creating a landscape of prolonged disenfranchised grief extending beyond individual loss. Many mourn loved ones, friends, and mentors they never met but also the cultural, artistic, and activist legacies cut short. Grief transcends death loss, encompassing the mourning of erased histories, lost futures, and a collective absence haunting generations. By examining the spectral presence of AIDS victims, Braun Freck uncovers how grief persists in ways seen and unseen, shaping memory and resilience. Braun Freck contrasts digital assets with physical relics, like Blueboy magazine, that risk a second grief if lost. Failure to digitize archives endangers cultural memory. Figures like Miss Tiger eternize themselves and others through technology, serving as living memorials in dialogue with grief, canonizing community stories.

Presenter(s): Symon Braun Freck

Channeling Memory: Spirituality and Energetic-Based Community through Blueboy Archives and Cultural Arts Foundation

Anna Weiler is a Visual Anthropologist specializing in spirituality and cultural dimensions of energetic liminality. She holds a Masters in Visual Anthropology from the University of Southern California, where her thesis focused on occultism and community within the veil of the physical and metaphysical. At USC, she produced a documentary on occultism and spiritual-based communal spaces. She obtained her B.S. in International Relations and Global Health from the University of Maryland, with concentrations in Anthropology and feminist health practices. The Blueboy Archives and Cultural Arts Foundation serves as a psychic hub for seance and invocation. Rooted in both the LGBTQIA+ physical and digital realms, it fosters collective remembrance, providing sanctuary where the living and the departed can connect, heal, and reclaim identities through ritual, storytelling and community engagement. Lost generations who succumbed to AIDS inhabit liminal spaces of collective memory. The living yearn for familiarity and the presence of ancestors, seeking narratives and identity within the echoes of lost generations. Weiler investigates the process of channeling these spirits to evoke memory and foster community. She delves into this haunting presence and investigates the ideas of social and political exorcism as pathways to healing. Spiritual and energetic practices play vital roles in confronting trauma and creating physical and digital spaces to honor and remember AIDS victims.

Presenter(s): Anna Weiler

2535 Law, Power, and Justice: Engaging the Book, "Moral Autopsy: Truths, Secrets, and the Judicial Afterlives of Communist Secret Service Archives"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This panel takes the form of a conversation around Saygun Gökarıksel's new book, "Moral Autopsy: Truths, Secrets, and the Judicial Afterlives of Communist Secret Service Archives" (Cambridge University Press, Law and Society series). The panelists, from different geographical locations (e.g., Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Americas) and through a variety of theoretical lenses, will engage the book, reflecting on the themes of law, power, and justice at this current global moment, often characterized as the crisis of liberal democracy and international law and the surge of populist and ultra-right. In particular, the panel will address the problem of rightwing authoritarian appropriation of the discourses, institutions, and practices identified with transitional justice such as truth and memory practices, public transparency and anti-corruption projects, and verification of civil servants.

Situated in the long aftermath of the fall of state socialism in Poland, "Moral Autopsy" offers a critical ethnographic study of the transitional justice form called "lustration," widely employed in postsocialist Eastern Europe, but also in "post-war" contexts such as the US occupation of Iraq in 2000s. Polish lustration officially refers to the public exposing and banning of the people identified as secret communist agents (spies) from public office by using communist secret service archives as its chief source of evidence and truth. Yet, lustration's social-political life extends far beyond its formal legal-institutional domain, mired in sensational media revelations and expansive suspicions of "collaboration" with the former regime. Through close study of court trials, biographies, media, films, and plays concerning judges, academics, journalists, activists, and artists who were accused of being communist spies, "Moral autopsy" shows how this transitional justice process, which was introduced in late 1990s to create public transparency and trust and build liberal democracy, has become appropriated by rightwing populist groups to bolster nationalist sovereignty politics of secrecy and moral purification. Instead of conceiving this rightwing appropriation as simply a case of pathological "abuse" of otherwise morally good instruments, "Moral Autopsy" invites us to interrogate the binary of liberalism and authoritarianism, war and peace, and the redemptive notions of transparency and truth-telling underpinning global transitional justice. Gökarıksel highlights the importance of critically attending to what he calls the moral autopsy mode of knowing, examining, and judging that informs postsocialist transitional justice projects concerning communism and its specters. Ultimately, the book calls for envisioning social transformation and justice beyond Eurocentric liberal teleologies of transition, capitalist nation-state epistemology and prerogatives of property and security, and the judicialization of history and politics,

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Saygun Gökarıksel, Boğaziçi University, Agnieszka Pasioka, University of Montreal

Presenter(s): Katherine Verdery, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Alex Hinton, Rutgers University, Elizabeth Dunn, Alejandra Azuero-Quijano, Swarthmore College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Discussant: Elif Babul, Mount Holyoke College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

3493 Meeting at the crossroads: Multi-Disciplinary approaches to identity formation in Southeastern Mesoamerica. Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Southeastern Mesoamerica-encompassing eastern Guatemala, El Salvador, and western Honduras-has long been viewed as peripheral to both the Maya heartland and broader Mesoamerica. Scholarly approaches have often focused on delineating Maya and non-Maya spheres, while research has remained constrained-both conceptually and practically-by modern national boundaries and disciplinary silos. Recent anthropological work, however, underscores the region's complexity and its ongoing importance in shaping social identities within a multi-ethnic borderland.

Historically at a crossroads of migration, exchange, and political influence, Southeastern Mesoamerica has experienced the arrival of diverse groups-from Lowland Maya and Nahuatl-speaking populations to modern-day ladinos. As these communities became established, local populations variously resisted, reinterpreted, or adapted to incoming peoples and their ideologies. Far from being marginal, this region offers compelling examples of how identities were-and continue to be-negotiated through interaction with broader social, economic, and political forces.

This session brings together Cultural Anthropologists, Archaeologists, Physical Anthropologists, Linguists, and Ethnohistorians to explore identity formation in this dynamic region. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, we aim to challenge the national and conceptual boundaries that have historically fragmented scholarship on Southeastern Mesoamerica. Ultimately, we seek to position this region as a critical locus for understanding the formation of social identities in frontier and borderland contexts. We further hope that insights generated through this collaborative discussion will contribute meaningfully to broader anthropological debates on identity, interaction, and cultural transformation.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Ruben Francisco Morales Forte, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Erlend Johnson

Chair: Ruben Francisco Morales Forte, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Erlend Johnson, Katherine A. Miller Wolf, PhD, University of West Florida

Presenter(s): Robin Quizar, Shigeki Nakagome, Erlend Johnson, Kerry Hull, Brigham Young University

Discussant: Marcello Canuto, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Creolization of Ch'orti'; Ghosts of the Classic Mayan Past

The two Eastern Ch'olan languages, Ch'orti' and Ch'olti', were both intimately involved in the Classic Maya culture of AD 250-900, each with its own role to play. While the direct ancestor of the now-extinct Ch'olti' was probably an elite Ch'olan language variety closely associated with the hieroglyphs, the direct ancestor of Ch'orti' was most likely the language variety spoken by the commoners, i.e. the merchants, farmers, potters, and shopkeepers who supported the elite and traded with foreigners in the area. Mayan loanwords into non-Mayan languages to the southeast, especially Xinkan, provide evidence of language contact. Ch'orti' borrowed an important 3rd person prefix a- from Xinkan that eventually led to the innovation of a third set of person markers, helping to distinguish Ch'orti' from Ch'olti'. Other evidence of extensive outside language contact with Ch'orti' is seen in the loss of tense/aspect markers on the verbs, regularity in verb forms, and the development of serial verbs. Such simplification features are typical of creoles and of errors during second language learning, suggesting that Ch'orti' was the lingua franca of the Classic Mayan world, the Ch'olan language variety being learned by outsiders to gain access to the elite Classic culture.

Presenter(s): Robin Quizar

Paleogenomic insights into Classic Copan

Copán, located at the southeastern edge of the Classic Maya world, was a key urban centre that connected regions of Central and South America. In 426/427 CE, a royal dynasty was founded there, lasting nearly four centuries. While the city is well-documented through archaeological and historical sources, little is known about the genetic makeup of its ancient inhabitants. In this study, we present genomic data from Classic Copán, including a possible royal family member and a person buried in a sacrificial context. Our findings reveal that the people of Classic Copán form a distinct genetic cluster closely related to the Late Archaic population from Belize, as well as Terminal Classic Maya from Chichén Itzá, Colonial-era Maya from Campeche, and modern Maya groups in Mexico. Tracing ancestry to the Late Archaic Belize population, we also detect genetic contributions from highland Mexico beginning in the Early-to-Middle Classic period, highlighting the importance of gene flow in shaping the Classic Maya civilization.

Presenter(s): Shigeki Nakagome

A Clash of Political Cultures and Values: Applying the concept of Schismogenesis to the Classic Maya and their neighbors in Western Honduras

Schismogenesis refers to a process of the formation of social division or differentiation through inter or intragroup interaction. It was first proposed by Gregory Bateson to describe the emergence of escalating tensions within the latmul of New Guinea and later adopted and modified by David Graeber, who used it to describe emerging differences and culture clashes between Californian and Pacific northwestern groups, where fundamentally different social structures emerged between these groups despite their close contact. In this paper, we explore how the concept of

Schismogenesis can be productively applied to describe cultural clashes and changes tied to the arrival of Lowland Maya peoples in western Honduras in the Early Classic. We suggest that lowland social hierarchies where power was amassed and wealth and status were conspicuously displayed by divine lords at the top of a social hierarchy were fundamentally different than long-standing local practices where power may have been more decentralized and wealth was not as conspicuously consumed. This paper examines examples of mounting tensions between the emergent Copan Regime and surrounding non-Maya groups with special attention to the Cucuyagua, Sensenti, and El Paraiso Valleys, where we conducted previous excavations.

Presenter(s): Erlend Johnson

Co-author(s): Marcello Canuto

The Ties that Bind: Defining Indigeneity through Borrowed Ritual among the Ch'orti' Maya

After a century of slowly losing the majority of community-wide ritual practice among the Ch'orti' Maya of Guatemala, a surprising resurgence of interest in such ceremonialism has recently occurred. In this paper, I first track the systematic stifling of native religious practices by first describing what we know about earlier ceremonialism and then discussing the myriad of ways much of Ch'orti' traditional ritual has been coerced into disuse. I then examine the various social and political motivators for "recapturing" aspects of past ritual performance among some revitalization groups today as a way to build social solidarity and, in their view, 'indigeneity'. Additionally, I show that some of the most prominent forms of these rituals are in fact borrowed from a number of Highland Maya groups. Thus, rather than being a renewal of dying or lost practices, key parts of outside ceremonialism from other groups have been incorporated into social and political movements. This brings to the fore the question of the relevance of ritual 'authenticity' in this type of revitalization effort.

Presenter(s): Kerry Hull

The Bioarchaeology of Identity and Dynamic Interaction in Southeastern Mesoamerica

While identity is fundamentally a sociocultural concept, it is physically embodied during the life course and recorded in the human skeleton. Indelible signs of migration, affinity, identity, and interaction are woven into bone and bioarchaeological analysis can reveal individual and community stories. Given its location at the southeastern frontier of Mesoamerica, ancient Copan reflects a complex network of identities and relationships straddling the perceived boundary of so-called Maya and non-Maya peoples. Once thought to reflect only Maya cultural systems, bioarchaeological research has revealed a socially and biologically diverse, urban city ripe with cross-cultural interactions. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this paper contextualizes the manifestations of identity within Copan drawing from a decades-long comprehensive analysis of the largest sample of human skeletal remains yet recovered in this region. Skeletal, biogeochemical, and biostatistical data drawn from those who participated in the creation and maintenance of social organization of the region elucidate the interaction spheres and identity formation processes of Copan's inhabitants to each other, to their neighbors, and those beyond their borders.

Presenter(s): Katherine A. Miller Wolf, PhD, University of West Florida

8036 From Object to Agent: Bodies in Struggle Across Global Contexts

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel, entitled "From Object to Agent: Bodies in Struggle Across Global Contexts," explores how bodies are situated, valued, and contested across social, political, and economic landscapes. Our papers interrogate the ways in which bodies are rendered as both subjects and objects. They examine the dual processes of both the objectification of bodies by institutions and states--as, for example, by processes of technologization and commodification--and the contestation of this objectification by parallel processes of care, negotiation, and resistance.

Across contexts as varied as carceral systems, waste infrastructures, elder care, and illicit markets, bodies are entangled in processes that blur the lines between personhood and objecthood. Our collective scholarship engages with the thickness of the objectification-subjectification problematic by examining the politics of artmaking practices in Michigan prisons, the relationship between race and the "Red Market" organ trade, the "stickiness" of waste and labor in East India, the intersections of personhood and dementia care in Texas, as well as the "narrative work" of incarcerated women in South India. Through the diversity of these geographies and subjects, we think through the ways in which bodies become devalued on the basis of class, race, gender, caste, disability, and age, while also holding the potential for reclamation and subversion.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Vitalis Im

Chair: Vitalis Im , Ryan Seidemann

Presenter(s): Vitalis Im, Micaela Bermea, Ryan Seidemann, Aishwarya Mukhopadhyay, University of Oxford, Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Vishesh Chander Guru

Discussant: Lai Wo

Presentation(s): "Wish You Were Here": Greeting Cards as a Mediator of Relational Violences in Prison

In this paper, I speak to the ways in which artmaking practices in prison mediate what I call the relational violences of confinement. Prisons, I will show, disrupt the capacity of the incarcerated person to relate and to be related to. To relate, within the context of this paper, refers to the incarcerated person's capacity to understand themselves and their relationships with others—particularly with those in the free world—beyond the relational logics imposed by the prison. To be related to speaks to the ways in which prisons structure how people in the free world think about and interact with people in prison. I argue that artmaking practices facilitate new ways of relating that resist the organizing capacities of the prison.

I will show the ways in which the homemade greeting card—a very particular kind of art object within the larger economy of carceral art—facilitates experiences of escape, self-fashioning, and kinship. As a tool of self-fashioning, the greeting card becomes a means by which people in prison refashion themselves as people to whom violence is done—inmates, prisoners—to people that work to countermand these violences—as artists and survivors of confinement. The greeting card becomes a way to imagine and enact modes of being that are rooted in care, agency, and survival. I show how it opens new ways of understanding how relational violences are enacted, negotiated, resisted, and experienced by people in prison and in the free world.

Presenter(s): Vitalis Im

Sustaining Personhood in Dementia Care: Unsettling The Devaluation and Objectification of Aging Bodies

At a time when the global population is increasingly greying and bodies are reduced to their capacity for labor and productivity, addressing how aging bodies are valued and situated within the subject/object dichotomy has become essential. This paper ethnographically engages with recognition of personhood in dementia care to explore the (de)valuation and objectification of the aging body. In the U.S., dominant cultural narratives of people with dementia as 'empty shells' or 'ghosts of their former selves' reveal the devaluation and objectification of bodies that have 'failed' to meet certain constructions of aging and personhood. Values of productivity, independence, and autonomy underlie these constructions and create a norm where older adults are active, able-bodied, and able-minded. Associated with frailty, dependence, and decline, dementia disrupts this norm and those with dementia become vulnerable to devaluation. This paper troubles this logic of valuation by examining how personhood is sustained in dementia care. Drawing on fieldwork with older adults with dementia and their caregivers in San Antonio, Texas, I show that despite the value of aging bodies being rendered to physical and cognitive ability, care that attunes to personhood unsettles processes of devaluation and objectification. Overall, this paper exemplifies how critical engagement with dementia care provides a more nuanced understanding of how the body might traverse the line between subject and object.

Presenter(s): Micaela Bermea

Objectifying Bodies: Commodification of Human Body Parts in Modern America

Contemporary scandals associated with funeral home and medical school mismanagement of deceased individuals have focused attention on the "Red Market" for human remains. An illustrative example is the recent revelation that Harvard Medical School's willed body program has been a source of body parts for the illicit trade. In this paper, we review the objectification and valuation of dead humans and their parts. We focus particularly on both the licit and illicit trade in these remains as well as the legal and enforcement structure navigated by market participants. We examine some demographic components of the online human remains trade to answer the question of whether this market represents a postmortem enslavement of disadvantaged people. This paper also examines the geographic scope of the online marketplace and asks whether the postmortem violence meted out on these remains through their commodification, objectification, and, often, display results from structural legal inequities—particularly in the United States. While modern bioarchaeology has begun to document connections between historic postmortem structural violence and disenfranchised peoples, little scholarship exists to inform whether such a connection exists with the modern dead. The human remains market data and legal analysis is used to probe this question and to examine what, if any, modern efforts should exist to protect against such activity.

Presenter(s): Ryan Seidemann

The Stickiness of Waste: Infrastructural Bodies and the Materiality of Waste Labour in an Eastern Indian City

This paper examines how waste work in an eastern Indian city renders labouring bodies both infrastructural and disposable, shaped by what I call the "stickiness" of waste—both material and social. This stickiness clings to bodies marked by caste, gender, and the burden of waste-work. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, I show how such labour blurs the line between subject and technical object: bodies become tools, abstracted and erased in state and public imaginaries—simultaneously essential to urban life yet excluded from its rewards.

Waste—the apotheosis of the Anthropocene—is met with disgust by both citizens and the state. This disgust extends to those who labour through it. Nirmal Bandhus (waste collectors), lower-caste men, perform exhausting, precarious work with little recognition. Nirmal Sathis, lower-caste women, are recruited through developmental logics that frame them as morally trustworthy. Initially temporary data collectors, they become symbolic supervisory figures—central to civic order but bound by precarity and structural violence. As cleanliness drives circulate aesthetic discourses of progress, workers face salary delays and unreplenished gear.

The materiality of labouring bodies—aching and worn—bears the imprint of waste. Through vignettes, I trace how bodily labour and earthly matter coalesce, revealing how (de)valuation blurs the line between human and object, rendering some bodies indispensable yet invisible.

Presenter(s): Aishwarya Mukhopadhyay

The Remembered Prison: Narrative Work and Selfhood in South India

This paper draws on fieldwork at a rehabilitation program for formerly incarcerated women in a southern Indian city. I pose a central problem: What is the relationship between narrative, experience and ethics in the aftermath of prison?

Narrative makes state institutions legible by dramatizing and explaining complex events, organizing its protagonists, and bequeathing a moral lesson (Gupta 2005, 18-19). My intervention contends with aftermath as a temporal, ethical, and narrative location where prison life is remembered, contested, and acquires an affective life in the present. Moral discourses of rehabilitation are often understood in a speculative mode, as "structuring forces of prison life and governance" that project a future return to society (Thompson 2020, 12). My work examines how formerly incarcerated women remember and recast life in prison, making it available to a moral imagination where they resist stigmatized identities and stereotypes, as a form of "narrative work" (Opsal 2011). I examine two broad categories of narrative: First, stories of corruption and resistance in prison; second, rumours around death, distress and hauntings. These stories open up an aporiatic space, evoking ethical registers outside of the law and its disciplinary ends. My interlocutors, in narrating the prison and its human dramas clarify the moral stakes of their own past and present.

Presenter(s): Vishesh Chander Guru

Discussion

2777 Deterritorialization as Power and Resistance: Rethinking Migration Across Dispersed and Contested Borders

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Deterritorialization" has been a term with significant political, discursive, and imagistic force, evading the fixity of meaning over time. Originating in the works of Deleuze and Guattari's (1970s-80s), where it signified an unmooring of structures, identities and meaning from fixed locations, deterritorialization gained traction with anthropologists (1990s-2000s) studying globalization and transnationalism as a phenomenon denoting the unrestricted flow of people, media and capital. In the realm of Post-Marxist political theory, deterritorialization came to describe the extension of security systems, transnational corporations, and digital infrastructure beyond sovereign boundaries.

Anthropologists studying global migration, mobilities, and refugee resettlement have attended to the multiple geographies across which bordering practices unfold, opening up new possibilities for theorizing deterritorialization. People on the move experiencing differential and layered forms of displacement, increasingly encounter bordering in multiple geographies and institutional formations. States, in their expanding practice of bordering, operate beyond the immediate boundaries of the nation, marking bodies, communities, and spaces far from the material borders that refugees and migrants have to cross. Border regimes are increasingly moving both outward and inward, prompting anthropologists to rethink the sites where 'border spectacles' (De Genova 2013) unfold.

From offshore detention sites, to confinement in camps and detention centers, from the outsourcing of border control to neighboring states and local law enforcement to new collaborations between refugee welfare and immigration systems, to intensified security alliances between nation-states, border logics exceed geographic and institutional boundaries. This panel examines the social, political, and material worlds that migrants and refugees encounter with these dispersed border logics, examining how they impact the lives of people through practices of state-making and border control.

This panel does not limit itself to a singular definition of deterritorialization as it relates to human mobility, but instead seeks to explore the broad landscape it evokes. Papers will examine how refugees create their own fragmented nations, how states extend their deterrence apparatuses transnationally, and how policies that aim to govern mobility within and across borders activate alternative and even collective conceptions of refuge. This panel aims to explore how deterritorialization is not only a vocabulary of power, but also of resistance as cyclical, dynamic, and emergent.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Helena Zeweri, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Ishani Dasgupta, University of Chicago

Chair: Ishani Dasgupta, University of Chicago

Presenter(s): Helena Zeweri, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Georgina Ramsay, University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology, Eleanor Paynter, University of Oregon, Ishani Dasgupta, University of Chicago, Laura Leisinger, University of South Florida

Discussant: Miriam Ticktin, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Governing Desire: Intimate Socialities in Australia's Transnational Migration Deterrence Campaigns

This paper examines the history, logics, and responses to Australia's public information campaigns which have aimed to deter migrants from entering its borders via sea routes, over the past two decades. It aims to further advance anthropological theorizations of migration deterrence as increasingly targeting the affective and intimate domains of prospective migrants' social worlds across multiple sites, including origin and transit countries. Today's PICs are part of a broader regime of extraterritorial migrant governmentality, focused less on telling people not to migrate and

more on shaming and guilting them into staying put. As such, in recent years these campaigns have adopted an ethos of cultural sensitivity in that they target the worldviews of prospective migrants through a culturally salient imagery. Through a confluence of government agencies, private consulting firms, and resettled refugee communities in Australia, PICs enact their power across a range of territorial and affective domains.

Based on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork with recently resettled refugees who encountered these campaigns, as well as discourse and media analysis of PICs since the early 2000s, this paper examines how PICs discursively and materially target prospective migrants' intimate social worlds through a politics of cultural competence. This paper offers another way to think about deterrence-based border policies as part of a broader regime of governing migrant desire.

Presenter(s): Helena Zeweri

Freedom of Movement? Refugee Labor and the Deterritorialization of the US Trucking Workforce

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization are central to the workings of global capitalism, where—generally speaking—the "free market" allows goods to flow across borders while the movement of people is regulated and controlled. But goods do not just move, they are moved through a complex system of logistics that, as I describe in this paper, often relies on the deterritorialized labor of migrants—and refugees—to function. Here, I give insight into Afghan Open Road, a program whereby refugees from Afghanistan who had been resettled in the United States in 2021 were supported to undertake training to receive their CDL and enter the trucking workforce. Their experiences speak to the violent deterritorialization of displacement and resettlement, as well as the ways that reterritorialization through the labor market has become both a condition of refugee resettlement and, in their words, an opportunity for "freedom." As they move through CDL training and licensing processes, it becomes apparent that the imperative to move goods within and across the United States often means exhausting and endangering the lives of people who move those goods. Seeing trucking as a "solution" to Afghan deterritorialization requires re-mapping their value and conditioning their "freedom," in terms of exchange.

Presenter(s): Georgina Ramsay

Border Externalization and Fugitive Refuge in Mediterranean Crossings

Europe's deterritorialization of its borders maintains the Mediterranean as a high-risk crossing zone. Since 2015, the EU and Italy have decreased and deemphasized state-sponsored search and rescue missions while renewing agreements with third countries to police borders and detain migrants. Today, NGO-operated vessels in the Central Mediterranean conduct a minority of overall rescues but remain in the spotlight as a target for the criminalization of migration and humanitarian aid. Since 2023, Italian authorities often send rescue ships to distant ports to disembark, amplifying the human and financial costs of these missions. To what extent, then, is a rescue ship—where people who have made long and dangerous journeys may finally obtain initial aid—a site of refuge?

I explore this question by elaborating how rescue ships occupy two contradictory positions: first, they operate as a temporary shelter carrying people to a safe port. Second, as the implementation of restrictive policies extends rescue voyages, these spaces also function as sites of limbo, uncertainty, and continued risk. My analysis draws on fieldwork I've conducted in Sicily since 2022 and on rescue mission data collected by NGOs. I show how refuge is itself a fugitive site, fleeting and contingent on fluctuating dynamics, from the materiality of the voyage to new forms of deportability, via third-country detention centers. I consider what forms refuge takes amid the broad normalization of such practices.

Presenter(s): Eleanor Paynter

Impermanence as the Politics of Deterritoriality: Rethinking Nation in Exile

The Tibetan refugee community, under conditions of exile, must contend with shifting ways of relating to territory—from the idea of a lost homeland, to the spaces of current settlement, to uncertain sites where necessity or aspiration leads them. I explore this contention with (de)territoriality through the concept of *mithagpa* (*mi rtag pa*), or impermanence—a Buddhist philosophical notion that has entered Tibetan political and social vocabulary to express precarity, entanglement, and compassion.

Mithagpa, according to Tibetan Buddhism, is the condition of all things. As a political concept, it encapsulates the experience of refugees' lives—whether in the transitory act of living on land that cannot be claimed as one's own, or in the attachment to a territorially bound nation that cannot be returned to. Amid shifting geopolitical conditions, Tibetan refugees navigate transformations in community, politics, and their relation to land, even as attachments reemerge in other deterritorialized forms. For instance, a patchwork of settlements—functioning as a microcosm of a Tibetan nation—is continually reshaped to endure within an unstable landscape of sovereign nation-states.

In the final section, I reflect on my role as an ethnographer, whose presence is defined by comings and goings—an impermanent presence—and who continually attempts to grasp the shifting prism of the field from her own liminal position within the community.

Presenter(s): Ishani Dasgupta

Bordering and Deservingness: Haitian TPS Recipients in South Florida

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians became a target of the second Trump administration as a status that allegedly allowed migrants to enter the U.S. illegally. Among other humanitarian legal categories, TPS appears to sit at a critical juncture in discourse on immigration about who deserves pity, who is an ideal contender for inclusion in the nation state, and who is a threat. As TPS's removal continues to be fought out in protest and court, many arguments both for and against a secure status fit within a migrant "deservingness" frame that posits TPS-recipients as law-abiding and well-behaved. The logic of deservingness creates a "moral demarcation (as opposed to a strictly legal one)" between those who merit empathy, rights, and benefits and those who do not.

(Holmes and Castañeda 16, 2016). The imagination of deserved protection envisions the state as a purveyor of good for the well-behaved, and an expectation that the state will help those who meet the moral criteria. Based on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork with Haitian TPS holders in South Florida, this paper explores some of the complex ways TPS recipients have engaged state-based frames of deservingness. It examines how people have positioned themselves either strategically or through identification as deserving to stay, while simultaneously subject to surveillance and temporal governance through the status.

Presenter(s): Laura Leisinger

Discussion

6447 Digital Anteriorities: Remnants and Revenants in Digital Infrastructures

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ones and Zeroes. Clarity and precision. The promise of digitization has long been systematicity: the leveling of all kinds of content into bits and bytes, the banishing of uncertainty, the transformation of unwieldy information into searchable, (ac)countable, disinterested forms. Digital infrastructures also traffic in fantasies of orderly ex-nihilo worlds. Scholars of digital infrastructures, however, have consistently drawn our attention to the ghosts in these machines. Legacies of colonial policing are built into biometric systems (Cole 2001); racial difference is reconstituted out of anonymity online (Nakamura 2010); virtually gated communities mimic those in the physical world (Chun 2016); "ghost work" sustains our digital everyday (Grey and Suri 2019).

Today, as the environmental costs of computation are mounting, poorly-understood AI tools proliferate, data deluges confound, and government data vanishes unceremoniously, the project of confronting the excessive and the aberrant, the uncanny and the unsettling within digital systems seems especially pressing. This panel, proposing "digital anteriorities" as contrast and complement to "digital afterlives," asks questions about that which can be obfuscated, buried or disappeared by the digital, and that which refuses to retreat. In turn, we examine the ghosts that the digital generates, paying particular attention to what upsets and unsettles otherwise orderly infrastructures. From the revivifying of once-dead robots to the uncanny return of "real people" behind de-identified data, panelists will each speak to a ghost that appears in their research, and engage in a discussion that seeks to make contact with more.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Alix Johnson, Macalester College

Chair: Vijayanka Nair, San Diego State University, Department of Anthropology, Alix Johnson, Macalester College

Presenter(s): Beth Semel, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Shaka McGlotten,

SUNY, Purchase College, Alison Cool, University of Colorado, Boulder, Vijayanka Nair, San Diego State University, Department of Anthropology, Alix Johnson, Macalester College

Presentation(s): "Auditory hallucinations": Debility and insensibility in mental healthcare AI data work

In machine learning (ML) research, a hallucination refers to an AI model output that is unreasonable with respect to the data the model was trained on. Critical AI and disability studies scholars have critiqued this usage for its ableist connotations; it adds to the long list of ML concepts haunted by pathologizing metaphors of disability and eugenicist imaginaries (Benjamin 2024). Building from these critiques, I provide an alternative examination of the ML hallucination as an artifact of exploitative labor relations. Namely, I suggest that the bureaucratic protocols surrounding "data work"—the undervalued human labor necessary to processing and curating ML training datasets (Miceli and Posada 2022)—often create hallucinatory conditions for workers by constricting what they can share about how their jobs make them feel.

I draw from fieldwork in an ML lab building technologies to algorithmically triage people seeking mental healthcare resources. As they establish the standard of what counts as an adequately disabled expression of distress, data workers become complicit in sharpening novel techniques of algorithmic abandonment, leading to moral-psychic injuries that must be kept secret and individualized. In such contexts, the hallucination might offer an anti-ableist account of harm by shoring up the ways that institutional infrastructures, and the very metrics of disability data workers must concretize, render data workers' own distress illegitimate and insensible.

Presenter(s): Beth Semel

Haunting the Algorithm: Conjure Work and Digital Revenants

The algorithmic ordinary teems with haints—peculiar Black ghosts that limn presence and absence, technic and magic. Part of a larger project on the "computational hex," this presentation summons Black conjure traditions and the digital hauntings produced through algorithmic systems to explore some of the ways each operates through hidden mechanisms of influence, temporal distortion, and absent presences.

Drawing from fieldwork notes, experiments with generative AI, and autoethnographic encounters with TikTok's bewitching "For You" page, I trace how digital systems possess—capturing attention, inducing desire, and manipulating time in ways that echo Black conjure. These algorithmic possession states are undeniably manipulations, and they are also potential sites of communion, where the engagement with digital platforms might be reconceived as ritual encounters with ancestral knowledge systems.

I call my method "glitchcraft," a reconfiguring of the relationship between Black magical traditions and computational processes, positioning the glitch not as mere error but as a site where these

systems' repressed histories and logics become momentarily visible. Rather than approaching algorithmic engagement through frameworks of resistance or survival, I propose understanding certain digital practices as forms of libation and offering—ritual acts that honor enflashed and digital ancestors while creating new possibilities for connection.

Presenter(s): Shaka McGlotten

Behind Closed Doors: Data Protection and the Unhappy Data Subject

Architectural treatises about old Scandinavian homes sometimes describe unusually elaborate doorways. Mortuary doors, for example, were occasionally built as special exits to remove a corpse from the home. As the funerary procession passed out of sight, the opening was bricked over to ensure that the ghost would never make their way back. Elaborately decorated bridal doors were thrown open to welcome a new wife to her marital home. After she passed through, the door was sealed lest the bride and her happiness should attempt escape. The silhouettes of these closed openings remained visible as reminders of their power to protect the sanctity of the family home against the ever-present threat of gender and sexuality out of bounds.

Long before firewalls, encryption keys, and patient portals, doors and locks have served as potent metaphors of privacy and its limits. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with data experts in Sweden, this paper considers digital infrastructure in relation to older imaginaries of domestic space as a way of understanding the appeal of anonymization—despite widespread acknowledgement of its technical shortcomings—as a solution to the legal problems of personal data. As with the ghostly traces of magical doors, the identifiable data subject--like the home-loving ghost or the unhappy bride--persists in a risk of reidentification and the uncanny return of the "real person behind the data" and their insatiable demands for both recognition and protection.

Presenter(s): Alison Cool

Unsteady Foundations: Digital Residues in India's Aadhaar Database

It might be safe to say that urban, middle-class Indians are becoming increasingly familiar with biometric identity verification at venues ranging from gyms and housing complexes to airports and banks. Aadhaar, India's national biometric identification system, serves as India's primary biometric ID infrastructure. One of the chief mandates of Aadhaar was to "get rid of ghosts" in existing government welfare systems by linking live bodies to their bodily impressions. And yet, Aadhaar is itself a locus of many hauntings. Aadhaar, as a "clean" new "foundation" is infrastructure that recalls exacting colonial modes of enumeration; in turn, Aadhaar haunts every new biometric identification enterprise in India and indeed other national ID programs adopting biometrics. Furthermore, until recently, Aadhaar had no mechanism to register deaths in its database, affording those enrolled seeming digital immortality. This paper examines the residues and infra-identities that haunt biometric identification infrastructures, teasing and taunting, revealing the unsteadiness of biometric foundations.

Presenter(s): Vijayanka Nair

Unfinished Business: Revenants and Reminders on a Fiber-Optic Frontier

Subsea fiber-optic cables, often described as the "backbone of the internet," carry the lion's share of international signal traffic. Carved into coastlines and dragged across the sea floor, they materially draw continents into connection, instantiating the global internet as we know it today. This talk investigates one ongoing effort to extend this network into the Arctic, asking how the arrival of digital infrastructure encounters the Northwest Passage as haunted frontier. An object of deadly fascination for explorers throughout the age of empire, the Passage today is figured as finally knowable by an international consortium preparing to lay fiber-optics along the infamous route. At the same time, the practical work of laying a cable here surfaces apparitions and revenants: shadowy seabeds are brought into view for the first time by cable route surveys; scientific priorities jostle with state interests as surveillance functions are built into fiber-optic lines; and echoes of the last Cold War reverberate through cables designed around anticipated attacks. Through the cable and the subsea space being organized around it, I probe what haunting (vs. better-documented affects like anticipation, awe, and apprehension) brings to light in large-scale infrastructural projects, and how an ethnography oriented toward ghost hunting might bridge the gap between a cable touted as cutting-edge, and a passage teeming with shipwrecks, dead men, and outdated dreams.

Presenter(s): Alix Johnson

8635 Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA) - General Body Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 12:45 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Waterbury (2nd fl)

Type: Special Event

ABA General Body Meeting

This is the annual meeting of the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA). We discuss the ABA's activities, the goals and objectives of the organization, its future plans, and unveil ABA award recipients.

*Open to all members (and aspiring members) of ABA.

8666 Medical Anthropology Students Association (MASA)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 2:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Napoleon (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

MASA: Medical Anthropology Student Association

mission statement

We are an international group of graduate and undergraduate students, some beginning our studies, some already working in the field. We exist as a body in order to create the supportive bonds that will enable us to assist each other through the long process of training, conducting field

work, writing, and succeeding in the job market. Through Special Events, bulletin boards, and student directed projects, we help provide each other with the resources needed to engage with this discipline, develop areas of concentration, generate theoretical innovations, write strong proposals, fund and complete our dissertation work, and successfully enter careers in medical anthropology.

We reject the notion that the graduate process must be a solitary endeavor; instead, we join together as a group to find and use the resources we need to complete our training with our health and sanity intact. We welcome all students who share our passion for the study and improvement of human life through the lens of health and social justice, and we lay the groundwork for the next generation of medical anthropology.

9079 Lunch Workshop: Collaborative Interdisciplinary Ethnography: Building a Community of Practice

Start Date: 11/22/2025 1:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Armstrong BR (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

This workshop aims to bring together anthropologists and other researchers working on collaborative interdisciplinary projects that combine ethnography with other methods and data, in order to begin building a "community of practice." During this session, attendees will learn from brief presentations by colleagues already engaged in interdisciplinary ethnographic work, followed by an open roundtable discussion to share experiences, ideas, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration. We will discuss strategies for integrating ethnography with quantitative methods, digital tools, policy analysis, design thinking, and other frameworks to deepen understanding and research impact. The workshop's goal is to spark the formation of an ongoing community of practice—a network for sharing resources, developing collaborative ethnography projects, and advancing interdisciplinary anthropological scholarship.

8855 Community Environmental Justice Documentary and Discussion with Regional Activists- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 1:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

The Anthropology & Environment Society and regional community activists present a discussion about environmental justice challenges and action in Louisiana and beyond. Discussion and Q&A will focus on the ways environmental harm and injustice, both past and present, are inseparable and how communities are demanding and creating change to protect waterways, landscapes, and seascapes that matter most to them.

The event includes discussion about the documentary film *Harm in the Water*--A Kendall Moore Production and *Black in Marine Science* Films Production with support from BlueGAP. The film

"delves into the critical issue of water pollution affecting Black communities along the Mississippi River, " and is the winner, Best Documentary, Essence Film Festival 2025.

Dialogue at the event builds on and intersects with Environmental Justice walking tour event co-hosted by A&E in 2024 in Tampa, Florida and connects leaders who participated last year with regional leaders in the AAA 2025 meeting site in New Orleans, Louisiana. Event will be held offsite at the Treme Market Branch, bringing anthropologists, activists, filmmakers, and artists together in conversation in a community venue and sustaining conversations begun with community engaged events at last year's AAA meetings.

8763 APLA Graduate Student Speed Mentoring

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:15 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

The APLA Speed mentoring event allows students and early-career faculty to meet multiple mentors in a short time. The event gathers together mentees who are planning their graduate or post-graduate career steps in and outside of academia with mentors who are experienced researchers or established faculty members. Mentees will have the chance to meet senior colleagues outside of the mentees' immediate circle, and will also have the chance to learn about variations in institutional and sub-disciplinary practice. In addition to offering guidance on fieldwork, writing, networking, and publishing, the event will provide support in navigating the current challenges of the job market and the growing precariousness of academic careers. The goal is to inspire, encourage, and share ideas in a judgment-free, supportive context that acknowledges and responds to today's realities.

8220 Ghosts in the Halls: The Liminality of Adjunct Faculty in Academia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ghosts are liminal figures, both spatially and culturally. They haunt spaces that exist outside of the normal flow of time and space-areas that are in-between, where the rules of the physical and spiritual world seem to bend.

Ghosts also symbolize the threshold between life and death, the known and the unknown, the natural and the supernatural, viable and unviable. In the United States, they are often depicted as the spirits of individuals who have unfinished business or unresolved emotions. Their haunting presence suggests that they are in an in-between state.

Part-time faculty are also liminal figures, and in the same ways. We haunt the halls of academia, not quite able to move into the light because we have unfinished business. We are unmoored, floating around in the ether, trying to find a home, the tangibility of a permanent place. Ghosts often become symbols of unresolved transitions or emotional stagnation, tying them to the emotional

and psychological spaces between different stages of life. Contingency in academic employment thrusts adjuncts into a similar in-between existence.

Ghosts serve as powerful symbols of transition, unknowing, and unresolved tension. Like ghosts, adjunct faculty occupy a threshold, challenging the certainty of a stable existence that is supposed to come with an advanced degree. Investigating a culture's belief in the supernatural allows anthropologists a better understanding of psychological and cultural relationships with death, trauma, and the future. Interrogating academia's dependence on contingent employment through an anthropological lens may provide an analogous insight into the death of tenure-track positions, the trauma of unstable employment, and even the future of higher education.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Aubrey Thamann , Kalliopi Christodoulaki, Purdue University

Chair: Aubrey Thamann

Presenter(s): Aubrey Thamann, Kalliopi Christodoulaki, Purdue University, Jeremy Beach, John Bessai

Discussant: Susan Hyatt, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Here Lies the Dream of an Academic: Didn't Publish, So I Perished

Adjunct faculty live and work within a perpetually liminal existence as temporary instructors, hired on a contract basis, typically without the benefits or security of tenure-track positions. We are transient, existing in a state of constant movement. We are the ghostly figures that wander the hallways of academia, both seen and unseen, present yet not truly belonging. We are hired for a semester, sometimes a year, with no promise that our contract will be renewed. We are also haunted by our impermanence. A job that could be secure one semester is at risk the next. The ghost of tenure lingers, a promise that seems forever out of reach for many of us. We can teach for years, even decades, without ever securing a permanent position. The longer we linger in this state, the more we feel like specters—like professionals without professional status. Owen Davies writes, "ghosts reflect the cultures that produce them" ("Ghosts," in *The Routledge companion to death and dying*). In this essay I will explore this existence through the lens of personal experience, examining the challenges of adjunct life, which, to many, is a life marked by impermanence and ambiguity. More deeply, I will examine the broader cultural context that has fostered (and festered in) this ghostly existence, analyzing the cultures of individual departments, institutions, and even the state of higher learning. What does the increasing dependence on contingent faculty reflect about academic culture?

Presenter(s): Aubrey Thamann

Hidden Faculty: An Auto-ethnography Exploring the Tenuous Existence in Academia

The social complexities of being an adjunct professor contribute to a life of uncertainty and of deference. One exists in a social system in which various players have different access to power, economic means, and social status. If you are at the bottom of the hierarchy, you must learn to navigate in the world described so well in, *The Unbearable Lightness of Anthropology* (Roseberry

1996). The distinctions between full-time and part-time faculty are particularly problematic in a discipline that often stresses its protection of the downtrodden and ill-treated. It is difficult to acknowledge that a few have the very power, prestige, and other benefits that a co-worker lacks and which, because of these, is put in a position that can be exploited. The move of an adjunct into a "non-person" as suggested by Erving Goffmann makes it easier for those in positions of power to escape some of the more unappealing circumstances of the adjunct's life such as low pay, large workloads, and overall insecurity. In turn, the adjunct feels ephemeral for a variety of reasons including the very tangible need to have another form of employment. Being a limited term lecturer for over a decade has given me insights into the compromises I have made to maintain a connection to the department and the reasons why I have done so. I want to explore what has contributed to the position that I and many others are in throughout the United States.

Presenter(s): Kalliopi Christodoulaki

There and Back Again: The Various Journeys of an Anthropologist in Academia

The journey to and through the labyrinthine halls of academia can be a long, twisted, and frightening path for some academics. As long as that journey may be for specific individuals, an exit from the halls of academia can occur quite rapidly. Yet, in some instances, people may even find themselves stumbling back into the collegiate campuses that at one point so dominated their identities. The harrowing experiences of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic affected working people in myriad different ways (professionally and personally), and the lives of academics are no exception. However, out of the ashes of this horrific global event, many stories of reinvention and strength have begun to sprout. The following paper recounts my own haunting experiences as an archaeologist who (briefly) exited academia for various personal and professional reasons, only to find myself drawn back, albeit in a much different role and with a renewed sense of identity. Examining the broader impacts of the pandemic on academic careers, this study highlights how scholars navigate institutional exits and reentries while reshaping their professional identities. Through reflection and analysis, this case contributes to discussions on career fluidity, resilience, and the evolving landscape of academic labor within anthropology.

Presenter(s): Jeremy Beach

A Report from the Trenches: Academic Precarity and the Ghosts of Tenure

This presentation offers a report from the trenches of academic precarity. As a long-serving contingent faculty member working across Canadian institutions, I reflect on the affective, temporal, and institutional weight of existing within a system that relies on my labor but refuses to grant permanence or recognition. Adjunct life haunts the academy—we are visible yet excluded, overworked yet undervalued, intellectually present yet institutionally dislocated. Drawing on my personal experience and theoretical work, I argue that adjuncts occupy a spectral space that is not unlike haunting. Our presence disturbs the idealized flow of academic life. We pass through hallways without offices, hold office hours in libraries or cafés, and perform the rituals of collegiality without the protections of employment security. Our time is fractured—writing and

publishing have become luxury acts, and conference attendance is a logistical impossibility. This presentation situates the adjunct condition within the emotional geographies of academic life. Through personal narrative, cultural metaphor, and institutional critique, I explore what it means to labor within the university while being denied its most basic promises. Ultimately, I ask whether haunting, as a metaphor, might help us name not only the trauma of exclusion but also the persistence of presence—and the possibility of solidarity among those who refuse to disappear.

Presenter(s): John Bessai

Discussion

308 Society for Linguistic Anthro Flash Session #3

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Wenliang Han, University of Michigan, Anna-Marie Sprenger , Jiaying Liu , Aliyah Bixby-Driesen, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Grace Pearce , Dejan Duric, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Wenliang Han, University of Michigan, Anna-Marie Sprenger, Jiaying Liu, Aliyah Bixby-Driesen, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Grace Pearce, Dejan Duric, University of Michigan

Presentation(s): "Looking for happiness in retirement life:" Learning to speak at the University for Aged in Contemporary China

This presentation focuses on a group of older, retired people (mostly female) who went to a University for Aged (laonian daxue) in Chengdu, China. More specifically, they are those who seek to improve their Putonghua ("common speech," the Mandarin lingua franca) speaking by taking classes there. When being asked why they still chose to study after retirement, most of them had answers that are emotional, and can be as simple as the idea that taking classes makes one happy.

With learning standard speech on the one hand, these people worked to reduce their (regional) dialect-influenced accent, on the other. I'm interested in exploring how these people who are more or less marginalized (in terms of their age, region, gender, and health condition, etc.) in Chinese society draw on, or internalize this idea of "standard speech" in pursuit of a happier life.

From rural to urban, from margin to center, and from local to cosmopolitan (and many times also in opposite directions), it is usually a story that happens when life collapses. When things go out of place, when people leave, and when a future once thought to be "guaranteed" now breaks silently, what choices do individuals make? How do they anchor themselves onto something - something different, or something nostalgic? To improve one's Putonghua speaking can open up a space in post-socialist Chinese society, not just for social mobility, but for my interlocutors more importantly, the peace of mind in face of loss, anxiety, and sadness. My research is mainly based on

the interview/oral history data, and some data from the class recordings at Chengdu University for Aged.

Presenter(s): Wenliang Han

If There's No Men Here, Why Are We All So Tired: Unbalanced Queer Care Networks in Iasi, Romania

This paper examines how queer subjects in Iasi, Romania negotiate uneven care labor through semiotic processes that both enable and constrain belonging. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with a queer community in this postsocialist city, I trace how linguistic practices mediate social differentiation within queer social networks. Rather than presuming that "chosen family" is inherently egalitarian (Weston 1991), I show how care becomes an ambivalent terrain of moral evaluation, desire, and disidentification.

I focus on three emergent queer personae – the Gossips, the Ambivalents, and the Flexers– whose orientations toward relational labor and spatial belonging materialize through distinct semiotic practices. The Gossips, largely queer women and nonbinary individuals, have dense and multiplex social networks with strong social ties. They are the primary organizers of events and activism for the queer community. They are in part defined by their rejection of heteronormative dynamics: through metapragmatic discourse at events like a "Decentering Men Picnic" about who gives and receives care, they bring up feminist critiques, constructing women as ethical subjects who "do the work" while men benefit without reciprocating. But when these same speakers describe their exhaustion supporting Ambivalents and Flexers, they recycle the very tropes they deploy against men, revealing a fractally recursive (Gal & Irvine 2019) structure of care imbalance. These discourses are not merely descriptive; they index and reproduce social asymmetries within queer formations.

Ambivalents inhabit a tense position between attachment to local queer life and aspiration for the West, where they see their desires as fully achievable. Their linguistic practices reflect this in code-switching, citation of American queer media, and sociophonetic features borrowed from English. Flexers, in contrast, disidentify with Romania altogether. Their performances of cosmopolitanism and queer adjacency circulate through lexical borrowing, English-mediated slang, and stylistic distancing from other queer people in Iasi. While they seldom claim queerness explicitly, they are legible through semiotic links to global queer imaginaries.

Through close attention to how participants narrate care – who gives it, who gets it, and who refuses it – I show how metapragmatic discourse becomes a central means of managing moral and affective life in queer Iași. Participants don't just describe care relations; they evaluate them, orient to them, and position themselves and others through them. These narratives hinge on fine-grained distinctions: who is "needy," who is "too much," who is on the "unreciprocated" end of a dynamic, or who is "doing the most." I argue that care emerges as a key semiotic terrain through which these queer subjects calibrate their identities and relational obligations, reproducing hierarchies even as they attempt to resist them.

Presenter(s): Anna-Marie Sprenger

Magic, History, and Enregisterment of Soul-Calling in Nuosu Contemporary Singing

The ongoing scholarly attention to the intersection of vocally mediated communicative registers with affect and history as an object of anthropological study highlights verbal/chanted/sung genres as a fertile site for producing place, personhood and history (Feld and Basso 1996; Harkness 2013; Mueggler 2017; Samuels 2004). This paper explores the ways in which Nuosu Yi popular music artists from Southwest China construct a genealogy of interactional texts (Silverstein 2005) in their contemporary songwriting and singing practices, using a ritually powerful chanted soul-calling register known as *yyrkut* (ꍯꍯ) (Bender 2005). As a ritualized genre for healing and safeguarding purposes in traditional settings, *yyrkut* is chanted primarily by the officiating ritual specialists, but also invites lay participants to converge and produce vocalizations in the ritual domain, highlighting the prosodic production of voice and charm in the enregistered process of renewing relationships with non- or semi-human others (i.e., ancestors, spirits of the dead, ghosts, nature spirits). Drawing on Peirce's semiotics of the intersecting trichotomies with an analytical focus on the rhematic configuration of signs (Gal and Irvine 2019; Harkness 2022), I examine how the creative use of *yyrkut* vernacular forms in popular songs becomes an object of its perceived effects, anchored in Nuosu historical consciousness.

Presenter(s): Jiaying Liu

Textual Democracy: Liberal Pluralism and Democratic Practice in Taiwan's Reading Groups

This paper explores the relationship between social reading practices and democratic politics through an ethnographic study of a Taipei-area reading group called "The No Rules Book Club". Focusing primarily on books in the self-help genre, this group of readers meets weekly to interpret texts and learn from them how to live well. In the process, readers are called upon to imagine their past, present and possible future selves in ways that are amenable to the kinds of self-transformation the books describe. In practice, this group imagination requires complex social-semiotic labor through which readers locate the described world in relation to the world of their experience, often bridging disparate contexts and unfamiliar registers.

Rather than seeking unity of worldview or consensus of interpretation, these readers use the presumed stability of the text to expose and calibrate differences between readers themselves—differences of gender, education, religious belief, and personality, to name just a few. Within the idealized space of the reading group, multiple perspectives are understood as not as contradictory, but as reciprocally enriching, leading to a fuller understanding than could be attained on one's own. But the reality of the reading groups I attended was often fraught with conflict and exclusion, as is the reality of Taiwanese democratic politics upon which they seem to allegorically draw.

Using linguistic and semiotic analysis of the reading practices in use in Taiwanese reading groups, this paper asks: what kind of pluralism is necessary for democratic practice? To what degree must people share understandings of the truth to do politics together?

Presenter(s): Aliyah Bixby-Driesen

What Comes First? Language and Identity in the Disabled Community

Language is one of the most salient mediating factors of both public and personal identity construction. The linguistic conventions used to label individuals and groups in the modern day are laden with linguistic lineages that include the social indices of otherization and oppression. This paper analyzes the role of language in the identity construction of disabled people on both the individual and institutional levels, focusing on the ongoing debate over the efficacy of "person-first" and "identity first" language use regarding the disabled community. By situating this debate within a larger historical framework, this research aims to reveal the historical effects of language use and the change in linguistic constructions on the public and private perceptions of the disabled community.

Presenter(s): Grace Pearse

"Did you see what she posted?": Multimodal Gossip and the Ethics of Exposure in Digitally Mediated Youth Interaction

This presentation draws on ethnographic fieldwork with high school youth in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, to explore gossip as a multimodal and transitional communicative practice. In the context of a society marked by post-war fragmentation and deep-seated ethnonational divisions, youth increasingly move between local cultural frameworks and more cosmopolitan settings, such as international high schools like the United World College (UWC) in Mostar. These transitions are not just geographic or institutional, but deeply social and semiotic-producing moments of heightened ambiguity, shifting peer norms, and redefined boundaries of belonging.

Building on my framework of Digitally Mediated Face-to-Face (DM-FTF) interaction, I analyze how gossip-often dismissed as trivial or marginal-is in fact a key site where youth negotiate social knowledge, moral frameworks, and shifting interpersonal alignments. Far from being limited to verbal exchanges, gossip among youth is deeply multimodal: it involves whispered side comments, exchanged glances, covertly shown screenshots, the forwarding of messages, and references to past posts or deleted stories. These fragments circulate not only in digital space, but within and through face-to-face encounters, generating what I call layered participation frameworks-where speakers, overhearers, and digital audiences coalesce across communicative modes.

In one ethnographic episode, three teenage girls discuss a peer's sudden relationship status change by combining snippets of social media posts, emoji interpretations, and in-person observations. A screenshot functions not just as evidence, but as a pivot in conversation-inviting judgment, humor, and subtle recalibrations of group alignment. These interactions, often happening in semi-public school settings, fold together multiple temporalities (the "before UWC," "now," and "what comes next"), revealing gossip's role as a transitional practice. In this setting, gossip becomes a way to navigate the moral and social disorientation of shifting between Mostar's local norms and UWC's more international, liberal culture.

This flash presentation thus offers both a methodological and theoretical contribution. Methodologically, it builds on DM-FTF as a way to account for the semiotic density of contemporary

youth interaction, where smartphones and social media artifacts are not separate from conversation but integrated into its very structure. Theoretically, it repositions gossip as a form of ethical labor through which youth engage with shifting chronotopes of identity, accountability, and visibility. In a world where screens and speech are increasingly entangled, gossip offers a window into how youth learn to make sense of each other-and of themselves-across rapidly shifting social terrains.

Presenter(s): Dejan Duric

320 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #5

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Anusha Hariharan , Camila Barros Coelho, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Devin Proctor, Elon University, Zannatun Nahar, University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Science and Global Studies, John Pendygraft , Vita Zelenska

Presenter(s): Anusha Hariharan, Camila Barros Coelho, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Devin Proctor, Elon University, Zannatun Nahar, John Pendygraft, Vita Zelenska

Presentation(s): Formations of feminist “thalaimurai”: intergenerationality, memory and care in Tamil political life

Based on ethnographic work with feminist collectives in Tamil Nadu, this talk attends to the intermediations between embodied, intimate feminist solidarities and the construction of feminist memory in intergenerational political spaces. The twin concepts of "generation" and "genealogy" have been central to anthropological theorizing, evident in the discipline's foundations in studies of kinship and biological descent. Beyond this oeuvre, two lines of enquiry have emerged: identification of cohorts based either on patterns of consumption (of commodities, labor, services) signaling shifts in political economy (eg. Gen Z or Millennials), or critical events that index a temporal juncture (eg. postwar generation). Departing from either conception, this talk builds on Tamil feminists' contextual use of thalaimurai (generations) in political life as marking transformations in activist imaginaries and shifting conceptions of the political. Their use of thalaimurai refrains from presuming an apriori relationality between generations (through kinship), to instead posit political relationships as requiring care labor, in this case, through the work of memory.

In tracking feminists' use of thalaimurai this talk demonstrates an intermediation at play, where the mediated object – memory – also serves as the mediating device. On the one hand, embodied feminist friendships and intimacies mediate the construction of memory, that feminists perform as a form of care for themselves and their histories. On the other, memory-work mediates the formation of new relationalities between generations, thus raising important questions for what political inheritance could mean for feminists in postcolonial South Asia.

Presenter(s): Anusha Hariharan

From Radio to Internet: The Communication Shift for the Mebêngôkre-Kayapó

This study examines how communication practices have transformed within a Mebêngôkre-Kayapó community, an Indigenous group from the Brazilian Amazon, following the introduction of internet connectivity in 2020. Focusing on the shift from radio communication to WhatsApp, it explores the impacts of digital media on cultural and social practices. Based on multi-sited ethnography and community interviews, the findings reveal both the benefits and challenges associated with internet use, including enhanced connectivity and emerging cultural dilemmas. While digital communication strengthens logistical organization and family ties, it also raises concerns about cultural preservation amid growing external influences. The study further highlights the community's interest in cyber awareness education and potential future collaborations.

Presenter(s): Camila Barros Coelho

Machines for the Movement: AI Chatbots, Alt-Tech Platforms, and the Discursive Production of White Nationalism

In 2024, the alt-tech platform Gab—which bills itself as a champion of "free speech"—unveiled Gab AI. This AI, they argued, would offer an "uncensored" alternative to the increasingly popular ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini models. As a bit of a gimmick to get the program off the ground, Gab AI offered chatbots based on historical figures, so a user could get an "uncensored" take on current events and politics from the likes of Henry Ford, Theodore Roosevelt, or George Orwell. Users could also chat with fictional people representing cultural archetypes, like "Charlotte" the tradwife, "Dakota" the trans rights activist, and "America First Zoomer." This presentation considers work a colleague and I did over the past year engaging with these chatbots in an attempt to test their capacity for radicalization in white supremacist discourses. Over a series of interviews with multiple historical and fictional AI "agents," we pushed the limits of what the bots would tell us, slowly asking more directed questions about white nationalist talking points like Great Replacement Theory or conspiracy theories about racial IQ discrepancies. What we found was that the AI in its current form was rudimentary in its ability to radicalize in a way that passed the "Turing test" but that it was very effective at working specific white nationalist talking points and discursive constructions like "racial realism" into conversation. The work—still ongoing—has led to more questions than answers: is this the future of radicalization? How will (and how do) overt white nationalist organizations use these systems for their ends? How are AI systems in more mainstream venues influenced in the process? And of note to anthropology more broadly, how do we conceive of ethnographic discussions and interviews with non-human entities, especially considering the increasing prevalence of AI technologies in our lives?

Presenter(s): Devin Proctor

Mongol Shobhajatra: An Archival Research and Visual Taxonomy Analysis of its evolution

Mangal Shobhajatra is an urban rally organizationally started in 1989 to celebrate Bengali's new year by manifesting an unprecedented visual identity conceptualized, organized and executed by the students from the 1986-87 cohort of the Institute of Fine Arts (IFA), University of Dhaka. They cooperated with their academic peers and some eminent cultural personalities. Although the rally was initially titled Ananda Shobhajatra (Joyful Procession), as soon as the second year the name was changed to Mongol Shobhajatra (Procession of Blessings). This rally has continued for the last 34 years in a similar ambiance - yet with an expanded urban scale and participation. Using archival research, taxonomic study and visual research methodologies, the authors investigated the evolution of the news and images dedicated to the Bengali New Year on the front pages of daily newspapers from 1989–2018.

Presenter(s): Zannatun Nahar

Co-author(s): Muhammad Rahman

ONCE UPON A TOWN: THE POWER OF ORIGIN STORIES IN MEDIA, HISTORY, HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

In 1939, Zora Neale Hurston wrote, in *Moses: Man of the Mountain*, "The present was an egg laid by the past that had the future inside its shell." (Hurston 1939: 193) Today, the complicated media landscape in St. Petersburg can be viewed as just such an egg. The deep erosion of trust in media and challenges faced by local media producers lie at the end of a long, often unacknowledged, chain of complex local history. In St. Petersburg, the headline issues of 2024 can be traced back to seeds planted in dominant media narratives as early as 1914. In that way, Hurston's egg – past, present and future together - represents a social dominion defined by dominant, and socially privileged, historic narrative storytelling.

This discussion, drawn from my 2025 Ph.D. dissertation, examines how the ghost of narratives past are constructed and how they shape everyday human realities in the present. The effort applies theoretical principals from media practice theory, narrative theory and heritage studies. That effort better contextualizes media practice today by putting it in conversation with the powerful social functions of dominant media narratives in historical formations of inclusion and exclusion, identity, and political economy, with specificity, on a local level. With that context, the project then collaborates with local media producers in the present to better understand how they are defining and achieving success. Themes from those local media producers were identified heuristically and explored.

By engaging perspectives from lived experiences of independent local media producers the project considered how they are adapting career identities in a present moment that is concretely and specifically defined historically by narratively privileged storytelling, rapidly advancing media technology and current political debated centered on the city's longitudinal commitment to a local political economy dedicated to tourism, baseball and leisure.

Presenter(s): John Pendygraft

The Ghosts of Sonic Activism: Sounds that populate the researcher's body

"No borders! No nations! Stop deportations!" – I noticed that this slogan kept playing in my head more than a week after the demonstration against pushbacks in February 2022 in Athens, Greece. Since then, the teenage activists from the Ritsona refugee camp in Athens have been shouting it in my head with very firm voices and no intention of giving up. Their voices still sometimes reappear in my head almost three years after I did that part of the fieldwork in Athens.

Sonic collectives keep living in such singular ghosts. In this case, this is the collective of activists who fight against pushbacks, that is, horrendous human rights violations at the Greek borders. The ghostly sounds share the spaces of our bodies, of media, buildings, demonstrators, and passers-by. What does this cohabitation invoke in my self-perception as a researcher and activist? Sonic memories of the migration research, what are they calling for?

My contribution will invite the listeners to exploration and reflection about the sounds that populate our bodies after demonstrations, that come to us in our dreams, that make us unthink our knowledge production. The presentation will be based on ten brief conversations about ghostly slogans with decolonial anti-imperialist researchers and will respond to the following questions: If we think about the slogans and other rhythmical ghosts that populate and build our body, what would come to our mind? How do these sonic imprints of our ethnographies define our politics?

Presenter(s): Vita Zelenska

538 Combined Flash Session #14

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Abigail Buchanan , Jonathan Muller , Jiantong Zhang , Memphis Mallory , William Duncan, East Tennessee State University, Sociology and Anthropology Department, Shirin Alamdari, University of British Columbia

Presenter(s): Abigail Buchanan, Jonathan Muller, Jiantong Zhang, Memphis Mallory, William Duncan, East Tennessee State University, Sociology and Anthropology Department, Shirin Alamdari, University of British Columbia

Presentation(s): A Tale of Two Readings: What Historical Marginalia Reveals and Conceals

The Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum in Rockford, Illinois, houses an extensive collection of over 800 books owned by the Tinker family (1836-1942), many of which contain marginalia-notes, underlining, drawings, and other markings left by their original readers. These annotations serve as a bridge between past and present, offering a unique lens into the personal thoughts, intellectual engagements, and historical consciousness of the Tinker family and their broader social world. This presentation examines how marginalia function as historical artifacts, revealing previously unrecorded narratives about life at the Cottage, regional events in Rockford, and shifting cultural and political ideologies of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Applying an interdisciplinary approach grounded in material culture studies, historical anthropology, and literary analysis, this research explores how these handwritten traces complicate and enrich our understanding of Victorian life. The concept of the "anthropology of absence" is useful in the examination of not only the content of these annotations but also what is omitted or left unsaid. By engaging with these marginal notes, we uncover the intellectual and social networks that shaped the Tinker family's world, ultimately repositioning the museum's book collection as an active participant in constructing local historical narratives. This study highlights the potential of marginalia as ghostly remnants of the past, whispering stories that might otherwise remain unheard.

Presenter(s): Abigail Buchanan

Digital Lives, Physical Impacts: Community and Capital in Video Games

Video games have become a globally prevalent part of life and a form of emergent culture. My research examines video game culture to ask how players, creators and others in gaming interact with video games in ways that challenge hegemonic narratives regarding race and gender. For example, prior research or general news might tell us that video games are a space of play dominated by white masculinity. In asking how gamers challenge those narratives, I seek to offer analysis and discussion of how gamers have built their own understandings of community. I show how gamers have developed communities through and around forms of social, cultural, and economic capital that are deeply rooted in their identity of what it means to be a gamer. Furthermore, I show that despite stemming from forms of capital, these communities of digital life do not need to have the same uncaring or oppressive nature as capitalism, under which I and the gamer-interlocutors I work with physically exist. I show that these communities support diverse representation in digital play and physical presence, while also providing care to the self and to each other in ways that have tangible impacts. Data for this research has been collected as part of ongoing dissertation work involving digital and physical participant observation, narrative analysis, surveys, and interviews.

Presenter(s): Jonathan Muller

Ghosts of the Art World: Independent Artists and the Struggle for Visibility Beyond Institutional Frameworks

This ethnography explores Golden Belt Arts, a collaborative art space in Durham, North Carolina, where independent artists create and showcase their work without the representation of galleries, agencies, or corporate sponsorship. Through five months of participant observation and in-depth interviews, this study examines how these "ghosts" of the art world navigate creative expression, financial sustainability, and public visibility outside the dominant circuits of the commercial art market. Unlike artists in global art capitals like New York City, who often operate within established networks of galleries and collectors, these independent creators work at the margins, forging alternative paths to recognition and economic survival. By centering artists who are both present in and invisible to the broader art economy, this study challenges traditional hierarchies of artistic

legitimacy and offers insights into the complexities of sustaining a creative practice beyond institutional frameworks.

Presenter(s): Jiantong Zhang

Photographic preservation of the San Marcos City Cemetery: Documenting historic grave markers in Central Texas

Historical cemeteries provide invaluable information about the cultural landscapes of the past. Historians, archaeologists, and genealogists rely on cemeteries and their materials to conduct research that benefits the descendants of interred individuals. Graveyards create a link between the people of the past and the people of the modern day, a visual bridge that unites communities across centuries. The San Marcos City Cemetery serves Hays County, Texas in the same way. San Martians are connected to their cultural heritage and the people who once shared it through the continued preservation of their graveyards and cemeteries. In the digital age, photography has proven to be an immeasurably useful tool in preserving cultural materials, and cemeteries are no different. Systematic photographic records of cemeteries can preserve their anthropological data even if they are damaged by natural factors like weathering and erosion, or by sociopolitical factors.

While surveys have been undertaken in this graveyard before by Hays County residents to record the tombstones' inscriptions (Walling, 1986), no complete photographic record of the cemetery's markers has been made. This presentation will cover recent digital documentation efforts of the San Marcos City Cemetery's history grave markers and explore their potential for further inquiry into the fields of art history, archaeology, and visual anthropology. It is the presenter's hope that opening a dialogue about grave marker preservation and its role in connecting communities with their cultural heritage will inspire a reexamination of the significance of cemeteries for their communities in the broader professional anthropological community.

Presenter(s): Memphis Mallory

Publication Trends in Forensic Biohistory: Spectacular Subjects and Contested Bodies

Over the last two decades there seems to have been an increase in what can be called historical forensic cases in popular media, cases in which specialists were called on to provide a positive identification of an historical personage, characterize some facet of their life or death, or using past remains to characterize aspects of an historical incident. These have ranged from the internationally sensational (Richard III) to the regionally relevant (Pedro de Corpa, a martyred priest from Georgia). This type of work has been called forensic biohistory, and over the last decade we have attempted to explore and define the nature of forensic biohistory as a framework for engaging past bodies. Here we briefly characterize forensic biohistory and present evidence that publication on these cases has grown dramatically over the last 50 years, with publications doubling roughly each decade since the 1990s. We offer reasons to account for this increase, and suggest that it is in part attributable to the use of specular subjects and contested bodies in popular and social media to attract attention in an online information economy.

Presenter(s): William Duncan

Co-author(s): Christopher Stojanowski

Silenced Provenance: Luristan Bronzes and Knowledge Production at the Museum of Anthropology

This project traces the provenance of nine Luristan bronzes held at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, examining how these Iron Age objects made their way from western Iran into a Canadian museum collection. Luristan bronzes, celebrated for their intricate designs yet shadowed by a history of looting and unprovenanced trade, embody the complex entanglement of colonial and imperial archaeology, fragmentary documentation and the art market. Often acquired with little or no contextual information, these objects raise important questions about the ethics of collecting and the responsibilities of institutions that house them. Drawing on acquisition records, institutional correspondence, and archival research, this study follows the journeys of these nine objects and considers how decisions about collecting were made, recorded, and legitimized. Using a "trace ethnography" approach, the research explores how museums construct authority and knowledge through practices such as acquisition, classification, and display. By revisiting these processes, the project seeks not only to recover lost or obscured histories, but also to highlight the silences and gaps that continue to shape our understanding of such collections today. Ultimately, this work contributes to broader conversations around decolonizing museums, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and critical reflection in how institutions engage with the cultural heritage in their care.

Presenter(s): Shirin Alamdari

4385 Haunting/ed: Ghost and Monster Stories as Critical Historiography

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Oral Presentation Session

To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghost to help you imagine what was lost that never even existed" (Gordon 2008, 57).

Monster, a word of Latin origin ("warn"). Ghost, a word of Germanic origin ("spirit, soul" in Old English). For many anthropologists, ghosts, monsters, and other supernatural beings animate our ethnographic stories and haunt encounters in the field. These creatures present themselves as powerful beings through which our interlocutors articulate their deepest desires, traumas, and hopes for the future. They pinpoint a myriad of gendered, racialized, and classed inequities as well as insecurities about home, the nation, and the planet (Musharbash and Gershon 2023). These beings are a reminder that the spectral and the monstrous can enrich our understanding of human experience in its most profound and disturbing forms. Taking seriously Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's contention that "monstrosity challenges a coherent or totalizing concept of history" (Cohen 1996, x) this panel considers questions related to constructions of anthropological time, space, and the "monstrous other." In interrogating how the intertwining of the "real" and the "unreal" challenges conventional epistemologies and historiographies and opens up new avenues for wrestling with

collective trauma, anxieties, violence, insecurity, and the quest for a desirable, livable, and dignified life this panel asks: How can ethnographers confront the invisible forces shaping lives, those that present themselves as an absence while being a seething presence of something (Gordon 2008)? What histories of violence, insecurity, power, and resistance lurk in their creases? How do ghostly and monstrous beings challenge us to engage changing conceptions of what the archive can look like and the place of historical imagination? How can we, as scholar-learners, think of ghost/monster stories as critical historiographies that are multisensory, just like life itself, revealing ways of being that have been previously misrecognized or mis-told? And, how can we draw on a critical historiography of monstrosity to know/imagine otherwise? In positioning ghosts and monsters as worthy interlocutors, this panel calls for monstrous and ghostly stories. Panelists will also consider the performative as both an ethnographic knowing-analytic tool as well as a medium for sharing the ethnographic work.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Kimberley McKinson, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Nelli Sargsyan, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies

Chair: Nelli Sargsyan, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies

Presenter(s): Nelli Sargsyan, Emerson College, Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies, Nataya Friedan, Cornell University, Kimberley McKinson, Vanderbilt University, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Olivares, University of Texas Medical Branch, Carla Hung, University of North Carolina, Asheville, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Discussant: Calynn Dowler, Vanderbilt University

Presentation(s): No Monsters Here, Just a War, a Mother, and Her Dead-Alive Kid

In the fall of 2020 Armenia and Azerbaijan, two South Caucasus neighbors fought a 44-day war over Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed territory that had changed hands and seen earlier skirmishes and wars. Thousands of young people were killed. Enraged by the incompetence and irresponsibility of the state that sent their children to be killed in a war it could not afford fighting, many families protested in front of government buildings and in places where they would encounter government officials in Armenia. To get back at the current government, their political rivals manipulated the pain of losing a child by funding some parents to confront the government. Mothers of hundreds of those killed turned to assisted reproductive technologies provided for free by the state to have new babies. Could they be practicing distributive reproductive justice in the absence of any state-level infrastructural support for sustaining life, while it supports birth? In this presentation-performance, I listen to the wartime and postwar stories of Armenian mothers and the monsters that haunt them or lurk in their stories and dreams. I draw on feminist praxis, to share the revelations of these monster stories by creating affective resonances between these grieving-elated mothers, the ethnographer, and the listener to touch and feel the (un)familiar people in (un)familiar places deeply and with care as I rehearse a livable life from what's left, to feel anew, oriented toward sustaining life.

Presenter(s): Nelli Sargsyan

Phantom Cowboys: Cosplaying Settler Archetypes into the Climate Crisis

This paper will offer a cultural history of the Texas cowboy and the oil industry from 19th century settler travelogues to Friday Night Lights to my own ethnographic research in Houston and across Texas from 2018-2020. The figure of the cowboy reoccurred in my fieldwork though very few people that I interviewed in the oil and gas industry had worked in cattle ranching. In the oil industry, business men and their families continue to go to Colorado in the summer to escape the Texas heat and play cowboy in nicer weather. The figure of the Texas cowboy has been central to projects of dispossession and extraction and now looms in the consciousness of the climate concerned as a monster who can't just keep it in the ground. Are these monsters real? Is their monstrosity what is obstructing climate action? What other modes of engagement might disarm these ongoing and destructive projects perpetuated through cosplay? Which ghosts may emerge hiding behind the cowboy who may feed on being seen as monstrous? In Houston, men in big trucks and thick belts whispered about climate change, race and Bill Clinton to outsiders like me. In other settings they may have spoken loud and clear. Who are these simultaneously bombastic and frightened engineers and businessmen and why are they playing cowboy?

Presenter(s): Nataya Friedan

Blackheart Man: Monstrosity, the Marvelous Real, and Crime in Jamaica

Crime in Jamaica has steadily escalated since the nation gained independence from Britain in 1962 and the severity of the country's crime problem is typically made legible through a series of increasing crime rates—metrics of the real. These data and rates serve to statistically capture the morbid effects of the crime phenomena. Still, in everyday talk, crime is grappled with outside such metrics. It is consistently bemoaned as a "monster," to be tamed and controlled. In this paper, I take seriously the cultural signification of crime as a monster in Jamaica. I offer a reading of the Jamaican "crime monster" through the figure of the Blackheart Man, the protagonist of one of Jamaica's most bloodcurdling myths. In centering the anthropophagic Blackheart Man through the storytelling soundscapes of reggae, I interrogate the temporalities of racialization, violence, and fear tethered to the Blackheart Man's monster body. I suggest that both the Blackheart Man and contemporary crime monster perfectly embody what the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier called "lo real maravilloso." In reading the Blackheart Man as a dynamic force through which to make sense of crime and make it legible beyond metrics of the real, this paper invites us to contend with an alternate historicity of crime in Jamaica. That is, one open to taking a mythology of monstrosity and an epistemology of the "marvelous real" as critical modes through which to understand what it means to live in a high-crime country.

Presenter(s): Kimberley McKinson

Monstrous Excess and Ghostly Pains: Reckoning with the Opioid Crisis in the Gulf Coast

This paper analyzes the opioid crisis in the U.S. Gulf Coast through a lens of monstrous excess and ghostly reckonings, examining the interplay between profit, pain, and care. I begin with a critical analysis of the television series, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a gothic allegory of a

pharmaceutical family dynasty's self-destruction. The series renders visible the horror of corporate greed and familial decay, echoing the legacy of the Sackler family—owners of Purdue Pharma, the company that developed and aggressively marketed OxyContin while downplaying its addictive potential. Moving beyond the fictional, I turn to ethnographic engagement with community clinics and private foundation-supported initiatives in Galveston, Texas, addressing the crisis's lingering "ghosts"—the enduring consequences of overdose deaths. These projects, serving the uninsured, attempt to channel these ghosts into improved care for the living and hopes for future healthcare possibilities. Through a multi-sited narrative encompassing television, institutional ethnography, and public health crisis analysis, I trace how the monstrous architectures of the opioid crisis came to be, and their lingering effects on care and capital. This paper asks: how can ethnographers confront these apparitions—not merely as metaphors, but as material traces of violence, disavowal, and complicity—embedded within archives, clinics, and community programs?

Presenter(s): Jessica Olivares

The Refugee Trafficker and the Monstrous Haunting of Europe's Asylum Regime

This paper interrogates the figure of the "refugee trafficker" as a monstrous specter born of contemporary Mediterranean migration. Drawing on Derrida's hauntology, it treats this figure as a ghost haunting Europe's borders, lingering as an unsettling reminder of an unresolved claim to colonial reparations. Informed by ethnographic research into the Glauco trial (Italy, 2016–2021), the paper analyzes how the courtroom upheld rigid binaries between victim and perpetrator, despite testimonies revealing that many accused traffickers were themselves coerced migrants. Legal anthropology and critical race theory help illuminate how the law produces this monstrosity—the refugee trafficker as both scapegoat and mirror of Europe's asylum contradictions. Building on Tendayi Achiume's formulation of migration as decolonization, the paper argues that the refugee trafficker becomes a cipher for unresolved colonial debts. These haunt the present in the form of punitive asylum regimes that criminalize mobility while denying historical responsibility. The state's disavowal of its own complicity – in creating lethal migration corridors – externalizes guilt onto the phantom of the trafficker. Ultimately, the paper asks what monsters are born of such disavowals, and how they reflect the haunted ethical landscape of European border security.

Presenter(s): Carla Hung

Discussion

524 Association of Black Anthropologists Flash Session #2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Karine Narahara, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, Abena Karikari, Akil Fletcher, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Reynolds, Rice University, Nia Harris, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Presenter(s): Karine Narahara, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, Abena Karikari, Akil Fletcher, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Reynolds, Rice University, Nia Harris, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

Presentation(s): A Book for My Great-grandmother – or Weaving Candomblé Histories

bell hooks once said: "The burden of proof weighs heavily on the hearts of those who do not have written documentation, who rely only on oral testimony passed from generation to generation" (1991:193). Even when we do have documents, they do not seem enough. How do we write history despite this burden? In the last few years, I have been working on a biography about our great-grandmother, Agripina de Souza – Oba Deyi, filha de santo (daughter-of-saint) of Mother Anninha dos Santos – Oba Biyi, two important Candomblé leaders in Brazil, both connected to the terreiro (place of worship) Axé Opô Afonjá, inaugurated in 1910. This is a collective project that came to me as a spiritual task and involves my community, the Ilê Axé Aganju Ixolá – a Candomblé terreiro located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The project was started many years ago by one of our ancestors, Father João dos Santos – Tobi Obá, initiated in Candomblé by Mother Agripina, in 1959, who for decades maintained a disorganized archive related to her. This presentation will explore aspects of the investigation of these documents and the writing process of the book, regarding its challenges. How to write a linear history when our ways of storytelling are cyclical? How do we write with our ancestors in a world dominated by a type of historiography that values the "written proof"? How do we manage conflicts regarding different versions of history? How to cope with the personal fears of being in charge of such a big task?

Presenter(s): Karine Narahara

Black Love Matters: Discourses around Black Romance in Online Literary Spaces

For the first time since its inception, in 2024 the New York Times bestseller list had two black romances on its list; Kennedy Ryan's *This Could Be Us* and Tia Williams' *A Love Song for Ricki Wilde*. Amid the rise of social media spaces dedicated to books, the literary world is taking notice of the impact these spaces have on bestseller lists and on the popularity of certain books over others. Additionally, this has enlightened readers to the power they have in determining the fates of books thus, we see the emergence of 'bookfluencers'; social media influencers who provide book-related content. This paper explores the discourses led by bookfluencers around the black romance genre in online literary spaces that have emerged on TikTok and Instagram. In general, the mainstream and romance publishing world are heavily dominated by white-authored books centring white characters. In recent years, the emergence of social media sub-cultures such as bookstagram (Book community on Instagram) and BookTok (Book community on TikTok) have further heightened the dominance of whiteness in bookish and literary spaces. However, these spaces have also provided platforms for black people and people of colour to forge their niches where non-white readers and authors control the narrative around blackness.

Using netnography, that is, internet ethnography, this paper delves into the perspectives and experiences of black readers and readers of color around black romance. The ways through which black romance serves as a medium for social commentary and for demystifying stereotypes about

black love and blackness are revealed. The findings also depict how literature can help to bridge cultural gaps.

Presenter(s): Abena Karikari

Gaming Beyond Death: Black Grieving and Restoration through League of Legends

Video games and death have often gone hand in hand. Rarely has there been a game in which you are not expected to die repeatedly as you slowly progress through its levels or narratives. But death within video games can, at times, be a much more visceral experience. For Black players, in particular, video games can often serve as a harsh reminder that Black bodies are often more valued in death than they are alive. However, video games have also functioned as restoration sites for Black players, providing opportunities to grieve and form intimate relationships within their communities. But how do Black players respond to this duality? How do they find room to grieve when games often benefit from portraying Black death? This chapter engages the juxtaposition of life and death faced by Black players by discussing the experience of a Black player named Dragonite, who found a way to grieve loss using the game League of Legends. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how Black players retool online games, often steeped in racism, into sites of Black repair and jubilation.

Presenter(s): Akil Fletcher

Ghosts of the Diaspora and Africa: Race in West African Vodun

This presentation examines how West African Vodun is being used by both Afro-diasporic tourists to Benin and Beninese nationals as a means of processing and rectifying the history of Transatlantic slavery. The Beninese state has spent the past thirty years promoting African indigenous religions as something crucial to Benin's history and national identity. This trend began with the democratization processes of the 1990s, which enabled Benin to become one of most democratically stable countries in West Africa, and encouraged President Nicephore Soglo to invest in tourism. During this time, the Ouidah 92 festival expanded to include the Door of No Return monument built by UNESCO on the beach in Ouidah-to commemorate the last view of Africa those enslaved in Dahomey would have had before being sent to the Americas. These heritage-based monuments, built to commemorate slavery and promote the culture of Vodun, are meant to draw in an Afro-diasporic market of tourism (among other global markets). Benin's current President, Patrice Talon, has continued this decades-long trend of commemorating history. In this talk, the presenter analyzes the ways Afro-diasporic visitors and Beninese work together to incorporate the diaspora within West African Vodun practice as a means of making peace with a turbulent past. The presenter uses excerpts from fieldwork in southern Benin towards this aim.

Presenter(s): Sarah Reynolds

Healing from the Earth: How Black farmers utilize land and food sovereignty to restore health amid racial injustice

Traditional definitions and perspectives of well-being that incorporate physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual states of being are returning to the collective consciousness (hooks, 1996). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed once again the Black population's heightened vulnerability to mental and physical illness rooted in the history of violence, discrimination, and poverty in the United States (CDC, 2020). The byproducts of these long-existing racial inequities in this country, since slavery in the early colonial period, create and self-perpetuate barriers to all forms of well-being. For this reason, groups within the Black community have actively refused to entirely rely on industry by supplying and resourcing ancestral practices to sustain their health as well as coordinating grassroots and mutual aid organizing efforts (Lewis, 2011). One group that has historically advocated for land access and food sovereignty as a means of holistically addressing health disparities is Black farmers.

In this paper, I expanded on existing scholarship to explore how Black farmers have deployed their knowledge and skills to cultivate healing with the Earth and incite growing food as an act of resistance against systemic oppression. This developed a longitudinal ethnographic study that examined how Black farmers use their material and intangible assets to advocate for their communities while providing access to land, fresh foods, and plant medicine. Through the theoretical and practical frameworks of Ecowomanism and Reproductive Justice, I analyzed their historical and modern day advocacy, beliefs, and practices in relationship to the well-being of Black communities. The first stage of the research revealed that agriculture can provide a pathway to bodily and economic autonomy for Black people, thereby fostering collective liberation efforts. Later, I executed ethnographic fieldwork where I lived and/or worked with 4 Black women who farm or steward land to support my preliminary findings. This paper now includes an analysis of this fieldwork and recommendations for the future of this study.

Presenter(s): Nia Harris

518 Combined Flash Session #6

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Gal Kramarski , Teckla C Negga Melchior , Juan E Eguiguren , Mayumi Ishikawa, Osaka University, Niels Schia , Amber Noor Mustafa , Fasa Namoh, National Taiwan University, Ben Blanco

Presenter(s): Gal Kramarski, Teckla C Negga Melchior, Juan E Eguiguren, Mayumi Ishikawa, Osaka University, Niels Schia, Amber Noor Mustafa, Fasa Namoh, National Taiwan University, Ben Blanco

Presentation(s): A Tainted Opportunity: How Palestinian Jerusalemite Development Workers Navigate the Occupation

What does it mean for a Palestinian to work for an Israeli development project? Based on ethnographic research conducted in Jerusalem, this paper introduces the analytical framework of a tainted opportunity to describe how Palestinian workers understand and navigate their roles within Israeli-led development schemes directed at East Jerusalem communities.

In light of Israel's Occupation, resulting in an ongoing catastrophe for the Palestinian people, my interlocutors navigate work as a channel for doing and undoing of political realities. A tainted opportunity, as I define it in my research, is a consciously constructed, calculated engagement with an uncomfortable, but meaningful, task. It is about seizing of action potential despite deterring conditions, while utilising a platform that is viewed by my Palestinian interlocutors as morally-stained, polluted, or impure. For my interlocutors, taking a tainted opportunity means existing despite the coercive challenges attached to acting from within such a compromised position. In this paper, I explore ethnographically the ways in which Palestinian workers realise a tainted opportunity beyond compromise, and define through it their role and responsibilities towards a transformative moment shaping their collective future.

To make sense of the development project as a tainted opportunity, my interlocutors creatively imbue their daily labour with political meaning. Through these creative acts, they challenge, stretch, and renegotiate the boundaries between East Jerusalem's Palestinian communities and the Israeli occupying state. Viewing Palestinian workers' role through the lens of a tainted opportunity, allows for challenging the binary discourse in critical Palestinian scholarship, which constructs and analyses Palestinians as either collaborators or resisters. Cross-thinking political, economic, and psychological subjectivities, this paper considers how socio-economic and political transformations emerge through the practices of those actively involved in shaping them. As an anthropological lens, a tainted opportunity, complicates the dichotomies of agency versus victimhood, and altruism versus selfishness, often limiting our understanding of development actors.

'Working for the Occupation,' my interlocutors are often judged for enabling, producing, maintaining, or normalising the development apparatus, widely viewed as colonial. Yet their conscious decision to take such a tainted opportunity does not reflect surrender, but a more complicated understanding of their positionality. From their brokerage position, and in their very being, they not only challenge the logic of the development platform, but also participate in reforming the transformative moment imposed on their people.

Presenter(s): Gal Kramarski

An intersection of the internal conflict of the Western zeitgeist and Anthropology: disappearing Barbudans through globalisation and profit.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain Harold Macmillan's "Winds of Change" speech, delivered to both houses of Parliament in Cape Town, South Africa, on 3 February 1960, represented for many and continues to represent a seminal point at which Europe and the Colonial Masters finally acknowledged and accepted the inevitability of decolonisation. However, the question for two siblings from a tiny island in the Leeward Islands that were colonial subjects without the protection of citizens was: Are these Trade Winds or Hurricane-force winds?

Macmillan's speech was a masterful detailing of a future as seen by the oppressor for the Barbudan brother and sister who tasked themselves, twelve years later, with the authorship of the Barbuda

Local Government Act, especially as his speech elegantly outlined the basis on which identity, trade, politics, and governance was to be based for the newly independent peoples of the African continent going forward-and by extension, the diaspora. The enticing element of this speech was the adaptation of a sentence from Edmund Burke's "eternal society."

The 2017 category 5 Hurricane, Irma, blew through Barbuda and swept away "the presence of partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." not only changing the governance and shared identity of the Barbudan people, but also giving space for others to initiate historical revisionism and negationism. Edward Said cautioned that knowledge is about human society, historical knowledge; therefore, the interpretation of this knowledge, who is interpreting, how the interpretation is conducted, for whom and in what historical moment that interpretation occurs. In short, change came to Barbuda not as a result of revolt against political oppression, but instead by globalists, opportunists and neocolonialists that rode in on the tail of a hurricane that effectively wiped out that which was, and that which was to be.

Key words: Barbuda, "Winds of Change", globalisation, historical revisionism, historical negationism, neocolonialist, Edmund Burke, identity, governance, Edward W. Said

Presenter(s): Teckla C Negga Melchior

Anthropology of Diplomacy

Anthropology of Diplomacy

This paper emphasizes the importance of an anthropological perspective in diplomatic practice and in the study of international relations. Anthropologists facilitate cross-cultural understanding and promote interculturality. Doesn't this suggest a connection with diplomacy, which has long held a universal character and is not confined to a purely Western context? Some anthropologists have explored this idea (Magnarella, 1983; Eguiguren, 1987; Latour, 2007; De Vienne & Nahum, 2013; Neumann, 2020).

An anthropological approach to international relations is especially relevant in a globalized world where states and cultures coexist-sometimes uneasily-and where ethnic issues are increasingly significant. We must also consider the role anthropology can play in diplomacy, as both fields share a strong interest in understanding other cultures and in mediation and negotiation.

I will examine the concept of diplomatic culture, which initially developed among states and their representatives, as well as with international organizations, but has since expanded to include multinational corporations, NGOs, non-state actors, and others. In defining what diplomatic culture entails, it is essential to include the ethnography of multilateralism and to promote the idea of an anthropological diplomacy-an approach that is urgently needed in today's fragmented and complex international system.

Juan E Eguiguren

Presenter(s): Juan E Eguiguren

Avenging the Ghosts of Empire: Transnational Student Mobility in the Post-Colonial Plural Society of Malaysia

This paper analyzes the transnational mobility of non-elite, middle-class international students from the Global South to the post-colonial plural society of Malaysia. While Malaysia actively promotes itself as an international education hub by hosting branch campuses of leading Western universities, this ethnographic study highlights the underexplored significance of Asian international universities in improving access, facilitating social mobility and fostering professional development. The three case study institutions examined partner with an international Islamic organization, a Chinese research university, and a private Indian university. These institutions offer affordable international education that is sensitive to non-western intellectual heritages and ethno-religious consciousness, while proactively cultivating ties with national and regional economic networks and opportunities.

Malaysia is a post-colonial modern nation-state that emerged from the "plural society" context (Furnivall, 1948). Its multiethnic social construction—a legacy of the British Empire long considered a baggage for social cohesion—now serves as a strategic asset for strengthening international outreach in the era of globalization. International students' accounts of their migratory trajectories and aspirations illustrate that Asian international universities are becoming as instruments of grassroots globalization (Appadurai 2001), challenging dominant, elite-driven narratives of international education. These institutions may also promote equity in global student mobility, which continues to be characterized not only by rapid expansion but also by uneven development across different regions of the world.

Presenter(s): Mayumi Ishikawa

Diplomacy Under Pressure: Narrating Elected States' Performance on the UN Security Council

This paper examines how elected member states of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) narrate their own performance and navigate both formal and informal pathways to influence before, during, and after their tenure. Securing a non-permanent seat on the UNSC is widely regarded as a major diplomatic achievement, often justified by promises of increased international recognition, status enhancement, and the ability to shape global governance. However, while elected members invest significant political, diplomatic, and economic resources in their campaigns, their actual ability to influence the Council's agenda remains constrained by institutional structures, working procedures, and the dominance of the permanent members. Drawing on existing literature and empirical cases, this study explores how elected states conceptualize and measure a "successful" term, balancing their aspirations for impact with the practical realities of UNSC decision-making. It examines the strategies states employ to navigate the Council's power dynamics, advance national priorities, and contribute to international peace and security. Additionally, it considers how serving on the Council can generate long-term benefits, including enhanced diplomatic competencies and increased credibility in multilateral settings. By analyzing the interplay between expectations,

structural limitations, and available pathways to influence, this paper provides new insights into the role and agency of elected members within the UNSC and the extent to which they can leave a lasting imprint on its decision-making processes.

Presenter(s): Niels Schia

Co-author(s): Kristin Haugevik

Sojourners Seeking Themselves: Identities and Experiences of Pakistani Women Doctoral Students in the United States

In recent decades, the number of women pursuing higher education abroad has increased, with the United States remaining the most preferred destination (Blackburn, 2023; Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016; Stewart-Rozema & Pratts, 2022). However, while this scenario appears mutually beneficial for both the U.S. and these women students, it fails to capture the complexity of their academic journeys and the myriad challenges and opportunities they encounter, which vary based on their cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds and countries of origin.

Since the early 2000s, Pakistan Higher Education Commission (HEC) has aligned its vision with the global agenda of empowering women through education to contribute to national economic prosperity and modernization. As a result, Pakistani women are encouraged to pursue higher education programs (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017). They arrive in the U.S. with academic, cultural, and religious capital, along with a sense of privilege and responsibility, only to be met with various adjustment challenges and prevalent mindsets about Muslim women from the Global South. This context underscores the need to explore the tensions between the aspirations of these students and their lived experiences, shaped by their cultural and social capital, the colonial history embedded in their Pakistani identities and local mindsets.

This study, therefore, examines the academic journeys of six Pakistani, women, Muslim doctoral students studying in the U.S. to accentuate how they perceive their identities in the current context, what coping mechanisms they employ, and how they envision their futures considering their present circumstances. It uses two frameworks to analyze their stories, aiming to uncover the institutional narratives that hinder or support their success, as micro (personal) experiences and macro (institutional) narratives are inseparable (Souto-Manning, 2014). The first framework is Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, which posits that borderlands exist not only at the margins of physical borders but also at the intersections of cultures, races, and socioeconomic classes (Anzaldúa, 1987). These students experience the in-betweenness of their old and new locations, identities, norms, privileges, and challenges, and the aspirations they bring with them versus their actual experiences. The second is Crenshaw's intersectionality theory, which recognizes that people's lives are deeply rooted in 'multiple interconnected social categories' embedded within normative structural inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991). The interplay of social markers like race, religion, nationality, academics, and gender shapes discrimination and privilege in participants' lives. Rich narrative data (Anderson, 2000) from videos, artifact elicitation, and interviews can

inform policies by revealing how students in similar situations mobilize empowerment, resilience, and identity in the US.

Presenter(s): Amber Noor Mustafa

Subjective Spaces and Religious Charisma: A Historical Anthropological Study of Transnational Paiwan during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis

This paper traces the migration history and adaptive practices of Paiwan migrants from Taiwan to Belize, Central America, with particular attention to a migration wave that began before the 1995 Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. The Paiwan, one of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, sought new economic, social, and religious opportunities abroad. Belize emerged as a distinctive destination shaped by local colonial histories and contemporary geopolitical dynamics. Over the past three decades, the Paiwan community in Belize has negotiated the challenges of cultural preservation, religious transformation, and social integration within a multiethnic environment. This research draws upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted in both Taiwan and Belize, including participant observation, interviews, and archival research, to examine how the Paiwan community has navigated processes of belonging and identity-making in diaspora. A central institution in this migration experience is establishing a Paiwan Christian church, which serves as a place of worship and a space for cultural continuity, social cohesion, and cross-cultural engagement. While rooted in Paiwan spiritual traditions, this church has been reshaped by Belizean Christian practices, resulting in a dynamic religious hybridity that reflects both adaptation and resilience. Through religious gatherings, language classes, community events, and shared agricultural activities, the Paiwan church has functioned as a nexus for community building and a platform for engaging with local Maya populations. Agricultural collaboration and shared cultural practices have fostered mutual respect and created opportunities for intercultural learning, challenging assumptions of Indigenous isolation and revealing the agency of Indigenous migrants in shaping their diasporic experiences.

This study argues that the Paiwan migration to Belize offers a significant case for understanding how Indigenous transnationalism operates within the interconnected histories of settler colonialism, Christian evangelism, and global migration. It highlights how migration reshapes Indigenous identity and place-making strategies, with the Paiwan community developing a unique sense of belonging that draws simultaneously from their ancestral roots and new social environment. The research underscores the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous communities in diaspora, illustrating how cultural negotiation, religious transformation, and intercultural alliances contribute to sustaining Indigenous identities in transnational contexts. By situating the Paiwan experience within broader anthropological debates on indigeneity, migration, religious syncretism, and diaspora, this paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship on Indigenous mobility and transnational belonging. It calls attention to how Indigenous migrants actively engage in processes of cultural exchange, religious innovation, and community formation beyond national boundaries.

Presenter(s): Fasa Namoh

Vale la pena: Tracing Migrant and Non-migrant Youth's Aspirations across Colombia and the United States

This work adds to the growing literature on migrant youth and transnationalism within the field of anthropology of education. This project focuses on the experiences of adolescent youth (15 - 25 years old) who live in and migrate from Lomas Verdes, Colombia, to Cold Coast, Massachusetts*. Tracing circulating ideas of success and opportunity across borders, I examine how young people develop aspirations around work, school, and migration.

To do this, I draw on 3 months of fieldwork from an ongoing ethnographic project in Cold Coast, Massachusetts, and Lomas Verdes, Colombia, two communities connected by migration since the 1970s. There are currently 20,000 residents of Lomas Verdes and 6,000 people from Lomas Verdes living in Cold Coast. In 2021, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of young people migrating to Cold Coast increased. From this, data focuses on the work, school, and migration experiences of young people from Lomas Verdes who (1) stay in Lomas Verdes (2) migrate to Cold Coast. This study uses semi-structured interviews and participant observations in schools to answer the question: How do migrant and non-migrant youth develop their work, school, and migratory aspirations?

Within the development of aspirations, I focus on young people's meaning-making. Young people across Cold Coast and Lomas Verdes maintain and change their aspirations in response to the people, institutions, and opportunities around them (Appadurai 2004). Reflecting the AAA theme of Ghosts, youth's meaning-making is shaped by lingering aspirations from prior generations and the ghosts of paths not taken. I focus on how youth locate aspirations in Lomas Verdes or Cold Coast and draw on scholars of migration and anthropology of education (Nichols 2023; Canizales 2024; Bellino 2017; Dyrness 2012) to compare how migrant and non-migrant youth in Lomas Verdes create and change their aspirations to work, study, and migrate.

*Pseudonyms are used

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Presenter(s): Ben Blanco

6422 Beneath the Shroud: H(a)unting Mediums, Messages, and Matters

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"It's those things lurking at the background of attention, things that we took for granted at the time, which now evoke the past most powerfully." - Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*

How can varied ethnographic writings uncover everyday, erased ghosts of our pasts, presents, and futures? This panel responds to McLuhan's aphorism that the medium is the message and Mark Fisher's idea that our lives are haunted by 'lost futures', seeking to locate those hauntings in the im/material. Tracing cultural and affectual resonances produced by and expressed through ashes, books, ethnofiction, and interactive art, panelists adopt interdisciplinary approaches to highlight moments when form becomes content. Pulling back the shroud, panelists find and argue how forms, their dynamism, and debris matter in examinations of materiality, temporality, absence, and the emotive work of ethnography. Ash Wednesday's ritual application of ashes renders both the ashes and the human body meaningful in forward- and backwards-looking signification. The aesthetic and archival practice of book collecting speaks to a constant re-encountering and re-making of the past, thereby perpetually changing the emotive ties. Ethnofiction, where the "literary and lived" converge, presents thrilling possibilities for writing emotions into and enlivening ethnographic accounts. Interactive art draws attention to engagement as intertwined with resonance, temporality, and materiality, particularly salient amid discourses about Queerness as an identity of diminishing futures. Like the medium in a seance, these media interactionally and materially make present what is not there.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Hunter Dodrill

Chair: Aïsha Philippe, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies

Presenter(s): Aïsha Philippe, Teachers College, Columbia University, Department of International and Transcultural Studies, Esther Tinhoy Fan, Carl Lewandowski, Hunter Dodrill

Discussant: Esther Tinhoy Fan , Carl Lewandowski

Presentation(s): You Are the Message: Affect and the Books We Hold Onto

Many are involved in a practice of collecting, curating, and preserving materials; this archival work consists of a constant re-encountering of objects in spaces that matter to us. When famed media scholar Marshall McLuhan wrote that "the medium is the message," to what extent was he considering the affective ties individuals create with their writings, and eventually, books? One

must consider what becomes of the material that houses writings once it has been encountered a first time, and then again and again—the message cannot possibly be static. In this sense, the commodity fetishism that follows the archival abandonment of one's print materials may be negated by the choice to return to what is enshrined by the materiality. Inspired by the conception of affect as "contained and emitted through the solidity, presence, visibility and tangibility of objects," this paper argues that print material must then be responsible for inscribing history, and in some ways, reinterpreting our unique relationships to the past, and what our print will mean to us in the future (Frykman and Frykman, 2016).

Presenter(s): Aisha Philippe

Heart matters: writing emotions into ethnography

What do we do with emotional ghosts and residues that pervade human encounters? Emotions give texture to our experiences and stories. Yet, anthropologists are trained to separate emotions from observations in crafting ethnographies. Collecting narratives of 'water' from Hong Kong people, I find that love, loss, pride, and sadness are facts of interlocutors' lives, imbued in how they ride waves of changing futures. As a translator, I struggle to resist feelings from flooding my pen. This paper explores how new ways of writing in emotions can enrich and thicken ethnographic descriptions. Particularly, I focus on how ethnofiction – a genre of "narrative(s) nurtured or inspired by lived experience, unfettered from the bonds of the precisely observed" (Falcone, 2020) – can account for sentimental nuances of cultural histories. In *The Songs of Solanda*, anthropologist H. Arlo Nimmo voices, "When at last I tried my hand at fiction, I was able to speak from my reservoir of experiences and to delve into the missing dimensions of my years in the field" (Nimmo, 1994). Tying this to my research, I examine ethnofiction's potential and limits in producing emotionally complex work and the importance of writing emotions out of ethnographic shadows to bring intricacies of our worlds to light.

Presenter(s): Esther Tinhoy Fan

Ashes to Ashes: A Material Semiotic Reading of Ash Wednesday

The application of ashes in the sign of a cross in the Catholic celebration of Ash Wednesday is an act of writing, broadly understood: the gestural creation of a meaningful visual sign on a surface. This produces a text in the medium of ash-on-living-human-body. These texts are mobile, and quickly decay. The ashes imprecisely index the "dust" which the priest reminds recipients they are, while the ashes' origins in palms used in prior rituals adds a further layer of signifying complexity. The mark itself may be understood externally as a marker of identity, and within the in-group as a reminder of sin and death; it gestures forward, to death, and backwards, to a longstanding tradition. I read this text using a material-semiotic approach, attempting to track when and how participants in the orchestration of Ash Wednesday render the ashes meaningful, and in particular, how the past and future are made present in the repetition of the ritual.

Presenter(s): Carl Lewandowski

Textures of Temporality: Interactive Art and Ethnographic Engagement

Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* and Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* are two of many works invested in ideas of Queer time and temporality. Looking at interactive art through an ethnographic lens, I aim to draw attention to how the process of engagement—in both reception and production—brings to the surface important considerations of resonance, temporality, and materiality in light of literature that positions Queerness as an identity of diminishing futures. Pulling from Félix González-Torres's "Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.), Ria Brodell's "Butch Heroes," and my own work, this presentation centers the embodied experience as critical to producing ethnographic texture, calling for expansion in multimodal ethnography.

Presenter(s): Hunter Dodrill

321 Society for Cultural Anthropology Flash Session #6

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Aksana Ismailbekova, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Alexis Yrigoyen , Reana Senjkovic , Anna Bloom-Christen , Bianca Romagnoli , Amy Fluker , Agustina Checa

Presenter(s): Aksana Ismailbekova, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Alexis Yrigoyen, Reana Senjkovic, Anna Bloom-Christen, Bianca Romagnoli, Amy Fluker, Agustina Checa

Presentation(s): Alma-Grad: Mobilizing Kinship for Care, Welfare, and Development in Kyrgyzstan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, residents of Alma, a village in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, were faced with many new challenges. Economic crisis and the elimination of welfare supports forced an entire generation to become labour migrants in Russia. Those 'left behind' – grandparents and children – were sustained by migrants' remittances and charitable activities, but at a cost. As villagers at home and in the Alma diaspora built upon existing kinship structures to create new practices of charity and mutual aid on the lines of Islamic teaching, both migrants and the left behind suffered from the 'dark side of kinship' that the crisis revealed. Migration is destructive of both the nuclear family and wider village life, but it provides an opportunity for lineages to be mobilized for collective social action that is both local and translocal. For this research the author interviewed many people in both Alma and its Moscow-based diaspora. Their experiences of creative response to adversity are at the heart of this talk: those responses created a 'moral economy of migration' that became territorialized as kinship was de-territorialized. This implies that all 'good' things become associated with the village, and with 'home', and 'culture'. All 'bad' things happen only outside the village, in Russia.

This presents a novel argument concerning kinship in present-day Central Asia. In the countries of that post-Soviet region, kinship matters because it can be mobilized in contexts of crisis. In situations of economic crisis and social upheaval, such as the erosion of welfare systems, systemic financial crises, COVID-19, and migration, kinship plays a positive role, one it enjoys when

networks of care and support gain crucial importance. This role is equally visible, and equally important, when the focus turns to housebuilding, religious aid, or to community organization in the village diaspora. Migrants still regard kinship ties, moral norms, and village life as elements of a personal ideal for which they must strive – and in striving for this ideal, they contribute to the reproduction of their home village, and to the development of its infrastructure and charity. The migratory context also contributes to a strengthening and enriching of translocal lineage networks. This same kinship system that has such a positive role also has another, darker, and negative aspect, one to which this book also draws attention: the dark side of kinship.

Presenter(s): Aksana Ismailbekova

From Shelf to Self: How Collectibles Contribute to Nerd Identity and Belongingness

For nerds, collectibles are more than material possessions. They reflect a person's identity, passion, and community. For many, collectibles carry deep personal significance and can represent cherished memories, favorite characters, and moments from beloved franchises. This interdisciplinary study explores the cultural significance, psychological motivations, and social dynamics of collecting within the historically marginalized nerd community. It utilizes a mixed-methods approach and draws on a survey of 485 participants, statistical analysis, in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations at Collect-a-Con in Los Angeles, and a literature review.

Interview responses emphasized common feelings of joy, nostalgia, and pride, with some participants relating their collections to social connections and others viewing them as a therapeutic outlet. The interview responses align with survey data, as 88.5% of participants reported nostalgia as influencing their collecting habits, and 94.4% prioritized the sentimental value of their collections over monetary worth.

A series of Chi-Square Tests of Independence examined relationships between self-identification as a nerd, collecting behaviors, and perceptions of collecting. One of the most substantial findings in this study is the large association between forming connections through collecting and the frequency of collecting habits, $\chi^2(4, [i]N[/i] = 485) = 87.634, [i]p[/i] < .001, [i]V[/i] = .425. The results indicate that those who build relationships through collecting are significantly more likely to engage in collecting regularly (McCain et al., 2015).$

The study further finds that belongingness through collecting is moderately associated with self-validation and the belief that collectibles reflect identity and interests, suggesting that collecting is both a social and psychological experience (Gabriel, 2015).

Moreover, ethnographic observations at Collect-a-Con in Los Angeles demonstrated how collecting fosters relationships. Attendees waited in line for autographs from celebrity guests, exchanging contact information with other fans while waiting. Collectors proudly shared their new collectibles with other attendees and formed bonds through these shared interests. The event provided a safe space for identity expression, reflecting Tocci's (2013) idea that nerds comfortably display their identities among like-minded peers. These ethnographic observations stress the role of community in the collecting experience and its connection to nerd identity (Gabriel, 2015; Spaid, 2018).

This extensive interdisciplinary study shows the motives and complex nature of collecting as a hobby. Collecting encourages a shared cultural space where nerds can express themselves, connect with like-minded peers, and reinforce their place within the nerd community. Collecting allows nerds to find solace, affirmation, fulfillment, and connection through their cherished possessions and fandoms.

Presenter(s): Alexis Yrigoyen

Ghosts in the World of Academia

Ghosts in the World of Academia builds on Maria Todorova's 2010 assertion: "A specter haunts the world of Academia: a study of Post-Communist nostalgia." Today, 15 years later, the concept of post-communist/post-socialist nostalgia has become deeply embedded in academic discourse. While early scholars such as Svetlana Boym, Maya Nadkarni, and Olga Shevchenko provided nuanced interpretations, the term is now often applied uncritically as a catch-all for any positive recollection of the state-socialist period. Labeled negatively – either as a populist political tool or as sentimental longing for a past best left behind – this framing not only dismisses feelings of regret for the former political and economic system but also entire narratives about that part of the past.

A similar pattern emerges in Western neoliberal societies, where nostalgia is frequently framed as a reactionary sentiment that political actors can exploit, invoking a return to the nation's past greatness and strength.

A particularly intriguing comparison arises when examining ethnographic research findings from both the "East" and the "West," especially in relation to the crucial identity-related themes of work and employment.

Our own study, conducted between 2017 and 2021, combined semi-structured ethnographic interviews with over 250 older individuals from the socialist Yugoslav workforce and survey questionnaires from more than 200 students across various disciplines. By centering on work and employment, we analyzed not only how individuals articulate their past experiences but also what their expectations for the future are. While we deliberately avoided the term nostalgia, we found that participants distanced themselves from it nonetheless, mirroring tendencies observed in Western studies, where the term has also acquired negative connotations in public discourse.

More importantly, however, this comparison highlights a striking similarity in respondents' perspectives. In both the "East" and the "West," their reflections frequently reference the past era of industrialization, high employment rates, and relative job security – grounded not in abstract longing but in concrete lived experiences. It is precisely these tangible memories, along with the data on work and employment embedded within them, that necessitate a critical reassessment of how the term nostalgia is applied in contemporary academic discourse.

Presenter(s): Reana Senjkovic

Look Who's Walking: Diversifying Walking Methodologies from the Ground Up

Walking together is a seemingly unassuming and common way to socialize in public space. We tend to take it for granted. At the same time, its particular manner of performance embodies context-specific norms of interaction and identity. Embracing both its universal and situated characteristics, walking together has emerged as a valuable research method in anthropological fieldwork. So-called walking interviews, go-alongs, and other forms of peripatetic participation hold the promise of sharing the view ahead and seeing the world through the eyes of another.

This paper explores the possibilities and limits of walking together as a research method. Considering the history of walking and its phenomenological underpinnings, I first outline how existing walking methodologies are predominantly shaped by a European, male-centered, able-bodied tradition. Confronting these exclusive ideals with insights from critical phenomenology and findings from my own fieldwork in Makhanda, South Africa, I then seek to challenge, diversify, and complicate the prevailing picture of walking methodologies.

Building on my long-term fieldwork in Makhanda on foot, I unpack how walking together is shaped by power relations, bodily capacities, and infrastructures that constrain or enable different forms of movement. By foregrounding the experiences of those marginalized within dominant walking traditions—such as disabled pedestrians, racialized walkers, and gender-nonconforming individuals—I argue for a more expansive and situated understanding of peripatetic methods. What does it mean to walk together when the very act of walking is structured by histories of exclusion? How might we develop methodologies that attend to the frictions, negotiations, and interruptions that characterize walking in diverse social landscapes? This paper contributes to a growing conversation about decolonizing research methods by reimagining walking not as a neutral or universal practice, but as a site of epistemic and political inequalities.

Presenter(s): Anna Bloom-Christen

Nostalgic Imaginaries: How Constructed Memories of Indigenous Canadian Rangers Shapes Current Military Dialogue Around Arctic Sovereignty.

With their signature red sweaters and bright red .308 bolt action rifles, Canadian Rangers have become an established military presence in some of Canada's most remote regions. Located in almost 70 communities across the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, the Yukon and Atlin, BC, Canadian Rangers in 1 CRPG are viewed as a critical part of the arctic defense strategy. Due to their geographical location and the unique living conditions, most Canadian Ranger patrols are comprised of Indigenous personnel living in these communities. Ranger patrols are administered by Ranger Instructors, non-northern regular force soldiers posted to the north.

While Rangers are applauded for using skills accrued from generations of living on the land to do their work, the constant narrative that Ranger skills are deteriorating plague the group. Not only does this narrative perpetuate the racist ideology that there is a correct way to be Indigenous, marking contemporary Rangers as being "less than", but it implies that in the face of rapidly shifting political, economic and ecological pressures placed on arctic security, Rangers are not up for the challenge of arctic protection.

This paper will examine how these assumptions affect the operational role Rangers are taking as arctic and northern military operations are becoming more and more common. In doing this, this paper asks: How are racist and colonial ideas about how Rangers should act manufactured by ideologized memories of the past? How does this set unrealistic standards that force Rangers to fail living up to the expectations set up by their non-Indigenous leadership? What effect will this have on the military's assumed ability to "protect" the arctic? To answer these questions, this paper will center ethnographic data from Ranger Instructors speaking about their assumed imagination about past Rangers gathered from 3 years of fieldwork working and living alongside Rangers and Ranger Instructors in the north.

Presenter(s): Bianca Romagnoli

The Bell Witch, Jim Crow, and the Haunting of African American History

For nearly 200 years, the legend of the Bell Witch has been a fixture in the literature, folklore, and popular culture of the United States. While there are significant variations in the legend, it centers on the God-fearing Bell family who, in the early 1800s, suffered supernatural torments by a ghostly entity that called itself a "witch." As legends go, it has a bit of everything: frightening phenomena like poltergeist activity and disembodied voices, a love story, a murder, and even a cameo by President Andrew Jackson. It is therefore no surprise that the story of the Bell Witch has been told and retold countless times-in newspapers, folklore collections, live theatre, TV, film, and even in Playboy magazine.

It is an undeniably entertaining tale. One essential reason for its popularity, however, has been entirely overlooked. This is because most popular tellings have entirely erased the history of slavery from the legend. The Bells are not remembered as the enslavers they were, nor is it remembered that the witch's favorite victims were the African Americans over whom the Bells claimed ownership.

This paper argues that when placed in its appropriate historical context, the nineteenth and twentieth century American South, it becomes evident that the popularization of the Bell Witch legend served as a mechanism of white supremacy. It illustrates how the telling and re-telling of ghost stories both reflected and perpetuated the atmosphere of racialized terror that permeated the region for generations. Drawing on the scholarship of folklorists, anthropologists, and historians, this paper offers an interdisciplinary analysis of the social and cultural power of the supernatural.

Presenter(s): Amy Fluker

The many lives of recorded magnetic tape. Grassroots cultural preservation and selective memory in Argentina's independent music scenes.

In Argentina, a country that has been immersed in a steep economic crisis for the last decade, independent record labels have turned to cassette tapes to document the significance of the songs and albums produced within their niche local music scenes. The return to neoliberal policies has

made spaces of independent music production feel evermore ephemeral and volatile, and the materialities of cassettes (magnetic tape, inserts, plastic cases and stickers) have been an affordable and symbolically-dense medium to preserve contemporary cultural work in community-oriented ways. Lately, the scarcity of virgin (non-recorded) cassette tapes—and the high costs of importing them—has pushed labels to record local music onto old commercial cassettes remnants from the reign of the format many decades ago. In this presentation, I examine the past and present lives of those re-recorded cassettes. What can we learn from a cassette of a little-known hardcore punk band from the outskirts of Buenos Aires in a case with an embossed Sony Music logo that used to store Madonna's greatest hits? How can these old forgotten tapes, ghosts of the unfulfilled promises of Argentina's drastic turn to neoliberalism in the nineties help contemporary music-makers construct spaces to shelter from market-driven logics of memory today? In what ways does a return to the past and a re-writing of history help grassroots cultural brokers rework unequal power relations of global capitalism to narrate contemporary experiences of cultural resistance? Building on several years of ethnographic work with cassette labels in Argentina, I examine the grassroots practices of cultural preservation that re-recorded cassettes enable. I study how magnetic tape enable independent labels to develop a kind of community-aimed "selective memory" (McMurray 2017) that works against the logics of a "phonographic regime" (Bohlman & McMurray 2017) shaped by ideals of realism and the epistemological pillars of European modernity. A close look at the many lives of recorded magnetic tape discloses changing regimes of value (Appadurai 1988; Myers 2002) and circuits of exchange, where the same materialities which once attested to robust music industries with large networks of operation now nurture collective frameworks of memory against widespread individualizing contexts of music circulation and storage.

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Presenter(s): Agustina Checa

4932 Ghosts and Other Unpredictable Others

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Ghosts and the dead more generally are often seen as minor members of the spiritual pantheon. They are more likely the subjects of scary stories than deep veneration. They are beings who were once human, usually, rather than enduring and mighty spirits who create. Ghosts and the dead are also more populous than mighty gods and one might reasonably wonder whether the implicit social rules that govern them differ from those that seem to govern the way gods are imagined and known.

This session explores the way humans experience relationships with these once-human spirits. Because we are persuaded that there are human choices that allow people to experience gods and the dead as interacting, we bring together anthropologists who write about ghosts and talking with dead with anthropologist who study how robots become human like, and how humans become non-human animals. What are the rules that monitor the boundaries between humans and non-human others? Are they stable across cultural worlds? How do people build these relationships and what do those relationships do for them? When do they fear them; when do they want them; how do they reach out and maintain them? At the heart of these discussions is the question of how the social ordering of the senses allow us to grasp the world in unexpected ways.

Thailand is a country of many ghosts, and we have two scholars (Felicity Aulino, Julia Cassaniti) who have examined the karmic constraints on the way the dead and other spirits become real to the human, and the role these ghosts play in healing and health. John Dulin took part of an intensive comparison of the supernatural across five countries; his focus was Ghana, where ghosts and spirits are greatly important. Elizabeth Fein studies the way humans become animals (as "furries") and Kelsey Clough examines the way plastic, mechanical robots come to feel alive. Abou Farman has explored the way the dead remain alive to the living, and the way they also escape the living's reach. For him the question of how the senses shift as we reach out is central. Tanya Marie Luhmann has been trying to figure out whether there are common rules that govern our relationships with spirits for many years.

This session aims to shed light on the broader implications of human encounters with the supernatural and unseen, leaning into the diversity of experiences and cultural contexts, to see how individuals use the supernatural to negotiate and reshape their realities and to explore the nuanced interplay between human doings and agency, the mind, and what are perceived as supernatural phenomena.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: MyKayla Williamson, Stanford University

Presenter(s): Abou Farman, The New School, Felicity Aulino, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Julia Cassaniti, Kelsey Clough, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, John Dulin, Utah Valley University, Behavioral Science Department, Elizabeth Fein, MyKayla Williamson, Stanford University

Discussant: Tanya Luhmann, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology

2909 Ghosts of Democracies Past and Otherwise

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Decades after the Global Sixties and post-Cold War democratization, democracy appears to be in crisis at a global scale. The rise of authoritarianism, racial intolerance, and a host of other social forces seem to threaten democracy at its very core in seemingly unprecedented ways. Considering this, a return to scholarly engagement with politics is called for by examining the political potentialities of the otherwise in the present moment (Postero & Elinoff 2019). An otherwise indicates a relation of difference, a difference from something that is, a difference from a particular reality (Povinelli 2016). Democracy is conventionally defined as Liberal Representational Democracy through which countries delegate democratic decision-making to appointed or elected government office members who act on their constituents' behalf in making policies, administering public affairs, and interpreting laws. However, debates regarding the dilemmas of self-governance are often hampered due to the multiple, competing understandings of democracy. Considering democracy's open-ended construction, anthropologists have demonstrated the need to scale down analysis to the level of everyday life to examine where, when and through whom democracy is exercised (Paley 2001; Nugent 2008).

Hailing from various disciplines and institutional backgrounds, and inspired by the creative potential of the spectral in the 2025 conference theme, presenters in this panel will explore how the past haunts the present, and immaterial worlds otherwise shape democratic politics today: The afterlives of Argentina's dirty war in collective historical memory amidst far-right omnibus cuts; The specters of Civil War-era incarceration and settler-colonial land relations in the contemporary United States; The ghosts of mass protest and a failed constitution in Chile; and an Algeria haunted by martyrs and the future democracy for which they died.

Participants will offer a range of perspectives on the ways in which the otherwise haunts the hegemonic order of things and thereby opens the potential for change. By bringing together scholars working in diverse geographic areas and methodologies, this panel aims to address three interrelated questions:

- 1.) What are the afterlives of past democratic movements, and how do they endure in present day spaces of struggle?
- 2.) Through which methods can scholars engage with the strategies employed to re-imagine more just worlds?
- 3.) To what extent do these immaterial worlds- real or imagined- impact how larger shifts are understood and refashioned into critiques and disagreements with the present order of things?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Nikola Garcia Johnson, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Troy Andreas Kokinis

Presenter(s): Troy Andreas Kokinis, Jessica Ng, Samantha de Vera, Stephanie Love, University of Pittsburgh, Nikola Garcia Johnson, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: David Nugent, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Militante and the Motosierra: The Ghost of New Left Militancy amidst Milei's Assault on Memory Spaces in Argentina

During the era of the Dirty War military junta (1976-83), upwards of 800 clandestine detention, torture, and extermination sites operated in Argentina. Of those, 40 have now been converted in to Sitios y Espacios de la Memoria (Memory Spaces), including seven under federal government administration. Since June 2024, 28 of the 65 federal workers at these sites have been laid off due to Far Right President Javier Milei's wave of omnibus cuts. The cuts have left some of the buildings in disrepair and have halted archival research. They have especially targeted educational programming at the spaces, including public school collaborations and outreach. The cuts are part of a broader attempt to erase history through deprivation of resources. While Milei and members of his government publicly downplay the Dirty War-era state-sanctioned violence and even sympathize with the dictatorship, the cuts aim to make long-term interventions in collective historical memory regarding this dark past. This paper explores the afterlife of disappeared militants in the current struggle for the preservation of these spaces of collective historical memory. The erasure of these historical spaces not only obfuscates the legacy of state sanctioned violence, but the politics and vision of the people who were detained, tortured, and executed there. They were people who fought for a world directly opposed to the high modernist fascist projects we are witnessing in Argentina (and the United States) today.

Presenter(s): Troy Andreas Kokinis

Black White Gold Mountain: Lithium and the Specter of Colonial Land Relations in the Green Energy Economy

With climate change an ever more urgent concern, corporations, states, and environmental movements are engaging in cultural production to paint electric vehicles as economically viable, environmentally responsible, and socially just. Behind this facade is the specter of colonial land relations maintained through legal and physical infrastructure. The batteries that power electric vehicles have motivated a rapid expansion of lithium mining across various geographies where it desecrates sacred lands, produces toxic waste, drains desert waters, and destroys ecological life. This presentation focuses on the Thacker Pass Lithium Mine in northern Nevada, which has received the largest federal investment in the U.S. to date and sparked intense resistance with a lawsuit and a sustained protest camp. Here and across much of the western U.S., the legacy of settler colonial expansion is enshrined in the Mining Law of 1872, which still governs mineral extraction on public lands. Meanwhile, electric vehicles accommodate and perpetuate the petroculture of highways and suburbs built for oil-powered transport. Tracing these colonial land

relations distinguishes between large-scale yet superficial technological shifts and radical structural transformation, exposes the limits of state-based policy, calls for global solidarity against mineral extraction, and demonstrates that we must create "a world where many worlds fit," as the Zapatistas propose, to heal this fevered Earth.

Presenter(s): Jessica Ng

From the American South to Guantanamo: Refugees, National Threats, and Incarceration

The US has historically denied—and continues to deny—equal protection rights to African Americans, and prisons emerge as the primary institution that unequivocally received them once deprived of such rights. We cannot fully understand the shortcomings of the Fourteenth Amendment and the construction of Black citizenship without looking at how enslaved people who sought refuge became federal prisoners during the American Civil War. This presentation focuses on experiences of refugees from slavery under Union captivity, when the US military expanded the power of military tribunals to control freedmen and white rebels. These tribunals were revived at moments when US legal systems and civil law constrained the federal government's ability to prosecute and persecute racialized persons and "enemies of the state" outside US boundaries. In 2006, the Military Commission Act gave the president absolute power to decide who counts as an enemy of the state and to imprison them indefinitely. When Haitians fled to the U.S. in the early 1990s, they were imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, where U.S. constitutional laws do not apply and where, to this day, Muslim men remain imprisoned without charge or trial. As the President of the United States threatens to incarcerate asylum seekers and migrants at Guantanamo, the specter of Civil War-era incarceration rears its ugly head, and we are reminded that the line between refugee and national threat is drawn along racial categories.

Presenter(s): Samantha de Vera

The Ultimate Witness: Martyrs, Futurity, and the Specters of Democracy in Algeria

Many Algerians today refer to themselves as the "people of a million and a half martyrs" (sha'ab million wa nisf shahīd), indexing their kinship with people who sacrificed their lives before and during the War of Independence (1954-1962). These martyrs have become the foundation of national identity and play a central role in postcolonial politics. In Arabic, the word martyr (al-shahīd) literally translates as the "ultimate witness," suggesting a deep (though sometimes hidden) relationship between (past) martyrs and (present) witnesses (shāhid) of various social injustices. In this paper, I argue that martyrdom signifies the act of sacrificing oneself for the community to secure a place in the afterlife and also represents an act of futurity. But what sense of future and "futures past" do the martyrs' deaths embody? Engaging with martyr images in contemporary urban Algeria, I examine the agency of the dead and their claims on the present and future. Drawing on Derrida (2011)—a native Algerian—who posits that specters "[precede] from the future" (p. XIX), I explore the complex temporality of martyrs that is enacted in postcolonial Algeria through their role as ongoing witnesses to present struggles and as specters of a future democracy for which they died, yet which has never materialized. The act of witnessing, I argue, structures a temporal

experience that entangles perpetrators, victims, onlookers, past, present, future, and afterlife in complex coeval relationships.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Love

The Specter of the Plurinational State of Chile: An Otherwise Democracy in the October Protests and failed constitution re-writing process (2019-2023)

What can the 2019-2023 Chilean "Social Explosion" and failed constitutional re-writing process tell us about global democracy today? Constitutions often express the most advanced ideals of their time and serve as a referent for marginalized groups who envision a better world, often projected into an imagined democratic future. Chile's Estallido Social led to a two-year constitutional re-writing process, which sought to replace the 1981 Constitution from the Pinochet Dictatorship (1973-1990). The 2022 constitution proposed replacing Chile's neoliberal economic system with a plurinational state obliged to broadly guarantee Indigenous rights, social welfare, environmental protections, feminist principles, and LGBT rights through democratic practices derived from human dignity rather than the political charter itself. Policymakers and social scientists have often emphasized how the exit referendum revealed a popular rejection of progressive politics, an enduring Chilean nationalism, and tacit support for extractivist and settler colonial projects. In contrast, this paper analyzes how the ideals and institutions in the proposed constitution reflected three decades of global protests and enunciated a model of governance and democracy that could be emulated worldwide. Without serving as a basis of authority for the Chilean settler-colonial state, the "Plurinational State of Chile" is a specter of an "otherwise" democracy haunting the hegemonic order of things.

Presenter(s): Nikola Garcia Johnson

Discussion

4084 Why Work? Doing the Anthropology of Work (Part One)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

From flint knapping to child tending, rocket science to hamburger flipping, few questions are more central to anthropology than what constitutes work and who can be said to do it. As the energetic fulcrum of economic production and social reproduction, human and more-than-human labor animates and destabilizes narratives of class, race, gender, and citizenship that rely on demographic measures of income and inequality. In cataclysmic times such as now, when across myriad walks of life intergenerational worlds of work and social mobility confront sudden or slow ends, structural metrics rather than storied accounts appear as kaleidoscopic images of technological change and historical inevitability. Yet as ethnographers of work can attest, models of sector-dependent labor rarely map neatly onto our interlocutors' experience of work-paid and unpaid; past, present, and aspirational-let alone determine their assessment of its rewards. Not

only are institutionalized paradigms of work "not working" for many today, they raise personal and professional questions for those of us doing the work of anthropology.

In honor of the work of Kathryn M. Dudley, recipient of the Society for the Anthropology of Work's 2025 Arensberg Award, this roundtable brings together an intergenerational group of ethnographers whose doctoral studies of various kinds of work were supervised by Prof. Dudley. Panelists will reflect on how Dudley's incisive questions as a mentor shaped their diverse fieldwork experiences and career trajectories, putting a spotlight on the work of mentorship itself, and how such generative mentorship has shaped research of the precarious worlds of work that we navigate alongside our interlocutors. As researchers, policy analysts, writers, and educators, we reflect on what our collective labors tell us about how current and nascent cultures of work are affectively transmitted and materialized in practice. Amidst the uncertainties of this late liberal age, we take stock of the analytics of labor that best speak to the challenges of making a living and making a life, and what, at the end of the day, may constitute the why of our life's work.

This session will conclude with the presentation of the 2025 Conrad M. Arensberg Award to Kathryn Dudley.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Alex Blanchette, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology, Carrie Lane

Presenter(s): Carrie Lane, Katherine McNally, Yale University, Benjamin Slightom, Yale University, Chloe Taft Kang, Northwestern University, Ruth Yow, Georgia Institute of Technology

Discussant: Kathryn Dudley, Yale University

3689 Violence in the Postcolonial City: Exploring Infrastructures, Mobilities and Threatened Lives

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Urban infrastructures are material structures or networks that allow for the circulation of capital, goods, services, people, and information. The importance of infrastructures in permitting the flows upon which everyday life depends makes them both an object of power, but also vulnerable to stoppages and delays. Although the link between infrastructures and different forms of social and structural violence have been widely studied, most of these studies tend to focus on the role of infrastructures in reproducing social inequalities, or on the struggle over the control of infrastructures by different (political) actors. Less attention has been paid to the way that people's everyday experiences, narratives, and affects related to violence and criminality shape the circulation of a variety of objects, bodies and information. Aiming to address this question, this panel looks at violence through the analytical and methodological lens of infrastructures. Rather than studying the harm produced by infrastructures, or conflicts over the control of these, we

propose to look at the ways everyday violence is inscribed onto infrastructural networks. The papers in this panel explore a variety of infrastructures that are complexly entangled with violent processes; water systems in the Colombian Pacific, oil pipes and mobilities infrastructure in Mexico, urban geographies in Turkey, railways in Mongolia, and streets and housing in the Colombian Andes. Our contributions explore the "coloniality of infrastructures", thinking of infrastructures as material and epistemic sedimentations of regimes of power. We understand that the rhythms and forms of urban violence reflect the legacies of colonial, modernist and neoliberal urban planning and extractivism. Empirically, this means that we seek to understand how a diversity of actors operating at different scales enhance, respond to, appropriate, and resist narratives and practices of violence in order to facilitate or block infrastructural flows. Our panel evinces the ways in which the materiality of everyday life in cities is affected by concerns related to safety, security, and danger.

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Sebastián Ramírez, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Felipe Fernández

Presenter(s): Hazal Hurman, Princeton University, Felipe Fernández, Sebastián Ramírez, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology, Arturo Díaz Cruz, Marissa Smith

Presentation(s): Topographies of Childhood: Criminalization, Justice, and Violence in the Urban Architecture of Turkish Authoritarianism

Since coming to power in 2002, Turkey's authoritarian Justice and Development Party (JDP) has increasingly resorted to criminal prosecutions and mass incarceration as tools to contain social unrest and political opposition—a process that various scholars aptly describe as "lawfare." Key to Turkey's lawfare is the separation of "innocent"—notably, Turkish—children deemed worthy of social protection, from other racialized children—Kurdish, Syrian, and Roma—who are marked as threats to security and order. This division is reinforced by the compartmentalization of urban space into multiple zones of exception, which become incongruent zones of governance as well as living spaces in which children make sense and use of law, space, violence, and childhood ideologies in distinct ways in their daily repertoires. Drawing on two years of ethnographic research in Antep, a multiethnic southeastern city along Turkey's border to Syria, this paper explores how children develop vernacular understandings of justice that cut across the legal-punitive infrastructure of the authoritarian regime, and activate or challenge various forms of violence structuring their daily lives. Specifically, it examines how children construct networks of care and survival that traverse fragmented urban geographies, thereby reconfiguring the terms of everyday life under authoritarian governance.

Presenter(s): Hazal Hurman

(Infra)Structural violence. State and Water Supply in the Port City of Buenaventura, Colombia

This paper examines the interweaving and overlapping of the phenomena of violence and water infrastructures in the port city of Buenaventura, in southwestern Colombia. This city is marked by high rates of violence, poverty and inequality. Further, the infrastructure systems for the allocation

of public goods such as water and electricity are highly precarious. By addressing the ways in which the state deprives larger parts of the population from water as a public good, this paper argues that the Colombian state inflicts 'infrastructural violence' on the marginalized population of Buenaventura. At the same time, it analyzes the ways in which everyday crime threatens and alters the improvised material practices deployed by the population to store water. Furthermore, this paper scrutinizes the mechanisms used by social movements and 'ordinary people' to cope with 'infrastructural violence'. Based on extensive fieldwork material gathered between 2018 and 2020, this research contributes research on infrastructure, urban poverty, and violence.

Presenter(s): Felipe Fernández

Para-Law of the Land: Social Cleansing and Sovereign Rule in Colombia's Urban Margins

Every year, thousands of people in poor neighborhoods in Colombia are the targets of social cleansing campaigns: efforts by neo-paramilitary groups, and neighbors to establish a species of security through the killing of those deemed threats to the social order. Social cleanses are announced through pamphlets that identify those threatened by name in lists posted in streets, stores, and homes of the neighborhoods. This paper examines how social cleansing campaigns – particularly the pamphlets that announce them – define the geography of a poor neighborhood outside of Bogotá. I explore how the distribution of the pamphlets in space circumscribes a jurisdiction of governance by describing the sorts of activities, persons, and relationships that are permissible under its parallel law. In describing some acts as punishable with death, and certain people as expendable, social cleanses also prop certain groups as legitimate purveyors of order and their activities, such as drug trafficking, extortion, forced displacement, and murder, as appropriate to their role. Social cleansing campaigns establish a novel sovereign bargain borne from the state's strategic retrenchment in urban margins, the enduring failure of peace accords and subsequent proliferation of armed actors who inherit wartime resources, strategies, and discourses, and the general population's willingness to enjoy their apparent protection and their desire to take their place among the unthreatened.

Presenter(s): Sebastián Ramírez

Urban mobility infrastructures and violence in the urban periphery:
predatory accumulation regime.

The crisis of violence in contemporary Mexico has become perhaps the main concern in public life. At the metropolitan scale, the multifarious predatory crimes produce a widespread insecurity which shapes and affects the urban experiences embedded in people's quotidian life. In Mexico City, the criminal violence located within the mobility infrastructures is particularly relevant because it informs some strategies that people deploy to cope with the relentless fears, raising at once possibilities and constraints on how they experience and signify their "right to the city". But the public transportation system, specially in the urban periphery, encompasses other forms of structural or "slow violence": overcrowding and unappropriated conditions of buses and vans, long-time distances and most expensive travels, and exploitative labor relations that reveal another

facet of the predatory accumulation regime that governs the mobility in Mexico City. I examine in this paper how these different types of violence converge, making the urban mobility infrastructures a product as well as a fundamental basis for certain accumulation regime whose violent elements reproduce the social and territorial inequalities. I suggest that urban mobility infrastructures comprise the material objects and networks that move millions of people every day and, fundamentally, the social interactions expressed through both collaborative and predatory exchanges that together sustain and defy this regime.

Presenter(s): Arturo Díaz Cruz

The Infrastructure of Subordination: Mongolian and Russian Relations from Post-Soviet to Putinized

This paper documents the infrastructure configuring Mongolia's relationship to Russia as a subordinate "younger brother." Since the hegemonic supermajority of the Mongolian People's Party starting in 2016, the MPP's presidential victory in 2021, the COVID-19 crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Mongolia has become further entangled with Russia politically, socially, and economically and more distanced from the rest of the world. The paper concerns developments in movements of people and things across the border, along the Russian-majority owned Trans-Mongolian railway, and through centers of accumulation including the Mongolian capital, Mongolia's two industrialized cities, and the monastery of Amarbayasglant first established in northern Mongolia in the early 18th Century.

Presenter(s): Marissa Smith

2629 Futurity as a Method? The Pursuit of Alternative Futures in China Today

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

A specter is haunting China: the specter of futurity. This roundtable approaches futurity as an ethnographic lens, through which we examine how people interpret time, hope, and modernity. Drawing inspiration from hauntology (Derrida 1994; Gordon 2008), and Mark Fisher's (2009) trenchant critique of capitalist realism, participants interrogate how alternative futures are imagined and pursued amidst the haunting presence of unfulfilled futures. In doing so, we explore how futurity can serve as an entry point for understanding the coexistence of nostalgia and development in Chinese society.

China today is a site of excess for future-oriented discourses, whether through state-led visions like the "China Dream" or corporate promises of high-tech cosmopolitanism (Chong 2020; Yang 2023). These grand narratives coexist with plural political imaginations and ordinary practices of pursuing the good life (Lin and Yuan 2023), manifested in emergent forms of livelihood, and reinterpretations of development, responsibility, and political futures. Meanwhile, the shifting promises about the future also linger around. Unfulfilled futurities have not disappeared, but rather, like specters, they

continue to be resurrected in current visions and actions. These hauntological phenomena challenge the linear understanding of time and invite us to reconsider temporality as a space where pasts and futures intertwine dynamically.

This roundtable convenes emerging scholars to investigate how individuals and communities negotiate alternative futures within the constraints of the dominant diagram of modernity, beyond "common futures" (Valentine and Hassoun 2019: 252–254). We ask: How do people imagine futures in a society featured by rapid transformations? Can futurity become not only a lens but also a method for studying China? Ultimately, this discussion encourages us to reconsider the relationship between the future and the past and to reflect on how actively engaging with futurity may alter our understanding of development. This connection spans not only from the past to the future but also from the future back to the past.

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Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Yadong Li, Tulane University, Yuhao Ding

Presenter(s): Yadong Li, Tulane University, Heyu Zhang, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Hechen Liu, Washington University in St. Louis, Yuhao Ding, Karen Hui

Discussant: Xiaobo Yuan, Whitman College, Department of Anthropology, Angel Nayden, Chinese University of Hong Kong

7736 New Books Conversation: Reworking Citizenship Race, Gender, and Kinship in South Africa

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Join us for a roundtable discussion about a new book that speaks to African studies, feminist anthropology, and economic anthropology.

In scenes reminiscent of the apartheid era, 2021 saw South Africa's streets filled with mass protests. While the country is lauded for its peaceful transition to democracy with citizenship for all, those previously disenfranchised, particularly women, remain outraged by their continued poverty and marginalization. As one black woman protester told a reporter, reflecting on the end of apartheid: "We didn't get freedom. We only got democracy." What obligations do states have to support their citizens? What meaning does citizenship itself hold?

Blending archival and ethnographic methods, Brady G'sell tracks how historic resistance to racial and gendered marginalization in South Africa animate present-day contentions that regardless of voting rights, without jobs to support their families, the poor majority remain excluded from the nation. Through long-term fieldwork with impoverished black African, Indian, and coloured (mixed race) women living in the city of Durban, she reveals women's everyday efforts to rework political institutions that exclude them. Informed by her interlocutors, G'sell retheorizes citizenship as not solely tied to individual rights, but dependent on the security of social (often kin) relations. She forwards the concept of relational citizenship as a means to reimagine political belonging amidst a world of declining wage labor and eroding state-citizen covenants.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Brady G'sell, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jennifer Cole, University of Chicago, Erin Moore, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Deborah James, London School of Economics

Discussant: Brady G'sell, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology

523 Association of Black Anthropology Flash Session #1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Grand Ballroom

Type: Flash Presentation

Organizer: Roy Celaire, Tristram Wolff, Ramon Lee, Spelman College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Scott Ferrara, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Jason Vasser-Elong, Maurice Rippel, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Gillian Richards-Greaves, Coastal Carolina University, Department of Anthropology & Geography

Presenter(s): Roy Celaire, Tristram Wolff, Ramon Lee, Spelman College, Department of Sociology

& Anthropology, Scott Ferrara, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Jason Vasser-Elong, Maurice Rippel, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Gillian Richards-Greaves, Coastal Carolina University, Department of Anthropology & Geography

Presentation(s): Anti-Blackness in the queer global city: London and the ruse of anti-racism

"Wondering, how can London gays be so racist in the most multicultural city of the world? I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around it, Jengu." (Florent 32)

As the most diverse city in the world, London is frequently touted as being multicultural, queer friendly, anti-racist and welcoming. Yet, as the quote above, taken from a conversation with Chatgpt, from my interlocutor Florent, a Black French man living in London, reveals, London, and particularly the queer element of the city, is in fact a city ripe with anti-Blackness and exclusionary practices which underscores the enduring legacies of slavery and colonialism. Indeed, as anthropologist John Eade (2000: 1) has averred "[p]opular images of a thriving, multicultural city – the capital of a 'Cool Britannia' – conceal a more complex social world shaped by the traces of empire". In this Flash Presentation I introduce Florent who embodies the hopes and dreams of many Black Europeans and Black British people who move to supposedly diverse cities such as London in search of queer friendly spaces and a place where they can be themselves and find community. Florent's story – and many of my interlocutors like him – however reveals the ever-present legacy of slavery and colonialism which haunts them in the present. Through Florent I show how the myth of the UK and London being a post-racial society is not only that, a myth, but that it also sets people like Florent up for failure as they come to London seeing it as a safe haven, but end up experiencing the city as a queer city rife with anti-Blackness.

Presenter(s): Roy Celaire

Between Harlem and Haiti: From Culture Concept to Folk Style in Zora Neale Hurston & Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain

This flash presentation makes a case for a comparative reading of contemporaries Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) and Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain (1898-1975), both anthropologists of the Black diaspora in the Americas with an interest in folk literature. Hurston and Comhaire-Sylvain were both active from the Harlem Renaissance (and the Haitian literary mouvement indigéniste) through the era of global decolonization. Using, as Cheryl Walls puts it, the "perspective of the 'folk'" - absorbed during fieldwork in the U.S. South, Haiti, and Jamaica - Hurston strategically suggests that vernacular Black identity rests on the ability (in Brent Hayes Edwards's gloss) "to negotiate the condition of diaspora." Comhaire-Sylvain performs a comparable role in Haiti, translating the literary motives of her father (Georges Sylvain) and brother (Normil Sylvain), both poets and protagonists in Haitian literary indigénisme, into her studies of transatlantic diasporic forms of identity. Both thinkers, I argue, borrow in calculated ways from the romantic Boasian anthropological discourse of cultural continuities or "survivals" and "retentions" from Africa in the Americas. Yet, with a distinctly literary bias, both also signal in their work that the racialized anthropological motives of romanticized "folk" culture could be repurposed not just to confirm authenticity, but to democratize cultural originality, which Hurston succinctly and memorably

redefined as "the modification of ideas." Tracing their redeployment of the culture concept, my presentation identifies a shift in European romanticism's influential theories about culture and language at the moment when they are transformed by these two early Black anthropologists.

Presenter(s): Tristram Wolff

Ghosts of Liberation: Situating the Past and Its Heroes in Contemporary Politics and Action

From the Brothers, the Combahee River Collective, and the other warriors of Black activism and liberation, the seeds of social change and contemporary politics in Albany NY were planted. Activists attempted to materialize better conditions for Black and poor residents of New York's capital city. While the legacies remain strong and the stories told, the contemporary struggles illustrate the long road still ahead. This paper examines the activism and community organizing in conjunction and respect to the ghosts of the past sixty years, whose work set the stage for the current wages of change. Nonetheless, while efforts persist, the push for revolutionary and structurally significant change seems to be lacking or at least indicative of changing political rules, as well as the game of socioeconomic progression, resulting in plans like Project 2025 and the policies of a second Trump Administration. These structures of power summon their own ghosts: those of Jim Crow and the centuries of lacking social, economic, and political capital.

Presenter(s): Ramon Lee

Haunts of Black Figures and White Gaze: The Archaeology of Racial Verisimilitude in Nineteenth Century, New York.

This paper critically examines how racial capitalism continues to shape the construction of local heritage in the northeastern United States, particularly through the lens of historic visual culture. Focusing on the prolific nineteenth-century genre paintings of William Sidney Mount, I explore how depictions of Black individuals as jovial musicians have been embedded into regional heritage narratives in coastal New York. While Mount's works are widely celebrated and frequently used by local heritage organizations to interpret the past, these imagined scenes obscure the historical realities of labor exploitation, social marginalization, and racial inequality that characterized the lives of Black residents in the region.

Drawing on archaeological evidence and archival documentation from communities such as Setauket, Long Island, this paper demonstrates that the lives of Black individuals in the nineteenth century were defined less by music and merriment than by survival within systems of racialized labor. Anthropology provides a critical lens through which we can expose these contradictions, illuminating how dominant historical narratives are constructed not only through omission but also through aestheticization.

In the current landscape of heritage preservation, public institutions continue to privilege nostalgic imagery over material evidence, reinforcing sanitized versions of the past that exclude marginalized voices. This paper argues for a more accountable and inclusive approach to heritage, making one

that challenges the authority of artistic representations in shaping collective memory and confronts the unresolved injustices that persist in our cultural narratives.

By reframing these artistic "ghosts" as active agents in the ongoing negotiation of identity, memory, and power, this work contributes to broader conversations about decolonizing heritage, confronting racial injustice, and reimagining the ethical responsibilities of public history.

Presenter(s): Scott Ferrara

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry is an essay that examines a new interpretation of The New Negro Movement. Coined by philosopher Alain Locke in the early 20th century to characterize African American Life and Culture, I argue that the poetry of contemporary African American poets is a continuum of this cultural phenomena. In this essay, I will illustrate how the New Negro Movement has survived through cotemporary poetry, evidenced in the poetry of several writers.

In his day, Locke was most interested in how African American writers addressed issues of race consciousness, activism, and leadership and I will examine these same themes. From a contemporary, socio-cultural lens, my essay will illustrate how African American poets use their voices in a political climate not dissimilar from the writers of the New Negro Movement, beginning in 1925. I created a course, Rhyme & Reason: African American Poets in Dialogue with Notions of Slavery, Identity and Existence, and in it, I teach about the significance of the New Negro Movement and its relevance in our current social – political landscape.

Identity at the Intersection: New Pathways Through Poetry will not only provide readers with how contemporary poetry mirrors similar issues of the New Negro Movement, but will also provide classroom activities and tools to be used while having difficult conversations. In effect, meeting people where there are, at the intersection of difference.

Keywords: New Negro Movement. Cultural Congruence. Literacy Studies. Race Consciousness.

Presenter(s): Jason Vasser-Elong

“An Almost Unheard of Thing”: Spectatorship, Belonging and Ghosts of the Color Line at the Penn Relays Carnival

This paper is a historical ethnographic meditation that takes the annual pilgrimage to Franklin Field in Philadelphia, USA for the Penn Relays Carnival as its compass. As one of the largest events in terms of spectatorship (over 110,000 spectators in the span of 4 days), and oldest (first held in 1895), the Penn Relays Carnival presents a unique opportunity to better understand: how the technological innovations of modernity, fueled by the structures of racial capitalism, have transformed physical, affective and political movement culture.

This paper will give give context to the modern phenomenon by focusing on the creation and foundation of the Penn Relays Carnival. Franklin Field is built on a potter's field, and constructed

simultaneously as the Penn Museum. This historical grounding then gives context to the life of an early though forgotten figure of the Carnival: Dr. John Baxter Taylor Jr (1882-1908). Taylor Jr. was the first African-American man to win an Olympic gold medal in the London 1908 Olympics. I trace Taylor's record breaking performances at the Penn Relays Carnival at the secondary and collegiate levels as foreshadowing of his Olympic performance. Taylor's athletic career is tragically cut short at the age of 26 by typhoid pneumonia, and his death sets forth a decades-long search for the next "World's Fastest Quarter Miler." I contextualize Taylor's accomplishments on "demonic grounds" (McKittrick 2006) as shaping early twentieth century athletics; furthermore, his life and legacy asks readers and practitioners to (re)consider our relationship to the project of anthropology by taking seriously the consequence of spectacular performance and hypervisibility on Black life.

Presenter(s): Maurice Rippel

"Two lil Cuff": On Gendering Domestic Violence & Ethical Conundrums in the Field

In the Guyanese community, enculturation, "the process by which a child learns his culture" (Kottak, 2025, p. 20), includes songs, stories, proverbs, cultural performances, and even physical discipline. A crucial aspect of enculturation is the strategies for gendering, which shape and reinforce gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender values, and gender activities. Among Guyanese of African descent (hereafter, African Guyanese), the complex of gender values is overtly and covertly demonstrated during kweh-kweh, a pre-wedding ritual that emerged during Slavery (Gibson, 2011). During kweh-kweh, the future bride and groom, their nations (relatives and supporters), and the larger community perform music, dance, food preparations, and diverse ritual activities to reinforce African-centered ethnic values. The crux of these ethnic values is centered on matrimony, which is inherently gendered. Amidst the jollification at kweh-kweh, the magnitude of gendered values is displayed for the entire community's participation and assessment (Richards-Greaves, 2020). In many instances, these gender values reference, normalize, and even reinforce domestic violence, particularly against women. For instance, proverbs like "Married gat teet, e bite like crab" and "Teeth and tongue must bite" inform the community that there will be disharmony in marriage, which may include physical violence. This paper draws on two decades of transnational and comparative ethnographic research among African Guyanese in Guyana and the United States. It examines the role of the kweh-kweh ritual in shaping gender values and reinforcing views on domestic violence in the African Guyanese community. It specifically investigates the dialectical relationship between kweh-kweh ritual performances and African Guyanese gender values.

Presenter(s): Gillian Richards-Greaves

3308 Haunting Root and Branch: Future Memory, Colonial Specters, And Imperial Ghosts Among Ethnographers In Plant Studies - Part 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This two-part session focuses on how plant studies ethnographers attend to hauntings - colonial,

imperial, intimate, and otherwise. In it, our participants address how plant-human relations, and our studies of them, hold the potential to unsettle quotidian temporalities of nationalism, settler colonialism, and empire. Panelists consider how plants and relations with them call our attention to the conditions of possibility of that growth, the soil, and the ways they burst their borders.

Plants topple notions of purity and control within the enclosure of the garden (Shotwell 2016; Subramaniam 2016, 2024), and spectralize past relations and future possibilities. With plants, we consider temporalities and impacts of imperial-colonial ghostliness. As lively beings and symbols of "life itself," plants are commonly conjured into the present tense. Might we also conceive of plants – and discourses surrounding plants – as time machines? They may transport the reader to the origin stories of nation-states, highlighting what Ann Laura Stoler calls "the durabilities of imperial formations" (2016: 17, 25); stories often sanitized by the genocidal process of colonization. They might also attune us to the planetary afterlives of enslavement "in the wake" of transAtlantic enslaver ships (Sharpe 2016: 22), as these relations manifest in the subtle as well as not so subtle soils of the plot, plantation, forest, field, swamp, desert, and garden (see also McKittrick 2013; Wynter 1971).

Critical plant studies ethnographers in this double panel ask: what kinds of memory can a currently living plant – or, in the archival sense, the *idea* of a plant – hold for people enacting social relations with reference to specific or imagined pasts? What are the theoretical frames ethnographers often take for granted as the most useful way to analyze plant-human relations? We provoke our colleagues to consider how the frames of economic botany, folk medicine, "magic" practices, and the notion of a settler-colonial and imperial "center" haunt our ability to see what is actually in front of us ethnographically. What kind of ethnographic work can be produced with and alongside plants? Do the frames of economic botany, folk medicine, etc., foreclose other possibilities? Ethnographic work with plants is haunted by the specter of capital, the wake of enslavement, and the mind-muting force of the "settler public sphere" (Lalu 2009) and "settler common sense" (Rifkin 2014; 2017), all the while planthropologists try to reach escape velocity on the available narratives.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Jessica Caporusso, York University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Charis Boke, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology, Jessica Caporusso, York University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Fionna Fahey, Esther Leemann, Cameron Butler, York University, Department of Anthropology, erin kelly, Jessica Caporusso, York University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Noah Theriault, Carnegie Mellon University, Department of History

Presentation(s): Seeding Alternative Temporalities

In preparation for futures clouded by anxieties over precarious future resources, plant breeders use seeds preserved in inter/national collections to create future crops. These collections harken back to empire-landscaping projects from the Columbian Exchange, plantation economies, and settler colonialism (Casid 2004; Schiebinger 2004). Adams et al. (2009) articulate how anticipation drives

material planning efforts for a sense of preparedness through "abduction," the fluid movements across and between past, present, and future. Through these logics, plant explorers, ethnobotanists, and salvage ethnographers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries collected plants and knowledge (Blackhawk & Wilner 2018). Importantly, these practices also reveal underlying sentiments that Indigenous People(s) and the seeds and environments they cared for were declining and would inevitably "disappear" (Curry 2022; Bonneuil 2019).

Just as seeds hold memories of adaptation, generations of agrarian practices, care relations, and colonial violence (Fullilove 2024; Gan 2017; Nazarea 1998; White 2019); they also carry reproductive material of interest to technoscience. In this paper ask how grammars of salvage, creation, loss, and disaster permeate plant breeding and seed growing (Cromer 2022). How do infrastructures of preservation and (re)production reverberate across space and time? In what ways do seeds and their relations already create ruptures in technoscientific temporalities?

Presenter(s): Fionna Fahey

Co-author(s): Eva Steinberg

Fields of Haunting: Plant Relations as Wake Work in Cambodia's Transforming Indigenous Landscapes

This paper explores how Bunong Indigenous swidden fields in Cambodia become sites of haunting—spaces imbued with traces of past agricultural practices while being reshaped through state intervention and Indigenous resistance. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork since 2010, I examine how Bunong farmers engage in 'wake work' (Sharpe 2016) by reimagining agricultural worlds after much of their land was allocated to rubber plantations.

As the state advances "modernization," Bunong farmers shift from rotational swidden cultivation to permanent agroforestry systems. They integrate rubber—a plant central to corporate land colonization—into diverse plots that contrast with monoculture plantations. These systems reflect both adaptation and resistance to dominant development narratives. By strategically planting rubber alongside other species, Bunong farmers redefine their integration into systems of appropriation and dispossession.

I argue these transformed fields act as temporal portals linking past, present, and future. Ceremonial practices invoking rice spirits persist under young rubber trees and planting strategies preserve cultural memory amidst agricultural transformation. Methodologically, I juxtapose insights from formal spaces with those derived from fields, revealing distinct epistemologies. While bureaucratic processes stall Indigenous claims, plants narrate stories of resistance and cultural persistence that complicate notions of linear progress and state control.

Presenter(s): Esther Leemann

The Quest for Microbial Efficiency: Plantation Logics in Emerging Agribusiness Value Chains

Industrial agriculture's shift towards soil health has given rise to a new class of products—biologicals—which encompasses a group of microbial supplements that aim to boost nutrient availability in soil and uptake by crop plants. Based on fieldwork in southern Ontario with commodity crop farmers, biologicals producers, and agricultural retailers, I explore how biologicals are being introduced into agribusiness value chains. Specifically, I focus on how discourses of efficiency, yield, and return on investment, as well as metaphors of plants and soil as factories or labouring bodies, structure agribusiness marketing and farmers' perceptions of biologicals, to explore how biologicals are future-making project haunted by settler-colonial, imperial legacies of plantations. I argue that the overarching focus on efficiency gestures towards a desire for what I call metabolic discipline—an extension of plantation logics of simplification, optimization, and extraction (Wynter 1971, McKittrick 2013, Barua 2024), intimately tied to racialized exploitation on Canadian farms, as the predominantly Mexican and Caribbean temporary farm workers are subjected to "slavery-like conditions." Thus, I argue that agribusiness producers replicate and extend plantation strategies of monocultural simplification and metabolic optimization towards commodifiable productivity on a microbial level, folding microbes into existing disciplinary matrices and industrialized temporalities.

Presenter(s): Cameron Butler

The Creation of a Medicinal Garden: Emergent Uses of Land Stewardship with the Dartmouth Organic Farm

This paper explores the various stakeholders that imagine an organic farm and allow for the creation of a garden to reside within it. By analyzing the farm's history, cultural significance, and the ongoing land operations, this study examines how the land itself serves as a site of colonial memory. The research considers the plants that grow within the farm's current function as well as the forgotten waste from past projects and how they reinforce, haunt, and challenge settler colonial structures. The ethnographic work I conduct will be alongside the plants in my garden, the fields planted by the Dartmouth Sustainability Office, and the wild herbs that grow between these spaces. This paper is looking to observe the ways in which the plants afford themselves to different understandings of plant use and plant perspective, as well as the relevance of decision making surrounding land practices. Observing the entangled interactions within the garden and the surrounding farm, this research aims to expose the various ways plants contest the ghosts of default attunements to plants. To answer these questions, my research will explore the comparison of maps, images, and text that depict the aesthetic of the farm landscape throughout recorded time. I will also be using the ethnographic experience of planning, planting, and sitting with the gardened section of the farm, regardless if the garden lies dormant or is actively growing.

Presenter(s): erin kelly

From Botanic Gardens to Contemporary Biofuels: Colonial Spectres in Mauritian Agribusiness

Hailed as one of the world's oldest "living laboratories," Mauritius has long been entangled with colonial botany and agricultural entrepreneurship. Since its founding in the 1730s, the island's

Jardin de Pamplemousses botanic garden and Station Agronomique sought to unearth "nature's knowledge" to harness it for human benefit (Grove 1995). This mandate nurtured a colonial vision of botanic gardens as proper loci of plant conservation and experimental propagation in relief to folk knowledges about plants. While the Jardin's prominence as a site of knowledge-making has since waned, its legacy endures via recent agropreneurial efforts to cultivate new uses for colonial crops. Sugarcane biofuel development, for instance, emphasizes a colonial mechanistic understanding of plants' "natural" ability to propagate and is built on centuries' old expertise gleaned in the garden. Such assumptions stress not only how vegetal knowledge is generated, but also underscore how current agribusiness island imaginaries (Gugganig 2021) are haunted by the spectre of colonial biotechnology (Storey 2017). The Jardin is thus a fertile site to query how knowledge about plants traffics between past, present, and future imaginaries, all while contesting whose expertise matters. Using ethnographic insights, I question colonial botany's enduring influence on biotechnology, arguing that attending to how the colony and garden co-cultivate each other may help us attune to plant stories otherwise overlooked.

Presenter(s): Jessica Caporusso

Discussion

4966 “Ghosted: Race, Health, and the Haunting of Medical and Public Health Systems”

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel will present papers that explore the spectral dimensions of health inequities—the ways that Black communities and other underrepresented groups are systematically erased, ignored, and made invisible within medical and public health systems. Taking inspiration from New Orleans, a city where the past refuses to stay buried, presenters interrogate how racialized histories of medical neglect, exploitation, and exclusion haunt contemporary health outcomes.

Across the landscape of public health, ghosts appear in missing data, medical neglect, and absent histories. Health disparities are too often explained as statistical anomalies, while the structural forces that shape these inequalities remain obscured. Black patients and communities are routinely "ghosted" by medical professionals and public health institutions, whether through the failure to take their symptoms seriously, the denial of life-saving care, or the historical refusal to document their suffering. The absence of data itself is a form of violence, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and neglect. Panel participants explore this by engaging ethnographic theory, methodology, and research in the US, Canada, and abroad.

This panel assembles scholars whose papers will produce discussion while seeking to address the following questions:

- How do missing, absent, or distorted data shape racialized health disparities?

- In what ways do medical and public health institutions "ghost" Black and other marginalized
- communities through systemic neglect, misdiagnosis, or dismissal?
- How does the erasure of Black health histories continue to haunt contemporary public health?
- How can we theorize haunting and ghosts as analytical tools for understanding health
- injustice?
- What are the epistemological and methodological challenges of researching what has been
- deliberately erased?
- How do Black and other marginalized communities resist their own erasure and engage in
- health activism as a form of counter-haunting?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Corliss Heath , David Simmons, University of South Carolina

Chair: Corliss Heath

Presenter(s): Daniella Santoro, Alejandro Cerón, University of Denver, Department of Anthropology, Tola Mbulaheni, Erin Mellett, University of Memphis, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: David Simmons, University of South Carolina

Presentation(s): "Wheelchair City": The "Ghosting" of Disabled Gunshot Survivors in New Orleans

In 1992, a cover story in the local newspaper referred to New Orleans as "Wheelchair City", named for the increasing number of residents with spinal cord injuries as a result of gun violence. Over the next few decades, these numbers continued to grow, and while important medical programs have been developed to help survivors manage their immediate trauma, gunshot survivors are still vastly underserved and underrepresented. As such, they represent an element of Black health histories and Black disability history in the U.S. that is at risk of erasure and misrepresentation in the medical and cultural archive.

This paper examines the "ghosting" of disabled gunshot survivors within two distinct but connected domains of social and political life: statistical enumeration of neighborhood gun violence, and the epistemic violence of the erasure of Black disability know-how, or what Black disability scholars call "crip wisdom". Through examining a social network of several gunshot survivors who are committed to New Orleans street parading traditions, I argue that the "wheelchair city" must be understood as more than just a product of trauma and violence, but also as a space of reclamation and power.

Presenter(s): Daniella Santoro

Neglecting Community Concerns about Water Contamination in a Neocolonial Enclave: A Case Study from Southwest Guatemala

When community leaders from several Indigenous and Mestizo communities noticed an increase in human skin illnesses and chronic kidney disease, alarming numbers of dead fish in local rivers, and persistent bad odors in the environment, they suspected they could all be related to water contamination from new agribusiness coming to their region. Over the past 15 years, they have asked for interventions from government institutions, universities, and international organizations, but their requests have gone unanswered. Drawing on 2 years of ethnographic research, I present the competing and overlapping explanations put forward by leaders from affected communities; by environmental, health, and workers' rights activists; by bureaucrats from public health, environmental, human rights, and agriculture institutions; and by academics and experts in medicine, epidemiology, agriculture, and environmental sciences. Findings show a map of discourses that shed light on some explanations while obscuring others, unveiling social, economic, political, and institutional relations that shape the social production of knowledge about health problems. The net result is that communities' concerns have been ignored, erased, and made invisible. While these discourses reproduce social relations with roots in the country's colonial and postcolonial past, they are also shaped by the country's place in the contemporary global economy, and by the neocolonial regimes that prevail in global health research.

Presenter(s): Alejandro Cerón

Hauntings and Historical Presence of HIV Response for Black Communities in Canada: 'Showing up' in Archival Representations of Risk and AIDS Activism

Four decades of HIV/AIDS in Canada and Black communities still feel its disproportionate effects of race. My paper examines past, present and future dynamics of structural racism shaping community experiences of HIV service access in Toronto. Recalling encounters with the public health archive, I engage how this material and cultural space harbours (counter-)hauntings of Black health, disease, and activism that socially and clinically emerge in these services. Immersive review of surveillance data, reports, speeches, and other textual fragments cohered a major narrative of the city's 'early' AIDS crisis and its public health response. The archival 'master-narrative' animates racial data as an epistemic form of violence and almost exclusively constructs Black populations as 'HIV-endemic'. This term is mobilized to pathologize risk as inherent to Black bodies and geographies. Its anti-Black logic continues to haunt the contemporary institutionalization of clinical policies and practices structuring pervasive experiences of racism in service access. I dually conceptualize the public health archive as a repository of 'ghostly matters', providing a glimpse into local Black AIDS activism. Influenced by Avery Gordon's approach to history, haunting, and crisis, I explain how the spectre of past Black activist tradition 'shows up' in unconventional ways to trouble past-present 'HIV-endemic' discourse and urge a (re)new(ed) HIV response to healthy futures of Canada's Black communities.

Presenter(s): Tola Mbulaheni

Signs of Exclusion: Deaf Immigrants, Language Access, and Health

This paper examines how deaf immigrants experience and navigate spectral dimensions of health inequities in the US medical system. Deaf communities are systematically marginalized in the medical system, particularly deaf immigrant communities with inadequate language access. American Sign Language (ASL) is among hundreds of sign languages across the world and deaf immigrants in the US may use a different sign language or may not have had access to signing in their country of origin. Standard ASL/English interpreters, at times, provide insufficient language access to this population. Ethnographic fieldwork in New England and the Mid-South, explores how intersections of racial/xenophobic ideologies about immigrants and ableist ideologies about deaf people amplify barriers to healthcare. Inadequate language access, compounded by ableism and xenophobia, renders deaf immigrants invisible in medical spaces, echoing broader patterns of exclusion seen in other marginalized groups. This paper examines how deaf immigrants negotiate constraints and mobilize options of different languages and modalities to navigate fundamentally exclusionary healthcare processes and spaces. It argues that deaf immigrants' collaborative and creative strategies of language practices challenges exclusions and explores how such practices can be understood as forms of resistance, offering new ways to theorize health justice as a counter-haunting to erase marginalized voices in the medical system.

Presenter(s): Erin Mellett

Discussion

8197 MAROONS, INDIANS & OTHERS: Ghost-hunting Black, Native and Latino Cultural Exchanges in Outlaw Geographies

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Our session looks at the apparitions of past alliances, fellow citizens, fellow slaves, maroons, and servants building community, creating kinship, and exchanging culture outside the bounds of settler colonial racial capitalism, that live today in unique geographic zones, practices and people. We are interested in present day endurances in the United States of elements of what could be called maroon culture: intercultural exchange and interracial community building among oppressed peoples at the ecological margins of colonized lands. In the historiography and popular culture of Latin America, the identification of the cultural and kinship blending of African, Indigenous and European peoples is often framed as central to national identity formations. In the US, racial determinism, longstanding segregation, and the siloing of Black versus Latino versus Native Studies has until recently left little room for the interactional perspective that could inform truly intersectional work on the richness of these exchanges. We present a range of ethnographic, person-centered and personal encounters that focus on people in places of abandonment and devaluation often transformed into sites of value, community-building, and mutual aid. They provide still-not-fully-revealed geographical locations for the generation of cultural practices,

families and lineages, and political subjectivities undergoing revaluation and renaissance today. They are generative, for example, of the challenge of Black Indian identity to the extant landscape of cultural centers, social service, and museum representations disturbed or disrupted by the histories represented by real live people claiming the fullness of their ancestries. The ghosts of Africans resisting slavery, and native people resisting Removal, inform conflict in Pembroke Township, Illinois, where Mexican people are fulfilling their dreams of return to the rancho, alongside Black farmers rebuilding Black to the Land sustainability. Today more scholars are seeing and imagining maroon legacies in activist occupations that defy urban displacement, challenge the carceral state, or affirm Palestinian solidarity, sites defined by cross-cultural inclusion, defying and denaturalizing property ownership, and mutual aid. These erased histories of people making place in hostile heartlands haunt our ongoing struggles for racial justice, and inter- and intraracial reconciliation and repair, and speak to contemporary efforts to restore these historical alliances.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Jesse Mumm

Chair: Symone Johnson

Presenter(s): Robert Keith Collins, San Francisco State University, John Lowe, Jesse Mumm, Symone Johnson

Presentation(s): The Ghostly Relevance of Native America to Black Anthropology: Allies, Citizens, Maroons, and Slaves

What is the relevance of Native America to Black Anthropology? To explore this question, this paper takes a person-centered ethnographic approach to the apparitions of alliances, fellow citizens, fellow slaves, maroons, and servants that have shaped the nature of African and Native American interactions examined by Black anthropologists within the present-day boundaries of the United States. The relevance of Native America to Black anthropology must be understood according to the contacts, interactions, and shared identities formed between individuals within communities and their interpretations of these interactions evident in what the people said, did, and embodied over time, and the implications these interactions hold for hemispheric investigation of the phenomenon. In this paper, I argue that the racial determinism that haunts notions of African and Native American interactions must be deconstructed if how scholars have, and continue to, study the cultural exchanges and experiences these interactions represent are to be understood.

Robert Keith Collins, PhD

Associate Professor

American Indian Studies

San Francisco State University

Presenter(s): Robert Keith Collins

Black and Indian in Chicago

As Executive Director of what was then the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in Evanston Illinois two decades ago, I had a meeting with a person from Chicago who identified himself as Black/Cherokee, who related to me a story of mixed identity and discrimination fostered by settler colonialism that is too often left out of in the "story" of America. It is a story of marginalized peoples learning lessons well to marginalize other peoples. These divisions and barriers have too long impaired relationships and alliances between BIPOC. He related that a few years earlier he had retraced by foot the Trail of Tears from Georgia to Oklahoma. He shared newspaper clippings documenting his journey. As I got to know him, I was invited and introduced to a Black/Indian organization in the metro Chicago area unaffiliated with the "official" American Indian Center of Chicago. I attended several social gatherings of the group whose mixed identity was very strong. My understanding was that they had been at some point rebuffed by the Chicago AIC and so formed their own organization to be an umbrella for community. My query is why this has happened and if there is a possibility for reconciliation.

John N. Low, JD, Ph.D.

Citizen - Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

Professor

Department of Comparative Studies

Director - Newark Earthworks Center

Ohio State University - Newark

Presenter(s): John Lowe

Maroons in the Shadow of Chicago: Cultural Exchanges and Interracial Legacies in Northeastern Illinois

I examine the intersecting Indigenous, Black and Latino histories that haunt the present residence and culture of the riverine wetlands and Illinois Dunes of Kankakee County just 50 miles south of Chicago. I trace here elements of maroon culture: intercultural exchange and interracial community building among oppressed peoples at the ecological margins of colonized lands. This is Potawatomi land, and of their mixed Métis descendants, whose presence, artifacts, and extant land claims endured far beyond the Indian Removal Era, as well as home to Black farmers with origins in the Underground Railroad. Today Latinos will be the plurality of the City of Kankakee by 2030, and hundreds now live in the new ranchos of Pembroke Township, the first and last historically Black farming community of Illinois. I combine historical and archival research with participant observation and oral histories of residents in a project rooted in the ongoing challenges of Blackness, indigeneity, and the mixed-race heritages of Latinos to the US racial system. This vibrant ecological zone, framed as wasteland by capitalism, racialized as a landscape of abandonment, has long meant refuge for marginalized people, and is now becoming a site for the re-fulfillment of betrayed American dreams. An unprecedented new dialogue emerges repositioning Black and Latino residents and reactivating the ghosts of historical memory.

Jesse Mumm, PhD

Professor of Instruction

Latin American and Latino Studies

Presenter(s): Jesse Mumm

Lincoln Park, Chicago as a Cross-Generational Land Site of Marronage and Revolutionary Activity

In observance of the 1903 Chicago centennial anniversary, representatives from the Winnebago, Chippewa, Pottawatomi, Sac and Fox, Menominee, and Ottawa tribes gathered in Lincoln Park to erect an encampment replicating an Indian village which existed a century before with a wish to "live as did his [sic] ancestors in the years before Chicago was born" (Clark 1903). Last Spring, the quad of the DePaul University Lincoln Park campus served as a site of one of many encampments constructed on college campuses across the US in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza victimized by an Israeli genocidal agenda with the support of the US and its allies. This paper draws from archival research on the 1903 Lincoln Park Indian encampment and data collected from a Teach-In & Talk-Back with DePaul students who were involved in the 2024 student encampment to discuss the history of marronage they are connected to, and to reflect on their work to establish a temporary community around collective values. I aim to trace this history and highlight the ways that African American and Indigenous political thought and praxis have activated and mobilized stewards, residents, and students of the Lincoln Park neighborhood across history while providing commentary, through the recent examples of student activism, on strategic and stylistic forms of contemporary marronage.

Symone Johnson, PhD

Assistant Professor

African and Black Diaspora Studies

DePaul University

Presenter(s): Symone Johnson

1404 Speaking with Seething Presences: Present and Future Hauntings in/of Reproduction

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

Reproductive health(care) is haunted by many specters.

To be haunted, Gordon asserts, is to encounter a presence that seethes with the urgency of its meddling in the realities we take for granted, even as it appears to not be there at all (2008). In her construction of haunting as a multi-temporal intervention on the present, the ghost-a social figure

through which something lost, abandoned, or hidden insists upon its own reality by challenging ours-is a clue. Following this clue, obeying the urgent pointing of a specter, leads us to subjugated ways of knowing where the affective blends with the political to reveal a haunting we may not even have words for yet. Medical anthropologists of reproduction have long followed the lead of many such insistent and impatient phantoms, directing us to excavate forgotten histories, name that which has been suppressed, and cross temporal boundaries through ethnographic acts that weave together the uncanny present with memory, engaging unquiet ghosts in a "politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (Derrida 1994) while invoking another aphorism: that "all politics [including those of our most seething ghosts] are reproductive politics" (Briggs 2017).

Haunting's core is emotion, affect, and feeling-a sense of the uncanny that links trauma from the past into present anxieties of the future. A ghost transgresses our fragile ordering of the years and drags events and the memories of feeling they evoke(d) into disquieting new frames. In this moment, where many of the "transformational recognitions" (Gordon 2008) engendered by ghostly projects and their politics-projects of racial justice, queer rights, reproductive freedoms, resistance movements against colonialism and genocide-have been met by reactionary assemblages using old forms of violence in new mediums, the traumatic past doesn't only conjure our mourned and subjugated ghosts, but presences that might seek something closer to possession than recognition. For many, the emotions that mark our current hauntings trend towards fear, panic, and an expectant grief, not for spirits from the past, but for the future hauntings we anticipate.

Scholars on this panel are speaking with seething presences-eugenics, colonialism, genocide--to consider the role of the specter in our present and immediate futures. Central to our work are questions that speak to the responsibilities inherent in it: How do we manage the boundaries between past, present, and future for public audiences and communities in a way that honors our ever-persistent ghosts without allowing them to possess us? As activists, scholars, and public intellectuals, how do we allow seething presences to speak through us without being overdetermined--possessed--by the past-futures they describe? In this panel, participants reflect on the ways that being haunted is necessary to the work of justice-seeking for past, present, and future ghosts.

Organizer: Sarah Williams, University of Connecticut, Alyssa Basmajian

Chair: Sarah Williams, University of Connecticut

Presenter(s): Jan Brunson, University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Williams, University of Connecticut, Manon Lefevre, University of Pennsylvania, Adrienne Strong, University of Florida, Google Karrass, Simona Spiegel, University of Notre Dame

Discussant: Daisy Deomampo

Presentation(s): The Specter of Population: From a "Small, Happy Family" to a "Smart Life"

The Malthusian specter of population explosion left a history of state-sponsored population control as well as international development programs that spread an ideology of the small family. The slogan "a small family is a happy family" was promulgated in low-income countries around the world. As fertility rates dropped and critics decried the focus on the procreation of brown families in

low-income countries over the overconsumption of high-income countries, messages of fertility reduction needed new packaging. In Nepal, a recent multi-year campaign produced idealized images of the "smart life" of "smart couples:" happy, middle-class families engaged in rationalistic family planning to delay and space their offspring. Contraception promised satisfaction through capitalism and economic mobility, or optimistic attachment (Berlant 2011; Murphy 2017). The historical refashioning of a discourse that promoted a small family to one that promoted a smart life is illustrative of a global trend in which a message of fewer births is repackaged as spacing. At stake is whether new discourses of improving household wealth and empowering women remain haunted by the lingering specter of eugenic targeting of marginalized groups to limit procreation. Anthropologists work to disentangle projects that support reproductive health from this legacy. And now, as many projects abruptly disappear, they must stand with (TallBear 2014) communities as they struggle to replace services that vanish.

Presenter(s): Jan Brunson

Eidolonic Visitants: Birth Tourism, Reproductive Racial Capitalism, and "Sticky" Eugenics

Projects of population-shaping rely on fabricated apparitions--eidolons, specters of the idealized responsible reproducer whose decisions serve the eugenic goals of their countries, and revenants of eugenics projects, irresponsible reproducers, who serve as a foil to eugenic goals in discourse and policy. In Yucatan, where eugenic logics permeate local reproductive landscapes, im/migration is high, and a birth tourism economy serving USians and Global North citizens—eidolons--has flourished, exploring the tensions between the figures of eidolon and revenant offers a means of understanding the stickiness of labels of ir/responsible reproduction to race and class. As eidolonic visitants enter a budding economy of guides, legal services, and healthcare that commoditizes their own reproduction as a tool for accessing citizenship and property in Mexico, they do so in a context where Mexican women must contend with the eugenic ghosts that haunt their kin-making decisions while enduring denigrating rhetoric that makes a revenant of their reproduction. Tracing these specters reveals how they are illustrative of the internal contradictions of reproductive racial capitalism: capital demands a regenerating underclass of cheap labor, while the racist logics that enable capitalism stifle the reproduction of that same underclass, resulting in a paradox: responsible reproduction is an always already unachievable goal, whose promotion perpetuates the racial projects that support capitalism.

Presenter(s): Sarah Williams

Reproducing Ableism: Eugenic Legacies in the Age of Preimplantation Genetic Testing

Since its introduction in 1990, preimplantation genetic testing (PGT) has become routinely used to test embryos grown in vitro for thousands of single-gene disorders, chromosomal abnormalities, and structural chromosomal rearrangements. At least half of all embryos created through in vitro fertilization (IVF) in the United States today undergo PGT. Technologies of preimplantation and prenatal genetic testing are inextricably entangled in histories of eugenics, reproductive coercion, and genetic discrimination. As disability rights scholars argue, their use often reifies cultural

understandings of the kinds of lives that are worth reproducing, an ideology steeped in ableism. Yet, they also remain integral to pregnant peoples', including disabled pregnant peoples', exercise of reproductive autonomy. This talk examines the structures of ableism that haunt contemporary practices of preimplantation genetic testing in the U.S. IVF industry, shifting the problematics of PGT away from individual patient "choice" and toward biomedical practice. Drawing on fifteen months of ethnographic research within IVF labs conducted in 2022 and 2023, I chart how biomedical logics, expert practices, and modes of financialization normalize the use of PGT in ways that obscure its eugenic origins. Finally, I look to feminist crip theory for a way to both interrogate the harmful legacies of ableism and eugenics within infertility medicine, while making space for patients' voices.

Presenter(s): Manon Lefevre

The Specter of the Lady with the Lamp: Nightingale and Colonial Hauntings in Tanzanian Nurse-Midwifery

In order to radically reimagine and re-world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2023) maternity care globally, we must grapple with the ghosts of our pasts and futures. In Tanzanian midwifery, Florence Nightingale's grip on nurses is both a guiding light and a suffocating stranglehold. Nightingale's legacy is mixed, colored by racism and her alignment with a colonial, patriarchal institution, while also continuing to provide an avenue to recognition and fulfillment for many (primarily) women in Tanzania through the profession she helped to start. Yet, invocations of Nightingale's legacy render invisible the contributions and innovations of Tanzanian nurse leaders and tie nurse-midwives to an institution (and history) that often places them at odds with the very women they are meant to care for. Racist, colonial, patriarchal ghosts condense in the form of Nightingale, and their hauntings foreclose futures just as they re-instantiate oppositional relations of care and power hierarchies. Based on archival and ethnographic work in maternity care settings in Tanzania since 2009, I use nurse midwives' narratives to argue that our radical imaginaries for maternity care must start with facing that which haunts us and freeing ourselves from ghostly possession of our futures. Using their own critiques, insights, and experiences, nurse midwives can point the way toward a more just and healthier version of the future.

Presenter(s): Adrienne Strong

Eugenic Apparitions: Polygenic Testing and the Temporal Politics of the New Right

Proponents of novel polygenic embryonic testing frame it as a cutting-edge expansion of reproductive choice and distance it from eugenics. Yet as scholars have long examined, the logics underpinning such technologies—risk calculation, optimization, and the promise of improved genetic futures—echo eugenic aspirations to govern life at the level of heredity (Rose 2001; Rapp 2004; Valdez 2022; Weinbaum 2019). This paper reconsiders the spectrality of eugenics in light of polygenic testing and the biotechnology sector's temporal politics. While biotech firms present polygenic testing as individual choice, neoreactionaries in adjacent social and financial networks position genetic technology as an instrument of elite stewardship and a defense against

civilizational decline, conjuring ghosts of eugenics past. Drawing on ethnographic research in tech-right spaces and a biotech company, this paper explores how eugenics is shifting from a disavowed past into a latent political present. Exploring what truths this unwelcome apparition reveals, this paper asks if liberal eugenics in the biotech sector is giving way to a new biopolitical project where eugenics, rather than a denied specter or circumvented taboo, becomes a politically and technologically viable future enabled by elite governance, techno-authoritarianism, and secession. How do we reckon with haunting when some ghosts are not merely lingering but actively seeking new infrastructures and sovereignties for their return?

Presenter(s): Googie Karrass

Knowing Bodies: Hauntings and Futurities in Midwifery Pedagogy

Black and Indigenous midwives, the backbones of midwifery, were once at the forefront of U.S. maternity care. The afterlife of racist campaigns to eradicate midwifery led to Black and Indigenous midwives making up less than a tenth of the midwifery workforce, a demographic reversal intensified by the institutional erasure and ahistoricization of traditional knowledges and practices in standardized midwifery pedagogy. In California, Black and Indigenous student midwives contend with racialized maternal death crises, financial barriers, and sociopolitical exclusion in their paths to becoming practitioners. How do these student midwives envision and cultivate healing and spaces of belonging amidst everyday manifestations of erasure? Disentangling (re)configurations of alterity and racial orderings in contemporary midwifery, this work blurs delineations of spectral and material manifestations of racial capitalism through the borderland of the body. Thinking with the embodied experiences of practitioners, this research approaches residual and emergent ways of knowing the body and birth via vernacular theorizing and structures of feeling, exploring ancestral connections as living blueprints for otherwise being in everyday life. Developed from the scholar-practitioner perspective, a methodological offering of 'thinking like a midwife' engages pressures of efficacy and hauntings of indeterminacy in channeling collaborative narratives as aspiring conduits for collective knowledge.

Presenter(s): Simona Spiegel

Discussion

3547 Part II: Specters in the Sepulcher

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Historian Arlette Farge (2013, 46) has argued that the archive is a "sepulcher," where one encounters "silhouettes of the past, be they faltering or sublime." Here, we take a broad definition of "archive" to include traditional archival documents, collections, archaeological record, ethnographic fieldnotes, and even the body itself. Following the "archive as sepulcher," we ask: what are the implications for our studies and our results when we encounter ghostly absences buried in these spaces?

Ghosts in anthropology have taken many forms, with "haunting" often metaphorically gesturing toward absence, longing, and troubled, violent, or unsettled pasts. They can also take the form of our recognition of what is missing, the loss of materials and knowledge unwittingly perpetuated by praxis, time, and historical forces. In our work, we encounter absences and the ghostly impressions they suggest in many ways. In collections and archives, we often open an empty box, note a missing document, see a space left blank on a form, or encounter a missing page from fieldnotes or diaries. There is also the pause, the self-censoring involved, when asking ourselves, "should I write that experience down?" Whether such absences become a dead end, a frustration, or an obsession, they are often left out of our studies, never mentioned in the "materials and methods." Writing on agnotology, Proctor (2008, 3) tells us, "Ignorance can be made and unmade, and science can be complicit in either process."

In this session, we invite contributors to re-presence these absences and impressions. Welcoming scholars from across the subdisciplines, we ask that they interrogate the ways that the absences we encounter in the archive--that sepulcher where "silhouettes of the past" live--shape anthropological knowledge, or the lack thereof, even as they are rarely discussed in official publications or presentations. In other words, we will consider the double haunting of archival ghosts: first encountered as absence in our fieldwork, and second as present absences that continue to haunt anthropological knowledge even as we participate in removal of their work.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Alanna Warner-Smith, American University, Meredith Ellis, Florida Atlantic University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Shannon Novak, Syracuse University

Presenter(s): Shannon Novak, Syracuse University, Haeden Stewart, Jose Marrero Rosado, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Elyse Semerdjian, Clark University, Gabriella Soto, Arizona State University

Discussant: Elizabeth Davis, Princeton University

Presentation(s): Playgrounds in Wastelands: A Ghost Story

It was the peak of Sunday puja and the shakti was high; a buzz in the mandir, electric. The air thick with smoke, a toxic blue haze—bipproducts of incense, cigarettes, and camphor burning—animated a dimension typically unseen. In defiance of gravity, the langued haze swirled as new plumes entered the dance; each, the residue of petitions for help or gratitude for blessings received. Since 2017, I have been sifting through some of these ashes, traces scattered widely amidst the "imperial debris" (Stoler 2013). From South India to British Guiana in the nineteenth century, indentured laborers carried the goddess, Mariamman, to the plantation's edge. Following independence in 1966, Indo-Guyanese immigrants took flight, bringing revitalized traditions to North American cities. For two decades now, the goddess has come to sit in a barren industrial park on the outskirts of Brampton, Ontario—a landscape typically deemed lifeless and uninhabitable. In the ruins of capitalism, there are bound to be ghosts; some familiar, others uncanny. I reflect on one of these encounters during my ethnographic fieldwork there, a flashbulb moment that I just can't shake.

Perhaps it was a dream, or maybe an apocalyptic vision like T. S. Eliot (1922) foretold in *The Waste Lands*, shattered by modernity. In this presentation, I step cautiously onto "demonic ground," unmapping landscapes of erasure to reconsider what "livingness" might feel like and mean (McKittrick 2006, 2021).

Presenter(s): Shannon Novak

A Tale of Tailings: The Long-term Afterlives of Industrial Waste and Its Haunting Absences

We are living through an era that has been described as "the apotheosis of waste", a globe brimming with greenhouse gasses, mountains of tailings, lagoons of pig-shit, and acres of cancerous sludge. The massive scale and persistence of industrial waste has transformed the air, water, and soil that we live on, and remade the very way we produce and reproduce social life. How can archaeology, a discipline that tends to view persistent waste as a fragmentary trace for the purposes of historical reconstruction, attend to the massive quantity of anthropogenic waste in a manner that is appropriate to the scale of our current climatic crisis? Drawing from excavations of a 1930s mining community that lived downwind of lead tailings, this paper explores the theoretical potential of 'tailings' as a metaphor for the affective and effective afterlives of industrial waste: their biophysical harms, their ecological affordances, and the uncertainties they carry with them.

Presenter(s): Haeden Stewart

Finding Absence: Tracing the Unknown Origins of Human Skeletal Remains in Historic Period San Juan, Puerto Rico

A popular trail in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, leads to an unmarked burial ground, a forgotten annex of the Cementerio Santa Maria Magdalena de Pazzi. Consulting the literature and the local archives supported that this area had been used to bury those who had perished during the cholera epidemic of 1855-1856. During the last few years we have worked towards the recovery of the primary and secondary inhumations in the area; tens of thousands of human bone fragments have been recovered so far, but the cholera mass grave remains unfound. In this paper, I grapple with the absence of the cholera mass grave and the unexpected recovery of skeletal remains of unknown origin. The primary and secondary inhumations on top of the cholera burial grounds are absent from the archives, records, and memory. By examining the inverse relationship between the archival and archaeological records at this site, we can approach a better understanding of the mortuary practices in 19th and 20th-century San Juan. This found absence is not trivial, however, but inherently tied to the physical and social body of the individuals, as well as community approaches to the living and the dead. Here, only by acknowledging and reflecting on these absences in the archives and living memory can we pursue a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social identity, disease, and mortuary practices, which would have been otherwise overlooked.

Presenter(s): Jose Marrero Rosado

Embodied Archives: Bone Collecting and Armenian Prosthetic Memory in Dayr al-Zur, Syria

Armenians grapple physically and emotionally with the bones of their ancestors in the unmarked killing fields of Dayr al-Zur, Syria where approximately half a million people were murdered during World War I. Reconstructing official church and unofficial pilgrimages to these sites over the last century demands a mix of archival and ethnographic methods to "re-presence" the gaps left within a mutilated, post-genocide and post-Syrian war archive. Centering the writings and experiences of the survivor community is an antidote to the violent production of state archives curated for the purposes of genocide denial. The paper embraces disciplinary heresies to speak back to archival absences and re-imagine what an archive can be within the historian's craft. In my telling, it is the "embodied archives" that matter most, including affective experiences of loss, mourning, and prosthetic memory (embodied post-memory experiences and acts). In this sense, this work steps back from the concept of the archive as a sepulcher, in Arlette Farge's formulation, to consider the broader excavation of bones as a post-genocide archive. In doing so, I consider Armenian bone collecting within a larger history of ancient reliquaries and religious practices that are unconsciously, at times, replicated in vernacular rituals of remembrance.

Presenter(s): Elyse Semerdjian

Into the Unknown: Lingering with Ambiguity on the US-Mexico Border

In her "Field Guide to Getting Lost" (2005), Rebecca Solnit wrote of the distinction between artists' and scientists' encounters with the unknown: "[scientists] transform the unknown into the known, haul it in like fishermen; artists get you out to sea" (5). Her call was not to eliminate science, but to linger with being lost as a productive theory of social change. Building from my fieldwork with records and searches for missing undocumented migrants in south Texas, the goal of this paper is to explore ways of framing experiences with missing and unresolved cases beyond attempting to order them. Previously, transforming the unknown into tangible data—names, numbers, stories—has been the province of the social scientists and community advocates observing the violent effects of US migration policies, including those that result in migrants' disappearances, injuries, and deaths in transit. We have worked with the idea that this hard data provides the foundation for demands of policy change and accountability—especially when the state denies these harms, and certainly any culpability for them. But, this ongoing effort has proven disappointing as a basis for change. Moving between theory, archive, and experience, I explore ways of advocating for change that instead build from the vast and haunted unknowns that pervade the border spaces where I work.

Presenter(s): Gabriella Soto

Discussion

4497 "Monsters at the crossroads: resisting the future through ghost-work"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In certain fantasy-horror, the inanimate takes on life, subjectivity, personhood. These can be robots, cyborgs, monsters and spirits. But it also takes away life, de-animates and objectifies. Kakoudaki (2018) speaks of conceptual cycles of subjectification and objectification. Monsters, evil spirits and horror transgress the classifications of moral and conceptual order, and in so doing, reify it in loops of recognition and non-recognition or alienness, inside and out and in-between, human and inhuman(e). In some art- or horror-fiction, the monsters are in a permanent nameless limbo or incompleteness. And in some Japanese horror films media can mediate only too well, allowing ghosts to transfer from the screen to the world of the real (Thacker 2015).

But in a context where the experience of history is not uniform, where it is sedimented at different velocities (Koselleck 2018) and often not in synch with the world, experience and the horizons of expectation become discontinuous. Monsters emerge and/or are made from these discontinuities, whether they are the spectral or hauntological aspects of state terror, or the darkneses of sudden social or political contingencies whose effects provoke horror. In this panel we ask: can we think of a monsterology that actively arises from the conflict between temporal flows, and from the disjunctions between expectations, cosmologies, communities? To what extent can these discontinuities be harnessed? How can we conceive of ghosting discontinuities as active divergencies that resist the past predictability to make a different future possible? How do people rally ghosts or monsters in animating or de-animating their futures, and how are these cycles subjected to the power-agency of the monsters themselves? Can we speak of ghost-work?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Diana Espirito Santo , Michele Feder-Nadoff

Chair: Michele Feder-Nadoff

Presenter(s): Katherine Swancutt, Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme, Anastasios Panagiotopoulos, Distinguished researcher of the EMERGIA grant (Consejeria de Universidad, Jan Karlach, King's College London, Mariana Eva Tello, Michele Feder-Nadoff

Discussant: Diana Espirito Santo

Presentation(s): Acclimatizing Local Territorial Spirits to Ethnic Others: A Spectral Disjunction Between Cosmologies in Southwest China

Is it possible to acclimatize local territorial spirits to new sacrifices? Entering into sacrificial contracts with "land spirits" or "mountain spirits" is common among the Nuosu, a Tibeto-Burman group of Southwest China. However, a unique spectral disjunction has arisen between the cosmologies of the animistic Nuosu and the Premi, a group that blends animism with Buddhism. Over the past 170 years, many Nuosu displaced ethnic others, and especially Premi, when migrating to the western Liangshan mountains. Yet with new lands came a newfound custodianship over local territorial spirits that may grant or forsake every dream and wish—leaving many Nuosu apprehensive about whether these spirits have acclimated to Nuosu sacrificial contracts and the Chinese state-mandated renewable energy technologies plowed into their territories. I consider

how Nuosu navigate the spectral disjunction that their adopted territorial spirits may perceive between their sacrifices and landscapes, old and new.

Presenter(s): Katherine Swancutt

Conversion and ghost work: Differential enactments of ghostly apparitions in Ifugao

This paper emerges from an encounter with a monster related by an interlocutor in Ifugao, the Philippines. Waking up and seeing a monster hovering over his bed, the interlocutor found himself confused and unable to decide what to do: relate to the monster as a spirit and organize a sacrificial ritual to appease it or take the monster to be a demonic apparition and have the Pentecostal pastor pray for deliverance. Using this case as a starting point for thinking about monstrosity and ghostly other-than-human beings at a time when people in Ifugao oscillate between taking part in animistic and Pentecostal religious practices, the paper discusses conversion as a form of ghost-work, i.e. a way of

'ghosting' spiritual alternatives. Conversion to Pentecostalism does not involve the total eradication of traditional spirits, but rather a continuous and practice of keeping them at bay while acknowledging their ever-present haunting presence. Approaching the monster encountered by the interlocutor through its ontological openness, the paper aims to show how the ghosts become different as ontic figures as they become swept up in different cosmologies – animist and Pentecostalist – whose temporal flows are disjunct and provide significantly different futures.

Presenter(s): Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme

“Religion” as an obstacle: the hauntings of the Afro-Cuban polytheistic cosmos.

Afro-Cuban religiosity is presented in two ethnographic contexts, Cuba and Spain, considering the ubiquity and multiplicity of its "demons", who haunt and are haunted by everyday life. The comparative

approach between the two contexts examines the possibility of analyzing them not simply in their capacity to transform Afro-Cuban religious praxis, but also in the potentiality of the latter to transform the former, that is, the contexts themselves. Deities and spirits of the dead of the Afro-Cuban cosmos constitute the person's "path" (camino), and their presence is more accentuated as obstacles. If and when these obstacles are surpassed, hardly a common thing, then paradoxically the entities disappear as an explicit religious praxis. I argue that their ubiquity and strong presence as haunting obstacles is a vital element of such a potentiality, and that this delivers a blow to the category of "religion", understood as the instantiation of "divine presence" and the absence of obstacles.

Presenter(s): Anastasios Panagiotopoulos

"That Pylon Reminds Me of an Effigy": Nuosu-Yi Ghost-Work and Energy Infrastructure in Liangshan, Southwest China

The cosmology of the Nuosu-Yi, who inhabit the Liangshan area of Southwest China, treats ghosts and spirits as entities that exist in the past, present, and future. From the 1960s–1970s, alongside its chaotic political excesses and spectral presence in Nuosu-Yi life, the Chinese state built a massive infrastructural project through Liangshan: the Cheng-Kun Railway, which made travel convenient but disrupted the Nuosu-Yi environment. Similarly, China's recent energy transition has led to a flurry of dam-building and forests of solar panels or wind turbines, forcing graves and territorial spirits to relocate. Many Nuosu-Yi have learned to welcome green energy while attributing ghostly appearances and agency to its infrastructures. The state harnesses this "ghost-work," built on a mosaic of resistance and acceptance, for its environmental-political needs by "speaking with (Nuosu-Yi) names," in hopes that Nuosu-Yi will reconcile this new development with their open-ended cosmology.

Presenter(s): Jan Karlach

“Disappeared” and “apparitions”: the production of spectrality in post-dictatorship Argentina

In many countries, authoritarian regimes made it a policy to 'disappear' - that is, to hide the bodies of those they murdered. In the countries of the Southern Cone of Latin America, and in particular in Argentina, where this work focuses, it constituted a systematic and massive methodology during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983). Hiding dead bodies, in addition to hiding evidence of the commission of the crime, had lasting effects on structural aspects of the culture as the ways of conceiving the boundaries between life and death, between the times and spaces reserved for one domain and the other. Existence, times, and spaces were profoundly blurred, giving rise to liminal figures capable of engendering haunting beings and places, and lasting terror. This contribution aims to analyze from an ethnographic perspective the 'appearance' of ghosts, spirits, and wandering souls in the spaces where repression took place in Argentina. Furthermore, it proposes to reflect on the methodological and ethical-political challenges implicit in ethnographic work of this kind.

Presenter(s): Mariana Eva Tello

Troubling art-work: ghosts, monsters, apparitions of loss, trauma, care and re-birth

Artworks, and artifices including texts, are apparitions that carry ghosts and monsters while also evoking them. How might un-finishing these things, looking closely at their hauntings, challenge the ghosts and monsters that are carried? This talk will discuss the work of four women artists whose works unravel the solidity of the finished thing to make things whole, to allow re-birth. To care. Artist and psychoanalyst, Bracha L. Ettinger transforms trauma into empathy, through paintings, collages, drawings and writings. By working with Gazans in Palestine she carries into the field the Angel of Carriance, of carrying others, of care and inter-correspondence. Artist and author, Riva Lehrer reveals the Golem monster haunting her self and re-births this into a crip-queer aesthetic to call out societal hegemonies through aesthetic representation and visibility. Artist, Amy Sillman celebrates the clarity of un-finishing by revealing editing, erasure, and failure. She challenges singular truths through seriality, iteration, multiplicity, allowing the ghosts of not-knowing in her

paintings and drawings to peek through its layers. While artist, Joan Jonas constructs affective informative installations around human and non-human loss and fragility. How can facing ghosts and monsters, traumas and doubts of the past and present change the future? How can unfinished art-works inform scholarly practices? What is our monster-slaying or monster-making ghost-work?

Presenter(s): Michele Feder-Nadoff

Discussion

2765 Ghosting Gender: Transgressive and Dissident Bodies Amid the New Culture Wars

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Transgender people and other transgressive and dissident bodies are at the center of new culture wars in the U.S. and transnationally. This is at once a novel phenomenon in its specificity, and an iteration of how gender has often emerged as a site of contestation in moments of cultural and political change. As Judith Butler argues, the transnational "anti-gender ideology movement" constructs gender dissidence as a "phantasm" that threatens the nation itself, and thus seeks to eradicate it (Butler 2024). We are in a moment of intensified public scrutiny of gender dissidence such that in many places, calls to limit trans access to rights, to public spaces, and indeed to living have gained political traction. But we are also in a moment of trans thriving in which increasing numbers of people are coming to see themselves as or align themselves in solidarity with trans, non-binary, and other historically and culturally defined extra-binary ways of living and doing gender. This panel asks – why are transgressive and dissident ways of doing gender a "phantasm" that haunts the nation, how are gender creative people responding to that threat, and how can anthropology grapple with these shifting contemporary dynamics of power, oppression and liberation?

In a moment where gender is being fundamentally upended, anthropologists are in an especially good position to account for, theorize, and be in solidarity with people at the forefront of transforming what gender is, how it should matter, and the work it does in the world in terms of our relations with others, our bodily autonomies, our collective political possibilities, and even our language. We aim to build an international research agenda for an anthropology of transgressive and dissident genders that is in conversation with longstanding anthropological engagements with gender and power, recent calls to broaden approaches to the discipline in ways that emphasize decolonizing epistemologies and community-engaged research, and historically and ethnographically informed trans studies scholarship across the humanities and social sciences.

Section: Association for Queer Anthropology

Organizer: Carmen Jarrin, College of the Holy Cross, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Noah Tamarkin, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Noah Tamarkin, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Carmen Jarrin, College of the Holy Cross, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Asli Zengin, Rutgers University, Cole Rizki, University of Virginia, Judas Cote, Louisiana State University, Department of Geography & Anthropology, Lucia Cantero, University of San Francisco, Elliott Tilleczek

Discussant: Eric Plemons, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Missing the Gender Revolution: Brazilian Trans and Travesti Epistemic Insurgencies Amid Anthropological Silences

When trans and travesti Brazilians read the Anglophone scholarship produced about them, they do not see themselves reflected back. Travestis, in particular, have long been regarded as fascinating and exotic creatures by anthropologists doing fieldwork in Brazil, and ethnographies have mostly focused on their lives as sex workers, on their bodily transformations, and on their gender performances (Kulick 1998; Lino e Silva 2022). What is missing from these accounts is the emergence of travestis as political subjects, a process that began in the 1980s as travestis began to organize to protest police violence, and which has culminated in a powerful social movement that elected two travestis to the National Congress in 2022. Anthropologists from the Global North have been "missing the revolution" (Starn 1991) in Brazilian trans and travesti activism because they continuously pigeonhole travestis into the role of the "transgender native" (Towle and Morgan 2002), and thus fall into the trap of portraying them as ahistorical and apolitical subjects. Today, trans and travesti activists are at the forefront of combatting "anti-gender ideology" discourses (Butler 2024), producing their own counter-epistemologies that haunt the prevailing national ideologies. The paper outlines how trans and travesti epistemic insurgencies have questioned the silences of scholarly inquiry, and explores how they can reframe trans studies in the Global North.

Presenter(s): Carmen Jarrin

Extralegal Sex/Gender: Transness, Surveillance and the Police Violence in Turkey

This paper examines the creative and constructive tensions between Turkish police and surveillance aimed at defining and regulating sex/gender transgression, on the one hand, and trans people's persistent everyday negotiations and strategies in response to these efforts, on the other. I focus on the narratives of trans women in Istanbul, recounting their past and present encounters with police violence between 1960 and 2020. By examining the disciplinary, regulatory, and punitive interventions into trans women's lives, bodies, and sexual practices, I seek to show how sex/gender transgression, especially transness, has persistently served as a critical extralegal site through which the state produces, enacts, reshapes, and reimagines its security regime. I employ the concept of extralegality to analyze the sexualized and gendered dimensions of security and the penal capacities of the police, which often operate within an ambiguous zone between legality and illegality. Yet, trans women are far from passive recipients or victims in the extralegal space. Not only police officers but also trans individuals actively contest the porous boundaries between the legal and the illegal through their interactions with surveillance and security technologies. Through

continuous engagement with the processes of surveillance and securitization, trans women compel the police to develop new legal and extralegal strategies of control and regulation—shaping the police institution itself.

Presenter(s): Asli Zengin

Arts of Survival, Arts of Repair: Negotiating Fascism's Gaze Past and Present

This paper draws on my ethnographic research with trans survivors of military dictatorship (1976-83) and police violence in Argentina. During dictatorship, over 30,000 people were disappeared for their leftist politics and passed through more than five hundred concentration camps. Some of these camps were not so clandestine: they were partially housed inside existing police stations and highly visible to other detainees, highlighting the ways that concentrational and carceral power and surveillance practices overlapped. These other detainees included trans women who were targeted by vagrancy and misdemeanor codes. Their spectacularity rendered them exceptional yet paradoxically their disappearance went unremarked and unrecognized.

Working at the nexus of ethnography and visual culture studies, this talk surfaces trans women's sensory acts of survival and resistance to authoritarianism. To do so, I turn to trans women's shared experiences of carceral photography and studio portraiture, considering how trans women developed visual and embodied tactics that produced creative interference to authoritarianism's gaze. In doing so, I argue that trans women's reflections on their experiences of carceral photography and their negotiations of studio portraiture surface a submerged infrastructure of state surveillance while revealing the centrality of sexual violence against trans women to Argentina's national desires and its fascist projects of state transformation past and present.

Presenter(s): Cole Rizki

Ritualized Hormone Replacement Therapy: Transgender Religious Movements and American Alchemy

The trans-specific angle towards religious studies and the anthropology of new religious movements elucidates a particular facet that has been cast in shadow: that religious trans people exist, and our alchemical abilities are more important than ever. Building upon ritual studies and the anthropology of transness, I will paint a picture of transgender alternative religiosity in America in the 21st century as a strategy for survival and community. Alternative religions are on the rise, and some of these alternative religions do not center a core authority figure to fill their God-shaped hole. These practices draw on potent cultural symbols that are used subversively in relation to hegemonic American Christianity. These practices center around the practitioner as opposed to values placed upon them by a religious authority. Trans spirituality is one way to work the alchemy of transness on not just the body, but the soul. There are also behaviors specific to the trans experience that can be ritualized. In terms of the relational elements of trans ritual, there is an emphasis on interdependence, care, and collaborative mapping of gender. Through an autoethnographic lens, alongside demonstrations based on religious trans figures, I seek to

illustrate the value that anthropology has in understanding transgender religiosity for both trans and cisgender people, and the value of trans inquiry to the field of anthropology.

Presenter(s): Judas Cote

Kineassthetics: The Popozuda, big booty politics, and other ghosts of (hyper)femme resistance in Brazil

This paper interrogates the "kineassthetics" of the Popozuda as emergent forms of 'hyper-femme' resistance. The popozuda, or big booty femme, has been a feature of common parlance and in Brazilian cultural production since Valesca Popozuda, lead singer of the baile funk group Gaiola das Popozudas popularized this term in Rio de Janeiro's early 2000's. This paper asks very broadly, what are the contemporary cultural symbolics and politics of this charged "big booty" hyper femme form? How has non-normative gender and deviant sexuality become imbricated, politicized and embodied as big booty politics? How do these practices ghost the nation and act as a phantasm (Butler 2024) that poses threats to the status quo? Queering – on all its registers - destabilizes categories toward the collective and self-realization and following bell hooks, practices of queering are not about having sex so much as they are about emergent selfhoods "at odds with everything around it." In what ways is this semiotic deployed as non-normative femme resistance? How have trans artists like Urias shaped these critical dialogues and amplified big booty politics in Brazilian culture wars and beyond? And lastly, how has the global rise of the "BBL"(Brazilian butt lift) and its necro-capital import shaped notions of (hyper)femme sexuality and resistance?

Presenter(s): Lucia Cantero

Algorithmic Exorcisms: Anti-Gender Ideology and Phantasmatic Social Media

This paper focuses on the current "anti-gender ideology movement" as it courses within algorithmic social media systems to highlight the ways that engagement-prizing algorithms are fuelling anti-trans and hate-based movements via so-called 'virality.' Working from Butler's (2024) theory of "gender" as a haunting "phantasm," this paper asks what happens if we think of current social media technologies as phantasmatic machines, working on some levels to amplify and profit from the anxiety, fear, and hatred which constitutes the anti-gender movement, while simultaneously serving as key sites for queer and trans activists. Drawing from my online ethnographic fieldwork of queer and trans social media activists, this paper argues for critical attention to ever-changing social media algorithmic systems and to the ways affect constitutes and circulates social media (Sampson et. al. 2018; Ahmed 2014). From Julio Torres's 2024 surrealist TV series *Fantasmas*, in which 'The Algorithm' appears as a phantasmic yet embodied character played by trans actor Dominique Jackson, to Dylan Mulvaney's 2023 Bud Light endorsement which began as a short Instagram video by the trans social media personality and ended in a cartoonish national boycott marked by videos of men shooting automatic weapons into cases of Bud Light beer, this paper stays with the hyper-visible and contradictory mediation of trans and nonbinary people online and in popular culture.

Presenter(s): Elliott Tilleczek

7113 Materialities of the Dead: Haunted Landscapes, Stories, and Dreams of Decolonizing Ethnographic Present

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview 1 (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We are concerned with the vast, infinite, and infinitesimal dead that populate the world. Countless in number, these dead are atomically imbricated with our reality. They suffuse what we call the "world of living" as the very matter of bodies. The atomic, immanent, constitutive place of the dead in terms of "haunting," and in fact "absent present" is one way we conceive of the dead in this panel. In suffusing landscapes and their features, both "living" (animate) and "dead" (inanimate), these dead underlie the personas of mountains, rivers, and sprawling trees. At more personal scales, these dead propel memory and storytelling, and as such we understand these dead under the terms of "the ancestral."

As "the ancestral"-ancestral influence, ancestral force, ancestral authority-to which we pay homage are found in myriad locales. They are found in the impacts of conquest and exploitation, as reminders of the never-completed tasks of decolonizing, whether it be of lands or epistemologies. They are found embedded in landscapes as ancestors that speak as otherwise unfathomable floods and tectonic movements. They sprawl on the surface of these landscapes, bursting from surface soil promising fate-shaping transformations. And they may silence or erase physical forms and social knowledge, as well as enhance these. We see them lending molecular, immanent, energy to social life in many forms, including, most importantly, stories.

The stories in this panel foreground are various. The Swayambhu Stories channel the charisma of digital media to exorcise ancestral spirits who have radically foreclosed the ways that Buddhism is known. Other stories take the form of ancestral emanations in the life of the ethnographer proper, healed through digital communications that give newly vital understandings to the term "haunting." They are stories that undergird a fractal healing-harming apparatus Cuban-Kongo praise. And they are the stories that reiterate the sovereignty of mountain ancestors in Andean approaches to intervening in cataclysmic "anthroposcenic" vistas. The discipline of anthropology has a long history of engagement with the realm of spirits, in our case the spirits that order the lives of our interlocutors and of our discipline itself.

We are conscious that there is no social theory without ancestral apparition. Each of the papers that comprise this panel engage with genealogies of interpretation enlivened by ancestral invocation, homage, and overwriting. As such, ghostly ancestors resonate in the sense of the uncanny that permeates the quotidian, including the everydayness of lands, ethnographic and archival data. The dead that interest us remind us of things that have been forgotten and of those who have come before. They generate insights into a world and into cultures that, even in a state of constant transformation, can't quite escape their pasts.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Ana Mariella Bacigalupo, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Todd Ramón Ochoa, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Todd Ramón Ochoa, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lauren Leve, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Laura Graham, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology, Ana Mariella Bacigalupo, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Todd Ramón Ochoa, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Bruce Mannheim, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghostly Absences and Digital Embodiment: Rematerializing Buddhism Thru Swayamba

For over a century, Buddhism has been haunted by hungry ghosts who have deformed and distorted popular knowledge. Anthropology has been well protected from their impact by the powerful disciplinary practice of ethnographic fieldwork. Yet the image of Buddhism as a dematerialized, disembodied, rational philosophy that the apical ancestors of Buddhist Studies unleashed dominates the Euro-American public sphere today. And it erases the history, presence, knowledge, and labor (affective, artistic, ethical, kinship-based, political, ritual, sweat equity, etc.) of living Buddhist caretaker communities, along with the objects, practices, and spaces they maintain. Against this, the Swayambhu Stories project seeks to channel the charisma of digital technologies to relocate and re-materialize what colonial sensibilities have disappeared. The Swayambhu Mahachaitya (stupa) in Kathmandu, Nepal is one of the most important Buddhist temples in the Himalayan region and a UNESCO-recognized World Heritage site. Rooted in an ethnographic collaboration between an anthropologist, Nepali cultural heritage activists, and diverse stakeholder communities associated with the shrine, Swayambhu Stories helps Himalayan Buddhists tell their own stories of Buddhism and/in their communities and makes locally curated religio-cultural knowledge publicly available in an immersive digital landscape. This paper reflects on the complexities of relationality, epistemology, and mediation in this work.

Presenter(s): Lauren Leve

Healing the Ethnographer: A'uwe (Xavante) Ancestral Communication via Dreams and Whatsapp

In December 2023, I suffered a serious accident in the field. For three weeks in critical condition and moved from ICU to ICU, I received WhatsApp communications from community members. Essential to the healing process, these often came from the spirit world, from 'ró, the spirit-infused landscape where the accident happened. Ancestors channeled messages through dreams to A'uwe elders who conveyed them to me via new media. In a health crisis marked by proximity (accident site) and distance (as I was moved further and further away for treatment), the ancestors and those who communicated on their behalf enabled care across scales in ways that were fundamentally linked to the material world. Dreams as a source of healing and affective ties are possible only with a vibrant and intact 'ró, which dreamers access through bodily preparation and its engagement.

Their broader scaled communication depends, in turn, on data sent by WhatsApp and the infrastructures of encoding and decoding dreams across distance. I reflect on the mechanisms by which A'uwe spirit forces enter into and affect the world of the living. Their presence propels cultural continuity in times of change, memory manifested through storytelling and made material through sound, embodiment, movement, and now digital encoding. This case illustrates ways that A'uwe past and future are constantly present, grounded in a spiritually infused landscape that can dynamically expand to embrace kin and others both near and far.

Presenter(s): Laura Graham

When Haunted Landscapes Speak: Decolonizing Earth Praxis in Northern Peru

In the Northern Peruvian Andes, prestigious ancestors become haunted landscapes or apu with material presence and agency, both living and dead. Here, apu lakes and mountains share in the consciousness of animals, plants, and stones and respond to their surroundings from the perspective of multiple beings. Apus participate actively in the world of living, shaping earth praxis and local perceptions of climate change. I analyze how the apu ancestor lakes and mountains I encountered in las Huaringas express pain and anger and act out revenge in the form of earthquakes, mudslides, and torrential rains when they are exploited; and how they possessed two shamans to articulate how they would destroy humanity with climate change. Climate change expresses the refusal of haunted landscapes to be reduced to objects of exploitation, rocking the foundations of non-indigenous thought. Through this metaphysical refusal, haunted landscapes challenge the ontological distinction between culture and nature, subject and object, and matter and spirit that are normalized by capitalist extractivism and settler colonialism. As climate change and extractive industries wreak havoc around the world, contributing to environmental devastation and structural violence, apu envision material futures that involve returning to a past without humans, ruled by earth ethics. The dead and their multiple pasts are never gone, they return materialized as haunted landscapes to reshape the present and the future.

Presenter(s): Ana Mariella Bacigalupo

Atomic and Molecular Potentials of the Dead in Cuban-Kongo Materiality

Cuban-Kongo praise, known colloquially as Palo, understands reality as suffused by an immeasurable mass of the dead. The number of the dead that comprise this mass is infinite, but the dead themselves are best thought of as infinitesimal. Atom-like in how they underlie matter, they in fact constitute it. Thus, the anonymous, infinitesimal dead are the very basis of matter. This paper explores how Palo healers seek out these infinitesimal dead to effect works of healing and harming to transform the lives of their clients. Preferred forms of access include roots, stones, and other varieties of vegetal and mineral matter. Propitious forms resemble simbi, these being BaKongo materializations of the anonymous dead that can be expertly handled by healers. These materialized dead must be ethically sourced, including being properly addressed in verse and song. In this paper I will connect ethnographic scenes of the handling of healing materials to Palo understandings of efficacy through what I will call "simbi physics." This will be an account of

materiality true to Palo ethics, while offering a novel understanding matter to those unfamiliar with Cuban Kongo praise.

Presenter(s): Todd Ramón Ochoa

Discussion

2506 Suspicion, Conspiracy Theory, and Authority

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Riverview II (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Suspicion can be understood as a style of thought, a way of making motivated connections between disparate things as part of everyday, pathological, and rarefied modes of making sense of the world. As scholars like Sedgwick (2002) and Masco and Wedeen (2024) have noted, there are many elective affinities between (pathological) suspicion and critical modes of theorizing the world, and the way we draw this line is central to the formation of disciplines and our place in them. Ricoeur (1965) notably claimed that modern critical thought, as inaugurated by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, was categorically "suspicious", and that a fundamental quality of this thought consists of the interpretive acrobatics that follow from its characteristic rejection of authority and given senses of meaning. Indeed, one of the main markers of intellectual virtuosity--and the establishment of theoretical authority--consists of connection-making between disparate spheres, and the critical revelation of truth behind appearances: activities one might dub "suspicious," or, in some cases, apophenic (Lepselter 2015). And yet, as many have argued (Postone 1980, Hofstadter 1964), the suspicious machinations of conspiracy theory so often serve to displace awareness of the structural realities of domination, redirecting attention to a realm of overly personalized and particular agencies and threats. What specific qualities of suspicious discourse make it critical or a mere disguise for impersonal domination? What makes it virtuosically creative or pathological; connective or displacing; world-making (Shulman, 2024) or world-breaking? What makes it modern and secular (Agrama 2023)?

The papers on this panel examine such distinctions ethnographically, parsing them through the interactional nitty-gritty of situated connection making, self-framing, critique, affirmation and the needs that subtend them. Berman's paper analyzes the limits and possibilities of political transformation in the paranoid atmosphere of post-genocide Rwanda, a context in which subject formation is conditioned by the imagined potential of particular individuals to commit apocalyptic violence. Elshaikh's paper analyzes the phenomenology of suspicion in experimentation in both so-called "pathological science" and its normal counterparts. McConnell's paper examines how the widespread suspicion and rumors that often arise in the splintered epistemological conditions of geographical backwaters can foster forms of resistance among residents to industrial ventures and state restoration projects. Finally, Wibberly's paper asks how right-wing militias at the U.S./Mexico border construct conspiratorial narratives and mobilize sense-making projects toward their own aspirations for state authority.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Zoë Berman, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Reed McConnell

Chair: Marcus McGee

Presenter(s): Zoë Berman, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Reed McConnell, Eman Elshaikh, Alaina Wibberly

Discussant: Hiroko Kumaki, Oberlin College

Presentation(s): “It’s Because he has Ideology”: Good Subjects, Suspicious Subjects, and Identity Formation in Post-Genocide Rwanda

This paper explores the ways in which Rwandan youth navigate an ethno-moral economy of threat produced in the wake of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Over the past three decades, Rwanda's ruling party, the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has led a series of reforms intended to eradicate ethnicity and build a unified "Rwandan" identity. Central to these reforms is the legal prohibition of "genocide ideology," a neologism elaborated by the RPF to describe the beliefs and practices intended to result in the extermination of a particular group. However, although "genocide ideology" is legally defined on ethnically neutral terms, in practice the state treats genocide ideology as an entity which may only be possessed by Hutu. In this way, the state's persecution of genocide ideology has undercut the national unity project by inscribing an ethno-moral hierarchy into public consciousness which frames Tutsi as inherent victims of violence and Hutu as potential carriers of this violence. Building on over two and a half years of fieldwork, I interrogate the ways in which Rwandans born after 1994 simultaneously trouble and reproduce this hierarchy in their efforts to move beyond the past. Drawing on studies which explore how state-authored orientations towards suspicion shape political atmospheres and subject formation (Bubandt 2014, Seigel 2005), I analyze how youthful engagements with the question of who "has ideology" engender novel orientations and possibilities.

Presenter(s): Zoë Berman

Epistemological ruins: conspiracy theory and rumor in Imperial Valley’s Salton Sea environmental crisis and Lithium Valley development project

In this paper, I explore the ways that environmental threat is being both conceived of and navigated in the small desert town of Bombay Beach, California, as well as the surrounding highly irrigated desert agricultural region of Imperial Valley. In particular, I trace the epistemological ruptures that arise in a highly polluted rural area dominated by big agriculture, weapons testing, and industry that are meant to primarily serve people in distant metropolises rather than local communities, resulting in conspiracy theories, rumors, citizen science, and other forms of vernacular sense-making about environmental conditions that are not otherwise readily knowable to those living amidst them. I explore this in particular in relation to two things: 1. the Salton Sea evaporation crisis, in which an enormous local lake that has been pumped full of agricultural chemical runoff for the past century is now rapidly evaporating, uncovering a lakebed full of toxic sediment, and 2. a proposed multi-company lithium extraction development project that has been hotly debated by local residents since 2021. I trace the networks of different branches of local government, non-profits, "green"

companies and "social entrepreneurs," and informal gatherings of locals, and think about how knowledge about the regional environment—often vital to taking action for public health—spreads, distorts, is kept secret, and is generated in unofficial ways.

Presenter(s): Reed McConnell

Pathological belief and suspicion

This paper focuses on the concept of "pathological science" and anxieties that scientists working at the margins of scientific fields have about being or being perceived as pathological. It analyzes the modes of reasoning one has to embody in relation to one's own perceptions and how those perceptions are calibrated to others' perceptions and the paranoid modes of reading one's own or others' apprehensions that characterize experimentation in these cases. Pathological science, as described by the chemist and Nobel Laureate Irving Langmuir (Langmuir 1989), refers to experimental research that begins as sincere, credible, and competent scientific inquiry but becomes skewed by subjective effects, wishful thinking, or self-deception. It often involves ambiguous signals, weak intensities, threshold effects, or irreproducible results; these results, rather than being discarded, are defended with increasingly elaborate explanations and apparatuses. To avoid pathological science and restore the epistemic virtue of objectivity, one then has to become constitutionally suspicious of oneself, to actively hunt and reduce noise. But falling into pathological science often involves its own suspicious readings of phenomena, too. Suspicion becomes an epistemic virtue of skepticism, which cuts both ways and is difficult to contain before it, too, becomes pathological. Indeed, the concept and its selective application are themselves objects of suspicion.

Presenter(s): Eman Elshaikh

Viral Vigilantism: Suspicion, Security, and Sense-making at the U.S./Mexico Border

Vigilantism at the U.S./Mexico border traces its roots to the historic frontier, where civilians played key roles in both the colonization of the Arizona Territory and the Mexican-American War. As a historical phenomenon, vigilante violence served state goals without official state sanction. The first Trump presidency saw a resurgence of right-wing militia activity in southern Arizona propelled by QAnon and its attendant conspiratorial worlds. Armed as much with cameras as with guns, the current cast of border vigilantes invest in the production and circulation of narratives about threatening borderland figures, such as the terrorist, the drug smuggler, and the child trafficker. Thus, as a second Trump term re-animates the border as a media object, conspiracies once considered "fringe" have gained popular traction through newly intimate relationships between border militias, state security programs (U.S. Border Patrol), and mainstream electoral politics. Fantasies of deputization mobilize militia media towards the goal of state-authorized vigilante violence. This paper interrogates the narrative strategies of vigilante media projects: How do militia actors draw connections, collect evidence, and imagine figures of threat? How does suspicion concretize into the conspiratorial architecture of border security? In what ways does vigilante

sense-making mirror state security and surveillance projects, and how do figures of threat circulate between them?

Presenter(s): Alaina Wibberly

Discussion

3555 Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal at 53

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Since Pete Vayda founded Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal in 1972, it has become a pivotal publishing venue for social and natural scientists spanning traditional disciplinary boundaries of the social and natural sciences. Now published by Springer Nature, last year the journal received nearly 500 submissions, and over the past five years, we have received submissions from 121 countries across the globe (62% of all countries). In 2024, long-time Editor-in-Chief Daniel Bates retired after 50 years of service to the journal, making this an ideal time to celebrate of Human Ecology's contribution to understandings of the complex, integrated, and unpredictable interactions that occur between humans and their environment. Consequently, we would like to invite you to join a panel of esteemed scholars, including former editor-in-chief Dan Bates, who have published some of the most important, impactful, and creative articles in Human Ecology to present their impactful work and to more generally reflect on paths forward for the interdisciplinary field of human ecology. Of course, we expect that the spirit of Pete Vayda will oversee proceedings with his always insightful and often critical eye.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Sean Downey, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Ludomir Lozny

Chair: Sean Downey, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ludomir Lozny, Amber Wutich, Arizona State University, Sean Downey, Ohio State University, Department of Anthropology, Bonnie McCay, Yancey Orr, Smith College, Daniel Bates

Discussant: Daniel Bates

Presentation(s): A review of publishing trends and patterns in Human Ecology, 1972-2024

Since its inception in 1972, the journal Human Ecology. An Interdisciplinary Journal published 2,422 articles (an average of 48.44 per year). Using NVivo 15 software, I perform qualitative, objective content analysis to systematically examine and interpret publishing patterns and identify themes and meanings within the body of the published articles. Subsequently, I quantify the results to reveal publishing trends related to, but not limited to, human adaptive strategies, environmental impacts and hazards, human-wildlife conflicts, risk management and risk mitigation, public health, climate change, biodiversity, ecological services, gender issues, and geographical coverage. I aim to identify possible gaps in published research that need attention, provide insights into the underlying attitudes and perspectives expressed within a particular topical context, and sketch pathways for the future journal's publishing policies.

Presenter(s): Ludomir Lozny

Water Insecurity & Human Ecology

Abstract: Water insecurity will be a major challenge in the coming century. Climate change is expected to destroy water systems, displace populations, and intensify water inequalities. But the work of many human ecologists—and my own, starting with Cochabamba's Water War—reveals that water crises are already happening in places where political and economic systems produce severe water insecurity for humans, even when water supplies overall are sufficient or even abundant. My research takes as its starting point the assumption that communities now surviving water insecurity have much to teach the world about how to confront future climate challenges. Building from my early fieldwork in Bolivia and later cross-cultural work, I argue one missing key to solving water insecurity is hidden in the social infrastructure all around us. I discuss findings that illustrate how we can leverage social infrastructure—informal economies, social networks, and cultural norms—to address water insecurity under climate change.

Presenter(s): Amber Wutich

Adaptive Self-Organization in Swidden Agriculture

Swidden agriculture (pejoratively, "slash-and-burn" or "shifting agriculture") has long been a focus of human ecological research across diverse societies, past and present. It has features in many articles in Human Ecology, including two special issues (2009 and 2013). Yet, it remains highly contested in scientific discourse, intensifying conflicts between planners and Indigenous communities—tensions further exacerbated by the accelerating climate crisis. In this talk, I present findings from nearly two decades of NSF-funded fieldwork in two Q'eqchi' Maya villages in southern Belize, where swidden (known locally as "milpa") cultivation has deep historical roots. Using an adaptive self-organization framework, I integrate household surveys, ethnographically informed agent-based models, and global-scale remote sensing analysis to demonstrate how customary cultural practices, social norms, and household-level land use decisions drive diverse swidden disturbance patterns, including the emergence of sustainability. I argue that a complex systems perspective offers valuable insights into how small-scale, informal societies achieve sustainability without top-down environmental management.

Presenter(s): Sean Downey

Western Science Astray in the Wilds of Knowledge Coproduction

Human ecology is an inherently collaborative field of study and practice and there is a lot of "co-production of knowledge" involved. I contrast two experiences: an international study of Mexican fishing cooperatives funded by NSF and a National Academy study of the co-production of environmental knowledge involving indigenous communities. Both posed immense challenges working within the framework of western science. The latter study was aborted in the spring of 2024, raising major questions about what "co-production" means and ultimately the authority and

power to answer those questions, where peer review and other processes of western science are at play.

Presenter(s): Bonnie McCay

Tracking Changes in Environmental Anthropology through Natural Language Process and Sentiment Analysis

In several periods since its inception in the 19th century, anthropology has seen rapid changes its theoretical and methodological approaches. For instance, within environmental anthropology, concepts such as "environmental justice" or "environmental racism" are relatively new phenomena that express increasingly moral models for research agendas. Yet, studies of such shifts in academic fields remain largely qualitative reflections. Natural language processing (NLP) can bring greater precision to the study of such academic transformations. NLP's sentiment analysis can quantitatively analyze the degree to which environmental anthropology has begun to use moral judgements and affective reasoning within its research. These trends will be compared to the broader field of anthropology and other sub disciplines.

Presenter(s): Yancey Orr

Discussion: Paths Forward for the Interdisciplinary Study of Human Ecology

During the discussion, we will briefly synthesize key themes from the presentations, solicit additional input from the audience, and discuss paths forward for the interdisciplinary study of human ecology.

Presenter(s): Daniel Bates

Discussion

2996 Inhabitations: Materializing Past, Presence, and Future in the Near and Built Environment

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 1

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Inhabitation" describes both the act of dwelling in a space or place, and the state of being possessed or influenced by other beings or forces. This dual sense of the term provides an apt entrée into anthropological work on the ways we (as people, as anthropologists) inhabit the near and built environment, from bodies and clothing to the objects we use, consume, and discard, to the structures and buildings we occupy. To be human is to animate and incorporate the material world through our actions, stories, and social relations. Inhabitation evokes the ways that objects and spaces move us and make tangible our pasts: our former selves, and the lives and works of others. There are times when inhabitations by others are marked explicitly, and other moments when these influences go unrecognized. The historical aspect of inhabitation suggests the well-worn grooves of the habitual, but acts in the present are also oriented towards the future, in the

form of making plans, setting expectations, and looking ahead with anticipation, hope, or anxiety. Collectively, the papers in this panel interrogate the notion of inhabitation ethnographically, through close attention to the relationships we develop with time and the tangible in acts of dwelling, movement, and material engagements. Through a range of diverse study locations, presenters consider the social, cultural, and emotional forces of inhabitation: from the fraught relationships articulated by slow fashion practitioners vis-à-vis their collections of almost discarded clothing; to the ways architectural educators and students envision or warn of futures in their talk, drawings, models, and buildings; to the entanglement of past and present in the spiritual and social inhabitations of African fertility figurines; to designers and anthropologists grappling with the "ghostly" presence of past gestures in an augmented reality system meant to teach handcraft; and to the ways former and current residents in memory-care nursing homes "haunt" these "other-than-home" places. Together, these papers speak to the entanglement of past, present, and future in the ways we inhabit and animate the material world, a world which also invites certain actions while foreclosing others.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Claire Nicholas, University of Oklahoma, Jimil Ataman, University of Alberta

Chair: Jimil Ataman, University of Alberta

Presenter(s): Jimil Ataman, University of Alberta, Arlene Oak, University of Alberta, Elsie Rebecca Osei, University of Alberta, Megan Strickfaden, University of Alberta, Claire Nicholas, University of Oklahoma

Presentation(s): Almost Discarded Clothes: Value, Ethics, and Consumer Practice in Slow Fashion

This paper examines the presence, persistence, and perceptions about almost discarded clothes. By this I mean the wayward piles, folded stacks and forgotten totes full of clothing that lurk, inhabit, and at times haunt the trunks, closets, foyers, basements and guest rooms of slow fashion practitioners. During my ethnographic fieldwork, which included 60 wardrobe interviews with consumers, producers, industry professionals and enthusiasts of slow fashion, I encountered almost discarded clothing on a consistent, if not constant, basis. Despite their near universality in the collections of clothes for most contemporary consumers, the very presence of almost discarded clothing departs from the idealized representation of a slow or sustainable fashion consumer, where terms like minimalist and mindful are used to denote a specter of appropriate consumption practice. This paper shares stories of clothes that do not fit anymore, clothes with painful memories attached to them, and clothes with no buyer despite their perceived economic value. I examine the 'mysterious power' of these commodities. Thinking with anthropological theory on value and consumerism, I show how almost discarded clothes in the slow fashion context absorb and retain affective, political, moral, and economic relations to show how my interlocutors rationalize, avoid, and negotiate these clothes within their slow fashion practices.

Presenter(s): Jimil Ataman

A Bride, a Dump Site, and "Bad Creative": Phantom Voices and Materialized Decisions

Situated in an ethnography of architecture education, this paper considers the talk of architects and others during a building's "site selection" (an early stage of design wherein the setting of a structure is determined through considering multiple locations). Through focusing on talk recorded as participants "walked" potential sites, the paper explores how such evanescent talk is consequential, as decisions about site influence a building's material trajectory and the actions of those who design and make it. Here, the talk was captured as participants explored features of the land that might impact the form and function of the potential structure, with participants' talk conjuring visions of phantom buildings, hypothetical construction, and inhabitation by imagined humans. As well as revealing such future-focused fictions, the talk, when revisited several years after the project's completion, also revealed a prophecy that was ignored at the time: that the location selected could lead to an untenable building. Accordingly, the paper considers both the negotiations between immateriality and materiality that occur through architecture-based talk, wherein ephemeral conversations leave physical traces through judgments made concerning a building; and also, how iterative engagements with data can disturb established narratives of a building's biography and haunt perceptions of the structure's apparent inevitability.

Presenter(s): Arlene Oak

Co-author(s): Claire Nicholas

Entangled Realms: African Fertility Figurines as Spiritual and Material Agents

African fertility figurines, such as Ghana's Akua'ba and Cameroon's Namji figurines, go beyond materiality to embody supernatural entanglements between the living and ancestral spirits. Drawing on Ian Hodder's material entanglement theory and LeRon Shults' spiritual entanglement, this study examines how these objects act as active agents, mediating cultural identities, societal norms, and metaphysical realms. These figurines exemplify the co-constitution of spiritual and material worlds. They enforce obligations to bear children while offering hope for conception, thus haunting present-day reproductive practices with the demands of the past. As inhabited entities, the figurines transcend passive symbolism, becoming active vessels through which spirits assert their presence. Their material forms are not merely symbolic but corporeal anchors for spiritual inhabitation, enabling ongoing dialogue between generations. This inhabitation emphasizes their role in sustaining cultural memory and resisting erasure, as ancestral voices persist through ritual engagement. By inhabiting these objects, spirits shape social realities, rendering the past palpable in negotiations of fertility, identity, and belonging. The figurines' enduring use, even amid "failure," reflects communities' adaptive negotiations with these inhabited legacies, offering insights into how spectral presences animate material culture.

Presenter(s): Elsie Rebecca Osei

Co-author(s): Megan Strickfaden

Four "Other-than-Home" Hauntings of Memory Care

This paper reflects on how memory-care spaces in nursing homes can be haunted by the former selves of the residents, as they experience locations that reference "other-than-home" places. Memory-care spaces house residents with, e.g., dementia, and are often geared towards being home-like. However, the requirement to house communally, to monitor health status, deliver care, and welcome visitors can result in the design of spaces that evoke unintended inhabitations. This paper draws on ethnographies across ten years and four countries to explore the experiences of those who dwell within spaces that are meant to evoke supposedly-familiar schools, hotels, shopping malls and hospitals. In the ten locations studied, these other-than-home spaces can propel already-confused residents to experience circumstances that compound their disorientation. This presentation focuses on four instances of memory care "hauntings" and their effects on residents. In particular are considered Canadian First Nations residents who experience the visual and structural reminders of a school location as a return to the residential schools of their past; farmers who believe they're perpetually on holiday at a hotel; homemakers who are stuck searching for stores that don't exist; and other residents who believe they've broken a bone or are in a mental ward at a hospital. Reflecting on these other-than-home hauntings offers reminders of how spaces have unexpected powers to disturb and disempower.

Presenter(s): Megan Strickfaden

Ghosts in the Machine? Traces of Gesture and the Social in Design for Augmented Reality

Philosopher Gilbert Ryle's critique of mind-body dualism assails the notion that the mind inhabits the body like a "ghost in the machine." Drawing on ethnography of design practice in a collaborative project on handcraft and augmented reality (AR), we consider Ryle's critique in relation to anthropological and STS explorations of embodied knowledge. The discussion focuses on the development and uses of a headset-worn AR tool designed to teach beadweaving. Our ethnography follows Canadian, American, and Nigerian anthropologists, architects, and human-computer-interaction (HCI) researchers as they learn, document, represent, and experience the gestural and material choreography of analog and digital beadweaving. Like Ryle, we insist on embodied, orchestrated systems of making that integrate ideas, drawings, code, materials, the senses, and the social. We also find "ghosts in the machine" to be a useful entry point for analyzing design dilemmas like standardization, representation, and access. Here, "ghosts" refers to the presence or absence of diverse hands and gestures "captured" by sensors, skeletal models of position in place and time that simplify rich movement, and the phantom presence of digital hands stitching in AR space. This project raises possibilities that "ghosts," or the AR traces of gestures, might extend their presence into the lives of others. But we also caution that digital data and phantom gestures may dematerialize or thin our shared social experiences.

Presenter(s): Claire Nicholas

Co-author(s): Rowland Goddy-Worlu, Peter Haltner, Venn Jemkur, Derek Reilly

5179 Haunting Narratives and Practices in Institutional Spaces

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM through 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how contemporary institutional settings - such as schools, daycare centers, NGOs, nursing homes, and hospitals - are shaped by the lingering presence of past images, practices, and narratives. Drawing on Avery Gordon's concept of ghostly matters (1997), we examine how spectral traces - both ephemeral and visceral - continue to shape the ways care is enacted, experienced, and understood within these institutions. As Gordon writes, "The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure... a dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (p. x). Viewing ghosts as generative social figures, this panel investigates how past imaginaries, and institutional histories manifest in contemporary care practices - sometimes as constraining forces that reinforce entrenched traditions, at other times as openings for critical reflection and transformation.

Our point of departure is that ghosts in the form of past images, practices, and narratives, with the potential to disrupt and critique current professional norms and everyday routines, persist in architectural designs, linger in nostalgic imaginaries of the "good old days", or are woven into institutional narratives of past scandals, harmful practices, and bygone golden eras (Armstrong, 2010; Derrida, 1994; Gammeltoft, 2014; Nielsen & Rytter, 2019). At the same time these hauntings are not only constraining but generative, opening for new possibilities for reimagining care. As Lisa Stevenson (2014) suggests, the past does not simply disappear but lingers in images and narratives that hold us in their grip, shaping affective and ethical orientations toward care. Ghostly matters may thus offer creative engagement with the past, preserve valuable intergenerational knowledge, and serve as reminders of collective wisdom and care (Gammeltoft, 2021; Louw, 2022).

Thus we examine ghostly matters as generative social figures that shape the present as both constraints and catalysts for new modes of care. We invite presentations that explore questions such as:

- How do past events, scandals, or care paradigms haunt contemporary welfare institutions?
- What physical remnants of outdated care paradigms persist in the architectural design or everyday routines of care settings?
- How do professional norms, imaginaries, or training practices carry forward assumptions rooted in the past, often in invisible or "spectral" ways?
- What ethical dilemmas arise from confronting these ghosts, and how might attending to their presence reimagine contemporary care practices?
- How might the concept of ghostly matters provide new perspectives for research methodologies in welfare settings?

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Europe

Organizer: Ala Jamal Zareini , Nina Kramp, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jonas Winther

Presenter(s): Ala Jamal Zareini, Maria Athena Campbell, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology, Nina Kramp, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology, simon cohn, Aodhgan O Cionnain

Discussant: A. Jamie Saris, Maynooth University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): "It Wasn't Like This in the Old Days": The Haunted Ethics of a Danish Care Crisis

Nordic welfare states are celebrated for their extensive elder care coverage, but scholars argue that these societies are now facing a care crisis due to increased privatization, New Public Management strategies, and the growing use of technology (Hansen et al., 2023). Denmark is no exception. Based on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a nursing home and homecare unit in Copenhagen, this paper examines how the experiences, imaginaries, and expectations that people in need of care, their families, and care workers have of the Danish welfare state shape narratives of disappointment and crisis in elder care. Drawing on Roitman (2013), I argue that crisis narratives invoke an implicit norm, revealing an axiological problem: Danish elder care is failing to meet its own standard of qualified and dignified care. Using Derrida's concept of Hauntology (1994), I contend that this norm is a ghost—there is no fixed point of origin for Danish elder care or the welfare state, as both exist in a perpetual state of becoming. Through Zigon's concept of Dwelling (2018), I examine how this ethical-spectral dimension of the care crisis expresses a desire to create better conditions in elder care. Drawing on ethnographic vignettes and interviews with individuals involved in elder care, this paper contributes a moral anthropological perspective to the care crisis literature, shedding light on its overlooked ethical dimensions and its transformative potential for elder care.

Presenter(s): Ala Jamal Zareini

Ephemeral Care: Parents' Experiences Navigating Healthcare in a Welfare State

Following its transfer from Novo Nordisk to the Capital Region of Denmark, Scandinavia's largest diabetes hospital, Steno Diabetes Center Copenhagen (SDCC), moved to newly constructed facilities. The hospital would now treat over 11,000 children and adults in addition to conducting world class research. Entering the new SDCC space, one is assured of receiving the best care the Danish public healthcare system has to offer. But this state-of-the-art hospital, like others in Denmark, is haunted by the practices and policies of the other sections of Denmark's welfare state. While public hospitals like SDCC are operated on a regional basis, certain healthcare services are provided through the municipalities, empowered to exercise discretion over which services they offer and to whom. This translates into an unpredictable variability in the treatment available to children with chronic conditions, determined largely by their address. Healthcare equipment, financial coverage, and institutional support are readily available to some families and ephemeral apparitions to others. How do parents to children with T1D and other chronic conditions navigate this "postcode lottery" in their attempt to secure access to the care that they know is available?

Based on both autoethnographic and ethnographic material from a study on fathers as caregivers, this text explores the experiences of parents to children with chronic conditions as they navigate the Danish healthcare system.

Presenter(s): Maria Athena Campbell

Shrinking Presence and Professional Belonging: Intergenerational Rifts and Everyday Practices in a Danish Public School.

Based on fieldwork in a Danish primary school, this paper explores how shifts in institutional practices and societal norms regarding childcare and education affect an older teacher. Building on Hartmuth Rosa's (2013) concept of the 'contraction of the present', describing the diminishing time span in which one's expectations for actions and one's knowledge and experiences align in a rapidly accelerating world, I propose the term 'shrinking presence' to highlight how such shifts leave older teachers chronologically out of place, rendering them increasingly irrelevant and 'invisible' in daily professional life. Drawing on anthropological research on belonging and possibility, and ethnographic fieldwork accompanying an older teacher in her daily work life, the paper unfolds the ways in which the teacher mitigates and withstands this intergenerationally driven 'shrinking' of her professional presence and virtues through small everyday routines. I argue, that while these seemingly unnoticeable practices are shaped by intergenerational 'rifts' that position older and younger teachers in distinct roles, with the younger generation holding a systemic advantage (Rosa, 2013), they also serve as enactments of professional belonging, helping her find her footing in an institutional environment dominated by a 'generation now' (Ingold, 2023). Together, these dynamics reveal how both subtle actions and generational divides shape professional identities in institutional settings.

Presenter(s): Nina Kramp

Visitors in the Hospital

In the UK, the NHS is regularly talked about with nationalistic pride, and despite it having been on the precipice of collapse for decades, is vigorously defended. But the reality is that increasing pressures on resources has meant much of the public's loyalty to it is shaped by ideas of how the NHS once was. Hospitals are places of vulnerability where people face uncertainty. This makes them particularly susceptible to the influence of small inconsequential things around them while they sit and wait for a consultation. A clock on the wall that needs a new battery, piles of tired dog-eared magazines on a table: The sense of the past seeping into the present via things that should not be there. Untidy and sometimes even dirty, they are not merely signs of a health service increasingly under pressure, but quiet institutional hauntings of other people having been there, in similar situations, and feeling similar things (Gordon 1997). Drawing on observations at UK hospitals, this paper will describe how these traces of the past shape the present. The very same signs of a tired and crumbling healthcare system are also small signals from the many other people, reminders of how things were, and assertions that what feels uniquely personal, and individual is, at the same time, something very public and shared. And crucially, because these

conflicting meanings remain ambiguous, they serve as lively contributors to people's experiences of illness and the sense of care they receive.

Presenter(s): simon cohn

"We Didn't Have Homeless People in Yugoslavia": The Ghost of Socialism in Contemporary Slovenian Homeless Care and Welfare.

Homelessness and housing precarity continue to rise in Slovenia, yet the state has been slow to respond, lacking strong political will. In reaction, NGOs have stepped in to provide care services. Recently, government attention has increased, leading to more funding for NGOs and state welfare services. As a result, NGOs have expanded their role in housing, healthcare, mental health, addiction support, and other welfare programs, forming a new institutional network of state and non-state care providers. However, this contemporary institutional arrangement is haunted by the spectre of Socialism and Slovenian's post-socialist reintegration into the global capitalist system. This paper explores how these historical legacies influence contemporary care and welfare delivery. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at a local NGO in Ljubljana, I examine how Yugoslavia's social housing policies and post-independence privatisation continue to shape housing provision today. Additionally, psychiatric institutions established under socialism constrain the shift to community-based care, creating service gaps. Nostalgic imaginaries of Yugoslavia, reflected in statements like "We didn't have homeless people in Yugoslavia," critique contemporary welfare failures. Such sentiments highlight how ghosts of the old system remain not only as memories of the "good old days" but are mobilised as critiques of contemporary society and the failures of care and welfare services.

Presenter(s): Aodhgan O Cionnain

Discussion

5365 After the fire: Pyropolitics in Latin America. Part 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Forest fires have become contentious political issues, to the extent that some writers speak of an age of fire. Media images of fire capture public attention, sparking debates about their causes and how to best prevent them. In this two-part panel, rather than examining the causes of fires, we follow its effects to focus on the political afterlives of fire.

As an analytical framework, pyropolitics (Marder 2014; Carey 2023) examines the complex relationship between fire and political dynamics, intertwining with issues of climate and land-use change, disaster preparedness, power and property relations, and longstanding social and ethnic inequalities. We seek papers that explore how fires shape political relations in Latin America, from the chakra to the international stage. In particular, this panel invites papers that explore how fires ignite broader social unrest, fuel political polarization, persist in disturbed landscapes, or even

reshape human-plant relations. We also welcome papers that critically examine the use of fire-related metaphors, which have long been prevalent in political anthropology about Latin America.

Political controversies, like fires, can flare up or fade away. Fires can also sometimes leave tangible and material, flickering, ghostly and lasting political effects. They may contribute to intensifying conflict and relations of political alterity. In this light, we ask: How do people live with the new normal of forest fires, in productive and/or destructive ways? And, what happens to politics in the wake of devastating fires, as people and groups navigate their aftermath?

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Cari Tusing , Stine Kroijer, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Cari Tusing

Presenter(s): Fernanda Gallegos, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology, Guilherme Fagundes, Mareike Winchell, London School of Economics, Stine Kroijer, University of Copenhagen, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Adriana Petryna

Presentation(s): True/False Heroes: Pyropolitics in the Afterlife of Forest Fires in Viña del Mar, Chile

In February 2024, the outskirts of Viña del Mar, in central Chile, witnessed the deadliest forest fires in the country's history. The disaster claimed 138 lives and affected at least 15,000 people, adding to the tragic toll of rising forest fires in the region. Yet another shocking development emerged a few months later: an investigation led to the arrest of seven individuals, including a volunteer firefighter and a forestry brigade member, suspected of orchestrating the fires. Based on fieldwork conducted with victims, community organizations, and state agents, this paper delves into pyropolitics—namely, the broader political processes, power dynamics, and social struggles that emerge from forest fires and continue to unfold in their afterlife. It does so by focusing specifically on the narratives of victims around what constitutes a 'hero,' and whether that figure is categorized as a 'true hero' or a 'false hero'. False heroes—such as the arrested firefighter and brigade member—were initially seen as public servants driven by noble intentions. Their unmasking, however, reveals not only their violent actions but also the broader role of state institutions in harming marginalized communities. In contrast, true heroes emerge from within these communities, as neighbors come together in acts of resistance to demand housing solutions and an overall fair reconstruction.

Presenter(s): Fernanda Gallegos

Making it Burn: Fire Techniques and the Government of Life in the Brazilian Savanna

The presentation will explore distinct strategies for engaging with wildfires and controlled burns in the Brazilian savanna (Cerrado), as well as their effects on the treatment of human and non-human alterities. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in collaboration with environmental managers, fire brigades, and quilombola communities from Jalapão, I examine in detail the emergence of integrated fire management in Brazil and the role of local knowledge within this environmental policy, which was enacted as federal law in 2024. The presentation argues that fire management techniques not only offer specific ways of addressing pyric phenomena but also give

form to ecological systems and political institutions for governing life forms. The shift from a disciplinary power focused on fire suppression to what we might call a new pyropolitics opens the way for conflicts grounded in divergent conceptions of regime, health, and environmental disease. These disputes foreground the contrast between environmental conservation efforts and the commitments of local communities to their valued forms of life. Showing it, I aim to outline a critical perspective on fire management programs that moves beyond both pyrophobic and pyrophilic positions, toward a critique of the forms of life enabled by particular fire assemblages.

Presenter(s): Guilherme Fagundes

Ghostly Invasions: Political Theologies of Fire in Post-Coup Bolivia

In 2019, uncontrolled wildfires in Bolivia became a key political issue for the nation's non-Indigenous far-right, fueling the outrage of a broad oppositional movement that ousted former President Evo Morales. The national and regional media have blamed migrants in the region for recent megafires, painting them as ghostly invaders caught up in illegal land trafficking. Yet, alongside amplifying racialized divisions, recent megafires in Bolivia are also giving way to emerging alliances across environmentalists, bureaucrats, politicians, and other-than-humans—above all Chiquitos ancestors associated with the region's famous carved masks. In the face of far-right challenges, Indigenous and migrant communities are involved in a range of projects that aim to renew attachments to land, place, and other-than-humans in ways that contest the erasures of ecological terra nullius—that is, efforts to make land available not only for capital but also for climate mitigation efforts that are often out of local hands. Paying attention to these alliances invites a less deterministic account of environmental disagreements, unseating familiar divisions between science and religion, Indigenous and mestizo, affect and reason. I ask what futures of conservation are opened up by taking seriously interlocutors' insistence on guarding "life"—not just "environment"—against converging political, atmospheric, and ontological harms.

Presenter(s): Mareike Winchell

In the eyes of satellites: aesthetics of fire and political alterity in Brazil

Based on fieldwork at the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE) and other public institutions in Brazil, this paper describes the uses of remote sensing imaginary in the monitoring of and making of policy about forest fires in the Amazon. At INPE, scientists translate the visual data received from satellites into maps of fire hotspots and statistics describing the number of fires and rates of deforestation. These data management practices create a bounded class of phenomena - forest fires - that becomes the object of policy development and which opposed political factions can mobilize around. The paper is interested of the aesthetics of data use and what this means for the form politics take in a country haunted by political polarization. Zooming in on the drafting of a National Policy for the Integrated Management of Fire and President Lula da Silva's pledge to create national reunification and achieving Net Zero deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon by 2030, the paper shows how political alterity has an aesthetic dimension. The concept of political alterity is developed to describe the ontological disagreements involved in creating forest fires as a bounded

political phenomenon and its relation to the proliferation of radical otherness in Brazil. In this sense, the political uses of fire imaginary is not only metaphorical, but their aesthetics have real consequences for political life.

Presenter(s): Stine Kroijer

Discussion

7539 Materializing Spectres: Pathways through Memory and Power

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 3

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History Among an Andean People* (1998) Thomas Abercrombie conjures the way that rituals of libation open up pathways of memory, syncretizing time and belief as he walks with and beside Aymara ancestors and landscapes in Santa Barbara de Culta, Bolivia. These pathways are haunted and haunt. They interpellate history as the present in the past and the past in the present; they follow the ethnographer and the individuals who "walk" them; and they materialize social memory.

This panel, co-sponsored by SLACA and SAR, revisits Abercrombie's seminal work on the intersections of ethnography, history, memory, and reflexivity—activating pathways with and through spectres, ghosts, and hauntings. Bringing together the Anthropology of Latin America, the Anthropology of Europe, and the Anthropology of Religion, the panel provokes a cross-disciplinary conversation around the politics of "the spectral" as a constitutive dimension of fieldwork.

Recently, and perhaps provoked by Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* and the *Sociological Imagination* (2008), an anthropological literature on "haunting" has burgeoned. In 2021, a series in *Anthropology News* amalgamated essays extending the phenomenon and thematic of haunting beyond forensic anthropology. In practice, anthropologists are and have always been haunted by the pasts of the places and social worlds they engage. Adding to literatures on hauntology and spectralities (Gordon 2008, Klima 2019, Hollan 2019, Good et al. 2022), as well as ruination (Stoller 2013, Tsing 2015, Gamberi and Calzana 2025), this panel draws from Abercrombie's careful attention to the intersections of history and ethnography to chart a pathway through the spectral that foregrounds reflexivity. It asks: what can we learn from listening to ghosts? How do we learn to listen to ghosts? What are the stakes of not listening?

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Augusta Thomson, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Augusta Thomson, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Krista Van Vleet, Bowdoin College, Department of Anthropology, Martyn Wemyss, Goldsmiths, University of London, John Collins, CUNY - Queens College, Lee Douglas

Discussant: Simon Coleman, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Mediated Stories and Memories of Intimate Violence: Haunted Pathways to an Ordinary Ethics in the Bolivian Andes

Violence and faith are mutually constituted in embodied encounters and shape the contours of peoples' lives in specific cultural and historical landscapes and in the dialogues through which we develop ethnography. Drawing on feminist decolonial frameworks and analyses of stance in linguistic anthropology, this paper analyzes narratives of violent encounter that haunt both the discourses of faithful pilgrims and those who claim no belief in the miraculous Mama Adelita, a Bolivian vernacular saint. Specifically, I trace the intertwined stories that emerge in a conversation between myself, a middle-aged Andean woman, Fidelia, and her adult daughter in Sucre, Bolivia, where I've conducted ethnographic research since 1995. Prompted by a question about the history of Mama Adelita's emergence as a santo (Sp., saint), Fidelia recounts her memories of the events that occurred in 1996 in the aftermath of the discovery of the brutal murder Adela Cardenas by her ex-husband. She also layers the stories of other femicides into her narrative, the details of which circulated in the Bolivian print and broadcast media at the time of our conversation in 2022. Attending to the intimate violence that haunts the intertexts of participants in the conversation, as well as the places of encounter and pilgrimage, I show how cautionary advice is offered (and ignored) and an ordinary ethics of human and more-than-human persons is jointly constructed even among those of uncertain faith.

Presenter(s): Krista Van Vleet

Embodied Ghosts of Phantom Lynchings: Legal Hauntologies and Lay Morals in El Alto, Bolivia

This paper defines "hanging puppets" (representations of lynched bodies which hang from lampposts to deter thieves) as figures produced by interstitial legal geographies. Beginning with the use of "hanging puppets" in a peri-urban neighbourhood as both a deterrent to, critique of, and index of insecurity; and as figures produced by the interstices of postcolonial legal geographies, this paper examines the material, temporal, spatial, and hauntological fabrication of subjectivities through both formal and informal legal practices in a neighbourhood of El Alto, Bolivia. Taking these figures--and the discourses and practices which incite them and they, in turn, incite-- seriously as commentaries, critiques, and interventions in Bolivian inter-legality, I develop a situated reading of these spectral presences and the ghosts they materialise as law in a hauntological key.

Presenter(s): Martyn Wemyss

Killing as Method: Venatic Memory, Sacred Stags, and Anti-Elitism in Highland New Jersey

Central to Tom Abercrombie's work is a recognition of the productivity of partial understandings in an intercultural Andean landscape in which ritual both re-enacts and transforms the mythic accounts and intersecting genres that gird indigenous history and memory. Sacrifice is essential to this process. This paper focuses on state-sponsored culling programs in New Jersey through which non-indigenous hunters compete for access to public lands to reduce deer populations that threaten forest ecosystems. These land-poor and mostly working class hunters must meet quotas and follow strict rules as part of what many dub "killing, rather than hunting." Tasked with protecting

the processes that reproduce a nature defined around public conservation rather than wildlife management through death, and therefore understood as antithetical to hunters' ways of life, hunters have co-produced with state officials a series of narratives and rituals essential to their collective identity and the politics presented as sustaining it. Spectral beings and fleeting apparitions, as well as killing and sacrifice, are basic to these accounts and their ritual composition. This paper examines the resonant, embodied practices, and associated accounts of presence and absence and conservation and extinction that bind humans and non-humans in the production of tradition and group boundaries in a United States in which politics often turn on the identification of putative elites and their forms of knowledge.

Presenter(s): John Collins

Ends, Beginnings, and the Spaces in between: A Counter-Cartography of Conjured Ghosts and Spectral Landscapes

Celebrated by both anthropologists and historians, Thomas Abercrombie's Pathways of Memory and Power activates "pathways" as routes through which the past becomes present via engagements with ritual, landscape, and narrative. Using this conceptualization as a guide, this paper unpacks my own experience navigating cross-generational silence and bodily absence in contemporary Spain, where the unearthing of mass graves produced by Franco's fascist experiment are radically altering the contours of history and memory. Positing that long-term fieldwork is a conglomeration of endings, beginnings, and returns, I describe how the ritual of mass grave exhumations alter how memory activists, forensic experts, and victims' kin—as well as the anthropologists following this phenomenon—understand and experience the ground on which they stand, ground that has grown heavy with human remains. Exploring forensic and archival experts' changing perspectives on and sensorial experiences with local landscapes, I use the concept of counter-cartographies to explore how tracing fieldwork pathways is also an exercise in conjuring ghosts and making present that which has been made to disappear. Here, "the field" is not a single place nor a singular landscape, but rather a place in-between where time, memory, and narrative overlap. As a result, I argue, unearthing and returning make the specters of the past important presences in the production of new forms of knowledge, historical and otherwise.

Presenter(s): Lee Douglas

Discussion

2476 An Elephant in the Room: Positionalities and Hegemonies around the Anthropology of East Asia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel addresses an issue that has received little attention in East Asian anthropology: the positionalities of researchers and what constitutes "sophisticated" thinking in anthropology.

Reflexivity has been valued in anthropological fieldwork, where the impact of researchers' identities on data collection and output has been discussed. However, we propose a more drastic mode of decolonization: what kind of thinking is considered "sophisticated" (Mihara 2025) and the urgency of getting rid of it. To succeed in Anglophone academia, East Asian scholars must unlearn what they experienced as "native" and internalize the Western gaze that functions as the discipline's master narrative. To engage in Anglophone scholarship, one's ability to speak and write English might count as more important than one's fluency in the languages used in fieldwork. Scholarship written in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other languages is rarely cited in the dominant English-language journals/books in Japanese anthropology. Citing these non-English thoughts requires a significant amount of explanation or is ignored. Researchers should think about intersectionality and the politics of writing: Who writes about Asia for whom and for what, and what voices and perspectives are neglected/silenced?

All presenters, once trained in the UK/North American institutions as international students, will share their experiences of unlearning their vernacular experiences and perspectives and adapting to master narratives. Topics include Japanese education, anime, medical anthropology in Korea and Japan, communal well-being of Yap in Micronesia and Yami in Taiwan. Altogether, this panel will address the linguistic/political/theoretical/methodological challenges and possibilities of decolonizing anthropology in East Asia.

Reference: Mihara, Ryotaro. 2025. "Decolonising Anime Studies: A Prolegomenon." Japan Forum, 37(1), 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2024.2446885>

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Kunisuke Hirano

Chair: Kunisuke Hirano , Ryotaro Mihara

Presenter(s): Kunisuke Hirano, Ryotaro Mihara, Yu-Chien Huang, National Taiwan University, Jiyeon Kang, Seoul National University, Sachiko Horiguchi, Temple University Japan Campus

Discussant: Patrick William Galbraith , Niko Besnier, La Trobe University

Presentation(s): Writing Japanese education: Enumeration in the process of dissertation writing

This presentation analyzes which topics and discourses are privileged and prioritized when writing about different cultures. Based on the presenter's own experience of writing a dissertation on alternative education in contemporary Japan as an U.S. institution, Hirano discusses the lack of reference to Japanese scholarship in the field of anthropology and how this has implications for the development of anthropology of Japan. While English scholarship on Japan could offer broader perspectives that are more easily referenced in interdisciplinary contexts, the lack of in-depth understanding of theories and materials written in Japanese could widen the gap between scholarship written in English and other languages. While English-language scholarship on Japanese education offers larger pictures and shifts in Japanese education, the lack of recent legal updates and changing admission systems may contribute to the reproduction of essentialized, outdated figures of education and society in Japan. To overcome this, the presenter suggests more equal dialogue between Japanese-speaking scholars and English-speaking counterparts. There

may be many advantages and contributions of the current anthropology of Japan in the Anglophone academy, such as a different analysis of Japan than in the Japanophone academy, but it still privileges certain etic perspectives and cannot overcome the dichotomies of 'us', the Anglophone audience, and 'them', the Japanese, as the ultimate other.

Presenter(s): Kunisuke Hirano

The anthropology of the Anglophone researchers on Japanese animation, or some remarks on anime Orientalism

The presenter (Ryotaro Mihara) outlines how Orientalism (as proposed by Edwards Said) is surprisingly still prevalent, yet is counterintuitively underexamined in the field of Anglophone studies on Japanese animation (anime). For more than two decades, anime has been a popular subject for research and teaching in Anglophone higher education institutions. However, mainstream Anglophone anime researchers have rarely recognised Orientalism's impact on the ways in which they make intellectual sense of anime. The presenter shares his ethno-autobiographical reflection on his liminal academic career, which has developed in the interstices between Anglophone and Japanophone academia – especially his recent experience of facing a backlash after publishing, in English, the very academic peer-reviewed paper that highlighted Orientalism in Anglophone anime studies. He thus demonstrates how the current Orientalist condition of Anglophone anime studies (i.e. anime Orientalism) dangerously distorts our understanding of anime on a global scale. The issues that the presenter intends to cover include: canonisation (e.g. of specific Anglophone texts on anime, at the expense of anime itself); hegemony (e.g. of English, which deprecates the intellectual capacity of Japanese writings on anime); and rhetoric (e.g. that the field colonialistically encourages the involved academics to internalise in developing their cognisance of anime).

Presenter(s): Ryotaro Mihara

To Listen Between the Worlds: Asymmetry, Care, and the Promise of Diversity

Since Ribeiro and Escobar's call for "world anthropologies" and Trouillot's critique of the "savage slot," anthropologists have increasingly confronted the "world system" of knowledge production (Kuwayama 2004). This paper revisits this issue not through a geopolitical critique of disciplinary hierarchies, but through the intimate labor of ethnographic listening: who listens, to whom, and from what position. Drawing on two field encounters—one with a Yapese woman in Micronesia, the other with a Yami man in Taiwan—I examine how their efforts to defend communal well-being were misrecognized, even humiliated, for not conforming to conventional norms and unsettling intercultural expectations. As an ethnographer from Taiwan trained in Anglophone academic traditions, I have carried the ambivalent task of mediating between dominant epistemologies and vernacular realities. By contrasting these two episodes, I highlight ethnographic listening and being together (Biehl et al. 2020) as a craft shaped by asymmetries yet capable of sustaining ethical attunement. In doing so, I argue that listening and accompanying can serve as modest, situated interventions in the pluriversal project of diversity—a shared, if uneven, commitment to epistemic

difference. Listening, then, is a form of care, a relational practice that resists extractive knowledge paradigms and gestures toward more reciprocal and plural ways of understanding.

Presenter(s): Yu-Chien Huang

Writing as a Creating/Translating a World: Conducting Fieldwork in One's Home Country and Writing in a Second Language

Writing is a political action. Those who write necessarily position themselves in a certain context and reveal, either explicitly or implicitly, how they relate to the world, both through and in their writing. Writing ethnography about one's home country in a second language sharply accentuates the anthropologist's triple liminality: being situated between insider and outsider of the field; between the field-world and the academic discourse; and between the author's desire and the readers' expectation. This presentation reflects on the translational labor and affective negotiations entailed in conducting fieldwork "at home" in South Korea while writing an ethnography in English for a presumed North American academic audience. Drawing on specific examples, I explore how I, as a native anthropologist, navigated the expectations of ethnographic exoticism projected by an Anglophone readership, what kinds of creative and epistemological gains emerged from writing between two linguistic and cultural regimes, and what form of epistemic disobedience was possible in writing the ethnography.

Presenter(s): Jiyeon Kang

Doing Medical Anthropology in/of East Asia: Reflections of a Japanese-/English-speaking Anthropologist on the Politics of Language

Anthropologies of medicine in Japan have contributed to questioning the universality of Western biomedicine and "science," due to Japan's "success" in modernization as a "non-Western other" (Kitanaka 2018). Against this background, this paper examines the politics of language in doing medical anthropology in/of East Asia, with a specific focus on Japan. I explore how I have navigated the Anglophone and Japanese-speaking communities of medical anthropologists as a UK-trained Japanese-/English-speaking "native" anthropologist based in Japan. I compare the scholarship that both communities engage with and contribute to, and scholarly works that are largely ignored by either community. I also examine the roles that the languages as well as the translations used in the process of knowledge production and dissemination have played. Finally, I suggest a need to recontextualize the status of English and Japanese languages in East Asia in attempts to decolonize anthropologies of/in East Asia. English has become a language franca in the emerging networks of medical anthropologists of/in East Asia, symbolizing the hegemony of English language in a "global periphery." Whilst promoting engagement with Japanese-language scholarship is essential to challenging the hegemony of English in the "academic world system," scholars should also be mindful of the colonial legacies of the Japanese Empire -and the hegemony of the Japanese language within- in East Asia (Kubota et al 2024).

Presenter(s): Sachiko Horiguchi

Discussion

Discussion

8044 Rethinking Justice Beyond the Human: More-than-human Entanglements in South Korea

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together ethnographic research on the entangled lives of humans and nonhumans in South Korea to explore the spectral traces, resistances, and alliances that shape environmental activism in the face of state-led developmentalism. Drawing on the concept of multispecies justice (Chao 2022, Chao, Bolender, and Kirskey 2022), we examine how trees, birds, rocks, soil, and seeds emerge not merely as passive elements of the environment, but as active agents that contest the social, historical, and ecological consequences of militarism, urbanization, and capitalist extraction.

Across forests, farms, streams, and sacred geological formations, the papers trace how nonhumans are invoked, remembered, and mobilized—often as ghosts of a repressed past or visions of alternative futures. From the vilification of “introduced” trees on Jeju Island to agroecological seed practices that restore sovereignty and soil kinship, and from endangered birds surviving in urbanized waterscapes to coral reefs and rocks resisting militarized violence, these multispecies assemblages disrupt dominant narratives of national progress and ecological modernization.

Together, the panel explores how the struggle for justice in South Korea increasingly requires attunement to haunted landscapes and wounded life forms, where ghosts of colonialism, war, and industrialism linger in more-than-human bodies and terrains. By placing nonhuman life at the center of analysis, this panel foregrounds a politics of care, memory, and resistance that challenges the logics of human exceptionalism and developmentalist futures.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Jeongsu Shin, Cornell University, Gowoon Noh

Chair: Jeongsu Shin, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Jeongsu Shin, Cornell University, Hyojeong Kim, Juwon Lee, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology, Gowoon Noh

Discussant: Eleana Kim, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Contesting Roots: “Native” and “Introduced” Trees in Jeju’s Environmental Activism

This essay explores the contested ecological and political terrain surrounding native and introduced trees in environmental activism on Jeju Island, South Korea. Through an ethnographic lens, it examines how scientists, environmentalists, bureaucrats, and residents frame arboreal identities in response to shifting climate concerns, aesthetic values, and nationalistic ideals.

Species like "Japanese" cedar (samnamu or suginang) and "Japanese" cypress (p'yŏnbaengnamu or hinoki), once promoted for economic and ecological reasons, are now viewed as threats to biodiversity and ecological authenticity. In contrast, native trees such as oaks, camellia, and red thorn are celebrated in restoration efforts as part of a rewilding agenda.

The essay shows how trees become symbols in debates over environmental purity, national belonging, and island identity. Introduced trees are often racialized in discourses that echo colonial histories and anxieties about cultural and ecological dilution. Meanwhile, restoring native forests invokes an imagined harmonious past. These categories are not neutral or purely scientific but shaped by memory, affect, and competing visions of Jeju's future. Ultimately, this contestation reveals broader tensions in environmentalism between conservation and change, indigeneity and mobility, and how ecological narratives are mobilized to reinscribe boundaries under the guise of care.

Presenter(s): Jeongsu Shin

Entangled Seed, Soil, and Sovereignty: Korean Women Peasants' Agroecology Activisms as Multispecies Care and Resistance

Hyojeong Kim (Assistant Professor, Myongji University)

In response to the climate crisis, women peasants' movements in Korea have cultivated an emergent ecopolitics by reconfiguring their entangled, co-constitutive relationships with soil, land, seeds, crops, and the broader more-than-human world. This paper examines these agroecological practices not merely as ecological alternatives but as multispecies acts of care, kinship, and resistance, foregrounding an ethics of reciprocal survival. Through embodied practices of sensing, cultivating, and remembering, women peasants engage in interspecies relationality with vegetal life, microbial ecologies, and animate landscapes.

Focusing on the development of Indigenous seed and food sovereignty movements since the mid-2000s, this study situates these efforts within a broader resistance to global extractivist and industrial agricultural and food systems. It emphasizes how women peasants cultivate not only crops but relational ecologies, where nonhuman beings are recognized as active agency in shared lifeworlds.

Drawing on critical ecofeminism, new materialist feminism and multispecies ethnography, this paper explores how women peasants enact a politics of becoming-with dissolving boundaries between human and nonhuman through situated practices of multispecies alliance, resilience, and transformative care in the face of ecological precarity.

Presenter(s): Hyojeong Kim

Apartment Ecologies: Human-nonhuman Relations from Apartment Complexes and Streams

Due to the growing concerns over the climate crisis, South Korean (hereafter Korea) municipalities have made concerted efforts to become "ecological cities." This transformation has been

prominent around large apartment complexes, producing waterfront landscapes that stage residents' interaction with "nature" as part of a spectacularized urban design.

As the most prominent housing type in Korea, apartments have represented upward class mobility and the middle-class lifestyle for the past fifty years. Government visions for the "ecological city" are inextricable from the real estate-driven political economy, which is dependent upon the apartment-centered housing market, middle-class family values, and urban planning schemes. Within this context, stream activists have engaged with these urban streams as

the sites to protect the habitats of nonhuman species since the early 2000s.

This paper explores the contested landscape of the "apartment ecologies," where streams and apartment complexes converge and produce urban natural landscapes within densely populated human neighborhoods. Based on my ethnographic research conducted in Seoul, this paper focuses on the relationships that stream activists have cultivated with long-billed plovers, a second-grade endangered bird species in Korea, and examines how their more-than-human relations emerge through the sociocultural politics of apartment life and the conservation efforts surrounding stream ecological processes.

Presenter(s): Juwon Lee

More-than-human Solidarity Against Militarism and Neoliberal Developmentalism in South Korea

This paper explores more-than-human solidarity against ecological destruction, imperialist military expansion, and anthropocentric neoliberal developmentalism on Jeju Island, South Korea. I focus on how human and non-human beings form the common front of an environmental movement: natives call on non-natives to collaborate by providing corporeal evidence of the climate crisis, and these others respond by migrating to the island. It is the story of an open-ended assemblage of multispecies beings, that is, South Korean and foreign protesters, endangered species such as soft corals and migratory mandarin ducks, and Gurumbi, a large and flat trachyandesite rock. The rock was once home to hundreds of species and operated as an open-air temple for the island's indigenous people. Thirteen years ago, the South Korean government dynamited it to build a naval base that often hosts destroyers equipped with U.S. combat systems for military training. Far from being forgotten, however, Gurumbi is at the heart of this multispecies alliance. For example, the protesters have performed a 108-prostration ritual, shouting "Rise up Gurumbi!" and "We are Gurumbi!" in front of the naval base every morning for thirteen years. This paper shows how this collective of human and non-human living and non-living beings demonstrates the resilience of the entangled lives of haunted bodies, spirits, and ghosts of the island, wounded, polluted, and/or wrecked by militarism and neoliberalism. I argue that this

Presenter(s): Gwoon Noh

Discussion

2631 Haunted by the Market: New Risks and New Gambles Amid Financial Uncertainty, Part 1

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The current climate of global financial uncertainty, manifested through market instabilities, currency devaluations, and shifting regulatory regimes, poses a new and intersecting set of financial challenges. Many have turned to risky behaviors, from buying lottery tickets and online gambling platforms to investing in cryptocurrencies and stocks, as a way to make money and sustain their livelihoods. The lines between risky activities such as gambling and investments have increasingly blurred. Gambling has spilled out of the casino and into transnational digital spheres, operating in legal gray zones and suspended in regulatory ambiguity. Therefore, this panel interrogates the production and reproduction of these political economies of risk while centering the lived experiences of those navigating volatile markets.

As betting platforms, crypto exchanges, and investment apps operate across jurisdictions, national regulators struggle to enforce policies designed for a world where gambling, speculating, and investing are more clearly demarcated. While policies governing gambling often claim to balance public health concerns, economic priorities, and consumer protection, they frequently produce contradictions that expose the tensions in how risk is framed and managed. For instance, the regulation of gambling is not just about preventing harm or ensuring fair play because it is also about defining what forms of gambling are deemed legitimate and which are considered reckless or illicit. The rise of online gambling and speculative markets further complicates these distinctions. Additionally, corporate actors, from financial institutions to multinational gambling firms, shape these regulatory landscapes through self-regulation, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and lobbying efforts that redefine speculation and gambling as either a public good or a social risk (Cassidy 2020). At the same time, state interests in generating revenue from both gambling and financial speculation often lead to policies that are fragmented, contradictory, or selectively enforced (Hassan 2025).

Our panel asks: What roles do states and corporations play in creating the conditions of possibility for these gambles or investment practices through regulations? Importantly, this panel dissects the dynamics of risk-taking, class-making, and moral economies of popular investment practices through ethnographic research from diverse locations and perspectives, including Turkey, Kenya, Vietnam, the UK, and Thailand. We open emotional, ethical, and spatio-temporal dimensions, asking: How do elements of hope, anticipation, and aspiration structure financial decision-making, and how are these acts embedded in histories of economic precarity or opportunity?

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Al Lim, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Wesam Hassan, The London School of Economics and Politics

Chair: Al Lim, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Wesam Hassan, London School of Economics, Farah Qureshi, Colby College, Department of Anthropology, Linh Dang, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, yathukulan yogarajah, Al Lim, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Allison Truitt, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Gambling, Speculation, and the Governance of Uncertainty in Turkey

This paper explores how regulatory ambiguity shapes the moral and material economies of gambling and speculative finance in contemporary Turkey. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul, I examine how state-regulated games of chance, such as the national lottery and sports betting, are discursively and legally differentiated from gambling. This ambiguity is further heightened by the rise of cryptocurrencies, which occupy unstable positions between money, assets, and gambling. I argue that the Turkish state simultaneously enables and disavows these practices: on one hand, it promotes state-regulated betting platforms as legitimate revenue-generating tools while, on the other, it criminalizes unauthorized gambling. Through this selective governance, the state reconfigures the boundary between legal speculation and illegal risk-taking, often along class and moral lines. I situate these practices within broader global shifts in financial governance, where distinctions between investing, gambling, and gaming are increasingly unstable. By interrogating the affective, moral, and temporal logics that underpin these speculative engagements, I show how research participants imagine futures and recalibrate aspirations within volatile political-economic landscapes. Ultimately, this paper contributes to ongoing debates about how risk is managed, regulated, and lived in times of financial uncertainty and how speculation becomes a livelihood and a mode of political critique.

Presenter(s): Wesam Hassan

Games on Tap: the social impact of Mobile Phone gambling in Kenya

This paper examines the rise of mobile phone-based gambling in Kenya as a lens into the blurred boundaries between investment, speculation, and predation in contemporary financial landscapes. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Nairobi and online, I explore how mobile money platforms like M-Pesa—originally celebrated for promoting financial inclusion—have become conduits for digital gambling targeting young adults. These platforms exploit existing cultural affinities for football and emergent desires for economic mobility, embedding risk-taking practices into daily life under the guise of leisure and opportunity. Through unsolicited SMS promotions, tactile phone interfaces, and algorithmically-driven games like Aviator, gambling companies produce a compelling ecosystem of addiction and aspiration. Inspired by theories of "predatory inclusion" (Yamatta-Taylor 2019) and drawing on Geertz's "deep play" and Schull's "Addiction by Design," I argue that mobile gambling in Kenya reveals the intimate entanglement of risk, masculinity, and economic precarity. State regulatory responses remain contradictory—both punitive and revenue-seeking—highlighting the fragmented governance of speculative financial practices. Ultimately, this paper situates digital gambling as a transnational political economy of

risk, where the boundaries between play, profit, and harm are persistently contested and ethically fraught.

Presenter(s): Farah Qureshi

Mystic Mathness: "Scanning Numbers" (Soi Cầu) in Vietnamese Underground Lottery-Betting

The Vietnamese lottery game encompasses two contrasting yet interrelated modes. In the state lottery (xổ số kiến thiết), players buy state-issued lottery tickets and win money if their ticket numbers match prize results. Yet, many players also engage in an illegal offshoot of this official game: betting on the last two digits of lottery prize numbers. This paper focuses on this underground lottery (lô đề), which gives players more room to exercise their agency and promises higher returns. One strategy for identifying which numbers to bet on is soi cầu ("scanning numbers"). Soi cầu instructions abound online, particularly in YouTube videos where self-proclaimed analysts demonstrate how to identify bet-worthy numbers through numerical operations on past lottery results. I suggest that soi cầu entails the "performance of mathness," the charismatic demonstration of the strategy's math-like character that obscures the arbitrariness of its underlying numerical manipulations and lends it an air of legitimacy. This mathematical construction also integrates Vietnamese cosmological imaginaries of elemental dynamics and number symbolism. By examining the interplay between math-like rationality and mysticism in soi cầu, this paper foregrounds the trans-capacities of numbers and people's creative "numerical sense-making" (Guyer et al. 2010) in navigating the uncertain possibilities of life.

Presenter(s): Linh Dang

Chance work and the work of chance

In the face of known limits and drudgery that wage work so often provides people turn to the unknown – in this turn, extractive mechanisms are at play. Drawing on ethnographic material from the cryptocurrency sector and placing them within a broader historical arc, this article makes visible an unaccounted-for extractive mechanism that is increasingly apparent in contemporary times. More specifically, by historically constituting the activities of amateur cryptocurrency traders within a broader historical socioeconomic chance landscape, I highlight cryptocurrencies as part of the work Londoners have been doing to rework the limits of wage work since the 17th century. Working against common assumptions and seductive metaphors, I argue that chance-taking requires work - what I call 'chance work' - and is the way by which people who intimately feel the limits of wages pursue capital. The term 'work of chance' is used to draw attention to the work chance does in people's lives, economy, and society. Through deploying these two terms, particular attention is paid to how emerging startup and tech cities, that are so often valorized by politicians as the harbingers of brighter futures, are benefiting from the chance work amateur crypto traders are involved.

Presenter(s): yathukulan yogarajah

More than Mania: Making Money and Meaning through Crypto in Thailand

Crypto's ubiquity in Thailand from 2020 to 2022 is often dismissed by explanations of mania ("her"), its popularity flattened into a singular desire for people to get rich quickly. However, this framing misses out on the specific, highly particularized ways Thai consumers made sense of crypto. Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork, I spoke with a diverse range of people, including consumers, the founders of companies, state officials, artists, product managers, and academics in Thailand. This deeply heterogeneous set of people repeatedly highlighted how Thai actors associated crypto with other locally familiar practices and media, namely stocks, gold, lottery tickets, and amulets. Each of these social categories is associated with more than just making money, but with a specific valence of wealth that I will call "fortune," in the capacious sense of the term that entangles luck, wealth, and social status. This paper focuses on how fortune's speed and deservedness are mediated through actors fluidly moving between these social categories. They fuse testimony-based storytelling, trading strategies, and forms of gambling as they chart their pursuits of fortune. Not only do Thai consumers make sense of crypto, but in doing so, reshape shifting financial and technological landscapes of risk, investment, and possibility.

Presenter(s): Al Lim

Discussion

3423 Ghosts of Reason: Anthropology's Enlightenment Conundrum

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

A specter is haunting anthropology-the specter of Enlightenment. If modernity, reason, science, myth, and religion have long preoccupied anthropologists, Enlightenment has kept to the shadows. Perhaps because, as Singh (2015) put it, "for postcolonials it is often assumed that the only permissible attitude to [...] Enlightenment is one of skepticism." Anthropologists don't seem to know what to do with the term.

On one hand, our questions, axioms, and tools can be traced back to Montaigne, Rousseau, and Kant. As Khan (2021) suggests, if Kant asked, "What Is Enlightenment" by questioning whether the "figure of the human was knowable," anthropologists further this line of inquiry by asking "whether we can [presume] the same human or reason across all contexts." On the other hand, anthropologists know well that "what seemed like Enlightenment [in] the eighteenth century... turned out to be a parochial self-consciousness of [...] the mission civilisatrice" (Sahlins 1999) In this vein, Viveiros de Castro (2014) and de la Cadena (2018) encourage ethnographers to let indigenous lifeways radically transform Western thought, not to extend the rational progress of les philosophes. But by "Letting Anthropology Burn," (Jobson 2020) how do we tell immolation qua exorcism from blazing rite of rebirth?

Anthropologists' ambivalence toward myth-busting as moral good seems to reflect Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment: "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology." This tension crystalizes in the revelatory thaumaturgy of anthropologists like Fuentes

(2012) ("Busting Myths about Human Nature") or Graeber and Wengrow (2021), whose *Dawn of Everything* smokes out the ghosts of Rousseau. While few anthropologists would balk at the impulse to "bust" harmful myths, doubt lurks: isn't taking myth seriously what anthropologists do best?

Of course, if this ambivalence suffuses our orientations to ethnography, then it also shapes our objects. Thus, while some have drawn on canonical theorists of modernity to show how Enlightenment logics produce environmental degradation, social atomization, economic precarity, biopolitical capture, panoptic securitization etc. (Edmonds 2010, Gershon 2017, Livingston 2019, Collier 2011), others have revealed Enlightenment as a myth itself, showing how enchantment remains immanent to social worlds (Turner 1969, Ong 1987, Taussig 1999, Mazzarella 2017). To paraphrase Latour (1991), they argue "We Have Never Been Enlightened."

This panel probes anthropology's Enlightenment legacy as an "interface of revelation and concealment" (Meyer and Pels 2003). Bringing together conversations on environmental destruction, racial capitalism, and the "disenchantment of the world" (Weber 1912), we ask how to mediate these antinomies. If the past is indeed "continued as destruction of the past" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944), how do we live well with the ghosts of Enlightenment?

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Luke Forrester, Brown University, Myles Lennon, Brown University

Presenter(s): Mayanthi Fernando, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Daena Funahashi, University of California, Berkeley, William Mazzarella, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Luke Forrester, Brown University, Myles Lennon, Brown University

Discussant: Dominic Boyer, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

2756 The Spectrality of Borders: The Image of the Frontier and its Phantoms

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel aims to reconsider the anthropology of the "frontier" and "borderlands" as an image by focusing on its qualities of "spectrality" (Weinstock 2004) made manifest as a spatial, phenomenological, and imaginal condition. At a moment when border-crossings, deportations, and renewed imperial ambitions consume public attention in the United States and around the world, this panel brings together the anthropological endeavors to understand the politics at the margins of the state (Das and Poole 2004) while taking seriously the spectral images, imaginations, and phantoms of inequity, division, and historical legacy, or as Byron Good recently put it, "the anthropology of being haunted" (Good, Chioventa, and Rahimi 2022). How might renewed attention to the "spectrality" of boundary spaces and interstitial states reorient and destabilize our notions of time and being?

Anthropological scholarship on borders has often focused on Euro-American concerns over borders as policed and produced by technologies of the state (Balibar 2002; Fassin 2011; Green 2013), and more recently, as imagined realms of humanitarianism (Walters 2011; Rozakou 2020). Yet, the multiplicity of the "invisible" margins and the implications of the frontier as an image continue to invite explorations of the "border as method" (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), particularly to probe the nonlinear time-space of those who live within the precarity of borderlands (Heo and Kormina 2019; Sur 2021). How do the contemporary lived experiences of those at the peripheries far beyond global attention speak to the "spectral" nature of the margins? What does it mean for these varying images of frontiers to encounter the phantoms of historical injustices and specters of anticipated "war yet to come" (Akar 2018)?

In response to these questions, the presenters explore how frontiers are suspended between a doubleness within the seen and unseen, lived and imagined, as a haunting presence within a spectrality of delineations. Chris Chan examines the archipelagic maritime borders in the Taiwan Strait and the ways in which islanders and artists attempt to "exorcise" the spectral environment of both its marine waste and political specters of war through art production. Centering on a village, a border stone and territorial spirit, Justin Weinstock considers traces of the Jahai indigenous people's historical memory and territorial claims that continue to haunt the Thai-Malaysian borderline and national histories that seek to exclude and overwrite them. Aleksandra Simonova explores double citizenship in Crimea and asks how citizenship correlates with identity and whether having two passports make people servants of two states more vulnerable? James Meador analyzes eighteenth century Russian-Qing border archives in order to theorize the tenuous multi-generational peace between early modern Russian and Chinese imperial states, one permanently haunted by the specter of an impossible war.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Chris Cristóbal Chan, Justin Weinstock, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Mariane C. Ferme, University of California, Berkeley

Presenter(s): Chris Cristóbal Chan, Justin Weinstock, University of California, Berkeley, Aleksandra Simonova, The Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, James Meador, Columbia University

Discussant: Natasha Raheja, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Environmental Exorcism: Sea borders and its Specters in the Taiwan Strait

The littoral coasts in the Taiwan Strait exist in a spectral condition: both haunted by ghosts and also littered with "ghost nets" and a spectrum of other material anthropogenic waste washed back up ashore. This paper examines the archipelagic maritime borders in the Taiwan Strait and the ways in which islanders and visiting artists contend with the ghosts of political and lived material conditions through an aspiration to "exorcise" the spectral milieu. Through an investigation of the remediated afterlives ghost nets washed ashore, I ask, how do different images of spectrality take on material forms as environment refuse and, likewise, become mirrored by homologous social imaginations of political and existential crises mediated through state-sponsored public

contemporary art production? This paper examines the ways in which Taiwanese environmental artists working at the confluence of politically-disputed waters remake macro-environmental conditions beyond their control by turning plastic marine waste back into "revitalized" lifeworlds. By recasting ecological waste as environmental media for imagination and creative production, this paper takes an ethnographic approach to understanding the relations between environmental "deathscapes" and their intricate relations with aspirations for new life by Taiwanese islanders and artists and, moreover, seeks to unmoor our understandings of what it means to coexist in a world with increasingly "spectral" environments.

Presenter(s): Chris Cristóbal Chan

What the Border Never Held: a Jahai Hauntology of the Thai-Malaysian Borderland

This paper conjures the historical memory and territorial claims of the Jahai indigenous people that continue to haunt the Thai-Malaysian border and national histories that exclude and overwrite them. I begin with a myth of an ancestor who unrolls the Jahai lifeworld like an expansive mat, weaving the Jahai into an ecology of reciprocal obligations with the land and its other inhabitants. This unbounded cosmology stands in tension with their forest's 1909 partitioning by the border, which Jahai later experienced as a rupture in everyday life through upheavals and displacements wrought by the Cold War's "Malayan Emergencies" (1948-1960; 1968-1989). Though Malaysia's difficult birth marked a violent reordering of space-time, its historical and geographical closure remains unsettled by memories Jahai hold that linger in the landscape, just beyond the perceptible. Ethnographically attending to three such spectral presences – a submerged border stone, a withering territorial spirit, and an evacuated forest village – I explore how the Jahai articulate a hauntology – a lived theory on how the past, though silenced, persists. Cast as a people without history, living in excess of national territorial bounds, unassimilable to development plans, labor markets, or universalizing religion, Jahai themselves emerge as a phantom – forestalling a national future that refuses to make space for them.

Presenter(s): Justin Weinstock

Citizenship and passports in Crimea: navigating war, identity, and borders between Russia and Ukraine

In this paper, I explore the double citizenship that emerged in Crimea after 2014 and transformed after 2022. The question of citizenship and crossing borders between Russia and Ukraine have been crucial for local Crimeans. After the annexation in 2014, they found themselves in a complicated situation when they had to get Russian documents to reaffirm their social and political existence under the new Russian government. However, the Russian documents issued in Crimea have been banned in many other countries and, unsurprisingly, have not been accepted by Ukraine, which still considers Crimeans its citizens. Similarly, most of the European countries have not only imposed rounds of sanctions on Russian banks, businesspeople, and politicians involved in Crimea but also have banned regular Crimeans from entering Europe and the US. Adaptation measures of Crimeans after that usually involved saving their Ukrainian documents and choosing between those

and the Russian ones depending on the occasion and the task to fulfill. After the extended periods of fieldwork between 2014 and 2021 and online research after 2022, I explore the question: How does citizenship correlate to identity? Does having both passports give additional levels of freedom from the nation states or, to the contrary, make people servants of two states, vulnerable to each? Or did they find themselves under obligation to choose a nation-state of their allegiances and be loyal to it?

Presenter(s): Aleksandra Simonova

Way of Life (Derogatory) : Finding Modus Vivendi in Early Modern Sino-Russian Diplomatic Crisis

How did Russia and Qing China avoid going to war with each other for almost two centuries? From 1689 to 1858, the two empires maintained an uneasy peace that weathered a series of deep diplomatic crises. This paper examines the first and worst of these crises in order to theorize the long Sino-Russian peace it punctuated. It does so by critically engaging political theories of modus vivendi ('mode of living')—a situational coincidence of interests rather than a more durable alignment born of shared values or commitments. Through rejecting the concept of interests that grounds most theories of modus vivendi, I propose its reconstruction through a broader notion of socially mediated historical possibility informed by social semiotics and phenomenology. I apply this theoretical framework to Russian and Manchu language primary sources produced by Russian and Qing border officials in the decade of crisis that began following the Qing genocide of the Dzungar Mongols (1755-1765). Without the common threat of Dzungar invasion to bind the two empires' elites together, the specter of war between the two imperial states threatened to become reality. This paper argues that this specter was stabilized as a deferred possibility to create a new modus vivendi, a process replicated in successive generations' crises.

Presenter(s): James Meador

3452 Displacement, Captivity, and Plantation Hegemony in North America

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Plantations are not relics of the past, and the effects of plantation labor regimes extend far beyond any particular crop, region, or nation and even beyond their origins in the agrarian world. Plantation societies organize social life around profit-based institutions of commodity production and political, territorial, and military control over land and human labor, imposing state-race orders with planetary and devastating effects. In the current context of intensifying international conflict over who will control transnational flows of migrant labor and capital, combined with employer uncertainty about looming labor shortages and the tentative rise of worker militancy, we ask: What are the legacies, continuities, and emerging expressions of North American plantation economies? As migrant laborers are being simultaneously captured and shunned, who will do the hyper-exploited work in the diverse fields of the North American plantation system, and how will that labor

be managed? What mechanisms do today's plantation capitalists use to order, divide, define, and deploy their labor forces? How do workers confront and disobey these mechanisms of control? How do employers shop around and mix different workforces, including undocumented, citizen, and temporary contract 'guest' laborers, as they seek additional profit and advantage?

In this panel, we will examine the history, present, and possible futures of North American plantation capitalism, drawing on frameworks of analysis and praxis from the Black radical tradition and Mesoamerican traditions of struggle against the fincas and haciendas. We will explore how multi-sited ethnographic and multidisciplinary research can support anthropological praxis- that is, both our understanding of how transnational labor management is evolving in real-time and the efforts of workers and organizers to resist exploitation. We go beyond conceptual borders and methodological nationalism and bridge theoretical discussions about plantations, large estates, factories in the fields, haciendas, fincas, agromaquilas, and campos agrícolas, as well as the adjacent industries such as landscaping, meatpacking, and even services and construction, where plantation logics continue to organize life and labor. The session comprises interdisciplinary papers that approach these questions through lenses of environmental justice, critical agrarian studies, Black radicalism, Marxism, feminist theory, abolitionist perspectives, and other critical approaches. The participants are a group of scholars from diverse fields, geographic regions, and career stages.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Gerardo Rodriguez-Solis, University of California, Berkeley

Chair: Tristan Call, Spelman College, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lisa Meierotto, Boise State University, Etni Zoe Castell Roldan, Dalhousie University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Tristan Call, Gerardo Rodriguez-Solis, University of California, Berkeley, Rosa Navarro

Presentation(s): "We Wouldn't Survive Without Them": The Rhetoric of Crisis in the Dairy Industry's Push for a Year-Round Guest Worker Program

The Idaho Dairy Industry has been leading the charge to expand the H-2A visa program to include year-round employment. Idaho dairy generates over \$10 billion in total sales each year. It's an industry that currently relies heavily on undocumented workers. Drawing upon fears of mass deportation of undocumented laborers, the dairy industry seeks to capitalize on the moment to lobby for a year-round visa program. If a year-round visa program is established, then to what extent does the industry seek to maintain a plantation-style regime? This paper aims to explore how the dairy industry seeks to order, divide, define, and deploy their labor forces. Through media discourse analysis, I explore how the dairy industry seeks to develop a different workforce, and document how they discuss the ways in which they frame the argument that temporary contract 'guest' laborers will lead to greater profit and advantage. I draw upon local and national media reports to explore the language utilized in their quest for a year-round guest-worker visa, with attention to language of fear and imminent collapse of the dairy industry, paralleling language used to justify slavery in the American South.

Presenter(s): Lisa Meierotto

Co-author(s): Rebecca Som Castellano

Ghost Workers in Canada: Mexican SAWP workers and translational bureaucratic inscription

This paper explores how actions taken by Mexican and Canadian state bureaucracies shape the lives of Mexican men hired in the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) during the intervals between farm work seasons. These actions influence their perceptions of aging once they no longer travel to Canada and appear as "goths" for both states. The paper emphasizes the importance of pensions as a critical component of the social wage, highlighting their role in the broader context of social reproduction for these international farm workers as they enter old age.

Presenter(s): Etni Zoe Castell Roldan

The Rise (and Fall?) of the Central American Ghost Visas: Spectral Plantation Capitalism and the State in 21st Century Captive Labor Programs

Beginning with a 2019 deal between the Trump White House and the Guatemalan Giammattei administration, and accelerating through the Biden (US), Lopez Obrador (Mexican) and Arevalo (Guatemalan) administrations, promises of expanding Central Americans' access to H2 temporary contract labor programs were a central part of multilateral projects to contain, capture, and control migrant workers traveling and laboring in the North American migrant corridor. However, the number and pathways of these visas were often vague and contradictory- revealing fundamental contradictions between the role of private employers and state actors in the management of US captive labor programs. I explore the rise and (possible) fall of what I call the Central American "ghost" visas, based on analysis of public statements about the program, visits with H2 workers in the United States, and interviews with NGO's and recruiters struggling for influence over the H2 expansion in Guatemala.

Presenter(s): Tristan Call

In the Name of Farmworkers. The Emerging Agrarian Nonprofit Industrial Complex in Mexico

The expansion of transnational chains of agricultural commodities and laborers between the US and Mexico has brought numerous changes to the recruitment, labor, and living conditions of Mexico's migrant farmworker population. As both the state and private industry promote market "self-regulation," a plethora of certification programs marking food as "fair" and "ethically" produced have flourished. In this process, new actors have emerged between plantations and distributors. These actors, from NGOs to corporate-sponsored academic research projects, are part of what Hernandez-Leon and Sandoval call the "emerging migration industry and infrastructure paradigm." In this paradigm, actors claiming to represent farmworkers closely collaborate with corporations to guide labor relations and recruitment processes. A notable absence are the farmworkers and their organizations. Who speaks for migrant farmworkers? Lacking effective unions and political representation, a middle sector claims to represent their interests and guide private and public policy. Based on two research projects in agro-industrial enclaves of northwestern Mexico (San Quintin and Hermosillo), this paper discusses how the corporate hegemony is not only seeking

control of the mobility and daily lives of workers but also the research and activist agendas in Mexico with detrimental effects on migrant farmworkers.

Presenter(s): Gerardo Rodriguez-Solis

Co-author(s): James Daria

The Rise of the H-2A Visa Program in the Pacific Northwest: The Manufacturing of a Labor Shortage and Displacement of Local Farmworker Communities

The H-2A Visa Program has been expanding fast across the US, and in Washington state, it has grown by over 1,000% in the last three years alone. Currently, H-2A migrant workers represent 30% of the agricultural workforce in the state. I explore the key drivers and actors that are driving the fast expansion of the H-2A visa program across the state of Washington, with a particular focus on the role of grower associations, labor contractors, and labor recruiters, in creating the web of migration and labor regimes that is manipulating the agricultural labor market to manufacture a labor shortage that is displacing local farmworkers across the state. I build on scholar Mai Ngai (2004) work that argues that guest workers are "imported colonialism" an agrarian proletariat that is created as subordinated "racialized foreign bodies" to work as captive laborers in the United States, as a regulated and restricted measure to restrict and control Mexican male bodies entering and leaving the United States. In order to build a controlled labor force as they forcibly displace organized and unionized local farmworkers from the agricultural labor market. I explore the manipulation tactics of the labor market by these actors to track and map the displacement of local farmworkers who are being displaced and replaced by the H-2A visa program.

Presenter(s): Rosa Navarro

3876 The Book's Spectral Futures: Academic Writing in the Age of Public Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Edgewood AB (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

At a moment when academia is under political assault, what uses can we make of the book? What is the role of the ethnographic monograph in addressing and educating a wider public? This roundtable pairs an editor and an author from four prominent university presses (Duke, California, Texas, Minnesota). They will each pose and answer a range of questions about the future of book publishing for cultural anthropologists.

These questions begin with how to engage audiences at a time when most Americans have little confidence or trust in universities and are reading fewer books every year. It is not unusual to encounter college freshmen who were never assigned to read a whole book in high school. As well, fundamental aspects of human sociality are being drastically reconfigured by various digital devices and platforms. How do we write for audiences with decreasing attention spans, glutted by cyberspace "content" and increasingly driven to social isolation and distraction? How do we

educate through writing even as public scholarship is being defunded and undermined. What knowledge claims are we making, in contrast to perpetuating traditions of "critique?"

As organizer, I'm drawn to this question by my own work and my responsibilities with Wenner-Gren, where we are thinking hard about what it will take for anthropology to thrive and survive in these difficult times. My writing has evolved but so has my thinking about our responsibilities when it comes to our readers and the communities impacted by our work. Participants in this roundtable will assess and discuss whether we are writing the best books we can at this perilous moment. Do we need to write differently? Are we failing the book medium in our current approaches? Are we not fully imaging and pursuing its many affordances and possibilities? The answers to these questions hinge on whether people will read the books we write. Do we assign ethnographies in the classroom? Do we write ethnographies that journalists will find interesting enough to report on? But the answers also turn on how we think through what our audiences need to know. How are we using the ethnographic monograph to convey the insights of cultural analysis to people who are increasingly disinclined to read?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Danilyn Rutherford, Wenner-Gren Foundation

Presenter(s): Nomi Stone, University of Texas, Kate Marshall, University of California Press, Aisha Beliso-DeJesus, Princeton University, Ken Wissoker, Duke University Press, Sarah Luna, Tufts University, Jason Weidemann, University of Minnesota Press, Casey Kittrell, University of Texas Press

Discussant: John Hartigan, University of Texas at Austin

4297 "The Making of History in a Time of World Order Instability"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Estherwood (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This is a session devoted to the ethnographic documentation of the making of history with a focus, in the words of Stephane Palmié and Charles Stewart, on "the principles, whether ideological, cosmological, or scientific - call them broadly cultural - that underpin practices of inquiry into the past, as well as the forms and modes in which the past is represented to others" in the specific context of world order instability, varying among economic liberalism, decolonial nation-building, and neo-imperialism. In this context, anthropologists cannot assume that the making of history represents grass-roots folk nationalism. History making practices can in some case mobilize the official nationalist sentiments of new states; in other cases history making practices mobilize alternative perspectives -- even if not necessary anti-state perspectives. As more and more literature highlights variations in colonial practice and in decolonial ideologies, we see that the valences of history making practices call for careful inquiry into world order matrices.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: David Dinwoodie, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Muhammad Abro, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology

Chair: David Dinwoodie, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): David Dinwoodie, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Kaitlin Lewis, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Leiter, University of Pennsylvania, Muhammad Abro, University of New Mexico, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Courtney Handman, University of Texas at Austin

Presentation(s): The Making of History and the Question of World Order

The anthropology of history arose in early 20th century structural functionalism. British oriented structural functionalists were seeing the role history-making played in the reproduction of acephalous societies within the empire. With decolonization came history making as integral to the building of ostensibly independent nations within a so-called capitalist/socialist world system. Today a burgeoning literature – John Darwin, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, Lydia Walker, questions whether the liberal nation-based order represents the default setting: economic and political liberalism, decolonization to the end of ostensibly equal nations, empires and tributaries, each is actively employed these days depending on the circumstances. On the one hand, studying the making of history requires carefully exploring the world order or world orders it engages, and, on the other, perhaps the making of history can reveal new insights into world ordering today.

Presenter(s): David Dinwoodie

The Making of Populist Histories in the U.S. Mexico Borderlands

Drawing on various strands of a long and complex history of Spanish, Mexican, and American imperial control/influence, Indigenous resistance and resilience, and long-term patterns of movement, working-class people in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands fashion populist histories of belonging, doing so often in dialogue with dominant political discourses. These populist perspectives often defy contemporary political expectations regarding identity. In this paper I explore some aspects of how these histories are being constructed today. I explore institutional platforms for the making of history, some of the broad historical themes that are often addressed, and how such populist histories mobilize messages about earlier eras as contemporary people negotiate the uncertainties of the present. The paper bridges an ethnographic approach to populism in the U.S. Mexico borderlands with the literatures on the making of history and the linguistic anthropology of voice, message, and narrative.

Presenter(s): Kaitlin Lewis

Spanish Nation-Building and Alternative Histories of New Mexico

In 2015, Spain ratified a law providing a special path to citizenship for descendants of Jewish victims of the Inquisition. Several hundred New Mexicans soon discovered that they might qualify through their conquistador ancestors who colonized New Mexico on behalf of the Spanish Crown. Painting this ancestry as genealogically Jewish required putting forth a historical perspective that contradicts hegemonic accounts of New Mexico and of Spain. Now, their ancestors who took on the mission of spreading Catholicism and extending the reach of an empire that had ostensibly

eliminated its Jewish population were reframed as descendants of Jews or secretly Jewish themselves. And yet, this alternative account was directly correlated with efforts to claim reparative Spanish citizenship in alignment with a Spanish nation-building project. This paper thus presents an ethnographic case in which history making practices can simultaneously mobilize and challenge official nationalist accounts.

Presenter(s): Sarah Leiter

Making History in Sindh, Pakistan and Decolonial Nationalism

This paper examines how Shia singers in Sindh, Pakistan, reinterpret the poetry of the eighteenth-century Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai to resist exclusionary nationalist narratives within a Sunni-majority state. Situating this case within broader debates on decolonization and nationalism (Ayres 2009; Chatterjee 1986, 1993), I highlight the contradictions of postcolonial nation-building, where efforts to decolonize through nationalism often reproduce exclusionary practices that marginalize minority communities. Engaging with scholarship on the making of history (Palmié and Stewart 2016; Sahlin 1985), I further explore how historical narratives are actively reworked by marginalized groups as tools for recognition and resistance. For Shia communities in Sindh, direct confrontation with the state is often untenable; instead, they turn to cultural and historical reinterpretation as a strategic form of resistance.

Presenter(s): Muhammad Abro

Discussion

3321 Architectures of Spectrality II

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The discipline of anthropology, in many ways, was built on spectral grounds. It is a form of inquiry that involves itself with ghosts and asks: how do societies narrate the ineffable, and what categories of social thought cohere around the interaction between living and dead things? (Ochoa 2010; Stevenson 2014; Meyers 2021; Taussig 2025). Put differently, anthropologists have long involved themselves with-and thought with-phantasms, ghosts, hauntive obsessions, and spectral projections. Additionally, the discipline's enduring tether to the colonial requires that contemporary anthropologists continue navigating the spectral materiality of fieldwork; i.e., how the event, the aftershock, and (un/ mis)memory of violence is made apparent in physical space. This panel proposes to take up the question of the spectral, otherness, and space. We have termed this convergence "the architecture of spectrality." In doing so, we attempt to answer a simple, yet vexing question: How do we sense that we are haunted, or in the presence of ghosts-materially and in space? And, in order to recognize the ghost, must you be political, cultural, or personal kin?

By tethering our collective meditation to architectures of spectrality, we point to the conditions of (dis)appearance in hauntings. In an echo to critiques of archival power (Derrida 1994, 1996; Hartman 2008, 2019; Arondekar 2009; Stoler 2010), we consider how collective memory and its absences take shape in specific places, such as streetscapes, toponymy, memorial plaques, online spaces, and archival institutions. Etymologically, architecture involves authoritative discourse (arkhe) and the techniques of building (tekton). Thus, the panel considers how spaces of ghostliness are constructed and by whose authority, as well as the ways space may withhold, retain or foreclose access to certain forms of memory.

Finally, the panel coheres around a practical question of writing and interpretation- which situates ethnography itself as another form of architecture. How is it even possible to put the spectral into writing on spectrality? How do we approach the spectral when faced with its obliqueness and opacities? What is the method of finding, feeling, knowing, and caring for the ghosts and phantasms that alter a place with affective density? Our presentations will demonstrate the various ways an ethnographer may become ghostlike, and thus attentive to appearances and absences in order to know or learn. In situating the ghostly as necessarily material-in its physical trace as well as its narrative recounting-our methodological meditations consider how the architecture of spectrality may reveal the sociospatial.

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Natalie Reinhart , Khalil Habrih, The New School

Chair: Lisa Stevenson, McGill University

Presenter(s): Amy Leia McLachlan, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Andrés Romero, Natalie Reinhart, Khalil Habrih, The New School

Presentation(s): “Every time it rains, the world ends”

In 2020, COVID-19 arrived as a familiar disaster to displaced Uitoto families living in Bogotá, Colombia. The catastrophic loss of kin to the virus and to the violence of state-funded healthcare was compounded by an economic crisis driven by the city's lockdown measures. Cut off from the informal cash labour that sustains them, several dozen Uitoto families were evicted from their already tenuous housing situations and found themselves out on the street at the same moment as their presence on the street was criminalized. Mobilizing a mutual aid network including elders, ancestral spirits, and plant beings, those families founded a new settlement in a place where they do not legally exist, and where material conditions routinely erase their presence and their tenuous but flourishing lives. This paper explores the ethics of a spectral architecture in a migrant space of never-ending-world-ending. Sustaining lives in a place that does not exist, in the confluence of routinized historical erasures, and in oblique relation to the kin and ecologies that make the world make sense, this Uitoto settlement offers a window into a mode of ethical relation to our shared horizons of perpetual provisionality.

Presenter(s): Amy Leia McLachlan

Reverberations: Violent returns across time in downtown Bogotá

This paper performs the layered rhythms of violence inscribed unto place. Taking downtown Bogotá as its fieldsite, this work is concerned with the haunting dimensions of violence, namely the way terror seeps into a place, and appears to invite further violent happenings. Elliptical returns, cyclical relays that seem to engulf everything into its vortex. Moving from 10th Avenue to 14th, from 6th street to 12th, this narrative driven paper tracks the way this shrunken place-world has, across centuries, been host to insurmountable levels of violence and of the dispossessed who seem to end up here, out of all places. Asylums, colonial lynching sites, drug-markets controlled by criminal governance, military bases, underground labyrinths, mass graves, sacred churches, all stand here or leave their traces. What gathers is an accrued density, a spectral and cumulative intensity where the past cannot be surpassed, forging forms of violence that at their core, are atmospheric

Presenter(s): Andrés Romero

The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Ghost Story

In 1933, journalist and ethnographer James Agee published an article for *Fortune* magazine titled "The Tennessee Valley Authority." The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was an unprecedented enterprise of infrastructural might that promised to electrify the poor, rural South. In his article, Agee described the Tennessee Valley as "a laboratory for a great experiment" at an industrial and social scale. Or as Agee wrote, the TVA "involves human beings." This presentation thinks with rivers as social architecture. It draws on the Appalachian tradition of ghost stories and hauntings to consider the unique relationship that emerges between a public-works project and the human beings that have lived alongside rivers. Specifically, the paper considers the "geological haunting" of the Paint Rock River, which is managed by the TVA. For example: the river is named after the town of Paint Rock, which itself alludes to the indigenous Cherokee moniker given to the limestone bluffs of lower Appalachia—white-streaked, like bleeding watercolors, the bluffs look "painted." Those bluffs stand like an affective tombstone, where American ghosts layer like geological sediment. For example, the town of Paint Rock is where the Scottsboro Boys were arrested; displacement, indigeneity, and racial violence layer on top of one another. This paper draws on personal and historical ghosts to argue for exhuming the specificity of place, and unearthing multivalent racial and political spatial histories.

Presenter(s): Natalie Reinhart

Architecture of Positions

This presentation begins in the Paris Police Archive, in a surveillance registry dated in the second half of the 19th century. Focused geographically on the working-class streets of the 18th arrondissement, the police log holders describe various women suspected of undeclared sex work. The descriptions, often laced in the misogynistic and racist gaze of the surveying officer, note physical descriptors, a monstrous neck, a crooked smile, "Jewish" written with a pencil under a name, traces of syphilis hidden under maquillage. Elements of what would eventually become the standard of Bertillonage and anthropometrics take shape in such logs. The abject of sex work appeared as a strategic site to experiment the modern power of monitoring, representing,

classifying; linking together the now crucial categories of otherness: territory-physiognomy-morality. This paper is interested in the technologies of perception and capture through which these archived biographies took form. It moves between archival vaults, Toulouse-Lautrec paintings, Christer Stromh  lm's photographs, and encounters in and with past and contemporary (North-)African Parisian streetscape, to formulate a queer idiom of remembering; one that conjures unexpected companions. By attempting critical fabulation, the writing engages an architecture of spectrality wherein the positions of colonial, racial and sexual others, although unevenly distributed through time and space, nonetheless resonate through one another.

Presenter(s): Khalil Habrih

4589 On the Ruins of Liberalism: Ethnographies of Far-Right Regime Building, Part 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"This storm is what we call progress," Walter Benjamin wrote during the final days of the interwar liberal era, shortly before taking his own life in fear of the Nazis. Drawing on Benjamin's evocative image of relentless historical destruction as a continuous catastrophe rather than a lost utopia, this panel examines whether we are witnessing a similar transformation today. Specifically, we explore how the ghost of liberalism functions as a legacy upon which far-right regimes build, an ideology with which they contend, and an epistemic context that shapes the work of anthropologists studying these regimes. As more political leaders invoke the monstrosity of liberalism to construct far-right regimes, we seek to understand how this imaginary fuses material and ideological foundations into cohesive, hegemonic systems. Rather than treating liberalism as the normative baseline, we aim to interrogate the failures of the liberal order and ask whether right-wing regime-building should also be understood as a form of revolutionary politics. This moment of urgency demands an analysis that bridges the political, economic, and epistemic dimensions of far-right regime-building, moving beyond reductive binaries and normative assumptions. To this end, this panel brings together contributions that examine transnational networks of think tanks, national and cultural infrastructures, academic institutions, and grassroots political practices. How can ethnography help illuminate the economic and epistemic foundations of these emerging regimes? What methodological and ethical challenges confront anthropologists trained in liberal institutions as they conduct fieldwork in anti-liberal contexts? What is the future of ethnographic inquiry in a far-right epistemic hegemony? Ultimately, this panel explores the implications of the next stage of the continuous catastrophe, the dawning post-liberal era, for anthropology as a public voice.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Sara Swerdlyk, University of Toronto, Annastiina Kallius, University of Helsinki

Chair: Krist  f Nagy, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Gregory Starrett, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Northeastern University, Department of Sociology &

Anthropology, Sara Swerdlyk, University of Toronto

Discussant: Agnieszka Pasieka, University of Montreal

Presentation(s): Totalitarian Ghosts in Camera Obscura

Iterations of fascism are never identical. Nevertheless, they emerge from common ghosts which reverse the narrations of past and present events. This paper examines the haunting pedagogy on which the contemporary far-right is built. Drawing on Benjamin, Arendt, and Derrida, we focus on the camera obscura effect that overturns our judgment by inverting our understanding of the world. We present a case study demonstrating how the left and the right recall classic works of philosophy, political theory, theology, or literature to frame totalitarianism in opposite ways. We provide a close analysis of a free, on-line course on dystopian fiction offered by a conservative Christian college that operates as one of the think-tanks of the current American administration. We examine how the course itself promotes a right-wing agenda by re-narrating the past in ways similar to the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's 1984, one of the novels it covers. The course instructor is disturbed that the Party in Orwell "repeals the idea that the past is known," but his analysis mimics current events that engage in re-narrating the past, which his own institution promotes. This includes the creation of new right-wing Congressional investigative Committees of January 6th and academic Commissions disputing the history of enslavement in North America.

Presenter(s): Gregory Starrett

Co-author(s): Joyce Dalsheim

Dark Ethics: Methodological Precarity and Fieldwork with the Far Right

Reflexively considering the ethics of fieldwork with far-right communities, drawing out issues of access, critique, and representation, I ask a pressing methodological question: In this increasing time of political chaos and violence, how might social scientists, who do qualitative in-person fieldwork, avoid unethical frameworks while also bracing against methodological (and even personal) precarity? While ethnographic research always brings with it ethical considerations, working with communities like those Susan Harding termed the "repugnant others" and Agnieszka Pasieka called "the unlikeable others" brings with it a different set of challenges, restrictions, and collaborations that play out in interactions with interlocutors even well after fieldwork has been completed, especially when they "read what we write." Taking my cue from Sherry Ortner's "dark anthropology" and extending Lene Faust and Simone Pfeifer's conversation about "dark ethnography," I suggest that "dark ethics" can provide a resistant framework for those of us who work with far-right populations. Tactical but not covert, "dark ethics" resists liberal assumptions about what counts as the moral figure, acknowledging the subjective postures of anthropologists and their interlocutors, while interrogating the epistemic regime conditions that complicate data gathering and feasible public scholarship.

Presenter(s): Sarah Riccardi-Swartz

Beyond Liberal Haunts: For a Militant Anthropology in Times of Far-Right Resurgence

This paper invites anthropologists to reassess the meaning of engaged anthropology at a time when far-right politics are becoming increasingly mainstream globally. The resurgence of far-right regime building globally offers an urgent opportunity for anthropologists to revisit debates surrounding the promises of public anthropology, activist scholarship, and politically-engaged research. How should anthropologists respond to an increasingly post-liberal political context? In what ways can anthropology pursue research in solidarity with those targeted by far-right regime building? And what spectres of liberalism hinder anthropology's ability to react adequately to today's resurgent fascism? The paper draws from research work conducted in collaboration with a community organization monitoring and countering far-right movements in Canada, reflecting on the cooperation, dilemmas, and frustrations between activists, community organizers, and academics in creating a research framework that can adequately confront growing far-right movements. In doing so, I consider how liberal legacies haunt the research methods and ethics of contemporary anthropology, hindering militant research agendas while simultaneously feeding far-right actors. Ultimately, the paper argues that, in an era when research can either help or hinder the far right, anthropologists must move beyond revisiting liberal haunts, and instead embrace a militant anthropology poised for activist intervention.

Presenter(s): Sara Swerdlyk

7120 The Many Specters of Food and Aid: Learning from the Past and Present to Feed the Future

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The work of growing, producing and sharing food is intertwined with landscapes, family histories, labor systems, and political configurations at multiple scales. Indeed, these are not only techniques of the living but instead involve negotiations, resources, and social dynamics among both living and long deceased people, ideas, technologies and embodiments. This panel will explore how the futures of feeding and being fed are shaped by environmental histories, migration patterns, the plight and precarity of food workers, and the death of federal agencies. Collectively, our papers consider what anthropology has to offer the study of food futures in both the US and global context and what continues to haunt us as scholars seeking to understand the interwoven challenges within food and humanitarian aid systems.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition

Organizer: Teresa Mares, University of Vermont, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jessica Hardin, Rochester Institute of Technology

Presenter(s): Megan Carney, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Teresa Mares, University of Vermont, Department of Anthropology, Hanna Garth, Princeton University, Alex Blanchette, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Apparitions in the Landscape: Drought and the Future of Food

Nearly a quarter of the world's population is experiencing drought conditions. Meanwhile, agricultural regions across the globe are facing historic drought levels. Posing significant threats to food and water insecurity, and exacerbated by climatic events, drought conditions intensify the risk of environmental displacement and necessitate human mobility. In the arid, borderland regions of the U.S. Southwest and the central Mediterranean, drought represents both a defining aspect of everyday life and an "interminable event" (Sharpe 2016). Displaced and migrant populations moving through these lands are haunted by drought conditions that persist into the present as native populations grapple with the histories of resource extraction and land dispossession that have produced and continue to exacerbate drought. This paper explores the politics of drought and their implications for the future of food through ongoing collaborative research conducted in both regions, specifically southern Arizona and Sicily.

Presenter(s): Megan Carney

The Phantom Essential Worker: Food Worker Organizing During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a phrase into our shared lexicon: the essential worker. However, it goes without saying that frontline workers in the food system were essential long before the onset of the pandemic, as the exploitation of workers is hard wired into our food system. For food and farm workers, even a global pandemic did not translate into a day off, but instead exposed them to more danger and discomfort. Meanwhile, domestic food labor--the unpaid work of the food system--increased, leading to the exhaustion of parents and other caregivers. Simultaneously, new forms of worker organizing appeared on the national stage and the visibility of front-line worker vulnerability, and the related economic downturn, led to increasing political support of unions in the United States (DiNatale and West 2022).

Despite the fact that essential workers remain indispensable to our collective wellbeing, they are very rarely recognized or compensated enough for putting their bodies and lives on the line. And, even though the COVID-19 pandemic brought greater attention to their needs and contributions, this attention has not resulted in enduring improvements for their daily lives or a more just food system. This paper discusses how, despite a growing awareness of essential workers, the US food system is still beset by deep labor inequalities which are likely to only worsen within the current political environment.

Presenter(s): Teresa Mares

Cooking with Ghosts: Thinking Memory, Archive and Ephemera With My Grandma's Cast Iron and Dad's Whisk

Inspired by the narrative of Roxanne Masters in the Heirloom Gardens Oral History Project, this project explores the role of recipes and kitchen tools in the various ways people remember and honor the dead as they determine what values from their ancestors to carry forth into the future. Through Master's memories of her father's recipes and the ways in which the meals she ate as a child connected her to ancestors in Jamaica, I am able to find words for the experience of cooking with my father and grandmother's ghosts through their recipes and cooking tools. In this talk I use

these embodied experiences to think through ways of knowing the past, different hierarchies of knowledge, and practices of knowledge maintenance that continue to uphold counterhegemonic narratives across generations.

Presenter(s): Hanna Garth

American Animal Slaughter and the Production of Human Disappearance

The typical American slaughterhouse maintains a one hundred percent annual turnover rate. Every year, the equivalent of a factory's entire workforce is either fired or quits. This absenteeism is, surprisingly, a managed, desired, and explicit corporate project. This paper examines the ghostly presence of ex-workers in American meat systems, arguing that since the 1980s the political power of American slaughterhouses has been predicated on the ongoing production of human disappearance. From using the punishingly fast pace of animal dis-assembly work to deter unionization and worker power, to nascent waves of automation technology for animal slaughter, it suggests that every slice of a knife has historically served a double-function: to kill pigs and encourage orderly human absence. My contention is that anthropological and political theory needs to focus not only on currently active workers improving their conditions of livelihood, but also the movement and aspirations of quitters who strive — sometimes haltingly — to realize lives tangential to industrial meat. If corporations assure their dominance by churning through both pigs and people, this paper explores the possibilities and limits of politically organizing ex-workers for the non-reformist interruption of American industrial meat.

Presenter(s): Alex Blanchette

5493 AFA State of the Field Roundtable: “Stop Gender!” Weaponizing Representations of Gender Ideology in Authoritarian Times

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Throughout the world, right wing and authoritarian movements rely on weaponized narratives about gender difference to justify their political projects. New technological tools, social media, populist movements and mainstream media are all sites that seek to regulate and even "eliminate" gender. Shifting political economic regimes rely on naturalized representations of gender difference to justify cuts to social safety nets. Feminist anthropology has a long history of analyzing the effects of these narratives. This roundtable brings together feminist anthropologists working in Africa, Europe, South Asia, and Latin America to reflect on how gender is deployed, weaponized, and imagined in contexts of authoritarian and populist politics. Asking how right wing movements and leaders theorize gender, and how social movements respond, our panelists share insights from research on reproductive violence, attacks on trans* rights and bodies, language and censorship, pronatalism, tensions between women's rights and anti-homosexuality movements, religious devotion and masculinity, and more. These themes are at the heart of the global rise of right wing populism and related political movements, which fiercely defend visions of gender hierarchy linked to naturalized

elisions between gender difference, political belonging, and national identity. These histories shape contemporary efforts to control discourses surrounding the origins, diversity, and social effects of gender difference--including, in some cases, efforts to "stop" gender by stopping scholarly and political discussions of gender as a historically and socially contingent category. Thinking with our panelists, the roundtable invites reflections why and how emergent politics centers gender as a threat, and also how feminist and broad coalition social movements are responding in contexts where naming gender poses threats, and where large scale data are now used to mine content for references to gender and other forms of difference.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Dinah Hannaford, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies

Presenter(s): Pinky Hota , Tatiana Sanchez Parra, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Anthropology, Mona Bhan, Syracuse University, Department of Anthropology, Lydia Boyd, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Susan Gal, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Julia Kowalski, University of Notre Dame, Hemangini Gupta, University of Edinburgh

7583 The Wîhtikow and other Nêhiyaw Stories: Revealing the Incommensurability of Plains Cree Culture and the Spirituality in Ethnographic Texts

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Chenier (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Known as the windigo or the wetigo/wetiko, the Wîhtikow is an entity in Nêhiyawak culture that has been misunderstood by popular culture, much like many other spiritual or supernatural entities of the Plains Cree People. The Wîhtikow is often referred to as "the cannibal" or "undead phantom" through a series of oral narratives and ethnographic texts that share the entity's story. Yet, there is much more to the early ethnographic texts than could have been known without understanding Nêhiyawêwin, the Plains Cree Language, and ontological points of view. Come and listen to the stories of the Nêhiyawak Nation of Alberta, Canada, as we examine what these stories tell us about the fate of our current society as told by the Ancient Ones who walked the land before us. In this oral presentation discussion, we examine the incommensurability of early ethnographic texts of anthropologists Alanson Skinner and David Mandelbaum as we tell the Nêhiyawak versions to better understand what is spiritual and what is supernatural/metaphysical.

Section: Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

Organizer: Paulina Johnson, University of Alberta

Chair: Diana Moreiras Reynaga, University of Alberta, Drake Worth, University of Alberta

Presenter(s): Paulina Johnson, University of Alberta, Marieliv Flores Villalobos, Sharaya Hill, Hannah Louis

Discussant: Paulina Johnson, University of Alberta

Presentation(s): Teachings from the Spirit World: Understanding Nêhiyawak Legal Traditions through Storytelling

Within the stories of the Nêhiyawak People lies the ability to understand the traditional governance of how one is to act. The story of the "Wîhtikow and rolling head" do just that. In this oral presentation, I will share the stories of the Wîhtikow and what it represents to the Plains Cree Nation but also how it shares the aspects of what happens when we do not follow the teachings of Plains Cree traditional law and what does it mean for society as a whole within the means of consumerism and capitalism. The stories of the Wîhtikow are one of many that will be shared but the underlying message tells us about what is truth and responsibility from a Plains Cree point of view.

Presenter(s): Paulina Johnson

Co-author(s): Paul Johnson

Presentation(s): Peruvian tales of caring: Connecting with the heart and spirit as a methodology of learning to Nêhiyawak Teachings

Prophecies, legends, and ceremonies allow people to connect with their spirits in a way that Western knowledge does not understand. According to many Indigenous Nations, including the Nêhiyawak Nation, the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor, it is said that they soon will dance together through the knowledge and culture of Turtle Island (North America) and Abya Yala (Latin America), come together to build a better present and future. More especially, Peruvian stories of the good ways of living advise us always to respect the Pachamama and maintain the connection between time, space, and ancestry. This way, we will be grounded and critical of teaching, learning, and sharing knowledge. Through this nation-nation oral presentation, we will share how the stories of the Indigenous Peoples inform us and what it means to learn between cultures and nations.

Presenter(s): Marieliv Flores Villalobos

Presentation(s): "They brought other beings from the old world": Understanding Ghosts and Spirits from a Metis-Cree Perspective

The distinction between the Old World and the New World is a common theme in colonial history. However, for many Indigenous Nations, there was a belief that the arrival of Europeans on Turtle Island introduced other beings, leading to both spiritual and physical conflicts. In this presentation, I will explore the Metis-Cree narratives regarding ghosts and spirits and their significance within Indigenous cultures in Alberta. What were the assumptions and beliefs held by Indigenous peoples and what notions were brought from Europe? By recounting stories passed down through Indigenous families, I aim to illustrate how Elders in Maskwacîs, Alberta, assert that "they brought other beings from the Old World."

Presenter(s): Sharaya Hill

Presentation(s): Ahcahk and Death Ceremonies

Long before colonization in the Americas, the Nêhiyawak have held detailed understandings of life, death and the spirit's journey. Oral histories of our ancestors frequently speak of our ancestors living to be well over a hundred years old. When they felt the time was right, they would often prepare for and participate in Death Ceremonies that would guide their Ahcahk (spirit) into the afterlife. By drawing on Cree knowledge, oral narratives and community teachings, I aim to explore how our Ahcahk and the Death ceremonies allowed the Nêhiyawak to move to the afterlife with little resistance. Unlike colonial ideals that render death as final, Nêhiyawak understandings offer an alternative paradigm wherein death is a relational process prepared for through ceremony, kinship, and spiritual knowledge. By engaging with Nêhiyawak cosmologies, I explore how Indigenous Knowledge might influence anthropological perspectives around Western understandings of death.

Presenter(s): Hannah Louis

Discussion

5278 Hauntology for Hire : Real Talk on 'What's Next' for Practitioners with the Living Legends of Business Anthropology

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Couteau (5th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Mid-career anthropologists and senior practitioners in industry often find themselves haunted by unmet career expectations, vanishing job opportunities, and the ever-present question: What's next? This roundtable brings together the GOATs, the OGs, the recognized leaders of business anthropology from UX & tech, marketing and advertising, and organizational consultants. We ask them to share their hard-earned lessons on navigating shifting job landscapes, securing fulfilling work, and stepping into leadership. How do we move beyond the ghostly presence of past career ideals to build a future that is both financially and intellectually rewarding? With candid advice and real talk, we'll explore strategies for staying relevant, finding meaningful work, and shaping the next generation of anthropological leadership within industry and within the discipline.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Jo Aiken, Google

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Briody, Cultural Keys LLC, Melissa Cefkin, Santa Clara University, Antonella Fabri, Ann Jordan, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, Timothy Malefyt, Clinical Professor of Marketing, Fordham University, Gabelli School of Business, New York, NY, Patricia Sunderland, Cultural Research & Analysis, Inc

Discussant: Astrid Willis Countee, Adam Gamwell

1974 Breath of Chaos II – Plant, rhythm, fungus, animal, elemental or word dust ... oh cosmodelia.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Plant pollen and fungi spores stir in the air with word and elemental dust we inhale and partake in the textures we exhale at varying rhythms, intensities, speeds and slowness. We can never tell when such a mixture suddenly overwhelms, takes over, lets something new emerge that perdures. In anthropology we often call these events "telling moments" or "serendipity", typically taking us by surprise. Artaud's "breath of chaos" is a force, a presence or an order that elaborates in a mystery or chaos beyond things; "... this sort of vital hunger, changing, opaque, whose currents sweep across the nerves, and battles with the intelligent principles of the brain. And these principles, in their turn, recharge the pulmonary breath and confer upon it all their powers" (2003[1979]:16). To reach this chaos or what he also calls the Marvelous of conscience, Artaud considers a cactus (Peyotl), to which he was initiated during his stay with the Tarahumara (Rarámuri) in Northwest Mexico, can indicate "where it is and according to which concretions of an atavistically repressed and obstructed breath the Fantastic can give rise and renew its phosphorescence and powdering in consciousness" (ibid: 38). It would be the breath of all poetry which pushes the hand to draw or write, and the same vegetal, by indicating the right way, can diminish the chances of falling into the obscure of a sensation that leaps out. We thus wish to retrieve the ancient Greek meaning of "psyche" which refers to life or its breath, thus expanding this sort of ode to "psychedelia" in as broad a sense as possible which brings it closer to something we might rather call "cosmodelia".

Following Deleuze, sensation is vibration, and when it is in direct contact with a vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all, it can feel like a wave passing through us; a unity of the senses (sense as event) which can be felt like a fall or a rise. This vital power he calls rhythm, more profound than vision, hearing, etc. (Deleuze 2002[1981], p.47). "We can seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed" (Ibid.: 44). It is not that order is engulfed by chaos, yet chaos itself, or the power to affirm it which happens to us (Deleuze 1968). It is irrational and more powerful because of it; "a wave in the mind, a rhythm far deeper than words, that one must recapture and set working, find words to fit" (Woolf 1926 in Le Guin 2004: 1). This might modify a well anchored idea that 'Any classification is superior to chaos...' (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 24), since it brings us closer to what is going on in experience relevant for anthropology. We invite contributions done in a single breath, a wind, a performance, stretching out from a singular encounter with a "ghost", attending to rhythms without measure, or in other words to the potentials of life to renew itself.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Organizer: julie laplante, University of Ottawa

Chair: Nina Tamara Barbosa Ponce

Presenter(s): Paulo Barreiro Sanjines, University of Ottawa, Yuxin Peng, University of Oxford,

Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology, Misha Schroetter, Maria Michails, University of Ottawa, Elphège Quenum, University of Ottawa

Discussant: Julie Laplante

Presentation(s): Everything the body gives' : Capoeira Angola as a site where embodied chaos generates new horizons

Waves crash on the shoreline in Southern Bahia. The beat of a conga gives the bass for the bateria. A capoeira roda forms on the beach. The players bow, readying themselves for the game. The master sets the rhythm with a slow, friendly song. The players know it. Their bodies know it. Capoeira embodies the breath of chaos as per Artaud—an emergent form of consciousness and life-making that defies linear histories, generating unpredictable relations through movement and play. Drawing on the sand, the players dance to the music, fully attuned to their opponent, moving and being moved. The sensation elates a joyful attention to the environment. Experienced players shift their positions, angling to unbalance their opponent. The power of rhythm is embodied in this martial art, which, as the first master and philosopher of Capoeira Angola, Mestre Pastinha, said, is everything the mouth eats, everything the body gives. As a Capoeirista and a PhD student in Anthropology, I explore how life emerges unpredictably through this ancestral dance. This work engages Capoeira as both a lived practice and a site of theoretical inquiry into rhythm, resistance, and emergence; a site where embodied chaos generates alternative futures and reconfigures the horizons of possibility.

Presenter(s): Paulo Barreiro Sanjines

Breathing the life flows through chaos: reconfiguring the effectiveness of five-finger breathing in Mental Health First Aid

This paper discusses the use of five-finger breathing to soothe the so-called hyperventilation in panic attacks at a community mental health charity in Southeast England. When a service user broke out into choking, trembling, and shaking, a volunteer encouraged him to breathe in and out through the up-and-down movement of her index finger. The moving finger as the 'intercorporeal hinge' (Csordas 2008) went along the contour of the palm and coordinated the attention and breath of everyone in presence. While the ups and downs of the fingertip choreographed the rhythm of breaths, the emergence and resolution of the crisis, actualising the peaks and lows of life, composed the 'sonorous sensations' (Laplante 2020) of breathing.

Moving away from the neuropsychological explanations of breath interventions, this paper presents a sensory-aesthetic analysis of the embodied practice (Ingold 2020) of five-finger breathing. Drawing on a medical anthropological interpretation of Samuel Beckett (1969)'s 30-second play, 'Breath', I suggest that the practice is intrinsically effective because it alleviates suffering and enables possibilities to reconfigure the implications and impacts of chaos in illness conditions. Instead of projecting chaos as an unforeseeable misfortune, the practice makes it an ineluctable prompt that evokes the creation of temporal, orientational anchors, assisting the body and self to navigate the life flows.

Presenter(s): Yuxin Peng

Emotion, Movement, the Wave, and Being Carried Away by the Trame: An Alternative Therapeutic Practice Inspired by Western Alchemy

What is this emotional "energy" that tramists speak of? Assimilation, direction, redirection, and accumulation—borrows from the vocabulary of electricity, or from thermal energy. In this way, the Trame draws upon fundamental physics to conceptualise the management of emotion, treating it as energy in its most rudimentary sense. Informed by the thermodynamics of energy, emotion sits at the very core of tramists' representations of the body. Yet, emotion through etymology has two possible Latin roots: *e movere*, from popular Latin, meaning "to shake" or "to stir up," and *motio*, from classical Latin, meaning simply "to move." Together, they suggest an essential dynamic: to set in motion—or, more precisely, of being moved. "Immobility, but not immobilism," they might say. The aim is not resistance but a yielding that remains intact: like a rock struck by a bolt of lightning—shattering upon impact, whereas a more conductive material might channel the energy without being broken by it. The lexicon of waves and currents of the tramists—the rolling swell of the sea, the propagation of movement, the vessel that rides the tide—we uncover a further layer of meaning in the metaphors employed by tramists. The ship, its captain, and its course all serve as images of navigation—guidance, governance, direction. It is through this interplay of borrowed language and metaphor that tramists articulate what it means to skilfully conduct a Trame.

Presenter(s): Misha Schroetter

Sensing Place: Subterranean Soundings and the Vibratory Life of Tundra Ecologies

In the subarctic Yukon, where black spruce thins into dwarf birch and alpine sedge, I've been attuning to the subtle vibratory worlds of mosses, lichens, and tundra soils. These organisms do not call out but remain layered, spongy, and responsive. They are sensitive to subtle shifts in moisture, temperature, and atmospheric alchemies of distant places; they store water, insulate soils, and buffer ground against change. My work traces how sound travels through their porous bodies. Through sensory fieldwork—deep listening, contact mic recording, breath pacing, and slow movement—I engage with these ecologies as more than backdrop: they are participants in the unfolding dynamics of climate and time. These soundings are not data points, but encounters—momentary alignments between body, weather, and terrain. Listening becomes a way to register shifting relations between atmosphere and ground, between sensing and being sensed. I draw attention to the overlooked and underfoot and ask what it means to dwell with a landscape. These are not simply sites of study, but sites of relation—where sound, touch, and movement open ways of knowing attuned to slowness, fragility, and persistence. Listening-with becomes a method to register the ephemeral as much as the enduring, the barely perceptible tensions that mark a landscape in transformation.

With deep gratitude I acknowledge that this work takes place on the Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation

Presenter(s): Maria Michails

Anthropological Awakening: From Chaos to Consciousness of the modes and worlds of Inhabiting?

The anthropological endeavor sometimes emerges from an unprecedented relationship with one's living environment, a sudden surge of awareness, or an eruption from chaos, thus revealing a new mode and world of existence. The realities of "inhabiting" and the "ecumene," where human existence unfold, remain in fleeting relations, constantly being reshaped. Such a dynamic sketches an ethnographic trajectory. As Roseline Lambert (2020) points out, there are "various places to inhabit when conducting ethnography." From this perspective, Bruno Latour's (2007) call to change society to remake sociology becomes an invitation to transform one's habitat to reinvent anthropology. How can the transition from one mode and world of inhabiting to another, induce an anthropological awakening? Does awakening or renewing one's perspective on the ecumene signify an exit from chaos toward a pre-existing or perpetually transformed order? How is the anthropologist's sensoriality engaged in apprehending his world?

Through a reflexive return and introspective reflection, this study examines my interest in trance in vodun in Benin within a familiar environment that suddenly provoked in me a new questioning. It explores that precise moment when the self-evident gives way to inquiry, when reality becomes problematic. It examines the experience of chaos and sheds light on the multiple forms of connecting to one's own ecumene, that oscillates between disappearance and reappearance, depending on one's gaze

Presenter(s): Elphège Quenum

Discussion

2698 Truths and Apparitions about Anthropological “Collaboration”: Lessons from Indigenous-Led and Indigenous-Academic Projects

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

It is questionable whether decolonizing methodologies can truly be achieved by anthropologists, given our scientific goals and histories. Yet as Tuihawai Smith, Harrison, and others remind us, the communities we hope to understand, study, and live among have been working to decolonize our methodologies long before anthropologists came to embrace these goals. This panel asks anthropological collaborators, interlocutors, and subjects to help us do and redefine the charge of anthropology. Responding to calls for broader forms of knowledge production (Keane, Khupe, and Seehawer 2017; Tuihawai Smith 2021), we ask how anthropologists can collaborate in - and not claim - the work of our partners. How can the analysis, reporting, or academic support of decolonial efforts best avoid the specter of our own cooptive and post-colonial nature? The panel takes up cases from the decolonization of communications infrastructure, the preservation of unique knowledge of environment and community-centered living, and critical study of 'misfit'

projects. We necessarily grapple with voice, authorship, and forms of data and method that populate these collaborations. And we will consider the frailties and dangers of our own collusions.

Section: Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

Organizer: Carolyn Smith-Morris, University of Texas, Kristin Hedges, Grand Valley State University

Chair: Carolyn Smith-Morris, University of Texas

Presenter(s): Erica Prussing, University of Iowa, Andres Tapía, Ana Cristina Benavides, Cesar Abadia, University of Connecticut

Discussant: Juliet Erazo, Florida International University

Presentation(s): Reimagining ethnography: Colonial hauntings and “misfit” projects

The rise of participatory and collaborative methods is providing an essential challenge to the timeworn and damaging power imbalances that have too often defined anthropological work with Indigenous communities. Yet as ethnographers support and participate in this shift, our profession continues to privilege single-authored books, researcher-driven analyses, and other components of past practices. New ethnographic possibilities also continue to proliferate, especially at intersections of anthropology and science/technology studies (STS). Many do not fit fully or neatly into either prominent past conventions or emerging research modes. In this paper I draw examples from such “misfit” projects to consider how colonial hauntings figure in efforts to envision and enact alternative futures for ethnographic work with, by and for Indigenous peoples. To help assess these examples, I make use of the distinctive yet overlapping insights from two anthropologists working with Indigenous issues and STS: Kim Tallbear's nuanced articulation of research methods for “standing with” Indigenous communities in North America, and Emma Kowal's searching examination of ghosts that permeate shifting efforts to represent Indigeneity in Australian museums, clinics, and laboratories.

Presenter(s): Erica Prussing

Anti-imperial struggles from/in Abiyala: The role of native and non-native anthropologists in decolonial agendas

A team of anthropologists and Mapuche artist Francisco Huichaqueo worked in a collaborative-art project with migrant women from Abiyala, many of them with fading memories of their Indigenous grandparents and others claiming a mestizo identity linked to nationalism. We co-labor with Francisco's artistic ideas to create an installation that brought to life the women's most heartfelt memories from their territories. The anthropologist team consisted of Catalina, a Mapuche PhD doctoral student and Francisco's partner, and Camilo and César, two Colombian mestizos. While Catalina struggles with the collapse of personal and professional interactions and the communal and historical meanings of her research given her investment in advancing Mapuche's political goals, Camilo and César have also been involved for decades in different social movements and political organizing, both in Colombia and in the United States, that could be label as “anti-colonial” or “de-colonial.” Hence, neither the face of these anthropologists nor their methods follow Eurocentric/U.S. centric legacies of “settler” sentiment. For us, anthropological collaborations start

from a place of involvement as members of different subaltern communities in which, depending on the task at hand, we bring different tools that have made us who we are and put them at the service of the larger political goal.

Presenter(s): Andres Tapía

Community participatory action research as a decolonial anthropological strategy in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Indigenous peoples face increasing challenges to achieve autonomy and self-determination as a result of the immersion of contemporary society in an increasingly globalizing world that restricts the community principles and values of the organizational systems of the indigenous movement throughout Abya Yala. In the face of this, research strategies that do not take into account the realities and particularities of the communities become one more form of scientific extractivism. This extractivism is viewed by the grassroots representatives of the communes, communities and peoples as just one more threat just as extractivist agents or companies of all kinds are. In contrast, community participatory action research, where organizations actively participate in the design and execution of the study, adopts a different position from the traditional one within anthropology, social sciences and communication. In this paper we present an evaluation of the impact of community communication and indigenous radio as participatory action research tools in the central Amazon of Pastaza, after studies developed jointly with Amazonian community media between 2022 and 2025. We discuss this type of participatory strategies as a contribution to research and the generation of scientific information that enjoys the legitimacy of the actors involved, and how that legitimacy was achieved.

Presenter(s): Ana Cristina Benavides

Anti-imperial struggles from/in Abiyala: The role of native and non-native anthropologists in decolonial agendas

We (a team of three anthropologists) and Mapuche artist Francisco Huichaqueo worked in a collaborative-art project with migrant women from Abiyala, many of them with fading memories of their Indigenous grandparents and others claiming a mestizo identity linked to nationalism. We brought a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to co-labor with Francisco's artistic ideas in a way that emotions, memories and art could result in an installation that brought to life the women's most heartfelt memories from their territories. The "we" in this process, however, consisted of Catalina, a Mapuche PhD doctoral student and Francisco's partner, and Camilo and César, two Colombian mestizos who despite having lost connections over generations with their Indigenous or Afro-diasporic ancestry are supporting Indigenous Amazonian elders in their efforts to recuperate ancestral knowledge. While Catalina struggles with the collapse of personal and professional interactions since Francisco and other members from her community are her "research subjects," as well as the communal and historical meanings of her research given her investment in advancing Mapuche's political goals, Camilo and César have also been involved for decades in different social movements and political organizing, both in Colombia and in the United

States, that could be label as "anti-colonial" or "de-colonial." Hence, neither the face of these anthropologists nor their methods follow Eurocentric/U.S. centric legacies o

Presenter(s): Cesar Abadia

Co-author(s): Catalina Alvarado-Cañuta, Camilo Ruiz

Discussion

1881 Cultivating Space for the Experimental

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The recently formed Experiential Ethnography Studio at Washington University in St. Louis joins a rich and growing tradition of experimental ethnography labs and collectives across universities. In 2021, a number of anthropologists involved in these spaces organized the panel "Critical Research Spaces," which led to the formation of the EMERGE Matrix for Ethnographic Collaboration and Practice. This roundtable aims to continue the spirit of this conversation and ongoing collaborative effort to consider: How do we maintain physical and intellectual space for experimental, sensory, and collaborative ethnographic practice? Where do the experimental, the sensory, and the collaborative productively overlap, and where are they in tension? How do we cultivate these methodologies and their sensibilities in ourselves and scholars at every stage of their careers? How have our efforts resonated with our research communities, and how can we push our collaborations further? Drawing from experience in spaces including the Collaborative + Experimental Ethnography Lab, the Ethnographic Design Collaborative, the Bureau for Experimental Ethnography, University of Toronto's Ethnography Lab, USC's Ethnography Studio, the Concordia Ethnography Lab, and the Laboratory of Speculative Ethnology, this roundtable seeks to offer a frank conversation about the pragmatic dimensions of building and growing experimental labs. At the same time, we will collectively explore the dreams and motivations that compel us to continue interrogating the history of the discipline and push the boundaries of ethnographic practice. We hope this conversation will facilitate continued collaboration among our collectives and inspire others to begin exploring building analogous spaces at their institutions.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: AJ Jones , Fiona P. McDonald, University of British Columbia, Okanagan

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Chin , Gregg Hetherington, Concordia University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Joshua Barker, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Huatse Gyal, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Maddalena Canna

Discussant: Craig Campbell, University of Texas, Austin, Department of Anthropology, Andrea Ballestero, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

3895 Analyzing the Intangible in Tourism: Spiritual and Spectral Presences of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The sensory experiences, performances, and emotions of tourism experiences, like ghosts, can seem ephemeral or fleeting, yet also similar to ghosts, their impacts on people continue into the future through memories and lived experiences. In the case of intangible cultural heritage that is featured in tourism or involved in large-scale temporary events, this ephemeral or fleeting nature can seem even more heightened in comparison to monumental tangible cultural heritage. However, performing arts, oral traditions, handicrafts, cuisines and other forms of cultural knowledge are skills and lived experiences "that are embodied in people" (Logan 2007, 33). Moreover, participants serve not just as mediums or conduits (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Just as ghosts are not merely passive, not without volition, neither are the performers and creators of heritage, which is both transmitted and transformed in response to changing social and physical contexts. Hence in a metaphorical sense, intangible heritage can be spiritual and spectral in nature, creating a sensation within and outside of oneself and, through engagement, individuals can transform the immaterial into a powerful commodity or medium of negotiation, contestation, and power. In addition, literal spirits, ghosts, and ancestors can also play a role in the touristic transformations of intangible heritage, expressing approval and disapproval of new tourism enterprises in a myriad of ways and influencing the transmission of this cultural knowledge. This two part panel investigates both the metaphorical and literal ghosts and spirits of tourism. This first session focuses on the spiritual experiences and spectral presences of intangible heritage tourism production, while the other session expands the focus to more metaphorical "ghosts" of tourism. To explore how tourism and intangible heritage intersect with spiritual landscapes, this session brings together case studies from India, Cambodia, Brazil, and West Africa (Benin, Nigeria, Togo). These work together to demonstrate how the ghostly world can impact tourism production, how the spirits can speak through and to tourism producers and visitors to enact personal and social transformation. They explore reciprocal human/spirit interactions and the exchange of knowledge about the spirit world. Many examine the power of pilgrimage to create multi-sensory shared experience. Through these papers, we can see how this spiritual landscape allows for the reclamation of power and for elements of wonder and the spiritual to come to life.

References:

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2004. "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production." *Museum International* 56 (1/2): 52-65.

Logan, William S. 2007. "Closing Pandora's Box: Human Rights Conundrums in Cultural Heritage Protection." In *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, edited by Helaine Silverman and Fairchild Ruggles, 33-52. New York: Springer.

Section: Council on Heritage and the Anthropology of Tourism

Organizer: Celia Tuchman-Rosta, Denison University, Audrey Ricke, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Audrey Ricke, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Nicole Cox, Whitman College, Department of Anthropology, Frances Riemer, Northern Arizona University, Marian Gabani Gimenez, Brian Smithson, St. Mary's College of Maryland, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Celia Tuchman-Rosta, Denison University

Presentation(s): (In)Tangibility, Incredible India, and Specters of the Colonial

As a program and catchphrase of India's Ministry of Tourism, "Incredible India" frequently appears in India's international branding of tourism experiences. The phrase has become so ubiquitous that even within India it is taken up into local discourses. Drawing from ethnographic and archival research on India's cultural engagement of international publics, this paper traces elements of the tangible and intangible in Incredible India's programs and promotional materials and considers the uptake of this phrase in local non-tourist settings. Doing so reveals two interrelated aspects of the life of "Incredible India" as it circulates international and domestic publics. First, a common pattern of branding India as an affectual space of wonder, spirituality, and incredulity emerges from comparing the Ministry of Tourism's present-day uptake of tangible and intangible heritage with nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial representations of India in the global realm. Second, while Incredible India may conjure specters of the colonial and a cultural intimacy with the Oriental, local communities' repurposing of this phrase works towards reclamation of elements of wonder and the spiritual that are authentically lived and important to everyday life and traditions in India. I argue that this constellation complicates the stakes of rendering heritage tangible or intangible in the branding of India to prospective tourists abroad.

Presenter(s): Nicole Cox

Pilgrimage: Conjuring Ghosts in Heritage Tourism

A pilgrimage, by its very nature, is a conversation with ghosts. Whether it's the more than 400,000 hikers who walked the Santiago de Compostela to the shrine of St. James every year or the nearly 300,000 fans who visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown NY, pilgrims commune with long dead saints and heroes. Drawing on autoethnographic research on Buddhist pilgrimage in northern India, this paper interrogates the ways

Buddhist pilgrimage tourism re/produces spiritual narratives of time and place, promises personal transformation (Salazar 2018), attempts to foster *communitas* in liminality (Turner, 1978), and navigates contested space (Eade & Sallnow, 1991). Carving out opportunities for heritage tourism through Buddhist pilgrimage conjures specters of the past set against challenges of contemporary tourism—the expansive Hindu divine, the sacred dead

in Varanasi, Buddha spirit under the Bodhi tree, ghosts of 10th century Nalanda Buddhist scholars and monks and 12th century Muslim invaders, alongside crowded World Heritage sites, imposing tourist buses, inadequate infrastructure, a begging economy, and environmental pollution.

Eade, J., & Sallnow, M. J. (1991). *Contesting the sacred: The anthropology of Christian pilgrimage*. Routledge.

Salazar, N.B. (2018). *Momentous mobilities: Anthropological musings on the meaning of travel*. Berghahn.

Turner, V., & Turner, E. (1978). *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture*. Columbia University Press.

Presenter(s): Frances Riemer

Stones as witnesses: the transformation of the Brazilian religious semiotic landscape through Igreja Universal's Templo de Salomao

In 2010, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) began the construction one of its most ambitious projects to date: a replica of the First Temple of Jerusalem, the Templo de Salomão, in São Paulo. The Brazilian media quickly filled with commentary on its cost and eccentricity. A focal point was the use of around 40,000 Jerusalem stones imported from Hebron (West Bank). UCKG leader Bishop Macedo defended the purchase, claiming the stones "from Israel" bore witness to the miracles of Jesus and made the Holy Land accessible to those unable to travel there. These stones became multisensory testimony of UCKG's growing presence in Brazil's evangelical religiouscape. This emerging religiouscape offers new forms of in situ pilgrimage, allowing practitioners to experience the Holy Land locally. At the same time, UCKG asserts itself as a religious authority—building pilgrimage sites while managing symbolic resources such as the intertextual gap between the imagined Holy Land and its actualization in Sao Paulo. Practitioners and visitors are, then, turned into co-witnesses, alongside the stones, of the "miracles of Jesus"—not the least of them the rapid rise of UCKG and Pentecostalism in Brazil, embodied in grandiose architectural projects.

Presenter(s): Marian Gabani Gimenez

Spirits Have No Borders: Diasporic Presence and Religious Tourism from Bénin to Nigeria

Since the 1990s, religious festivals have brought together practitioners of African and African-inspired religions, repairing relationships damaged by the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Scholars have shown how these events drive tourist pilgrims from the Diaspora to Africa, allowing trans-Atlantic exchanges of knowledge about shared spirits and divinities. Less attention has gone to how such festivals repair colonial-era separations within Africa. In this talk, I focus on one event and the spirit who haunts it: the annual Ọ̀rányàn Festival of Nigeria, which honors Ọ̀rányàn, the deified founder of the precolonial Ọ̀yọ́ Empire that once spread across what is now Nigeria, Bénin, and Togo. Drawing from my ethnographic participation in a delegation from Bénin to Nigeria for the festival, I show how both sides negotiate the nature of Ọ̀rányàn himself—and with it, the nature of the Ọ̀yọ́ Empire that the divinity's veneration refigures. On one side, Nigerian Yorùbá present Ọ̀rányàn as a symbol of a hypermasculine warrior past, today best represented by Ọ̀rányàn's descendant, the Emperor of Ọ̀yọ́. On the other, Beninese Yorùbá draw from oral histories to promote Ọ̀rányàn as a gender-bending, cosmopolitan peacemaker who is still present and active in the religious life of Ìpòbẹ̀,

Bénin. Ultimately, I show how tourist pilgrimage yields political advantage for both sides, in the form of reclaimed subjects for the current Emperor of Ỡyố, and resuscitated royal cachet for monarchs in Bénin.

Presenter(s): Brian Smithson

Unsettled Spirits: Possessions and Hauntings in Cambodia's Dance Tourism Industry

Toes curved upward, knees bent, and back arched, Srey Nit slowly emerged from the back of the Mini Theater at the Cambodian Cultural Village in Siem Reap. Srey Nit had been selected to perform the role of the lead Apsara at a 2012 dance festival in honor of UNESCO's recognition of Classical Cambodian Dance as a representative of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity. As she danced, tears began to stream down her face uncontrollably. She continued to dance, but the tears didn't stop for hours. Rumors spread that she had been possessed by an ancestor of the dance and was not in control of her body—something that she confirmed in a 2023 interview as we discussed the impacts that spirits of different types were having on the tourism industry. The spiritual landscape in Southeast Asia is varied and complex. Spirits remain active players in the social and political realm. They can offer support and guidance, and they can serve as a means of resistance. This paper examines how Cambodia's spiritual landscape is enmeshed in the dance tourism industry by contrasting two types of spiritual influence. The first is Srey Nit's case of possession by an ancestor aiming to transmit cultural knowledge. The second is a case of unsettled vengeful spirits who engaged in a series of possessions and hauntings at a Chinese produced dance show that some believe resulted in a 2018 theater fire. These cases offer insight into the complex power dynamics at play in the development of tourism in Siem Reap.

Presenter(s): Celia Tuchman-Rosta

4610 KEYWORDS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF "MENTAL HEALTH": TOWARDS A RELATIONAL MAPPING

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Concepts, like words themselves, are meaningful only in patterned relation to other concepts (Whorf 1956, Carruthers 2023). Yet as certain concepts traverse social worlds - becoming simultaneously technical terms in academia, politics, and media and incorporated into the vernacular - their relational patterning varies, turning them into "boundary objects" (Star and Griesemer 1989); i.e., entities that vary in meaning across heterogeneous social worlds while remaining sufficiently stable to allow communication and translation across them. With psychiatric discourse and talk of "mental health" and "well-being" ascendant globally, this roundtable takes six such boundary objects as keywords to map their relational meanings and disciplinary trajectories. Each opening onto a constellation of interrelated concepts, the terms DISTRESS, FLOURISHING, PREVENTION, COMMUNITY, CARE, and RECOVERY carry implicit relations - semantic oppositions,

affinities, echoes, limits, potentialities - as they are mobilized and implemented across diverse domains of mental health research, practice, and everyday talk.

This roundtable aims to bring conceptual clarity to this discourse by mapping relational entanglements and asking: How is each keyword - technical or vernacular - related to and distinct from other terms? How is each used to capture aspects of the same concept? What disciplines dominate in its investigation and how can they come into conversation? Participants will discuss each of the six keywords in relation to the others and to concepts and contexts beyond, drawing on their own research and wider collaborations. Ultimately, the roundtable seeks to imagine space for comparative and interdisciplinary work based on these terms, across fieldsites and intellectual communities.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Naomi Leite, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media, Orkideh Behrouzan, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media

Presenter(s): Beatriz Reyes-Foster, University of Central Florida, Department of Anthropology, Orkideh Behrouzan, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media, Neely Myers, Southern Methodist University, Sarah Willen, University of Connecticut, Department of Anthropology, Naomi Leite, SOAS, University of London, Department of Anthropology, Gender & Media, Chikako Ozawa-de Silva, Emory University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Rebecca Lester, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Anthropology

7761 How Law Matters Now: Considering legal anthropology's critical empirics for these troubled times.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Among the noisy recriminations and finger-pointing following the outcome of the 2024 US presidential election, one could already hear the susurrus of an even deeper foreboding about the future of the rule of law in a world where democracy, and the norms operationalizing it, no longer seem as inviolable as they once were. Ironically, Euro-American political and legal theory and scholarship tells us that harmony between liberal democracy and the rule of law is not as obvious as commonly thought. Democratic republicanism and the rule of law operate in tension with one another, and it is as much in the maintenance of the aporia between the two, as it is the specific and material form of their imperfect overcoming in different times and places that constitutes much of the topography of Western liberal legal orders since the mid-20th century. Thus whether couched as the "juridification of politics," the "sovereign exception," or "lawfare," diagnosing what the consequences of rising authoritarianism holds for the liberal rule of law, or governance and its effects more generally, requires something more than simply discerning the political dimensions of law or the legal dimensions of politics.

Armed with these insights, and the critical theories that inform them, now is the time to ask anew, both figuratively and literally, how law matters. The current crisis begs a return to inquiry that asks after the ways in which law emerges in the everyday lives of those caught up with it. If law, at least in the liberal traditions currently in crisis (traditions which also inescapably inform law's theorizing in "western" social science), generates its authority and force by joining norm-to-fact, ideality-to-materiality, we can ask whether it demands a mode of investigation whose method can account for both its humanistic and empiricist dimensions. Can such an approach escape its grounding in liberalism? Must it? In this roundtable anthropologists of law at various career stages and locations in the academy will discuss whether anthropology offers just such an approach, and whether its commitments to the critical hermeneutic and empirical dimensions of ethnographic investigation provides a fruitful vantage from which to map law's unfolding emanations in and with our political present. It will also consider the limits of that vantage, and what is gained or lost when we look back to law with methods that are almost-but-not-quite the very ones that are both objects of critique and subjects in crisis at the very same time.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Justin Richland, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Grigory Gorbun , Robert Gelles, University of Chicago, Lee Cabatingan, University of California, Irvine, Meghan Morris, Temple University

Discussant: Justin Richland, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

3471 Haunted Ethics: Memory and Marginality in Modern Medical Care

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists have deeply theorized how clinics become halls and harbors of sociohistorical memory and meaning, both in the construction of what, or who, is remembered and in the imposition of the question, why remember anyway? (Good 2015, Kilroy-Marac 2019, Strassler & Stoler 2000). In this panel, we seek to explore the hauntological implications of these memories, posing how clinical experiences, especially for those of socially marginalized identities, form a social and embodied experience of "quantum dis/continuity" (Barad 2010). Writing from a variety of medical contexts, panelists approach the question of hauntings from their own unique angles, all united by their focus on demonstrating the ways in which historical medical abuses and the temporal displacement of memory (Good 2020) deeply influence the ways in which marginalized groups experience care and biomedical interventions. Haunting, as a theoretical framework, allows for a robust exploration of the tension between what practitioners view as good science and what patients may view as a new enactment of historical power structures, especially when those power structures are thought of as over and done with (Gordon 2008). Thinking with haunting through the lens of ethical practice emphasizes the importance of affective affordances in clinical care, a kind of orientation that aligns with the call of Kleinman and Wilkinson (2016: 18) to view care practices

through an analytic of "critical humanism" where suffering and discontent create a ground of mutuality between service provider and user from which humanistic care practices can exist.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Lucas Rozell, University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus, Conor Lanning

Chair: Lucas Rozell, University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Presenter(s): Kelsey Armeni, Conor Lanning, Silver Mckie, Lucas Rozell, University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Discussant: Tali Ziv, University of Rochester, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Ghosts of Violence Past: Health Law and Care in Post-Conflict Guatemala

My talk will examine medical hauntings as visible through the material-discursive dimensions of health laws and Maya women's embodied experiences of care within Guatemalan clinics in the aftermath of the 1996 Peace Accords. I will explore these hauntings as they move through La Ley de Salud Popular Tradicional (The Traditional Health System Law), a law that sought to integrate biomedical and Maya ecologies of knowledge and care into the national health system. Building from the work of Charles and Clara Mantini-Briggs, I argue that these hauntings render Maya comadronas (midwives) and women incommunicable within biomedical global and national health systems, reinforcing the continuity of the ghosts of violence past. I will show the embodied and material impacts of incommunicability on how Maya women experience care, and how comadronas (midwives) are transforming the ghosts of violence to create safe spaces for Maya women's healthcare, shape policy, and assert cultural sovereignty.

Presenter(s): Kelsey Armeni

Queerly Ethereal: Trans Mental Health Care and Liminal Grief

How do you grieve for a life your ghost couldn't live? This question, circular though it may seem, colors many conversations had between mental health providers and transgender patients who, in the context of my research, are often receiving services as a mandatory prerequisite to receiving gender affirming care. My talk will explore the implications of mental health models of grieving as they are deployed in mental health care for transgender individuals in the United States. Using the theoretical frameworks of Alison Kafer and Isabelle Stengers, I will explore the problematic cosmopolitical framework of psychotherapy that compels a person to grieve for a life that they may not or do not want to live and, as a result, abandons the trans person in therapy in a liminal space of having no past or future. This liminal abandonment invokes strong questions and concerns about mental health care, where consumers of mental health care services describe the experience of care as deeply othering, even bordering on violence. I argue that this abandonment is emblematic of the social impossibility of trans life that Eric Stanley (2011) poses, consistently relegated to a place of political and social death. Finally, I will illustrate how the imposition of grieving as integral to the process of trans identity forms a troublesome framework of selfhood, as the clinical 'line' between what is 'self' and what is 'disorder' becomes blurry.

Presenter(s): Conor Lanning

Expecting Singularity; Imposition, Anticipation, and Plural Selves in Clinical Space

Medical frameworks that grant access to gender-affirming care locate capacities of self-knowledge and consent within the singular self. As follows, plural persons in America, including those diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder, are often deemed unable to consent to gender-affirming treatment. My paper will explore how plural persons must grapple with the clinical expectation that they undergo therapeutic treatment fusing their many autonomous selves into a singular sense of self, inextricable from the historical imposition of fusion treatment onto community elders. These stories, giving weight to the clinical record, haunt plurals who actively resist selves normalization in the course of gender transition, shaping their anticipatory concealment and construction of selves narrative when accessing care. Attending to these hauntings and their impositions reveal how plural selfhood disrupts medical expectations of transgender identity as simple, consistent, and conflict-free.

Presenter(s): Silver Mckie

Fresh Hauntings, Familiar Ghosts: Promises and Pitfalls in Genomics Research

Biobanking is a prominent component in modern genomics and precision medicine research, one that straddles the line between lab and clinic when patients are recruited by their doctor and presume that clinically actionable results will be returned to them. In the interest of building more inclusive and ethically engaged genomics research, focus groups were conducted with historically underrepresented participants in a Colorado biobank. I draw upon this focus group data, as well as autoethnographic data from working in the research facility linked to this biobank, to explore culturally situated anxieties about biobank participation and genomics research more broadly. An issue I aim to highlight here is that participants and providers have a temporal mismatch in how they experience the biobanking process. I argue that providers focus on the present and future potentials to prevent/cure/alleviate, while participants must contend with the ghosts of ancestors and relatives who have been abused by the medical system, as well as the new and ongoing hauntings that are created through the inherent uncertainty of discovering predispositions within their genome. I will demonstrate how these hauntings call attention to the ways in which past abusive medical practices still make their impacts felt today (Gordon 2008) and how the promises of personalized medicine are not viewed as universally beneficial nor universally accessible by populations that researchers hope might benefit from them.

Presenter(s): Lucas Rozell

Discussion

3290 Toward an Anthropology of the Contraption

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

"Technology" has a long and problematized relationship with progress, efficiency, and efficacy.

Sleek trains rushing through the countryside, the blinding reach of the electrical grid, or the instantaneous messages of networked communication are its shiny avatars. Contraptions, by contrast, are technical devices that barely work. They seem too complex, too circuitous, too labor intensive. They are frequently ad hoc—as unrepeatable and unreliable as Rube Goldberg's fantastical machines. They push the received wisdom about technology's defining features to the limit. Like the aesthetic "gimmick" theorized by Sianne Ngai, the contraption is a category charged with normative judgment. Contraptions may work, but they don't work right. While the contraption is commonly associated with vernacular or retrograde alternatives to high technology, many "high tech" devices reveal a contraption-like character on close inspection: AI chatbots, internet protocols, and helicopters come to seem both over- and under-engineered the more attention is paid to them. Venkatesh Rao takes the helicopter as a paradigm for his own contraption theory, seeing in the contraption a wild and productive technical alterity—a way out of hegemonic engineering practices that pursue clean and obvious logics. Contraptions may fit more comfortably with anthropological theories of technology like Alfred Gell's, which sees in all technology a kind of "roundaboutness" that is brought to the foreground in the apparent complexity of the contraption.

This session invites anthropologists of technology and technique to think with the figure of the contraption: What alternatives to popular and anthropological ideas about technology do these complicated and unruly objects offer? What is it about the present moment that pushes the contraption back into public thought? How does the normativity of contraption judgments manifest in everyday life? How do people come to perceive and evaluate technical complexity in social life? Work in this area may draw on theories of gimmicks, hacks, kludges, workarounds, tricks, bricolage, and other complex or informal technical activities.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nick Seaver, Tufts University

Chair: Nick Seaver, Tufts University

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Hanley-Mott, Spencer Kaplan, Yale University, Liliana Gil, Ohio State University, Nick Seaver, Tufts University, Danya Glabau

Discussant: Graham Jones, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Presentation(s): Mimicking a Human Hand: High-Tech Prosthetics as Contraption

High-tech hand prostheses capture the imagination of a nondisabled public and the hype of a nondisabled media. The well-meaning comment of "you wouldn't believe what they can do with technology these days" is often repeated by family and a sympathetic public to the newly limb-shorn—a statement which reveals a lay belief that technological progression is an inherent good and that it will cure disability. In my interviews with American prosthesis-users and at industry conferences, hand-mimicking prostheses are considered the future of the prosthetics industry. This is despite high damage and maintenance rates and economic barriers to accessing the devices. For users and industry professionals, the meaning of the prosthesis resides not only in the function that it provides to the wearer, but also the fact that high-tech hand prosthetics, and their aesthetic, work to communicate a distance from disability. The imaginary of these devices comfort the non- and

newly-disabled, even as its promise fails to be upheld. This paper discusses the high-tech hand prosthesis and how its reality as contraption, dongle, and a technology of enchantment coincides with transhuman visions for the future, metaeugenics, and gestures towards a hovering spectre of physical and institutional violence.

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Hanley-Mott

Agents of Faith: Building Contraptions in San Francisco's AI Industry

Generative AI's industry leaders have proclaimed 2025 the year of "AI agents." Whereas chatbots simulate conversations with humans, AI agents interact with their environment to achieve user-defined goals. Developers and investors portray these agents as autonomous, making decisions to reach their objectives without human assistance. My fieldwork at hackathons and a startup reveals a different reality, however: today's AI agents are unwieldy and unreliable, demanding constant human oversight and intervention. Yet rather than discourage proponents, these shortcomings seem, if anything, to strengthen their faith in AI's future. This contradictory effect, I argue, comes from AI agents' capacities not as technologies but as contraptions. Such devices exist less to perform a function than to perform a demonstration. By building AI agents, proponents seek to prove the possibility of a technological future and measure the industry's progress toward it. And by exploring AI agents' powers and limits, proponents hope to experience this future prematurely and prepare themselves for its arrival. Using AI agents as a case study, this paper shows how building contraptions may enable the stabilization of generative AI—an industry whose promised achievements vastly exceed current capabilities. More broadly, it explores the role of contraptions in technological development.

Presenter(s): Spencer Kaplan

Make-Do Cyberpunk and the Politics of Improvised Contraptions

This paper explores how cultural producers in Brazil have politically engaged with improvised contraptions as forms of both creative expression and political action. Based on long-term fieldwork with artists and activists, it examines how socially embedded idioms and practices of improvisation have served as an inspiration to amplify marginalized forms of tech-making, foregrounding the overlooked knowledges and skills they entail. Reworking scrap materials and recycled devices into what I call a "make-do cyberpunk" aesthetic, these actors approach improvisation not only as a response to constraints but also as a "recombinatory framework" – a method for reassembling materials, concepts, histories, and relations. In doing so, they present improvised contraptions as a means to "decolonize mentalities" in a context haunted by the specter of colonialism and the deep inequalities it left as a legacy. Drawing on artworks, interviews, and participant observation in educational workshops, I discuss the politics of improvised contraptions as a way of challenging dominant ideas about design and innovation amid social and environmental precarity, while also attending to the pitfalls and contradictions of such projects.

Presenter(s): Liliana Gil

Mouse Jigglers and the Aesthetics of Contraptions

Many computer workers find their activity monitored by managers through a variety of workplace surveillance technologies. In response to this surveillance, some workers use devices called "mouse jigglers," which physically manipulate their computers' mice to keep the machine active while they pursue other goals, like caring for children, eating, going to the bathroom, or playing video games. This paper uses the mouse juggler as a figure through which to theorize a nascent anthropology of the contraption, drawing on data from an ongoing study of the users and producers of these devices, as well as online discourse about them. Mouse jigglers are technically simple devices, usually rotating disks set beneath a mouse's optical sensor; yet, to many online commenters, they seem absurdly complex in use, reflecting an excessive amount of effort expended toward a very minor goal. The "contraption" label often indexes a skepticism about technical activity per se: contraptions seem to be precarious achievements, only barely functional, like a mouse juggler leaving a worker vulnerable to surveillance through every channel aside from computer wakefulness. Examining contraptions directs us toward the aesthetics of complexity and functionality—to how technical qualities are apprehended and evaluated in social contexts.

Presenter(s): Nick Seaver

Contraptioning the University

This talk considers administrative contraptions in the university: ways to use existing institutional structures for unexpected, even subversive, ends. For instance, what if a feminist anthropologist hijacked an engineering school's system for winning national engineering competitions and gifting free student labor to tenured professors to create a student-centered feminist laboratory? Drawing from Black studies conceptions of fugitivity and feminist exhortations to "stay with the trouble", this paper explores the ethical, reputational, and practical possibilities of such a recuperative move. As these frameworks remind us, however, repurposing is not an innocent gesture. It is always political but not necessarily activism. The stakes are raised further by the presumptive endpoint of engineering education, the crafting of high-skilled workers bound to certain types of high-pay but hierarchical employment by narrow technical training and high levels of student debt. By contraptioning the university to introduce feminist engineers to ways to do science otherwise, perhaps we can sustain it just a little bit longer.

Presenter(s): Danya Glabau

Discussion

4631 Ethnographic Lack: Studying Ghosts, Lacunae, and Absences

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In Jonathan Lethem's satirical science fiction novel *As She Climbed Across the Table* (1997), a group of physicists become obsessed with understanding the nature of an empty presence

accidentally created by a particle collider, naming it Lack. One of the physicists even falls in love with Lack, to the dismay of her anthropologist boyfriend who struggles to understand the attraction of the invisible lacuna. His predicament is deeply relatable to many of us whose ethnographic research involves objects of study that are absent, that no longer exist or perhaps may never exist, but are nonetheless profoundly significant to our interlocutors, whether because of their absences, despite their absence, or both. This raises an essential question: how do we study things that are not there and to what consequences?

This roundtable explores the methodological and conceptual challenges of studying absences, ghosts, and lacks-the immaterial forces and the spectral (non-)presences that shape social worlds. Whether in the form of missing actors, haunting acts, unmet desires, broken promises, vanished histories, or lost futures, the absent often exerts a profound influence on the lives of those we study. Drawing on ethnographic work that grapples with non-presence, we consider how a "lack" (Biehl 2013; Das 2007) can become a structuring force, shaping practices, subjectivities, and imaginaries. From manifestations of abandonment in communities disproportionately impacted by the carceral system to the social and political fallout of failed infrastructure development, the irreplaceability of lost cultural heritage, the speculative promises of technological fixes that will never come, the unknown victims and unidentified perpetrators of wildlife crime, and the absent referents haunting grocery store shelves, this panel bridges projects across North America, Eurasia, and Africa to ask how anthropologists can attend to what is not there while avoiding the trap of reifying absence.

Participants will reflect on the affordances of studying lack as a lens for exploring the limits of visibility and materiality in ethnography. Inspired by Avery Gordon's (2008) *Ghostly Matters* and Ann Laura Stoler's (2009) work on the colonial traces that continue to haunt the present, we ask: How do we document and analyze the immaterial without collapsing it into metaphor? What methodological and theoretical tools needed to trace the outlines of absence and its social impacts? And how does attending to lack in all its various forms challenge or expand the ontological boundaries of ethnographic knowledge?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Elan Abrell, Wesleyan University, bahar aykan

Presenter(s): Bilge Firat, University of Texas, El Paso, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Maresi Starzmann, Vera Institute of Justice, bahar aykan, JIM RIUNGU, CUNY - John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Discussant: Elan Abrell, Wesleyan University

8275 Birds, Monkeys, and Whales: Bridging Nature-Human Divides through Deliberate Interaction

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

All around us there are ghosts, species that occur on the fringe - the fringe of our cities, the fringe of where light can no longer penetrate the deep sea, the fringe of human busyness that fails to note our own backyards, and for many, the fringe of survival. And yet, interactions between humans and these animals continue to occur, often deliberate and with important consequences for all involved. As human and other animals' worlds intersect through habitat reduction, invasive species, urbanization, tourism and research, the relationships between species are more entangled than ever, and require closer examination. Our interdisciplinary roundtable focuses on deliberate human relationships with species that exist on these fringes. These encounters foster relationships between humans and animals and serve to challenge peoples' ideas about nature. Through a multispecies lens, our work asks what the implications of these relationships and their continued re-negotiation have for species' survival, our survival, and the expansion of anthropological inquiry into a human-animal realm. By integrating our own ethnographic and species research involving different human-animal interactions, we can explore the creation and breaking down of the nature-culture binary. Our work has taken us to the open Pacific Ocean where passengers aboard whale watching vessels encounter a whole host of species, familiar and unfamiliar, the suburbs of San Antonio, Texas where backyard birds bridge the gap between an abstract, inaccessible nature and residents' daily lives, ecolodges in central-western Belize where tourists encounter wildlife of various desirability from the endangered Yucatán black howler monkeys (*Alouatta pigra*) to butterflies to scorpions, and various fieldschool locations abroad and in the United States where future scientists are trained to study these animals and their interactions. In the Pacific, whale watchers peer down at northern right whale dolphins (*Lissodelphis borealis*) bow-riding their vessel, the dolphins in turn gaze upward - mutual observation that challenges anthropocentric distinctions of watcher and watched. In Texas, residents experience their backyards as nature for the first time through breeding birds and delight even in species derided by natural scientists as invasive and by others as pests such as house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). In Belize, ecotourists expect a jungle experience and delight at encountering some wildlife, while other animals are seen as unsavory and unwelcome. In Thailand, students attending a field school are experiencing fieldwork for the first time and experiencing a relationship with their macaque (*Macaca* sp.) study subjects like never before. It is our hope that in bringing attention to these species, the fringe will cease to be so and these ghosts might become a bridge to form the human-animal realm.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Andrew Loyd Smith, University of Texas at San Antonio

Presenter(s): Alexandra Sheldon, University of Texas at San Antonio, Mariel Ortega, University of Texas at San Antonio, K.T. Hanson, University of Texas at San Antonio, Andrew Loyd Smith, University of Texas at San Antonio

Discussant: Alexandra Holdbrook

7117 Spectral speech: The voices of political pasts in contemporary discourse (Part 2)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

From the echoes of long-dead leaders in populist rhetoric to revived ideologies in today's policy debates, language becomes a conduit for haunting. This panel explores how past ideologies and figures persist in contemporary speech to reveal how the past remains embedded in the present. Registers of speech gain social value through repeated associations with identities and histories (Agha, 2007), enabling political actors to evoke legitimacy, nostalgia, or resistance. In discourse, the past is made present--historical movements shape ideological landscapes, and speakers invoke past figures to justify, resist, or reshape power structures.

Political ghosts manifest in many ways. Leaders may appropriate the voices of long-gone figures to legitimize agendas, or revive the rhetoric of past regimes to maintain ideological continuity. Whether explicitly cited or subtly embedded, historical ideologies shape public debates by reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives. This panel brings together scholars to examine how political legacies animate language and how historical ideas influence governance, protest movements, and public memory.

We ask: How do political actors invoke historical figures or ideologies to gain legitimacy? How do citizens, activists, and marginalized communities engage with or reframe these hauntings in their speech? How does past political discourse shape public consciousness and action? In line with the politics of communicability (Briggs & Mantini-Briggs, 2003), we consider how discourse circulates and acquires authority across publics and historical moments. Using ethnographic and discourse-analytic approaches, our papers examine political speech in contexts including post-authoritarian societies, ongoing colonial struggles, and nations grappling with racial and economic injustice.

This panel sees ghosts as both disruptive and productive. Political language is imbued with past struggles, injustices, and aspirations. Legacies are not just echoes but active forces shaping present realities. In an era of rising nationalism, renewed conspiracy theories, and struggles over memory, recognizing the ghostly in speech helps us engage with the unfinished work of justice and transformation. Building on work in legal discourse and memory (Hirsch, 2006), the ideological circulation of speech (Schieffelin, 2007), and studies of voice, entextualization, and cross-chronotopic alignment (Perrino & Lempert, 2007), we examine how language resurrects, distorts, and reconfigures political pasts.

By focusing on discourse's role in political ideologies, this panel contributes to broader conversations about anthropology's role in contemporary crises. We consider how anthropologists might intervene in these hauntings--challenging the revival of oppressive pasts or amplifying voices whose struggles remain unfinished. Ghosts reflect our fears and hopes and show how the past refuses to be buried--still speaking through the voices of the living.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Nora Tyeklar, University of Maine at Augusta, Morgan Siewert, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Chair: Nora Tyeklar, University of Maine at Augusta

Presenter(s): Marina Gotovina, Tilburg University, Michele Koven, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Aron Marie, University of Virginia, Department of Anthropology, Marina Mikhaylova, Temple University, Lila Ann Wong, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Leela Riesz, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Anna Babel, Ohio State University, Kristina Wirtz, Western Michigan University

Presentation(s): Reframing the Present with the Past: Discursive Heritage Work Among Immigrants from the Former Yugoslavia

This article investigates the sociolinguistic dimensions of heritage work among immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, focusing on elements of micro-contextual discourse. It explores how these immigrants from a nation that is now dissolved engage with their cultural heritage through everyday interactions embedded within non-heritage environments, reframing the present with the past. These frequently ephemeral interactions allow these individuals to assert control over their cultural identities and maintain a sense of belonging without relying on larger heritage institutions. My analysis focuses on the scalar viewpoints, rechronotopizations, polycentricity, and boundary negotiations that are exhibited in discourse, illuminating how discursive practices facilitate the democratization of heritage. By applying these concepts to culturally salient linguistic features, I argue that discursive heritage practices support the preservation of hybrid identities and frequently occur in a chronotopic sense. This research contributes to emerging sociolinguistic scholarship regarding how language plays a crucial role in heritage maintenance, identity negotiation, and in-betweenness within immigrant communities.

Presenter(s): Marina Gotovina

Multiple chronotopes of Portuguese national identity in celebrations of Aristides de Sousa Mendes

Previous work has addressed the multiple chronotopes of Portuguese identity in verbal art and performance. This paper discusses how the chronotopes of Portuguese empire and Salazarist dictatorial regime emerge or "haunt" current Portuguese celebrations of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Sousa Mendes was Portuguese consul in Bordeaux when France fell to the Nazis in 1940. He illegally issued thousands of visas to refugees seeking to escape through Portugal, the only remaining exit from Europe. Until the mid-1980s, ASM was considered a criminal in Portugal. Since 2010, there has been a dramatic reversal, and he is now celebrated as a national and international hero. The president of Portugal uttered the following upon ASM's 2019 induction into the national Pantheon: "ASM changed the history of Portugal and projected Portugal into the universe...Portugal, curving towards his moral personality, eternally grateful, today and forever, remembers and honors him." The president links the story of ASM with the currently reinvented destiny of Portugal on national and international scales as a humanitarian leader. Current celebrations of ASM sometimes

treat him as the final triumph over fascism, sometimes as embodiment of a timeless "real" Portugal, and sometimes as a sign of Portuguese (post-imperial) grandeur. I examine how participants shift among and laminate these multiple chronotopes.

Presenter(s): Michele Koven

Don't lose "Community Control:" Sharing narratives of the United States sign language interpreting profession in Hanoi, Vietnam

When foreign deaf activists and interpreter trainers meet with Vietnamese deaf leaders they often share a warning; don't lose "community control" over the field of sign language interpreting as it professionalizes. These international actors invoke a historical narrative rooted in the United States that frames the passage of the Americans with Disability Act and subsequent demand for interpreting in mainstream K-12 education as a critical turning point where the deaf community lost control over sign language interpreting. This narrative has been (re)produced through personal testimony, interpreting studies literature and conferences (e.g. Cokely 2005). But what are the afterlives of such narratives in the Vietnamese context? Moreover, what does "deaf community" and "control" come to mean to local actors? Bringing together deaf and disability studies attention to the ways disability histories travel (Instagad and White 2007, Friedner and Kusters 2015), with linguistic anthropology's attention to the narrative process of re-entextualization (Agah 2005, Perrino & Lempert 2007), this talk traces the way such narratives are recontextualized and taken up for local projects in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Presenter(s): Aron Marie

Spectral Regimes at the Baltic Borderlands: Chronotopic Imaginaries, Political Orders, and Linguistic Circulations in Contemporary Lithuania

In the Baltic region historical configurations of competing political orders contribute to a circulation of divergent chronotopes and political imaginaries. I argue that at the times of crisis, individuals invoke specters of past political regimes in order to navigate rapidly shifting socio-political contexts. This paper builds on scholarship of chronotopes (Wirtz 2016; Koven 2013; Perrino 2011) and interdiscursivity (Agha and Wortham 2005) to examine how individuals invoke and reinterpret past political orders, creating new possibilities for social action and contributing to new patterns of social exclusion in the process. I particularly consider how the Russia-Ukraine War, increased immigration to Lithuania, and the changing EU-US relationship have prompted anxieties about Lithuania's sovereignty and engendered novel reconceptualizations of history. I draw on my fieldwork and interviews in Lithuania and analyze discourses in Lithuanian media, as well as in Belarusian and Russian diasporic media. As individuals invoke and engage with specters of the Soviet regime, the Russian Empire, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and other historical regimes, these imperial hauntings shape the contours of political debates, engender novel socio-political alignments, and create new social divisions. This paper contributes to the scholarship on circulations and interdiscursivity by tracing how individuals voice, reinterpret, and contest spectral political regimes.

Presenter(s): Marina Mikhaylova

The specter's double: Scrutinizing a young leader's speech for sincerity in Burkina Faso

For more than 30 years Thomas Sankara's memory lived with the thick transparency of a ghost in Burkina Faso as his alleged killer elaborated democratic dictatorship in the era of political and economic liberalization, and as an increasingly complex "security" situation plays out since the 2014 "popular insurrection" that ousted Blaise Compaoré. Assassinated while realizing an ambitious revolution, Sankara continues to represent the possibilities for a self-determined, African development for a great many Burkinabè and for people across the continent. The second military coup of 2022 brought Ibrahim Traoré to the helm of the state, a figure who bears biographical, ideological, and intentional likeness to Sankara. The widespread support of an apparent majority of Burkinabè for Traoré's presidency and government rests importantly on the resonance of Traoré's person and projects with those of Sankara. However, Traoré's popular legitimacy is not a matter of nostalgia or haunting alone. In this paper I study how Burkinabè discuss Traoré's perceived sincerity as a criterion for supporting his political project, and locate it within the Sahel's *longue-durée* history. Drawing on interview data from more than 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Burkina Faso and discourse data from the weekly news debate of the country's leading private television station, I use semiotic discourse analysis to illuminate the political wager that Burkinabè see themselves making with Traoré's leadership.

Presenter(s): Lila Ann Wong

Stages of Memory: Black Spanish Racial Politics

If the past exists within the present, how is historical memory marshaled by Black Spanish artist/activists to confront systems of exclusion? This paper traces the politics of historical memory and erasure within projects of colonial reckoning in Spain. It investigates Black Spanish artists/activists' roles in shaping raciolinguistic ideological landscapes and the contours of public memory. It explores the semiotic resources that are available to them owing to complex biographical trajectories and ties to Spain's ex-colonies spanning continents (Feliciano-Santos 2023). Colonial iconographies and racial caricatures permeate Spanish media and visual culture. Activist/artists strategically deploy discursive forms in their stagings, set designs, speeches and protests. Advertisements for colacao, songs and refrains depicting "el negrito from Africa tropical," are stark reminders of how discourse can evoke colonial imaginaries thereby reinscribing certain racial hierarchies. Drawing on ethnographic data collected in Madrid and Barcelona, I explore activist/artists' efforts to challenge Eurocentric fantasies that belie local racial anxieties (Shohat 2018). Examining theater productions and activist campaigns, I illustrate how artists/activists tap into hauntings of coloniality and anti-blackness to facilitate anti-racism work. By developing interdiscursive practices (Cavanaugh 2004), activists ultimately implicate multiple audiences in racial consciousness work.

Presenter(s): Leela Riesz

7884 Legal Phantoms: Executive Action and the Haunting Failures of Immigration Reform

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D3 (3rd fl)

Type: Conversation/Debate

This conversation with the authors of the book, *Legal Phantoms: Executive Action and the Haunting Failures of Immigration Reform* (Stanford, 2024) discusses the current historical moment of immigration-related executive actions. This interdisciplinary book, co-authored by legal scholars Jennifer Chacón, Stephen Lee, and Sameer Ashar and anthropologist Susan Bibler Coutin, provides important historical background about the impacts of a very different set of executive actions, namely Obama-era measures that were designed to provide temporary relief to undocumented immigrants living in the United States. The 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was supposed to be a stepping stone, a policy innovation announced by the White House designed to put pressure on Congress for a broader, lasting set of legislative changes. Those changes never materialized, and the people who hoped to benefit from them were instead forced to navigate a tense and contradictory policy landscape ever since, haunted by these unfulfilled promises. *Legal Phantoms* tells their story. After Congress failed to pass a comprehensive immigration bill in 2013, President Obama pivoted in 2014 to supplementing DACA with a deferred action program (known as DAPA) for the parents of citizens and lawful permanent residents and a DACA expansion (DACA+) in 2014. But challenges from Republican-led states prevented even these programs from going into effect.

Many of the people who are today targeted for deportation could have potentially obtained temporary relief and work authorization had the Obama-era forms of executive relief gone forward. This conversation explores these extraordinary policy pivots, examining how failed immigration-reform efforts continue to haunt not only those who had hoped to benefit, but their families, communities, and the country in which they have made an uneasy home. The conversation will also discuss how impacted groups seek their own paths forward through uncharted legal territory with creativity and resistance.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Susan Coutin, University of California, Irvine, Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh

Presenter(s): Jennifer Chacon, Stanford University, Stephen Lee

Discussant: Caitlin Fouratt, California State University, Long Beach

6395 Vernaculars of the Common: Ethnographic studies of collaborative social, technical and environmental research

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The common(s) has returned to the debate about new forms of collective governance of social, technical and environmental practices. This return follows a resurgence in the context of social movements concerning the "common" Lauren Berlant equated with "nonsovereign ways of being in common," representing an important theoretical departure from canonical studies on the governance of common-pool resources (Ostrom 1992; Dardot and Laval 2012; Berlant 2016). To problematize the liberal opposition between the private and the public, this new body of scholarship on the "common" has opened up possibilities for examining infrastructures for political, economic, and ecological relations under the register of mutual support and care. This problematization has been particularly important for the meta-study of technopolitical and ecological projects that point to alternatives to neoliberal and illiberal forms of governance. In this panel, we discuss a wide range of collaborative social, technical, and environmental projects that point to the common as an alternative approach to collective organization. We debate the contribution of ethnographic studies of what we call the "vernaculars of the common," that is, the contextually-dependent practices of "commoning" ("placing something in common") that take on different social forms and assume different language practices across political locations in moments of politico-institutional-environmental collapse. In particular, we discuss the contributions that ethnographic research can bring for the technopolitical, scientific, and philosophical studies of the common(s) by identifying emergent practices of commoning that are not identified as such. Across multi-sited ethnographic contributions to this panel, we ask the following questions: what are the configurations of the common(s) in contemporary social, technical and environmental research? What vernaculars do the common(s) manifest? In what ways might socio-technical and environmental action disrupt normative orders of algorithmic governance and open up temporary zones of commoning? How do we mobilize ethnographic methods and sensibilities to identify the common(s) in its proliferating hybrids between private/public forms?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Luis Felipe R. Murillo, University of Notre Dame, Department of Anthropology, Cynthia Browne, Max Planck Institute for History of Science

Presenter(s): Sebastian Zarate, North Carolina State University, Felipe Mammoli, Deepika Ganesh, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Presentation(s): Citizen Science or Platform Science? Assessing the complex interplay between Andean potato commercialization and agrobiodiversity conservation

This paper explores how Wiki Papa and VarScout, two citizen science platforms, engage with potato agrobiodiversity conservation in the Andes. Wiki Papa, as a curated digital archive of native potato varieties, and VarScout, as an app that enables on-the-ground data collection from farming fields and households, aim to engage farmers, students, researchers and extension workers in collective data stewardship practices. These platforms reflect emergent practices of "commoning", where the conservation of Andean potatoes becomes a shared responsibility. However, recent discussions about incorporating e-commerce into Wiki Papa to link small-scale farmers directly with urban consumers present challenges to community driven stewardship practices that citizen science initiatives promote. Drawing on qualitative research, including interviews and participant

observation with key stakeholders, this paper examines the relationship between native potato commercialization and citizen science data practices via Wiki Papa and Varscout. It reveals that integrating e-commerce into these platforms poses challenges to conservation related to market-driven standardization and socio-economic inequalities. By shedding light on the tensions between economic growth and the preservation of food heritage, this paper contributes to discussions on the role of citizen science in conservation, collective data stewardship practices, and the commoditization of the commons.

Presenter(s): Sebastian Zarate

In Search of a Digital Commons: Strategies for Sharing Socioenvironmental Data by Scientific Non-Governmental Organizations in the Brazilian Amazon

Scientific Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in the Brazilian Amazon play a central role in the region's territorial governance. Particularly regarding deforestation, these organizations are key actors in the collection and processing of socioenvironmental data, in the verification of governmental reports, and in the sharing of a wide variety of datasets. Beneath their seemingly technical character lie particular notions about the power of data in decision-making processes, as well as understandings of what counts as knowledge and how such knowledge should be governed. Based on interviews with data managers and other members of three organizations working in the Brazilian Amazon (MapBiomias, IPAM, and Imazon), along with document analysis, this paper discusses how scientific data become objects of technical and political interest in the region. Drawing on insights from Science and Technology Studies (STS), this article explores how the technical challenges of managing large-scale geospatial data affect how these organizations imagine their role in reducing deforestation. At the same time, it shows how the environmental monitoring and control mechanisms of the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAM) point to a form of knowledge governance marked by the tension between the centralizing force of government agencies and the decentralizing force of NGO networked landscape.

Presenter(s): Felipe Mammoli

Co-author(s): Marko Monteiro

Place, memory, and situated inquiry through Open Educational Resource authorship in Bangalore, India

Foundational ethnographic work explored ontological connections between peoples and specific locales, such as "senses of place" with historical perspectives conveyed through memory and social relations, crucial for identity and community orientation. The conceptualization of place has expanded more recently, moving from geographically bounded sites to encompass these fluid, layered, and mediated realities. This paper addresses these shifts as they pertain to learning communities in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Bangalore, India. In each site I ask how do students of sustainability in engineering articulate meaning and relationships through situated narratives of sustainability-oriented technology projects? How do they mediate local attachments and

contested spatial realities of migration for economic or social mobility? Drawing from the literature on "Third Spaces" as well as classroom ethnography, I argue that understanding student experience demands examining place-making, situated practices of technology development, and the power dynamics of knowledge creation. Interpreting lived experience becomes crucial for understanding how place is known and communicated, and how it can expand ways of understanding digital development. Traditional pedagogical practices reproduce hierarchical narratives and practices, while digital technologies remediate these processes, offering new avenues of articulating experience and expertise.

Presenter(s): Deepika Ganesh

5449 Weaving Worlds: Agrifood Practices, Community Livelihoods, and Territorial Ecologies across the Neotropics

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oak Alley (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel asks: How do Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) adapt, sustain, or transform their knowledge and socio-ecological relationships amidst challenges posed by colonialism, modernization, extraction, and globalization? Tropical forests worldwide are undergoing rapid socioecological change, impacting biodiversity, local livelihoods, languages, and knowledge systems. IPLCs are navigating profound changes in their relationships with land, food, and knowledge. With a focus on agriculture and land-use change, this panel explores the dynamic entanglements between livelihoods, agroecology, and environmental change in Latin America, where historical continuities meet contemporary pressures and possibilities.

Bringing together ethnographic insights from the rainforests of the Amazon and Panama, the panel traces how Indigenous and local actors are inheriting and innovating ancestral practices in response to socioecological transformations. From chagras (agroforestry plots) that nourish bodies, memories, and ecologies, to the everyday ecological creativity of swidden reactivating anticolonial pasts, to recipe revitalization as tools of autonomy and transformation, these cases trace the ways agrifood systems, cultural landscapes, and rural lifeways become vessels for memory, resistance, and the making of Indigenous and local futures.

We broadly ask: what roles do multispecies relations, gender, knowledge transmission, and land-access play in these socioecological transformations? How might community-rooted practices of stewardship and development offer alternative visions for sustainable, just, and culturally meaningful futures? Through grounded case studies and interdisciplinary methods and dialogue, this panel offers an invitation to rethink agricultural development, forest-use, and community livelihoods not merely as technical or economic domains, but as relational, place-based, and culturally embedded fields of practice. In doing so, this panel contributes to broader anthropological conversations on tropical socioecologies and livelihoods, food sovereignty, Indigenous autonomy, and cultural resilience.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Aoife Pitts, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Youyi Xie

Chair: Aoife Pitts, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Aoife Pitts, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Katie Lois Hutchinson, Perry Maddox, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Youyi Xie, Bruno Ubiali, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Diego Amoedo

Discussant: Aoife Pitts, University of Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Carlos Tobon Franco

Presentation(s): Agroforestry, livelihoods and knowledge: the dynamic role of chagras in a shifting Amazonian landscape

This work documents the knowledge, relationships, and farming strategies cultivated within chagras, small-scale agroforestry plots, and explores how these systems both influence and reflect broader socioecological dynamics. Chagras provide food, non-timber forest products, cash from market sales, and preserve agrobiodiversity and ancestral knowledge. As Puerto Nariño, Amazonas, Colombia entered the global market economy, livelihood strategies changed, resulting in shifting engagement with chagras and the ancestral knowledge that they store, cultivate, and transfer. Preliminary fieldwork has utilized semi-structured interviews, chagra workdays, and "art and herbaria" workshops. Initial results highlight notable shifts in livelihoods and chagra engagement, which impacts food security, biodiversity, language, and knowledge transference. Future fieldwork will utilize interviews, botanical sampling, participatory mapping, and herbarium archival work to explore the impacts of the market, tourism, and climate change on the chagras and the socioecological dynamics that they foster. This research aims to document the knowledge and more-than-human relationships that are cultivated in chagras, and to support community efforts to adapt and utilize ancestral knowledge in pursuit of healthy, culturally relevant, and stable food systems. This work also supports Indigenous territorial governance as policymakers attempt to synergize biodiversity and agricultural production.

Presenter(s): Aoife Pitts

Exploring local perceptions of and motivations for community-led reforestation in Ecuadorian transition landscapes

Society has moved on from a unidimensional perception of the relationship between nature and people, which emphasises nature being for people, towards a multi-layered, interdependent, bi-directional approach, which focuses on the interrelationship between nature and people. Nature-based Solutions research can help develop an understanding of these ideas. This ethnographic, socio-ecological study, carried out in partnership with Indigenous Peoples of Kichwa identity in Tena, Ecuador, employed structured interviews and aimed to understand if and how community-led reforestation and chakras (a local term for a small-scale ancestrally underpinned agro-farming system), a Nature-based Solution for Climate Change Adaptation is enhancing ecosystem health, and how ancestral knowledge plays a part in efforts. Key aspects of ecosystems, including their most valued constituent species and those particularly relevant to climate change, nature's

contributions to people, and how individuals foresee climate change adaptation transpiring in the future, were also explored. Participants shared in-depth knowledge about chakra management, changing weather patterns proving detrimental to crops, and mechanisms by which people are collaborating with NGOs to tackle the challenges faced. This research is supported by ecological health assessments of species composition and microclimate in reforested areas, enabling a broad picture to be developed.

Presenter(s): Katie Lois Hutchinson

Improvising Ngäbe Futures: agroecological creativity in Indigenous Panama

This paper traces how Ngäbe campesino farmers Indigenous to western Panama rework their agroecological practices in response to climate change and environmental disruption. As extreme heat, unpredictable rains, and new pathogens ramify through the patchy swidden landscape they cultivate, tearing at the fabric of human and more-than-human life, these farmers continue to experiment in myriad ways to weather the changes. Here, I detail some of these ecological improvisations, which following Raka Sen (2021) we may consider forms of "everyday adaptation," while drawing out the commitment to multispecies flourishing that shapes such creative efforts to remain in place. Focusing on two staple crops, I also point to how, in this place, such creativity reactivates long histories of adaptation to reinhabit a shattered world in the wake of colonial devastation. Yet, even as climate and environmental change impinge upon Ngäbe life, these same territories are threatened by extractive capital, which would render them a sacrifice zone for open-pit mining and hydroelectric dams legitimized through a discourse of poverty and lack which vaciates the future of campesino farming. Following the work of my collaborators in a grassroots Ngäbe environmental organization, I trace not only how ecological experimentation unfolds in everyday life, but also how this work is explicitly counterposed to such discourses of poverty, as a dynamic form of knowledge articulating a distinctly Ngäbe future.

Presenter(s): Perry Maddox

Taste of Tikuna: Indigenous Food Reawakening in the Colombian Amazon

This research aims to identify key parameters for redesigning Amazonian agrifood systems from an Indigenous perspective. Focusing on the bottom-up structure, this research analyses the Saberes y Sabores Ticuna, a woman-led community-based organization in the Colombian Amazon. Drawing on participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, cooking workshops, and secondary data analysis, the research examines how Tikuna women revive and innovate traditional recipes as acts of care, resistance, and cultural continuity. Framed by the Tikuna concept of Meechi Torü Maú (good living), their agrifood practices—from the chagra (farmland) to the cuisine—constitute a reweaving of human–nonhuman relations, grounded in Indigenous autonomy and collective wellbeing. The recipes that carry stories, the chagra breathing with memory, the pottery shaped through generations, and a forest whispering with spirit continue to guide everyday food practices. These elements are not symbolic remnants, but dynamic agents in shaping Tikuna agrifood system transformation. Bridging ethnographic insight with transdisciplinary analysis, this

research positions this indigenous-led practice as both a response to and a reconfiguration of agrifood systems haunted by colonialism and modernization. This research contributes to anthropological debates on food sovereignty and indigenous autonomy, while calling for policies that support holistic, locally grounded transitions in Latin America.

Presenter(s): Youyi Xie

Social Landscapes: Smallholders' social-ecological responses to industrial monoculture expansion in the Amazon

This study seeks to document and support locally devised strategies to maintain control over the land by smallholder colonist farmers in the Curuá-Una region, an agricultural frontier in Pará state, Brazilian Amazon. I also consider how these processes affect the ecology of the larger landscape through time (e.g., through increased landscape connectivity). Through the integration of ethnography (participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and informal interviews) and geospatial analysis (sketch mapping and remote sensing), I assess how colonists have historically responded to an encroaching and destructive agro-extractive front. Since the implementation of industrial farming in the region, colonists have lost access to land through land purchases, land grabbing, and "chemical displacement." Traditional swidden manioc cultivation was replaced with soybean/maize monocultures, radically reducing access to land, biodiversity, and jobs. While some colonists leased their land to soybean growers, others organized themselves in associations to occupy a new, forested, government-owned frontier. Despite challenges with poor infrastructure and environmental policing, colonists have accessed land and kept their rural lifeways while producing a multitude of foods and conserving forests. This study seeks to produce relevant information for policymakers tackling the important yet sensitive links between biodiversity conservation, food production, and rural development.

Presenter(s): Bruno Ubiali

Sociobiodiversity in the Amazonian Plantationocene: a multispecies perspective on land-territory

In the Brazilian Amazon, the large-scale plantation mode of agro-industrial production has gained prominence since soy was introduced in the early 2000s, dispossessing traditional peoples and communities of their lands and destroying associated biodiversity. This process is captured in the notion of the plantationocene. Yet traditional peoples and communities maintain productive activities despite pressure from agribusiness, mobilizing traditional knowledge (agroecology and agroforestry) and cultivating various relationships with plants, animals, and non-humans: multi-species relations. Sociobiodiversity is a concept formulated as a public policy that aims to develop market products that value traditional knowledge and the agrobiodiversity present on the lands and territories of farmer collectives. In this presentation my aim is to deepen theoretically notions of plantationocene, multispecies and sociobiodiversity with the ethnographic data I already have collected in an Amazonian +10 project in the Santarem region.

Presenter(s): Diego Amoedo

Discussion

Discussion

2398 Los Fantasmas del Pasado Inform Our Work for the Future: Community Education in Indigenous Guatemala

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Oakley (4th fl)

Type: Interview

Copal AA La Esperanza is a Maya community in northern Guatemala. The community was formed near the end of the internal armed conflict (IAC) in 1995 when 86 refugee families returned to Guatemala after living more than a decade in Mexico. That first year, at the community's invitation, the first author worked as a human rights observer in Copal AA. Comprised of Q'anjob'al, Q'eqchi', and Mam families, the community is multilingual and multiethnic, and has committed itself to environmental and cultural sustainability. At its founding, the community established bylaws that foregrounded these commitments. They banned the use of slash and burn agriculture, chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and the sale of packaged food due to their negative effects on Mother Earth and people's health. This live interview with members of the community's education committee will focus on the ways Copal AA uses education to preserve community knowledge and to prepare their youth to advocate for their future.

In 2007 Copal AA developed the region's only middle school to keep adolescents from having to leave the community to continue their education. The curricula at Instituto Básico Nuevo Amanecer (IBNA) emphasizes sustainable agriculture practices, Maya spirituality and leadership, and historical memory through intergenerational community knowledge building (Briseno, 2015; Rubin, 2016). Having survived the IAC and more than a decade in refuge, the community leverages education to pass on their lived experiences of oppression and resistance to the community's youth. Understanding their decades-long struggle for self-determination, they assert, is essential in preparing the youth to confront the contemporary challenges of climate change and extractive capitalism (Batz, 2024) that threaten the community. While clearly grounded in community elder knowledge and Maya cosmology, the school also embraces Freirian approaches to popular education (Freire, 1993) to engage students in analyses of their material reality in order to take action. Since 2007 for example, the community has been a leader in a regional movement resisting the Xalalá Dam, a massive hydroelectric project that would negatively impact nearly 60 indigenous communities. Students have played an active role in this resistance, writing and performing plays and using the arts to educate other communities about the dam.

This project draws on more than six years of ethnographic data including semi-structured interviews, archival photos, and participant observation to document how Copal AA uses education to promote sustainability and self-determination. Community members consistently locate IBNA at the center of the community's efforts to preserve historical memory and advocate for its future. When asked about the theme of "ghosts," the school's principal shared the following,

"Los fantasmas del pasado informan nuestro trabajo para el futuro/the ghosts of the past inform our work for the future."

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Greg McClure, Appalachian State University

Presenter(s): Greg McClure, Appalachian State University, Shanan Fitts, Appalachian State University

3268 Haunted by Anthropology's Spectres: Navigating Black Student Life in Precarious Times

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

As Black Anthropology students, our encounters with the discipline's ghosts are unceasing. We wrestle with feelings of frustration and grief from studying a discipline that has played a crucial role in codifying racist scripts and myths. Yet, at the same time we have found refuge and armaments from the works and mentorship of our Black, Indigenous Feminist, fugitive, trickster forebears that have long ago begun illuminating pathways towards liberation (Hurston, 1942; McClaurin, 2001; Harrison, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Nevertheless, the haunting persists as we parse through hidden curricula and navigate the entangled choreographies of institutional bureaucracy, sourcing funding, conducting fieldwork, trying to publish, and ultimately trying to find a job.

This roundtable seeks to center the experiences and voices of Anthropology students across the African Diaspora by creating a space for us to collectively reckon with the unique challenges arising from our politically, socially, environmentally, and economically tumultuous present. We are actively bearing witness to and feeling the effects of global climate catastrophe and the Anti-Blackness underpinning escalating assaults on our public institutions, civil rights, and futures. Indeed, we are all too familiar with the enduring legacies of slavery, colonization, and displacement, and at the same time we are also aware that we are living archives of survival-our very being as disruptive to normativity as the spectres that haunt us all.

Through this roundtable we engage in ceremonious convocation with ghosts as we refuse erasure, complicity, and silence. Together, we will hold space to express ourselves and our experiences freely while honoring and co-imagining radically alternative methodologies, practices, and praxis. What does it mean to be Black and studying Anthropology right now? What are the conditions of this moment encouraging us to embrace? Where can we look to envision a different future? Just as ghosts demand accountability and witnessing, we look to create a space for collective reckoning, remembering, and future-building.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Yveline Saint Louis

Presenter(s): Yveline Saint Louis , Jessi McNeill , David Kofi Mensah, University of North Carolina - Charlotte | AnthroClub, Cosmos Amankwah, Northern Arizona University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Alexis Holloway, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Pasama Cole-Kweli, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology

4892 Meeting at the crossroads: Multi-Disciplinary approaches to identity formation in Southeastern Mesoamerica. Part 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Southeastern Mesoamerica-encompassing eastern Guatemala, El Salvador, and western Honduras-has long been viewed as peripheral to both the Maya heartland and broader Mesoamerica. Scholarly approaches have often focused on delineating Maya and non-Maya spheres, while research has remained constrained-both conceptually and practically-by modern national boundaries and disciplinary silos. Recent anthropological work, however, underscores the region's complexity and its ongoing importance in shaping social identities within a multi-ethnic borderland.

Historically at a crossroads of migration, exchange, and political influence, Southeastern Mesoamerica has experienced the arrival of diverse groups-from Lowland Maya and Nahuatl-speaking populations to modern-day ladinos. As these communities became established, local populations variously resisted, reinterpreted, or adapted to incoming peoples and their ideologies. Far from being marginal, this region offers compelling examples of how identities were-and continue to be-negotiated through interaction with broader social, economic, and political forces.

This session brings together Cultural Anthropologists, Archaeologists, Physical Anthropologists, Linguists, and Ethnohistorians to explore identity formation in this dynamic region. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, we aim to challenge the national and conceptual boundaries that have historically fragmented scholarship on Southeastern Mesoamerica. Ultimately, we seek to position this region as a critical locus for understanding the formation of social identities in frontier and borderland contexts. We further hope that insights generated through this collaborative discussion will contribute meaningfully to broader anthropological debates on identity, interaction, and cultural transformation.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Ruben Francisco Morales Forte, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Erlend Johnson

Chair: Ruben Francisco Morales Forte, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Erlend Johnson

Presenter(s): Shintaro Suzuki, Brent Metz, Akira Ichikawa, Ruben Francisco Morales Forte, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Marcello Canuto, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Multi-layered isotopic proveniencing in the Southern Coast of Guatemala

Isotopic proveniencing from human remains has become an everyday practice in bioarchaeological studies. A combined approach of strontium and oxygen was proposed more recently and has been considered the best method, offering the highest resolution of proveniencing. However, Suzuki and his colleagues (2024) pointed out that the combination also has limitations. The authors focused on the sites on the Guatemalan Pacific Coast and discussed that they shared the same local range with Teotihuacan, both strontium and oxygen. Although their cultural interaction is one of the most interesting topics in Mesoamerican archaeology, the human movements between Teotihuacan and the Pacific Coast cannot be assessed based on the current standard method of isotopic proveniencing. This talk introduces our preliminary results about generating a multi-layered isoscape that combines four or five reference baselines $87\text{Sr}/86\text{Sr}$, $206\text{Pb}/204\text{Pb}$, $207\text{Pb}/204\text{Pb}$, $208\text{Pb}/204\text{Pb}$, and $143\text{Nd}/144\text{Nd}$, to trace origins of skeletal individuals with the highest resolutions.

Presenter(s): Shintaro Suzuki

Evidence of Acculturation during the Postclassic and Colonial Periods in the “Ch’orti’ Area”

What other scholars and I refer to as “the Ch’orti’ region” has long been a zone of intercultural contact and blending. This is evidenced via all four subfields of anthropology. Here I address language and culture. Linguistically, historical place names, colonial reports of languages spoken in particular communities, colonial lexicons, and contemporary Ch’orti’ language support an amalgamation of Ch’orti’ Maya, Lenca, Nahuatl, Xinca, and other influences. The Spanish referred to the ancestral language of modern Ch’orti’ as *apay* and *apayac*, but also documented the language spoken in the same communities as *alaguilac*. The roots of *alaguilac* are still debated. Culture is more difficult to identify in colonial documents, but the Ch’orti’- and Pipil Nahuatl-speakers blended some traditions in El Salvador and eastern Guatemala, and at the northern reaches of the Ch’orti’ territory we see signs of mixing from other groups. This historical information has largely been inaccessible to contemporary Ch’orti’s, and they welcome any information as they try to consolidate their group identity. Regarding indigenous rights, this data matters little, as blended traditions are to be expected of any group on the planet, although claiming “Maya-ness” has advantages outside the realm of legal rights.

Presenter(s): Brent Metz

Complexity of local and regional cultures in the southeastern Maya frontier: Revisiting

Chalchuapa and San Andres, El Salvador

This paper examines the complexity of local and regional cultures in the southeastern Maya frontier, specially Chalchuapa and San Andres, both located in El Salvador. Chalchuapa and San Andres have been recognized as important regional centers since the early 20th century. However, the relationships between these centers remain unclear because of the lack of comparative data, even though both sites were long-lived centers that existed from the Preclassic to Postclassic periods. This study provides the different trajectories of social processes at both sites with growing archaeological evidence, and reveals both similarities and differences in material culture over time.

Consequently, the data show that Chalchuapa and San Andres shared several cultural components, practices, technologies, and beliefs. However, their political power may have been limited in small scale, such as at the valley level. Additionally, each site had its own cultural preferences, social negotiations, and different connections with the Gulf of Mexico, Central Highlands of Mexico, Maya Lowlands and Highlands, and even intermediate areas during different time periods. These data suggest that both centers were more complex than previously thought and should be considered important actors in both the local and broader cultural historic context of the Maya region and beyond.

Presenter(s): Akira Ichikawa

Ch'orti' Sociolinguistics: The View from Guatemala

Indigenous languages, particularly the small ones, are usually deemed homogenous. Ch'orti' (Maya), spoken by ca. 16 thousand people in Southeastern Guatemala, is no exception. However, recent fieldwork has shed light upon markers and identifiers defining various sociolects. Analyzing speech patterns across geographic locations, age, gender, and educational level, this paper provides a first glimpse into the sociolinguistics of Ch'orti'. The data comes from interviews over the last four years in the municipalities of Jocotán and Olopa, in Chiquimula, Guatemala. During this time, the project has benefitted from constant collaboration with local speakers who guide the interviews and analysis. Our research promises to illuminate recent developments in Ch'orti' and insights into the history of Ch'olan languages and the constantly changing landscape of the region. In the process, it also legitimizes local identities by showcasing their linguistic varieties.

Presenter(s): Ruben Francisco Morales Forte

Discussion

6945 Intimate Affects: Embodiment, Time, and the Everyday

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel turns attention to the intimate affects, emotions, and sensibilities that permeate everyday life, indexing other ways of being in and inhabiting the contemporary conjuncture of political, economic, and consumer subjectivity often termed the neoliberal. Building on scholarship that locate regimes of sense and sensibility as provisional formations of state and market always open to challenge (Ranciere 2013), the papers in this panel are interested in how feelings, emotions, and the senses are experienced, expressed, reflected upon, and embodied in everyday contexts (Amrute 2020; Govindrajana 2021; Awal 2025). Love, sacrifice, disgust, and joy reside in the body through practices, relations, and histories of contact as much as they are ambiguous, elusive, shifting, and slippery (Masumi 1995; Ahmed 2004; Berlant 2011). Intimate affects flow from and adhere to certain formations of state, society, kinship, gender, religion, class and race as much as they undo and exceed attempts of categorization and fixing. Therefore, we are interested in the embodiment and expression of intimate affects as modes of being and relating

that reveal the complex negotiations through which individuals and groups situate themselves in the world, neither in conformance with nor resisting of dominant discourses, structures, and processes. Intimate affects we argue, reveal an ethnographic otherwise, a set of sensory and embodied feelings, moods, dispositions, and reflections that gesture towards new openings, possibilities, and futures not captured by binaries of past and present, subject and object, or structure and agency. Transversing time, space, concept, substance, and subject, intimate affects serve as a lens through which everyday interactions and contexts become a critical archive for addressing questions of the political, the economic, the spatial, and the subjective today.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Shaheed Tayob , Xiao He

Chair: Shaheed Tayob

Presenter(s): Xiao He, Angelantonio Grossi, University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology, Shaheed Tayob

Presentation(s): The Intimacy of Brideprice: Money and Love Among Rural Migrants in Shanghai

Rural-to-urban migrants in Shanghai often aspire to romantic love but frequently marry partners from their hometown through matchmaking. The brideprice—a transfer of money from the groom to the bride's family—plays a central role in these marriage arrangements. The brideprice violates the modern ethical and affective sensibility of love promoted by the socialist state and urban elites, triggering constant anxiety. Based on fieldwork with rural-to-urban migrants in Shanghai, this paper explores how the ritualized transfer of money could mark an ethical and affective space of sacrifice in which the boundary between money and love is reconfigured.

Presenter(s): Xiao He

Quotidian Affections: Sacrificial Time through the Material and Spiritual

This paper is concerned with the emergence of aesthetic forms—choreographies, aural and visual expressions, rhythms and rituals—through the distribution of the sensible across materials, media, time. Through an ethnography of spiritual practitioners who cross between Ghana, the US, and Japan, I situate daily gestures in the tension between ritual and the quotidian, asking how race and colonial histories are indexed within African spiritual traditions across multiple, global locales. I focus on the relations between embodied experiences, historical conditions, and the capacity of pain, and ritualized forms of sacrifice, to call into question linear conceptualization of time and life. Inheriting anthropological reflections on liminality, this contribution dwells on the articulation of a language of spirits through the conjunction of mundane flow of signs over Internet spaces with lived histories of violence, generational impasse, racial calculus. It draws attention toward the carving of a space that is both ceremonial and ethnographic, a space where the progression of modern, neoliberal time fades to non-linear temporalities inflected by events that invoke a past that is not past—events that keep acting upon the present as violence deflects futures through the quotidian. How do sacrifice, violence and pain figure, then, in the codified registers of traditions kept at bay by modern "epistemological disregard"? What is the cosmological significance of such intimate affects?

Presenter(s): Angelantonio Grossi

Between Disgust and Disdain: Making and Trading Halal Meat in Mumbai

In Mumbai, as with much of North India, Hindu Nationalist articulations position the sights, sounds, and smells of Muslim food, bodies, and ritual as vectors of disgust and repulsion. In this imaginary Muslim practices of butchering index the Muslim-as-other, to be rectified through anti-cow slaughter legislation and meat industry modernization. The matter is not one of meat per se, but rather of the place, space, and sensory forms of meat consumption and trade considered amenable to the properly Hindu and modern Indian nation. For Muslim butchers, however, the slaughter of animals and the trade of meat, is an obligatory ritual, a necessary practice, and a livelihood activity that is often treated with intra-Muslim caste disdain, placing them firmly but precariously within the spaces and occupations of the city. So, where disgust serves as a powerful caste-laden vector of sanitation, expiation, and critique, disdain registers as a complex force of distinction and difference. Moving beyond arguments that position disgust as a natural bodily response or as a historically mediated structure, this paper attends to the way disgust and disdain are embodied and reflected on by butchers and others in meat market interactions in Mumbai. Inhabiting a space and sense between conviction and reflection, disgust and disdain reveal a world where the value and affordances of ritual, state ideology, and economic aspiration are mediated and contested.

Presenter(s): Shaheed Tayob

7547 Un-making the Expert: Affective Dimensions of Emergent Expertise in South Asia

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How do we understand expert-knowledge making as a place where "experts" personal hopes and sentiments interact with public affects regarding socio-political changes in South Asia? Scholars of expertise have urged us to focus on the hopes, affect, and sentiments as crucial for expert knowledge-making (Boyer 2005). However, public affects surrounding expert knowledge cannot be untangled from the hopes, affects, and aspirations of the purported "experts" ranging from climate scientists, sustainability specialists, and technical experts to medical practitioners. This becomes particularly salient in South Asia where public affects surrounding cataclysmic tumults of change in the form of climate catastrophes, paradoxical market trends, authoritarianism, and revolts are always marred with public discourses of "mis-management". In a time of dispersal of responsibility through neoliberal modes of governance, expertise is vastly distributed and contested. Rather than focusing on "who is an expert", this panel focuses on how people assume expert positionality and how they are engaged in the work of expert knowledge-making– situating their sentiments and expert knowledge-making within public affects. How does this approach help us understand the role public discourses of mis-management have on the work of expert knowledge-making and its

sentimentalities? Therefore, this panel aims to investigate the affective worlds of climate scientists, sustainability experts, legal professionals medical practitioners as emerging within public affects to eventually shape the expertise to tackle the changing terrain of South Asian socio-political and environmental changes.

Therefore this panel asks:

What affective worlds is expert knowledge-making in?

How are the public affects surrounding socio-political events made legible through news, protests, revolts, digested, reproduced, or contested by experts in their daily work of expert knowledge-making?

What affective registers must be present for collaborations and contentions over expert knowledge?

What possibilities of governance emerge from South Asia with such expert formation?

How do public affects and everyday expertise together shape governance in the midst of climate catastrophes, public health emergencies, paradoxical market trends, authoritarianism?

We aim to investigate forms of expertise emerging in relation to the public affects shaped by climate change processes, changes in market economies, and governance regimes. We invite papers focusing on the making of expert knowledge in relation to the affective lives of individuals and the public affects emerging from these social and political processes.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Ihsan Arsalan, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Ramsha Usman, University of California, Santa Barbara

Presenter(s): Abdullah Ali Jawad, Ihsan Arsalan, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Zahid Ali, Zara Bakshi, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Anam Khan, University of Texas at Austin

Discussant: Vivian Chenxue Lu, Rice University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The problem of 'intention' in the adjudication of blasphemy in Pakistan Since the 1990s, the proliferation of blasphemy accusations and related violence in Pakistan has placed unprecedented pressure on the very laws which adjudicate its punishment. The empowerment of anti-blasphemy related populist groups has rendered blasphemy highly available for settling a broader range of disputes, situating traditional legal institutions in an ambivalent position both as infrastructures of punishment and as sites of protection from mob violence. The evidentiary procedures central to the law , meanwhile, make it practically impossible to defend and acquit persons accused. Drawing upon archival evidence and ethnographic fieldwork in Lahore in 2024 with lawyers attempting nonetheless to defend clients from blasphemy accusations, in this In this paper, I investigate how the 'insanity plea' has enabled the acquittal of defendants, even as the blasphemy law itself explicitly rejects 'intentionality'. Focusing on an acquittal which sought to argue how 'dreams and visions' cannot constitute sufficient evidence of blasphemy, I suggest how

secularizing medico-legal discourses are instrumentalized in the management of contentious religious publics.

Presenter(s): Abdullah Ali Jawad

Comprehending Cryospheric Connectivities: Glacier Science and The Karakoram Anomaly

This project examines glaciers as a space of encounter between technoscientific research and Indigenous knowledge in the Karakoram Mountains situated in Pakistan. Glaciologists and climatologists heavily research these glaciers because of their anomalous growth and surge (Hewitt 2005) patterns as opposed to other glaciers of the world. Scientists make use of on-ground sensors and other data collection devices to record patterns. The project, using an STS approach, attempts to highlight the unexpected affects and potentialities that these sensors and reports acquire in Karakoram glaciers using Eleana Kim's framework (2016) about rogue materials embedded within societies. It also delineates how alternative modes of knowledge disrupt the dominance of climatological knowledge about glaciers. The project will demonstrate points of convergence and divergence between local knowledge about glaciers and scientific expertise to emphasize the limitations of technoscience by employing a Latourian framework. Through an exploration of local practices around glacial ice and glacier stories (Cruikshank 2005), it will trace local practices in the face of hegemonic technoscientific research. These acts include reorienting scientific objects and materials like sensors for unlikely uses and affects. In doing so, the paper also questions the limits of STS and its inadequacy in understanding alternative knowledge systems.

Presenter(s): Ihsan Arsalan

Technocratic Dreams, Desert Disruptions: Making and Unmaking Energy Expertise in Pakistan

In Pakistan's Thar Desert, coal infrastructures are rapidly expanding under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), despite global pressure for decarbonization. This paper examines how expert knowledge surrounding these projects is forged, justified, and contested amid climate crisis and widespread discourses of environmental mismanagement. Based on ethnographic research with engineers, policymakers, activists, and Thari villagers, I explore the affective dimensions of expertise—how it is shaped by sentiments of urgency, nationalism, and developmental aspiration.

State and technical actors frame coal as a sovereign imperative central to economic survival. Yet these claims co-exist with public affects of uncertainty, ecological anxiety, and disenchantment, especially among communities displaced by mining and power generation. Expertise here involves emotional labor and political imagination, negotiating tensions between economic growth and environmental responsibility.

Meanwhile, Indigenous Thari communities resist dispossession through protest, legal action, and alternative ecological visions. Their engagement challenges state-led narratives of energy sovereignty and redefines what counts as expert knowledge. This paper contributes to debates on

infrastructure and expertise by showing how knowledge is produced through affective entanglements and contested futures in the Global South.

Presenter(s): Zahid Ali

Insurgent Care and Affective Expertise: Governing Loss and Survival in Occupied Kashmir

This paper examines the affective dimensions of emergent expertise in Indian-administered Kashmir, a region shaped by decades of military occupation, enforced disappearances, and conflict-induced disabilities. It traces how public affects—mourning, anger, endurance—intersect with grassroots practices of survival and care cultivated by families of the disappeared, rights activists, medical practitioners, and humanitarian workers.

Building on feminist theories of care and insurgent politics, the paper explores how enforced disappearances produce spectral forms of life, compelling surviving kin, particularly half-widows and half-mothers, into precarious roles of memory work and advocacy. Simultaneously, the use of pellet guns generates new forms of embodied injury that call forth alternative infrastructures of care amid the collapse of state accountability. The paper thus argues that expertise in Kashmir emerges not through institutional credentials but through affective labour, insurgent care, and collective practices of tending to loss, injury, and uncertain futures. Rather than viewing expertise as a stabilised domain, this paper situates it within the fragile, contested, and affectively charged work of survival. In doing so, it offers an alternate epistemology of care forged through feminist politics of endurance at the occupied and wounded margins of South Asia.

Presenter(s): Zara Bakshi

Curating a Good Helper: How Expertise Is Felt, Framed, and Sold in Pakistan's Domestic Labor Market

In this paper I aim to examine emerging forms of "expertise" in the realm of domestic labor brokerage in urban Pakistan, where agencies present themselves as professional intermediaries that vet, train, and place domestic workers in upper- and middle-class households. Positioned as a neoliberal solution to the perceived risks of informal hiring, these agencies seek to replace kinship and word-of-mouth-based recruitment with processes that appear more regulated and secure. Their claim to expertise does not rest on technical credentials alone. Instead, it is anchored in the management of trust. They are offering a promise of a particular kind of imagined worker who is disciplined, loyal, and morally upright. These assurances respond to broader concerns around domestic safety, household management, and classed social boundaries, especially in urban contexts saturated with narratives of misconduct and insecurity. Drawing on research on labor agencies and domestic worker organizations, this paper looks at how different modes of labor mediation give rise to conflicting ideas about what counts as value, care, and credibility. Agencies recast domestic work as something that needs professional oversight. In doing so, they rely on stories about trust, risk, and compatibility that influence how employers evaluate workers and how workers come to see their own labor in increasingly transactional terms.

Presenter(s): Anam Khan

Discussion

4979 Experimental Science of Body Habitation

Start Date: 11/22/2025 2:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Southdown (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What could it mean to be "at home" in the body? Is there a limit in the body's capacity to respond to the solicitations of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012), to dwell in the environment with others (Ingold, 2000), to sediment the habitus of collective dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990; Mauss, 1973), or to carve out a place in social and cultural life? This panel aims to explore the concept of habitation beyond phenomenological and practice-based paradigms of the body, through leaky paths and processes that escape capture and containment. We attend to moments when the body becomes the only way of engaging with that which (in)habits it, a form of somatic experimentation with both the material and symbolic. What type of experiments are possible with the things that pass through bodies as they simultaneously pass through sites of habitation?

In the experiments that we explore, the body is "not a located thing but a path of access, a being-in-the-world" (Leder, 1990). It enables the passage of things in space and time: of disease, toxicity, memory, spirits. Freud articulates these concerns through the uncanny (*unheimlich*) – what was once familiar (*heimlich*), which has become strange and frightening (Freud, 1917). While the word *heimlich* carries resonances of the home, dwelling, familiarity, and warmth; it also has a second class of meanings. Namely, the *unheimlich*, that which is secretive, concealed, untrustworthy, and dangerous. Amidst the habitability of home, subjective life passes into an ambiguity, becoming indistinguishable from the uncanny, what De Certeau describes in terms of the uninhabitable dimensions of the body (De Certeau, 1998). Fanon speaks of these dimensions of the body through the "atmospheric violence" that one breathes in, sedimenting "under the skin" (Fanon, 1963). The corporeal schema gives way to the symbolic fixedness and immobility of bodies intruded upon by uncanny forms, rendering them uninhabitable and unrecognizable. Such bodily intrusions open sites of experimentation with modes of passage that reconfigure the way bodies inhabit space and time.

Papers in this panel will explore the tension implicit in the concept of habitation, whereby one's placement in social and symbolic life may also suggest a "feeling of estrangement" (Ahmed, 2017) and foreclosure from the self and others. Estrangements that might be produced under the authority of the hospital, laboratory, psych ward, family home, and factory. We draw from De Certeau's "experimental science," as a mode of reinhabiting the uninhabitable body by witnessing its emergence as both familiar and unfamiliar (De Certeau, 1998). Beyond a universal being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 2012), we approach body habitation as an uncanny passage where life and death, placement and displacement, presence and absence, parasite and host, and ghost and home become indistinguishably entangled.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jaleel Plummer, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Maria Fernandez Pello, University of Texas at Austin

Chair: Deren Pulley, University of California, San Francisco, Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine

Presenter(s): Deren Pulley, University of California, San Francisco, Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine, Jaleel Plummer, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Anthropology, Ajung Ryoo, Maria Fernandez Pello, University of Texas at Austin, Sarah Eleazar Sadiq

Discussant: Levi Vonk, University of Virginia

Presentation(s): Creeping Fat and the Uncanny Gut: Living as a microbial g(host)

Crohn's disease (CD) is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Chronic inflammation erodes the bowel, risking perforation. As the inside/outside threshold of the gut collapses, fecal bacteria gravely flood the body. Severe CD is characterized by a mysterious phenomenon called "creeping fat." Finger-like projections from abdominal tissue wrap around gut lesions, causing obstructions as the gut narrows. Creeping fat remains enigmatic because it cannot be clearly distinguished through medical imaging nor directly experienced. A recent microbial theory posits creeping fat as a harmful and protective consequence of gut perforation. It prevents fecal flooding of the host at the expense of bowel obstruction. Amidst creeping leaks and obstructions, some with IBD feel the gut is haunted by ghosts. In the same breath, gut ripples are described as bacterial blooms and phantoms of surgical resection. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in New York City, this paper explores the convergence of microbial host and the ghosts of haunted guts through the metabolic processes and experiences of people living with CD. How does subjective life persist when the gut is possessed of more than the body's relational capacity can maintain? This paper is about uncanny habitability at the limits of the metabolizable – in the space between gut perforation and obstruction. In the wake of perforation, creeping fat is how people with living CD inhabit a g(host)ly body in the gaps of a narrowing gut.

Presenter(s): Deren Pulley

"Every Night is Nine Night": Madness, Duppy Possession, & British Colonial Occupation

This talk explores the case of 400 Black Jamaicans in a psychiatric hospital in Kingston, Jamaica, referred to as "social cases." Although formally discharged, they remain there due to family abandonment, migration, or death. About one-third attribute their madness to possession by "duppy," the spirits of the dead. After Jamaica was taken by the British Empire, the first psychiatric asylum, the "Asylum for Deserted Negroes," was established but later destroyed in a storm, releasing the spirits of deceased slaves into society. The Kingston Lunatic Asylum, the second facility, detained both enslaved and recently freed Black Jamaicans, whom colonial authorities viewed as a lunatic threat. Around this time, Obeah, a significant spiritual practice, was criminalized due to its ties to slave uprisings, leading to a decline in the "Nine Night" ritual that planted the dead in the earth. Consequently, Obeah is now referred to as an "evil African sorcery" and duppy possession has become more prevalent. The uncanniness between the Asylum for

Deserted Negroes and the 400 social cases reveals how the Black body is perpetually displaced and inhabited by colonial and spiritual forces. This talk examines how the dispossessed are possessed by duppy and become mad, highlighting the enduring impact of British colonialism in Jamaica today.

Presenter(s): Jaleel Plummer

Haunting Housing: Middle-Class Intrusions into the Sex Worker's Space and Her Return

This talk grapples with the liquidity or fragility of place that chronically conditions the sex worker's life and body in Seoul, South Korea, or more specifically, the crisis of housing which links the sex worker and middle-class citizen to become mutually haunted by the possibility and actuality of each other's penetration into one's "safe space." Many sex workers in Seoul live in either the brothels they work at or half-basement studios which easily get flooded and are covered with mold. However, to meet the pressing demand for more middle-class housing, the Seoul city government has been displacing the urban poor, with an anticipation to eradicate all slums and red light districts by 2028. To purge sex workers, the police, public health workers, and even nearby apartment residents persistently barge into sex workers' ambiguous home-work spaces, harassing them and charging them with petty fines until they move out. Due to such invasions, I argue, a survival strategy of the sex worker has become one of infiltrating into middle-class spaces, in ways that are opaque and constantly on the move. The increasing form of offi-sex work happens through short-term leasing rooms in office-tels, which are commercial complexes that many middle-class Koreans live in, with stores, offices, and housing mixed on each floor. Such sex work has become a new source of the middle-class citizen's panic and anxiety – the prostitute might share their very house, unknowingly and undistinguishably.

Presenter(s): Ajung Ryoo

The (A)visuality of Interior Worlds

This paper draws from ethnographic fieldwork in biomedical laboratories that research human immunity. It investigates how biomedical research produces what Lippit calls an "impossible interiority" (2005), a paradoxical perspective that results from attempts to turn the elusive, ambiguous experience of the visceral body into a sensible and operable object of experimentation. Following modern conceptions of, and aspirations for, transparency, the biomedical technologies employed in the study of inner bodily systems exemplify how this perspective is intimately connected with the desire to make visible an experience that is not. Against these technologies, the phenomenological experience of interiority emphasizes the "avisiuality" (ibid.) of the inner body and its microbial worlds, which are ultimately only accessible through the "qualitative reduction" of interoceptive perception (Leder 1990). Through examples of scientific experiments observed during ethnographic research, the paper shows how, despite biomedicine's desire to make the interior of the body visible, it only contributes to emphasizing its avisiuality, pointing to its always elusive visualization. Using pictures and ethnographic descriptions, it ultimately suggests that scientific experiments with interiority are always thought experiments for they require scientists to

continuously engage with an idea of the inner body that reinforces its status as an imagined
visuality – not invisible, but visible somewhere else.

Presenter(s): Maria Fernandez Pello

The Double Bind of Toxicity in a Factory Town

The environment of factory towns is toxic. Smoke billowing from chimneys and toxic sludge in drains signals jobs and opportunities for residents. But like ghosts, industrial toxic waste passes unseen, unheard, and untasted through bodies and the built and unbuilt environment, accumulating towards permanent toxicity or disaster. Nasrath Colony is a Catholic neighborhood in Bhai Pheru, a factory town south of Lahore city, in Pakistan. Since the late 1990s, the groundwater in this area has been unfit to drink, causing acute skeletal fluorosis and brittle bones among children and adults. In this paper I trace degrees of toxic exposure in caste-based separation. The residents of Nasrath Colony belong to various castes but their social status as a religious minority relegates them collectively to lower caste status within larger Pakistani society. This means most of them work sanitation and solid waste management jobs considered unclean and demeaning. Caste-centered practices and beliefs are rooted in symbolic ideas of purity and impurity. Using the sanitation infrastructure of the neighborhood as an ethnographic subject, this paper traces the neighborhood's leaky system of symbolic estrangement – between neighbors and the rest of the town. Conceptually, toxicity reveals the impossibility of absolute states like purity and impurity, and draws attention to the spillage, seepage and slippage that remains unsensed till they cross a threshold.

Presenter(s): Sarah Eleazar Sadiq

Discussion

8649 Interest Group Conveners Meeting

Start Date: 11/22/2025 3:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 4:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rex (8th fl)(Access vis elevator only)

Type: Special Event

Interest Group Conveners Meeting

8809 Culture@Large: Spectral City—Walking New Orleans through Slavery's Present Pasts with Rashauna Johnson

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 5:00 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Orpheus (8th fl) (access via elevator only)

Type: Special Event

New Orleans was a critical hub for the global circulation of slaves and became a metropolis with an explosion of slave population, who claimed one third of the city's population in the early nineteenth century. Society for Cultural Anthropology presents its flagship event, Culture@Large, to trace the lasting legacies of slavery etched onto the urban landscapes of New Orleans and to reflect upon

geographies of unfreedom, which have shaped the city and beyond. This event consists of a lecture (open to public) and walking tour of New Orleans (for registered participants).

Rashauna Johnson, Associate Professor of History at the University of Chicago and the award-winning author of *Slavery's Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), will deliver a lecture entitled "Where Sidewalks Talk: New Orleans and Global Geographies of Unfreedom" at the AAA conference venue. Professor Johnson will then lead a walking tour of New Orleans.

9053 De-exceptionalizing US Universities: DEI and Narratives from the Margins

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

Since the January 2025 inauguration of the new administration in the US, the dismantling of higher education has struck universities in myriad ways that extend far beyond undoing DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives. Prominent are the ways academic freedom is being curtailed and reprimanded. The emergence of this punitive and even penal regime, especially in a space that is historically upheld as the bastion of radical and experimental thinking, has been met with shock and disbelief amongst academics.

As the dismantling of higher education accelerates with alarming speed, this late-breaking session seeks to move beyond prevailing reactions of shock to delve deeper into this seemingly new regime with critical urgency. We ask if this is indeed novel? And, if so, to whom? Like the wider society, and the nation-state, the US university is also a microcosm of a White hegemonic system simultaneously embedded in neoliberal priorities, whose current upheaval sends shockwaves through international academic networks. In centering the experiences of faculty of color, this panel explores how this academic upheaval in the US in fact has a deeper and a hidden trajectory of marginalization. Rather than focusing solely on shock and repression, we draw from the rich repertoire of resistance that has long existed within these institutional spaces, examining how marginalized communities have cultivated alternative imaginaries of what universities could be and developed forms of knowledge production that challenge dominant paradigms.

Based on an engagement with these narratives, the panel has two goals. First, to decenter Whiteness as the overarching context of the university in ideology and praxis. Second, to critically examine how DEI, as important as it is as an institutional tool, continues to operate in ways that foreground Whiteness. In doing so, we consider what transformative possibilities emerge when we center the wisdom and strategies developed by those who have always existed at the margins of academic institutions.

Organizer: Hayal Akarsu, Utrecht University, Simanti Dasgupta, University of Dayton, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

Presenter(s): Deepa Das Acevedo , Smoki Musaraj, Ohio University, Department of Sociology &

Anthropology, Debarati Sen, University of Houston, Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, Simanti Dasgupta, University of Dayton, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, Karime Parodi, Mark Schuller, Northern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Simanti Dasgupta, University of Dayton, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

9014 In Decency and In Order: The New Orleans Cultural Repatriation Committee and the Effort to Bring Home the "New Orleans Nineteen"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Late-Breaking Roundtable/Town Hall

On Saturday, May 31, 2025, the remains of nineteen Black New Orleanians were laid to rest at the New Orleans Katrina Memorial following a ceremony at Dillard University. Their skulls had been part of a medical research collection at the University of Leipzig, Germany, amassed in the late-nineteenth century as part of a large collection of crania by Dr. Emil Ludwig Schmidt for pseudoscientific research on race. The event marked the culmination of a 2 year-long effort involving staff at Leipzig, professionals in archaeology, anthropology, and the law from the City and area universities, and a local cultural committee that grappled with how to bring home these 19 individuals "in decency and in order", in a way that honored their humanity while also recognizing the racism and violence in which skull collections like this were accumulated. This represented one of the first times that a crania collection like this was repatriated to a community of origin in the United States outside of cases involving Indigenous remains. This special town hall brings together members of the cultural committee to reflect on the process, its significance, and its implications for the future.

Organizer: D. Ryan Gray

Presenter(s): D. Ryan Gray, Michael Blakey, College of William & Mary, Ryan Seidemann

Discussant: Michael Blakey, College of William & Mary

8554 This Business meeting - Interlocutor event about new careers celebrating new books, research and our Christine Fry Student Travel Award winner.

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 5:45 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Lafayette (41st Fl)

Type: Special Event

This Business meeting of the interest group on aging and the life course and Interlocutor event celebrates new books, research within the focus of our group. It also celebrates and honors our 2025 Christine Fry Student Travel Award winner. It will also include an interlocutor discussion of

building careers with a focus on aging and the life course in non-traditional academic and non-academic settings. This will include medical schools (Aaron Seamon), the State Department (Phil Kao) and an engineering school (Caitrin Lynch); and building multi-disciplinary research centers (Jean Schensul).

8777 New Orleans Cocktail Culture and Heritage: A Visit to The Sazerac House- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 6:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Come explore the "spirited" heritage of New Orleans via this self-guided tour of the Sazerac House! The complimentary tour of the legends and lore of New Orleans cocktail culture features three floors of exhibits. Visitors explore the heart of the production process from grain to rye spirits, experience the flavors of a variety of spirits, and examine the "New Orleans Heritage" in the last century through the lens of the cocktail.

This is a self-guided tour with a 28-guest capacity (sign-up details TBA). Visitors who are 21 and over are able to sample the spirits on offer throughout the exhibits.

Participants must make their own way to The Sazerac House and should plan to arrive by 4:15 pm for a tour start time of 4:30 pm.

The Sazerac House is located at: 101 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70130, a 25-minute walk or 10 minute car ride away.

8592 Presidential Address with Awards Recognition

Start Date: 11/22/2025 4:15 PM **through** 11/22/2025 6:15 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom A-C (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

Presidential address from outgoing AAA President Whitney Battle-Baptiste.

8778 A Sensory Experiment: How Militarization and War Bring Ecologies Into Relation.

A Rivers Institute and Ecologies of War Collaboration.- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 5:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

This multimodal salon opens an inquiry into how planetary ecologies have been cultivated through inextricable, militarized, petropolitical intervention. This curated sensory experiment brings together scholars and artists whose work focuses disaster capitalism, maroon ecologies, war and

militarization, and resource control to probe the interrelations of planetary ecologies beginning with an inquiry into the relationship of Iraq's marshes to the NOLA watershed, which were brought into relation through scientific management technologies of the US Army Corps of Engineers in the early aughts. What histories do watersheds hold and how do we know them? How do military and extractive industries recruit bodies-human, wetlands, resources-to violence? Conversely, how can one's embodied, sensory, and affective experiences of these lands probe, surface, and expose the shared histories of geological existence in the age of the Anthropocene? What tangible, material relationships exist between and across geologic space? What are the necessary grammars to render these pasts visible? Through a curated multimodal performance during the first hour scholars and artists grapple with these and other questions. We will then open the salon to questions and discussion in the remaining 30 minutes. This event will be held at the Marigny Opera House on Saturday, November 22nd from 5-7 pm.

4086 Why Work? Doing the Anthropology of Work (Part Two)

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

From flint knapping to child tending, rocket science to hamburger flipping, few questions are more central to anthropology than what constitutes work and who can be said to do it. As the energetic fulcrum of economic production and social reproduction, human and more-than-human labor animates and destabilizes narratives of class, race, gender, and citizenship that rely on demographic measures of income and inequality. In cataclysmic times such as now, when across myriad walks of life intergenerational worlds of work and social mobility confront sudden or slow ends, structural metrics rather than storied accounts appear as kaleidoscopic images of technological change and historical inevitability. Yet as ethnographers of work can attest, models of sector-dependent labor rarely map neatly onto our interlocutors' experience of work-paid and unpaid; past, present, and aspirational-let alone determine their assessment of its rewards. Not only are institutionalized paradigms of work "not working" for many today, they raise personal and professional questions for those of us doing the work of anthropology.

In honor of the work of Kathryn M. Dudley, recipient of the Society for the Anthropology of Work's 2025 Arensberg Award, this roundtable brings together an intergenerational group of ethnographers whose doctoral studies of various kinds of work were supervised by Prof. Dudley. Panelists will reflect on how Dudley's incisive questions as a mentor shaped their diverse fieldwork experiences and career trajectories, putting a spotlight on the work of mentorship itself, and how such generative mentorship has shaped research of the precarious worlds of work that we navigate alongside our interlocutors. As researchers, policy analysts, writers, and educators, we reflect on what our collective labors tell us about how current and nascent cultures of work are affectively transmitted and materialized in practice. Amidst the uncertainties of this late liberal age, we take

stock of the analytics of labor that best speak to the challenges of making a living and making a life, and what, at the end of the day, may constitute the why of our life's work.

This roundtable will conclude with overarching reflections on the anthropology of work by Kathryn M. Dudley.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Alex Blanchette, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology, Carrie Lane

Presenter(s): Karilyn Crockett, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Alison Kanosky, Joseph Plaster, Sylvia Ryerson, Yale University

Discussant: Kathryn Dudley, Yale University

8848 CAE Business Meeting, Awards Recognition, and Social

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 8:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Special Event

Annual business meeting, awards recognition, and social gathering of the Council on Anthropology & Education. Agenda will include brief comments by the recipient of the George and Louise Spindler award for career achievement.

2621 Death and Hauntings in Central Pennsylvania

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** St. Charles (41st Fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Central Pennsylvania is a region of small towns, liberal arts colleges, farms, and forests. Although within 3-4 hours drive of major metropolitan areas, it is seen as unambiguously "rural." It is a region where young people are leaving for work in more urban spaces, leading to local population decline and older communities. The region is also haunted by the ghosts of previous economic booms in furniture making and mining, while new employment opens up in correctional facilities, hospitals, and colleges. It is also a space of rural imaginaries, from idyllic family farms to the zombies of George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead."

The papers on this panel, all written by undergraduate researchers, explore this diverse landscape through original ethnographic research. These investigations reveal how local residents think about life, death, wellbeing, and work within changing rural landscapes and their imaginaries. The topics span the life cycles of rural residents, from critically ill infants in hospital NICUs, to retired pickleball players who reject the idea of being senior citizens, to funeral home workers who assist families with their loved ones' end-of-life rituals. The rural imaginaries of the "family farm" are discussed in relation to the realities of the Farm Bill that creates cycles of dependency and debt. And finally, the last paper considers how video game post-apocalyptic fantasies of rural U.S. spaces are adapted to other cultural contexts. Throughout, these papers return to the intersections of lived realities and the ideas that haunt them.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Clare Sammells, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Clare Sammells, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presenter(s): Tori Chace, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Catherine Dineen, Vuochna Taing, Kaitlin Henry, Reid Orphan, Lycoming College

Discussant: Clare Sammells, Bucknell University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Presentation(s): Beyond the Incubator: Intersecting Environments of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is situated at the intersection of spatial, social, and distant environments that shape cooperative care for infants in critical condition. This study was conducted in a regional hospital for much of northeastern and central Pennsylvania, and location of one of four level-IV NICUs in the state. I examined how the social environment, centered around medical staff, parent, and patient interactions, is impacted by the spatial layout and external resources. Findings highlight that mentorship, interdisciplinary communication, parental involvement, and care routines are shaped by these intersecting environments. Understanding the social interactions through a lens of intersecting environments offers insights regarding communication and care engagement within intensive care settings.

Presenter(s): Tori Chace

“Not Dead Yet”: How Pickleball Unites Communities, One Game at a Time

Pickleball is a game that has fostered connections since its creation in the 1960s, attracting individuals of various ages and backgrounds. The game requires a small paddle, ball (similar to a wiffle ball), net, pickleball court (same as badminton court) and up to four players. Pickleball has evolved from a neighborly competitive game to an addictive form of exercise that is played professionally and casually. During the spring semester of 2025, an ethnographic study was conducted in central Pennsylvania on pickleball at an exercise facility. This space combines the efforts of local organizations, including two local hospitals, to form a community focused on health and wellness. Pickleball is played by members and non-members alike daily on three pickleball courts across three basketball courts. The nine courts are filled with a mostly retired population that meet mornings and play games to eleven points. Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher found a clear and known divide between advanced and intermediate players that did not stop individuals from enjoying their time while playing pickleball. The findings of the research are that pickleball, specifically the competitive nature of the game, allows players to make meaningful connections through small talk and shared desire to play well.

Presenter(s): Catherine Dineen

“My Other Ride is a Hearse”: An Ethnographic Study of Funeral Directors, Death, and Grief

This ethnographic research explores the perspectives of funeral services practitioners, death rituals and grief inside a family-owned funeral business in Union County of Pennsylvania. This study

focuses on how funeral directors make sense of the anticipated and unanticipated death and bereavement happening daily in their work. The findings discuss how funeral directors move in and out of different subject positions according to the tasks they have to deal with, such as meeting clients, doing paperwork, embalming bodies, organizing funeral services, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and discussing hard topics like pricing and grief. These funeral directors have families, hobbies, and deal with challenging issues, while maintaining their professionalism to help others get through some of the most tragic and complicated times in their lives.

Presenter(s): Vuochnea Taing

Possessed by Policy: How Farm Bill legislation fuels corporate control of farmers

The Farm Bill is a USD 400 billion investment that haunts the U.S. every five years, controlling our food production processes and dominating the distribution of money and subsidies throughout U.S. farming and livestock systems. This bill's content is influenced by millions of dollars of corporate agricultural lobbying efforts and multiple pieces of political legislation. Every five years, these policies continue to hyper-industrialize food processes and haunt small farmers to enter into predatory relationships with companies that mass-produce patented GMO seeds. My analysis of the Farm Bill, coupled with working on several small-scale farms in Pennsylvania, reveals how this legislation elevates corporate agribusiness and locks small farmers into cycles of dependency and inequality. Farm bill policies subsidizing soybeans and maize, almost all grown from GMO seeds purchased from private agricultural companies, push money directly into the hands of large corporations while not assisting smaller farms (defined as those with an income under USD 250K). In combination with legislation that disproportionately funnels funds to large-scale farms, this deepens the gap in wealth in the farming industry. Small-scale farms are drawn into loan cycles to keep their business solvent through loans from the Farm Service Agency (itself authorized mostly via the Farm Bill).

Presenter(s): Kaitlin Henry

Fallout London: Sounding Out British Identity, Post-Apocalypse

Released in July 2024, *Fallout: London* is a free, full-sized, fan-made game in the *Fallout* franchise, built over five years by a team of volunteers through a process known as "modding" (modifying, adjusting, or generating new content in computer games with external tools, and usually released for free online). The *Fallout* franchise is known for its rural and small-city Americana environments in a post-nuclear wasteland, leaning heavily into Cold War-era language, purposefully leaving the state of the rest of the world a mystery. This U.S.-centricity extends to the soundtracks of the games and television show, featuring a 1950s U.S. aesthetic mixed with bleak ambient undertones, and creating a rural imaginary divorced from actual geographies. The British team of *Fallout: London* faced a unique question: What does British identity sound like after a nuclear war? This paper looks at the project of *Fallout: London* and how its creative team (particularly the composers and sound designers) adapted a U.S. rural post-apocalyptic locale into a British sonic identity for the year 2237. It examines how British *Fallout* modders conceive of and critique British identity through what

I call "acousto-mutation"- the process through which the "acoustemological" meaning of sound (Feld 2024) changes -or mutates- through some combination of environmental and/or sonic factors.

Presenter(s): Reid Orphan

Discussion

4390 Haunted by the Market: New Risks and New Gambles Amid Financial Uncertainty, Part 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

The current climate of global financial uncertainty, manifested through market instabilities, currency devaluations, and shifting regulatory regimes, poses a new and intersecting set of financial challenges. Many have turned to risky behaviors, from buying lottery tickets and online gambling platforms to investing in cryptocurrencies and stocks, as a way to make money and sustain their livelihoods. The lines between risky activities such as gambling and investments have increasingly blurred. Gambling has spilled out of the casino and into transnational digital spheres, operating in legal gray zones and suspended in regulatory ambiguity. Therefore, this panel interrogates the production and reproduction of these political economies of risk while centering the lived experiences of those navigating volatile markets.

As betting platforms, crypto exchanges, and investment apps operate across jurisdictions, national regulators struggle to enforce policies designed for a world where gambling, speculating, and investing are more clearly demarcated. While policies governing gambling often claim to balance public health concerns, economic priorities, and consumer protection, they frequently produce contradictions that expose the tensions in how risk is framed and managed. For instance, the regulation of gambling is not just about preventing harm or ensuring fair play because it is also about defining what forms of gambling are deemed legitimate and which are considered reckless or illicit. The rise of online gambling and speculative markets further complicates these distinctions. Additionally, corporate actors, from financial institutions to multinational gambling firms, shape these regulatory landscapes through self-regulation, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and lobbying efforts that redefine speculation and gambling as either a public good or a social risk (Cassidy 2020). At the same time, state interests in generating revenue from both gambling and financial speculation often lead to policies that are fragmented, contradictory, or selectively enforced (Hassan 2025).

Our panel asks: What roles do states and corporations play in creating the conditions of possibility for these gambles or investment practices through regulations? Importantly, this panel dissects the dynamics of risk-taking, class-making, and moral economies of popular investment practices through ethnographic research from diverse locations and perspectives, including Nigeria, South Africa, China, the UK, India, and the US. We open emotional, ethical, and spatio-temporal

dimensions, asking: How do elements of hope, anticipation, and aspiration structure financial decision-making, and how are these acts embedded in histories of economic precarity or opportunity?

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Al Lim, Yale University, Department of Anthropology, Wesam Hassan, The London School of Economics and Politics

Chair: Wesam Hassan, The London School of Economics and Politics

Presenter(s): Jing Jing Liu, MacEwan University, Department of Anthropology, Brittany Birberick, University of California, San Diego, Qicheng Yao, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Natalie Wood, Vinay Brandon, University of Minnesota, Noa Vana, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Discussant: Anthony Pickles, University of Birmingham

Presentation(s): Stability Over Speculation: Mobilizing Cryptocurrency for Economic Sovereignty against State Cannibalism of the Nigerian Middle-Class

Beyond libertarian ideals for cryptocurrency to evade state oversight or capitalist fantasies of speculative gain, young, middle-class Nigerians also operationalize cryptocurrency to preserve their political potency and connection with the state. Nigeria hosts the highest volume of cryptocurrency activity in Africa, with cryptocurrency increasingly used to support everyday financial activities—payments, savings, and income generation. Moreover, in Nigeria, stablecoin volume is double that of Bitcoin and altcoins, suggesting that cryptocurrency's ability to secure stability overshadows its part in facilitating speculation. These activities maintain middle-class status against state cannibalism; the latter exercised through impetuous interventions in monetary policies and insidious indifference to citizen cost-of-living expenses. According to Nigerians, the overall effect marginalizes the middle class and impoverishes them into accepting clientelist relationships. This dynamic complicates the theorized relationship between the state and the middle class, wherein the state supposedly fortifies the middle class as a buffer, and the middle class legitimizes the state in return. Instead, the Nigerian state appears to induce, rather than prevent, middle-class precarity and attrition, abandoning middle-class citizens to promote their own preservation. These changing relationships animate how Global South citizens adapt digital technologies to local economic and political conditions.

Presenter(s): Jing Jing Liu

Playing the Numbers: The Shifting Logic of Gambling in Johannesburg, South Africa

The presentation examines the historical and contemporary logic of gambling and relations to the state in South Africa. Since the early 2020s, electronic gambling has made significant inroads across the region. Tied to a void in regulatory policies, unemployment, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of these gambling technologies has transformed social lives of low-income gamblers by creating new opportunities for sustaining livelihoods as well as new opportunities for risk. In Johannesburg, these new gambling technologies have begun to usurp

older, street-based lotteries like *fafi*. Most popular during the apartheid era, *fafi* thrived beyond the gaze of white society, and state regulation, since the early 1900s. Throughout the post-apartheid transition, *fafi* persisted, but the rise of these new gambling technologies and the legalization of electronic gambling halls has diminished its popularity, the rituals that accompany the game, and the social infrastructures that it relies on. The paper explores how a closer examination of the decline of *fafi* sheds light on shifting relations to the state, the racialization of gambling, and the transformation of traditional rituals of divination and risk assessment.

Presenter(s): Brittany Birberick

Heat and Sentiment: Affective Alignments in Chinese NFT WeChat groups

In Chinese court cases and news outlets, non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are portrayed as financial schemes where a few profit from an irrational crowd. This paper investigates why NFTs resonate among mainland Chinese players (*wanjia*) in WeChat groups. As crypto intersects with local practices of investment, gambling, and scams, "sentiment" (*qingxu*) and "heat" (*redu*) emerge as key fetishizations. Players believe prominent actors (*dahu*) manipulate crowd sentiment, and certain visual and haptic signs signal a surging market. These productive misrecognitions are part of affectively charged rituals that players (co)construct in WeChat. Through multimodal communication—metricalized texts, GIFs, videos—players enregister NFTs to (co)produce alignment around footings, values, and temporality. Signs like memes (*biaoqingbao*) gain affective force through circulation and citation. Drawing on models of underground lottery gambling, stock trading, and communist revolution, players frame NFT speculation as a war charge against the passivity of contemporary working-class life. Signs also scale the moment of collective action as both effective and retro-performative. Genred texts referencing feel-good net novels invite players to adopt the stance of a successful elite male looking back on his original risk-taking moment, imagining a certainty from the near future.

Presenter(s): Qicheng Yao

Gambling in the Supermarket: Re-imagining Shopping with the Food Pantry

In our current economic climate of Casino Capitalism, where "Trump goes full gameshow host to push his tariff plan – and nobody's a winner" (Smith 2025), I ask how these macro games of risk and chance are embodied in everyday dispositions toward uncertainty (Malaby 2009). Using shopping as a cultural access point, I explore how a language and, in turn, embodiment of gambling is performed beyond the casino or betting shop, instead, in the supermarket. Here, I make a distinction between provisioning as a minimisation of risk and, conversely, bargain hunting as an engagement with chance. Drawing on 4 months of fieldwork in 2022 in Northern England in a food pantry – a food bank that simulates a shop – I argue that while the emergence of a food pantry suggests a normalization of food banks and, in turn, enduring crisis, I propose that from this emergent space unfolded an affective atmosphere of the play. Through a carnivalesque reversal of wealth, the pantry playfully and materially inverts exchange value and use value. Ultimately, I put

forward the argument that the pantry does not just challenge what a food bank is, but it perhaps provokes a reimagination of what shopping could be.

Presenter(s): Natalie Wood

Institutionalizing Web3.0: Ethics of Risk, Mutuality and Consensus among India's Crypto Merchants

In this paper, I undertake an ethnography of the knowledge products and professionals affiliated with India's Crypto industry association, Bharat Web3.0. I will be approaching policy documents and proposals produced by the consortium as 'boundary objects' to analyze how these rework differences between speculation and investment through different imaginaries and applications of Blockchain within India's startup ecosystem. Thus, I will critically analyze the professionalized temporality, sociative 'infrastructuring', and key branding strategy - emphasizing Web3.0 instead of Cryptocurrency - that constitutes the core value proposition for scaling blockchain-based innovation, in alignment with the Indian government's aims of seeding a globally dominant digital economy. This strategy emphasizes creative production, protocol thinking, and open innovation rather than speculative investment, becoming the key 'Maussian gamble' through which major Indian Crypto players organize themselves to present a collective voice when interfacing with government regulators and chambers of commerce. My paper approaches this speculative labor of class-making and coalition building through the concept of 'Guild Dataism', ethnographically describing how the industry performs peer-institutionality, voluntary compliance, and ethical self-regulation, while demarcating different modes of decentralization and disruption through which Crypto imagineers distinct non-sovereign claims upon the future.

Presenter(s): Vinay Brandon

Sensorium, Risk, and Ritual: Gendered Gambling as Affective Survival in Off-Strip Las Vegas

Drawing on sensory ethnography of everyday situations in off-strip Las Vegas casinos, this paper explores how structurally marginalized women engage in gambling as a strategy for emotional regulation, risk negotiation, and survival. Giddens and Luhmann conceptualize risk and uncertainty as fundamental conditions of late modern life. Gambling, in this context, becomes an exemplary site for examining how individuals navigate manufactured uncertainty through routinized risk-taking. Through a collaborative project involving an anthropologist, sociologist, and clinical psychologist, we ask how gambling becomes a site where women perform agency in the face of structural precarity. Rather than seeking dramatic wins, many female patrons engage in affectively charged, habitual interactions with slot machines, manifested in gestures of breath control, stillness, repetition, and chase, all signaling what we call, following Hochschild, "self-directed embodied emotional labor." Gambling, in this context, is not only an economic behavior but an affective infrastructure shaped by social determinants and the politics of uncertainty. These practices unfold in ambiguous social spaces that are not quite communities yet offer temporary alignment and emotional containment. Ultimately, the casino emerges as a space where neoliberal logics of responsibility and fantasy converge: risk is individualized and hope is enacted through embodied rituals of anticipation.

Presenter(s): Noa Vana

Co-author(s): Shane Kraus

Discussion

3775 Time of Monsters 2

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable is a sequel of sorts to a panel of the same name staged at the 2017 AAA meetings, inspired by Andrea Muehlebach's characterization of our political era as a "Time of Monsters." This roundtable continues the work of that panel to generate a "Bestiary for this Time of Monsters" (later published in Cultural Anthropology's online Fieldsights section:

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/time-of-monsters>). If anything, 2025 seems like an even more monstrous moment than 2017, as neofascist overtures become policy, as oligarchs preside over new magnitudes of plunder and planetary ruin. These are some of the monsters we will discuss. But in addition to creatures we rightly dread and abominate, we wish to surface the complex latent meanings of the concept of monstrum, including nuances of "portent," "sign" and "wild creature." Some monsters are xenobiotics with respect to the dominant racist, patriarchal, colonial and extractivist institutions. We wish to explore the idea that these wild creatures may represent powerful allies in efforts to build a better world from contemporary ruins. As with the 2017 panel we will recruit a local artist-in-residence to visualize our monster-making in real time.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Dominic Boyer, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Cymene Howe, Rice University

Presenter(s): Sareeta Amrute, The New School, Stuart McLean, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Department of Anthropology, Mayanthi Fernando, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Cymene Howe, Rice University, Dominic Boyer, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Abou Farman, The New School

Discussant: Anand Pandian, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

8729 Anthropology and Environment Society Business Meeting and Awards Reception- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

The Anthropology and Environment Society will hold its annual Business Meeting and Awards Reception at the AAA meetings in conjunction with the Climate Change Interest Group. This event will summarize the actions taken at the A&E Board Meeting, the COP badge process, and announce

A&E award winners for the Rappaport Student Prize, the Julian Steward Book Award, the Bonnie J. McCay Junior Scholar Award, the Barbara Rose Johnston Next Generation Award, and other major A&E business. The meeting will be followed by the annual party in the same venue, location TBD.

3808 Ghosts of the Past: Sediments of fossil violence in Trump 2.0 "Drill Baby Drill"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 7:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Toxic sediments of the past haunt the present. The toxic layering from decades of petrochemical industry manifests in the form of environmental illnesses that struggle for biomedical legibility. Communities built around past fossil fuels appear locked in a haunted eternal return to new forms of extraction, violence, and destruction. Some old coal towns in PA and West Virginia abandoned one industry for another, fracking for natural gas. Fracked areas are already beginning to see ever more destructive ecological and human health harms through new energy frontiers such as data centers and a quest for carbon capture like blue and green hydrogen.

This roundtable will look at the extraction of fossil fuels in the Appalachian and Mid-Atlantic region of United States in a Trump 2.0 moment: what are the sediments of violence from zones of extraction to export? What are the stories we tell (in anthropology about fossil fuel extraction and frontline communities), and how might the work we do contribute to a public good or to a broader commitment to building solidarity across entire supply chains (oil, gas, coal)? How can we move beyond our own extractive research models, simply "extracting" stories of human struggle, of health consequences, labor exploitation tied to fossil fuels? How might we think beyond institutional affiliations to building "interdisciplinary teams" or "inter-institutional" allegiances to address fossil fuel extraction and the climate crisis? How can our classrooms connect with and support organizers in their efforts to end the extraction and burning of fossil fuels?

Engaged and activist anthropologists have a responsibility to intervene politically as extraction of fossil fuels intensifies and is paired with attempts to shut off conversations about environmental justice. Trump signed in January 2025 an executive order declaring an Energy Emergency; "We will drill, baby, drill," Trump said in his inauguration speech. Around the same time, he rescinded several decades worth of EJ orders. Trump 2.0's "energy emergency" set the stage for hyper militarism, displacements, further ecological/climactic crisis. Our planetary and human health crisis depends upon us to reinvent how we teach, rethink how we politicize and motivate undergraduates/graduate students to engage in struggle, and how we use our tools to advance movement politics.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Nicole Fabricant, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice, Tomas Matza, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Bret Gustafson, Washington University in St. Louis, Karen Rignall, University of Kentucky, Anne Spice, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Frances Roberts-Gregory, Harvard University, Jessica Smith

Discussant: Nicole Fabricant, Towson University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice

8760 Speaking Justice to Power 2025: APLA/ASAP Roundtable on Academic Freedom, Immigration, and Carceral Regimes- offsite

Start Date: 11/22/2025 6:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Cosponsored by APLA (Association for Political and Legal Anthropology) and ASAP (Association for the Anthropology of Policy).

When: Saturday, November 22, 6:30-9 pm

Where: Ashé Cultural Arts Center, 1712 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70113 (30 minutes walk, 20 minutes by tram, and 5-10 minutes by car from the conference venue)

Food and cash bar to follow

Louisiana - the second state with the largest number of people in U.S. immigrant detention per day - is an important place to talk about incarceration, the right-wing war upon universities, and the utter brutality of crackdowns on immigrant communities. Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil and Tufts University student Rumeysa Öztürk were both detained at Louisiana Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers for their pro-Palestine activism. In this very same sites are undocumented workers who have been detained as "criminals" and "aliens" or marked as "threats to national security interests."

At this critical moment and in this critical place, APLA, in collaboration with ASAP, brings together legal experts, immigrant rights defenders, community organizers, scholars and educators to discuss how we can collaborate and strategize together to effectively resist the ongoing attacks on human rights, rule of law, and due process. We call upon Anthropology and Anthropologists to seek ways of moving beyond the ivory towers and envision how their pedagogy, research, and service can advance struggles on the ground. With APLA's Taskforce on Academic Freedom in mind, we will also discuss how academic associations like the AAA and its sections can work in the service of these struggles.

Featured speakers:

- Martha Alguera (Southeast Dignity not Detention Coalition)
- Tia Fields (Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants)
- Matt Olson (New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice)
- Tania Wolf (National Immigration Project)
- Mary Yanik (Immigrant Rights Clinic at Tulane University)

Organizer(s): Heath Cabot, Elif Babul, Nicole Fabricant, Theodore Powers

8621 Illustrata - An Evening of Recognition

Start Date: 11/22/2025 7:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 10:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

Closing event for the 2025 Annual Meeting at Arnaud's restaurant. This event will be ticketed.

8639 Association of Black Anthropologists - Awards Ceremony & Party

Start Date: 11/22/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/22/25 11:59 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

ABA Awards Ceremony & Party 2025! Ashé Cultural Center 1712 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70113.

This is the annual awards ceremony for the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA). The awards ceremony is followed by a catered party. All ABA members are welcome!

8596 CUAA Distinguished Speaker: Desiree Fields, Geography, UC Berkeley -- "California Forever? Speculating on 'New Cities in the Wild Frontier'"

Start Date: 11/22/2025 7:30 PM **through** 11/22/2025 9:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Special Event

In the period between the Great Recession and the coronavirus pandemic, the ideology of technology as an engine for economic growth and rational instrument for addressing urban problems profoundly influenced approaches to urban governance. Tech leaders also became social and political elites whose status gives them an outsize voice in conversations about urban problems-and fuels their frustration with the norms and pace of the democratic process.

Today the tech sector is deeply implicated in projects of territorial control that give off "secessionist energy" (Slobodian, 2023). These projects far exceed what we might associate with smart urbanism or platform urbanism, mobilizing the logic of the zone to place their speculative political economic and development agendas beyond the reach of conventional governance and prevailing regulatory frameworks. While many new tech-led cities have failed or fizzled out, the underlying desire for a new urban frontier abides.

The urban utopias desired by tech elites are ideologically aligned with much of the second Trump administration's governing agenda. Could their experiments in city-building be edging closer to realization than previous failures might suggest? In this lecture, I draw on California Forever, one such effort in the San Francisco Bay Area, to speculate about the futures of tech-led cities in an era of immigration sweeps, the criminalization of unhoused people, and an unprecedented expansion

of federal surveillance. What urban forms might be concretized by these forces? How does the impossibility of living under these conditions help us search for the possible within the real?

[b]Bio:[/b]Desiree Fields is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography at University of California, Berkeley. She is an economic geographer and critical urban scholar. Her research program addresses how Wall Street and Silicon Valley are jointly transforming property relations, urbanization, and economic subjectivity. Fields is a trustee of the Urban Studies Foundation and an editor at Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space and Housing, Theory, and Society.

8563 Wenner-Gren Reception

Start Date: 11/22/2025 8:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 9:30 PM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom D (5th fl)

Type: Special Event

Reception with light refreshments. Come to meet other anthropologists, catch up with old friends, and celebrate the Foundation's ongoing support of anthropology.

8698 Reception -- Critical Urban Anthropology Reception - For CUAA Distinguished Speaker, CUAA Award Honorees, and Members

Start Date: 11/22/2025 9:00 PM **through** 11/22/2025 11:00 PM

Venue: Offsite

Type: Special Event

CUAA Reception in Honor of CUAA Distinguished Speaker Desiree Fields (Geography, UC Berkeley), CUAA 2025 Anthony Leeds Award Winner(s) for Best Book in Urban Anthropology, and Winners of Best Graduate Student Paper and Best Graduate Student Session prizes. Location to be announced at CUAA Annual Business Meeting, Friday, November 21.

Sunday, November 23, 2025

8836 Society for Visual Anthropology Film & Media Festival-- Day 5

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:00 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton

Type: Special Event

The Society for Visual Anthropology screens the best of ethnographic film at the annual SVA Film & Media Festival. The Festival is held as part of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, giving filmmakers and distributors broad access to an audience of thousands of anthropologists, educators, and other attendees.

Ethnographic film and media can be defined broadly as works that emerge through ethnographic fieldwork or that use, are informed by, illustrate, or evoke concepts and principles of anthropological theory, methods, or practice.

2025 SVA Film & Media Festival Directors:

Dr. Anna Neumann

Dr. Mariam Abazeri

8252 Anthropology and the Specters of Science 1

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists across many areas of inquiry have struggled to account for multiple forms of scientific knowledge, in particular, when working in interdisciplinary spaces or when negotiating data with findings from other sciences. Many have educated themselves to become competent in scientific worlds other than their own. Others have treated the sciences as phenomena to be studied, questioning scientific systems of knowledge as they have emerged from specific histories and ideologies, such as the Enlightenment, capitalism, or Cartesian dualism, exposing the discrimination, assumptions, and biases that saturate scientific discourses. Scholars of indigenous knowledge have juxtaposed cultural systems to show how vastly different knowledges emerge from unique histories and lifeways. In some cases, they have not only unsettled scientific truth but also leveraged anthropological awareness to contribute to scientific practice. Much of this work involves reflection on the limits of scientific findings, but also a deep engagement with it.

This panel seeks to explore tensions produced among the different sciences when in deep multi-disciplinary engagement. We start from the awareness that scientific knowledge permeates late modern life, but cannot address many aspects of human experience, such as aesthetics and ethics.

We invite reflection on the nature of interdisciplinarity, the sharing of methods and data, the making of some knowledges commensurable or protecting that which is incommensurable. We are particularly interested in phenomena that cannot easily be examined, isolated, or quantified, especially phenomena that haunt the sciences, teasing the boundaries of what can be known.

We are also interested in what remains when scientific institutions are faced with public and policy challenges to their epistemologies and practices. Scientific knowledges and expertise are criticized, among other reasons,

Will current challenges encourage us to reconsider our differences and strengthen our commonalities or will attempts to create mutual understandings disappear in a scramble to preserve the status quo?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Rachel Prentice, Cornell University, Luisa Cortesi, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Luisa Cortesi, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Rachel Prentice, Cornell University, Rachel Prentice, Cornell University, Rebecca Carlson, Alejandra Osejo, Rice University, Department of Anthropology, Aline Bravo

Discussant: Luisa Cortesi, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Art of Feel: Knowing Bodies in Equestrian Worlds

Harmony between horse and rider is one of the highest aims of dressage, the equestrian discipline dedicated to doing precise figures. Over more than two centuries of development, classical dressage has become an applied science of equine movement. The stated goal of dressage's ruling body, the Fédération Equestre Internationale, is for the horse to be a "happy athlete," who is able and willing to do what the rider asks. With long-term training, riders develop visual and sensory skills that enable them to assess and alter equine movement, ideally to improve the animal's long-term health as a riding horse. They often describe the development of "feel" for the horse and his movement. In recent years, riders increasingly rely on the science of biomechanics to understand subtle and not-so-subtle movement issues that plague their animals. But biomechanics cannot adjudicate the horse's happiness or the harmony of horse and rider. Further, biomechanics may displace the highly trained and subtle art of discerning equine movement that trainers develop over years. This paper examines the movement of biomechanics into equestrian sports in the United States, showing how recognized scientific knowledges mesh with, change and may displace applied sciences. Building on the phenomenology of movement, this paper examines how equestrians learn to see, hear and feel equine movement and how the science of biomechanics meshes with more traditional approaches.

Presenter(s): Rachel Prentice

Collecting Knowledge: The Role of Hobbyist Collectors in

Botanical Research

Botany has been an imperial science since its inception. Explorers and colonizers hunted plants across the globe, transporting them to botanical gardens to extract commercial value—often leaving behind plunder and ecological destruction. Indigenous knowledge was frequently erased. As a result, scientific research on such species often relied on the affective engagement of their new European growers. This paper analyzes the central role—both past and present—played by hobbyist aroid collectors in the production of scientific knowledge about the Araceae family, which includes many of today's popular houseplants. What role do plant enthusiasts play in scientific knowledge production about tropical plants? How instrumental is their affective and embodied engagement with vegetal beings in creating new scientific insights? Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Europe and the USA between 2023 and 2024, I argue that lay enthusiasts are vital to supporting the taxonomic work of botanists. I demonstrate the deep entanglement of scientists and amateurs. I seek to understand hobbyist collectors through the lens of botanists'

views and relationships with them. This approach reveals similarities and differences between the groups and shows how their engagements with plants are mutually dependent. This paper shows that scientific knowledge about plants is deeply rooted in practices of care and emotional connection. Affect haunts botany.

Presenter(s): Rachel Prentice

Kinning Data: Residual Life and Relational Logics in Bioscientific Practice

In a Japanese biomedical laboratory focused on mouse genetics and human disease, making data is a practice of selective clarity—one that renders some relations visible while bracketing others. Drawing on two years of fieldwork, this paper explores how scientists transform animal bodies into digital traces, structuring spreadsheets, experimental readouts, and breeding records. These practices hinge on logics of recognition and exclusion that distill and produce epistemic order: shaping what counts as data and structuring how relations between organisms, researchers, and technologies are recognized, positioned, or excluded.

I draw on Signe Howell's concept of kinning as a way of tracing how biomedical data is organized through active, often hierarchical, logics of relatedness. From genotyped animal "family trees" to institutional lineages of researchers and the circulation of materials and experimental practices, kinning is shapes connection and belonging across multiple scales. These practices also generate residues—question marks, blank spaces, and informal know-how—that persist beyond formal representation. These spectral elements mark the limits of what bioscientific systems can stabilize, contain, or render meaningful. Grounded in the internal logics of scientific practice, this paper calls for interdisciplinary attention to what exceeds its conceptual and operational boundaries: to trace the ghosts, gaps, and entanglements that remain after data is made.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Carlson

Listening to the River's Others: An Anthropological Exploration of Hippos, Science, and Coexistence in Colombia

Forty years ago, drug trafficker Pablo Escobar introduced four young hippos to Colombia as part of his private zoo in the Magdalena River basin. Following his death and the abandonment of the ranch, the descendants of these hippos migrated downstream. Today, at least 169 hippos inhabit the river. These unusual creatures, considered by some as living relics of drug trafficking, have spurred significant concern among scientists and policymakers regarding the current and future risks posed by hippo interactions with humans, native fauna, and the river's ecosystems. Scientists have projected a potential population of 1,500 hippos in the Magdalena River within the coming decades. They predict potentially devastating changes to the river and its environs and fear the possibility of hippo attacks on river-dependent communities. In 2022, the Colombian government declared hippos an invasive species, enabling reproductive control measures, including controlled hunting.

This paper explores the scientific practices rooted in models and algorithms that shape public policy and management strategies. This collaborative work includes contributions from a visual artist, a sound artist, and a biologist specializing in aquatic ecosystems. We aimed to explore alternatives to projected catastrophes. Utilizing ecoacoustics, hydroacoustic, and artistic tools, we crafted narratives about hippos and other beings, exploring risk, the limits of risk-based approaches and possibilities for coexistence.

Presenter(s): Alejandra Osejo

Mapping Ecologies in the Wake of Hydrological Disaster

What happens when scientific representations of nature collide with the lived experiences of disaster-affected communities? This paper explores the epistemological tensions and political stakes involved in mapping the ecologies of the dry Copiapó River in Chile, where the absence of water disrupts both physical and conceptual infrastructures. I examine Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as sites where dominant scientific paradigms encounter alternative, often marginalized ways of knowing. I explore the political and ethical implications of open mapping and counter-mapping practices in the Global South, based on a collaborative experience with the dry Copiapó River communities (agricultural unions, Indigenous communities, and scientists). This mapping process challenges static hydrological representations and foregrounds rivers' mobility, uncertainty, and affective dimensions. These practices contest dominant scientific narratives and open possibilities for interdisciplinary engagement between anthropology, geography, and environmental science. At stake are technical representations and planetary power dynamics embedded in whose knowledge counts and how space is governed. This paper contributes to conversations on the limits of scientific knowledge, especially when confronting the experiences of disaster that resist quantification. It asks: What becomes visible when different knowledge systems are layered through mapping? What remains incommensurable?

Presenter(s): Aline Bravo

Discussion

3877 Ethnographic Discomfort: The Political and Ethical Project of Centering Experience in Research, Collaboration, and Writing

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Our work (re)turns to the question of experience. Experience has generated a contested terrain in social science. Scott (1991) observed how "What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political" (797). How should we conceptualize evidence in our work as anthropologists? In our research and practice, we prioritize the primacy of lived experience as essential. The immediacy of experience in our research and writing is a decided decolonial and feminist approach to both. Drawing on our work across

adolescent mental health, bioethics, hidden labor, and contested processes of recovery, we make explicit the value of lived experience and prioritize it as a feminist method in our shared knowledge production and advocacy work.

This panel invites us to sit in the scholarly discomfort with the unfinishedness of experience (Biehl and Locke 2017). We push each other and ourselves to consider: In what ways is experience made equitably and ethically explicit and when is it rendered invisible? Whose experience is (de)centered and when? What can individual experience tell us about what is shared? And how can we or must we find value in experience when it cannot? In colonial contexts that haunt, is there such a thing as a finished experience? How do structures interplay with lived experience in ways that they become more than structure, fundamentally orienting and organizing our engagement with the world (Jenkins 1991, 2015)?

By centering experience, we highlight the moral commitment to understand structures, institutions, ideologies, and wider dynamics of power as they are lived.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Angela Leocata, Stanford University

Chair: Ellen Kozelka, University of Vermont, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ellen Kozelka, University of Vermont, Department of Anthropology, Angela Leocata, Stanford University, Giselle Sanchez, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Julia Brown, University of California, San Francisco, Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine

Discussant: Janis Jenkins, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Mary-Jo Good, Harvard University

Presentation(s): (Re)Considering Recovery: Temporality, Healing, and Real Life after Addiction Treatment in the United States and México.

Cultural understandings of addiction, proper treatment, and what recovery should look like vary dramatically between persons, institutions, and nation-states. These differences can radically alter the life and experience of those who encounter them, as these models and experiences through them are tied to broader state constructions of affect (e.g. Jenkins 1991). For example, community-based, residential addiction treatment centers in Tijuana, MX all have distinct formulations of what recovery looks like within their particular therapeutic model. However, this does not always match inpatient conceptions of recovery, either while in treatment or when they leave. This paper asks: what is (successful) recovery? Who has the authority to decide? How does the lived experience of residential treatment influence this? After reviewing the institutional model for recovery at one 12 Step center, I discuss the everyday experience of time for three women. I focus on how their individual experiences within the same treatment model translate into differential recovery trajectories. By exploring how hopes, dreams, and setbacks (e.g. lapses) factor into their experience of time, conceptions of self, and ideas of future possibility, I examine the healing process as moral laboratory in which inpatients struggle to enact morally valued personhood

(Mattingly 2014). In doing so, I present an argument for a more individualized understanding of what counts as recovery, in Tijuana and beyond.

Presenter(s): Ellen Kozelka

In the Absence of Expectation: The Gendered Labor of Waiting and the Category of Complaint

In this paper, I consider the gendered labor of waiting among kin in Valadares, Brazil's emigrant capital. Focusing on mothers who wait for departed children and partners, I argue that waiting often occurs without expectation of return. It could happen, but is also understood and navigated as part of a political ethos (Jenkins 1991, 2015) shaped by departure, loss, and unrealized returns—an ethos characterized by this precise sense of uncertainty and contradiction.

I explore complaint as a gendered social practice that, as Callard (2021) notes, is intimately political. Weaving the personal and collective—yet stripped of any qualifier, resolution, or antidote of suggested action—the complaint is a category of speech and practice that guides the gendered labor of waiting. Even if not for someone, something, or some object—even in the absence of expectation—the complaint holds together the ambiguities and contradictions that characterize this ethos and invites engagement with a politics shaped by haunting. These politics, as Rahimi frames, are animated by a "yearning for fairness [...] and moral coherence" that defies legal or institutional solutions (2025, 1). The complaint is intimately political and yet allows politics to remain necessarily unresolved. It evokes un-lived but real experience—transmitted, anticipated, and embodied—that, within this political ethos, grapples with the possibility of return: felt, labored for, and awaited, yet ultimately left open.

Presenter(s): Angela Leocata

Coraje and Resentment: Adolescent Lived Experience, Evil Spirits, and the Impress of Political Grief

In the United States, the prevalence of adolescent depression and anxiety has increased in the past several years mirroring larger global trends (Daly, 2021; GBD, 2022). However, the lived experiences of Latinx adolescents living within social environments marked by several forms of structural violence (racial, gender, economic) remains largely limited. In this paper, I draw upon four years of team-based, ethnographic research on Latinx adolescent mental health in the U.S./Mexico border. I explore the ways in which feelings of depression, anxiety, and anger emerge as emotional traces left behind by familial, social, and political forms of abandonment and betrayal. For adolescents in this study, seen and unseen forces, evil spirits, and noxious energies bear the capacity to influence everyday interpersonal relationships and emotional health. In this way, adolescents express mental health conditions not simply as a matter of illness and distress, but rather as intimately connected to the groundswell of spiritual, emotional, and affective life. By attending to the points of view of early adolescents (10–13-year-olds), this research contributes to our understanding of the ways adolescents make sense of the struggles they face in their everyday lives, the feelings associated with the navigation of insecure environments, and the intersections between developmental processes and moral experience.

Presenter(s): Giselle Sanchez

Lived experience, ethical frameworks and public engagement in clinical research

Lived experience is challenging to include in ethical frameworks for biomedical research because, unlike clinical measures of safety and efficacy, lived experience cannot be quantified. Nonetheless, a clinical approach to benefit-to-risk calculus does not account for research subjects' decision-making processes and values, which are always contingent upon relational and political experience beyond the research setting. A further challenge is engaging a wider public to consider how biomedical research and ethical frameworks represent, or fail to represent, shared values. This paper first considers the perspectives of individuals participating in or overseeing prenatal genetic research, including the seeking of prenatal genetic information and the seeking of experimental in utero treatments. It then considers how these perspectives can be most constructively shared with the public, to improve communication of experiences and values and overcome the abstract nature of ethical frameworks and clinical measures.

Presenter(s): Julia Brown

2642 Towards a Critical Anthropology of Impunity Pt. 1

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Hauntings and ghosts evoke unresolved past events that are often violent in nature. These unresolved or unacknowledged events can be described through the language of law and the absence of law or "impunity."

Since the war between Israel and Hamas began in 2023, "impunity" has circulated in global political and legal discourses in a wide variety of contexts from protests to the International Criminal Court. More recently, "impunity" has entered into popular discourse in the United States as the Trump administration continues to pursue a political agenda that functions outside of or beyond "the law."

Historically, impunity has been taken to mean the absence of legal or punitive redress for violence in the global south, however there is an urgent need to think about impunity theoretically and ethnographically in diverse contexts. Building on the recent work in establishing an anthropology of "justice" (Brunnegger 2019; Clarke 2019; Cooper 2018; Greenberg 2018), this two-part panel brings together anthropologists working on the question of impunity in diverse contexts and geographies.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Claire Branigan

Chair: Alana Ackerman

Presenter(s): Claire Branigan, Kalyani Menon, DePaul University, Victoria Sanford, CUNY, Herbert H Lehman College, William Alexander, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Jessica Greenberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Intimate force of Feminicidal Impunity: Towards a Sociality of Seeking Justice

Impunity is widely recognized as the defining trait of femicide in Latin America. Yet, less is known about what impunity means to those who are most affected. In this paper I offer an ethnographic account of the ways in which impunity impacts lives on an interpersonal level. I present "the intimate force of impunity" to demonstrate how the absence of redress can destroy interpersonal relationships long after a femicide has taken place. I then show the ways in which family activists against femicide have worked to circumvent this impunity by fostering new forms of kinship with one another. Family activism has been critiqued for its apolitical optics, and reification of traditional gender and familial roles, yet, in this paper I show the how family activists against femicide in Argentina are far more dynamic as they generate new forms of sociality based upon a shared experience of suffering and militancy.

Presenter(s): Claire Branigan

Configurations of Power, Impunity, and Muslim Life in Modi's India

What does impunity mean in a context where god is constructed as the ultimate sovereign?

While conducting fieldwork with diverse groups of Muslims in Old Delhi, I often heard people say, "Allah is the Sovereign of Sovereigns" in conversations about the difficulties facing Muslims in contemporary India. In a country where Hindu supremacy is ascendent, where Muslims live with the constant specter of violence from Hindu vigilantes who seem to act with impunity, and where they are increasingly dislocated and disenfranchised by a Hindu majoritarian state, my interlocutors insisted that everything in their lives was a manifestation of Allah's will and that, ultimately, justice would be done. I analyze what such statements tell us about understandings of impunity, and configurations of sovereign power and agency amongst Old Delhi's Muslims. I suggest that these narratives not only undermine the current regime by refusing to recognize its ability to determine their lives, they also indicate an alternative temporality for justice and redressal. These narratives position Muslims in a divine landscape where Allah is the sovereign agent whose power can be channeled to change their circumstances, make place for themselves and their communities, and hope for a more just future.

Presenter(s): Kalyani Menon

Friends Who Disappear: Memory, Justice and Moral Reparation After the Guatemalan Genocide
Guatemala has the dubious distinction of inventing the political condition of "disappearance" in late 20th century Latin America. In Guatemala's long history of repressing its own citizenry, forced disappearance is rooted in the 1954 US-backed overthrow of democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz and was used throughout the military dictatorships that followed. This paper traces state deployment of forced disappearance on opposition leaders in Guatemala from the 1966 mass disappearance of members of the Guatemalan Workers Party to the 1980 mass disappearance of union leaders in order to understand the systematic use of forced disappearance by a state so fragile that it disappeared children in the 1980s. Specifically, I consider the case of Dr. Marvyn Perez

who was forcibly disappeared and tortured by Guatemalan security forces when he was 14. More than 30 years later, he continues to seek justice for himself and others who did not survive.

Presenter(s): Victoria Sanford

Polluting Industries and the Production of De Facto Impunity

Using the contamination of the Cape Fear River basin in eastern North Carolina by Dupont/Chemours as an ethnographic case study, this paper reflects on the production of corporate shields of de facto impunity in community struggles for environmental justice. In the relationship between time and redress, corporations notoriously employ delay tactics in lawsuits. Timelines of accountability and remediation are also distorted by changes in corporate structures and spinoff operations. With regards to impunity as it relates to bodies of evidence, there is robust anthropological research on the ways in which environmental and health impact data can be manipulated and how it can be challenged. While local communities embroiled in the fight for environmental justice are forging alliances near and far to counter the power of corporate impunity, the global, national, and state-level sociopolitical dimensions of the problem are complex and shifting. In November 2023, the United Nations declared contamination of the Cape Fear a human rights violation. A little more than a year later, the proposed US EPA rule that would have set national limits on the discharge of PFAS "forever chemicals" in waterways was rescinded and now leaves it up to states to regulate industrial pollution.

Presenter(s): William Alexander

Discussion

3783 Ethnography of the University: Student Life

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony M

Type: Oral Presentation Session

What is a University? This may seem like a simple question, but answers may be surprisingly divergent. Indeed, if we reflect deeply on the word "university", we may find it difficult to define-it has many diverse connotations: higher education institutions, students, academia, etc. The Ethnography of the University project was founded by Professor Nancy Ablemann at the University of Illinois, and Professor Tania Li initiated a parallel project at the University of Toronto in 2012. The Ethnography of the University involves analyzing the University itself: as an institution and as a system. To conduct such an ethnography, a theme is assigned every year. The theme for 2024 is "Student Life".

"Student Life" is a normalized concept within the contemporary university system. As a concept, it indicates an institutional-wide attention on students' academic as well as non-academic life - "well-being"- within the university. At the University of Toronto, as in many other higher education institutions, this concept is realized institutionally as a student services department. As a department, it indicates a new form of "management", or potentially "governance", towards the

students: their extracurricular activities become "called up", visible, and categorized as a newly formed "category" that is managed by so-called "higher-education" experts and professionals (Li 2024). It aims to facilitate learning, enhance well-being, minimize stress, and promote a healthy and productive university experience (Li 2024). Student Life's website (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/>) advertises the department's diverse programs and wide-ranging services, making it appear to be a dedicated service sector just for students. Yet, most University of Toronto students are either unclear about this department or have no idea about it.

So, what is Student Life and what does it do? Is it just a new form of student governing apparatus, or is it actually "for" students? How did this department develop these student programs and what "problems" are they intending to address? Furthermore, who are the staff working within, and what and how do they work? In our presentation panel, we use ethnographic methods to examine three sectors of the Student Life Department at the University of Toronto: 1) the Central and Administration Sector, 2) the Learning Strategy Support Sector, and 3) the Student Club and Leadership Development Sector. We collect and analyze the stories and experiences of staff and students involved in the operations of Student Life to understand what Student Life means to them. And, in doing so, we propose potential rethinking towards the University as such. This project can be both thought-provoking for other peers/scholars to reflect on the current education system and be pedagogically inspiring for other Anthropology professionals to know and teach about undergraduate-level ethnography.

Section: Council on Anthropology and Education

Organizer: Lukey Lu, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Yunshan Li

Chair: Yunshan Li, Richard Wu, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Lukey Lu, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Yunshan Li, Yihang Xu, Richard Wu, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Duofei Liu, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Daisy Sanchez Villavicencio

Discussant: Yihang Xu

Presentation(s): The Undocile mind: 'coping' with neoliberal education?

This is an ethnographic research about the staffs in Student Life's Center of Learning Strategy Support (CLSS). There is a 'gap' inside the neoliberal education system: it constructs an idealized 'successful student' image but does not provide any clues on how to become 'successful'. Helping students achieve academic success is the work of these Learning Strategists. Examining their counter-hegemonic stories in the workplace, this paper suggests that their way of navigating the contradictions is a strategic use of the 'gap' in 'rebellious' against the neoliberal education system. Since neoliberal education does not regulate the way to become 'successful', Learning Strategists 'sneak' their resistance forces into the regime by: 1) suggesting a collaborative relationship with the student rather than leading them, 2) providing alternative ways of thinking about the student subjects, and 3) affectively passing the concept of 'help' and inviting students to iterate the practices. Besides, this research also denaturalize individuals' 'docile body': no one is naturally born with a docile body/mind and 'willing' to be disciplined.

Broadly speaking, this research is about navigating contradictions. No matter how hard we critique neoliberalism, we are unavoidably neoliberal subjects. Through my research, I wish to offer everyone an alternative lens to reflect on ourselves inside the neoliberal regime: as neoliberal subjects, how should we live inside the paradox?

Presenter(s): Lukey Lu

Student Engagement: Concretized Student Leadership

This research explored the function of Student Engagement (SE), a section under the University of Toronto's Student Life Department, in concretizing student club leadership development. Under the historical background of newly-emerged formal leadership training, by employing ethnographic interviews, document analysis, and limited participant observation, the author explored the necessity and the operation mechanism of this program. The research found that the practice of Student Engagement includes three core dimensions: 1) individualized leadership, which emphasizes autonomous exploration and experiential learning; 2) concretized leadership, which turns abstract concepts into applicable skills; and 3) connective leadership, which enhances inter-student group cooperation by shared spaces and general events. The project design of SE integrates student feedback, theoretical frameworks, and professional expertise, reflecting the increasing complexity trend in higher education institutions. The findings emphasize the role of student engagement as a bridge between university policies and student needs, constructing leadership development as a process that is both supporting and empowering. The professionalization of leadership training reflects the university's emphasis on students' holistic growth and highlights the increasing necessity of structured leadership training in modern universities.

Presenter(s): Yunshan Li

The "Identity Crisis" in the Work of Learning Strategy: An Ethnographic Glance at UofT's Fragmented Support Landscape

What does it mean to say "learning how to learn" at one of the world's most academically demanding universities—and what tensions arise when this mandate is both pastoral and institutionally constrained? Drawing on four months of ethnographic fieldwork at the University of Toronto's Centre for Learning Strategy Support (CLSS), this paper examines how learning strategists negotiate their identities within a fragmented and neoliberal higher education system.

Tracing CLSS's evolution from holistic academic-psychological support to its current focus on metacognitive strategies, this shift reflects broader institutional trends: the "rendering technical" of complex student struggles and the fragmentation of care in the context of a diversifying student population. While learning strategists remain committed to providing individualized, affective support, students are ultimately responsible for navigating a fragmented system that extends beyond their professional boundaries. The resulting identity crisis for those professionals is symptomatic of a broader transformation: the systemic imperative to shape all actors as self-managing agents within an increasingly distributed infrastructure.

Presenter(s): Yihang Xu

Power through Professionalization: Power Dynamics in Student Peer Mentorship

At the University of Toronto, Mentorship and Peer Programs is an institutional division that, among its other responsibilities, designs, organizes, and implements textual resources as well as interactive workshops for training students to become quasi-professionalized peer mentors. Based on ethnographic research using interviews, immersed observation, and document analysis, I argue that professionalization is the general process whereby student mentoring relations are incorporated into U of T's regime of governance. More specifically, I argue that, from a subjective perspective and at the discursive level, "peer mentorship" tends to be experienced by its practitioners as an exercise of a professional negotiation between the exercise of what Michel Foucault calls pastoral and governmental powers. However, from an objective perspective and at the practical level, "peer mentorship" is in effect a technical management of student social relations: Student peer mentorship is rendered a technical object used as a solution to a host of problems perceived by various administrative units in the university. Theoretically, viewed as a case study on how power operates, this work may contribute to an elaboration of a particular configuration in which different modes of power interact in what Foucault calls the "witches' brew".

Presenter(s): Richard Wu

Understanding the Experience of Neurodivergent Students in Higher Education

This study proposes an investigation into the experiences of neurodivergent students in higher education, with a focus on how institutional accommodations are accessed, interpreted, and navigated. Drawing on the principles of Universal Design for Learning and inclusive pedagogy, the research challenges deficit-based models of neurodivergence by foregrounding students' lived realities. Using a mixed-methods survey distributed among undergraduate students — including both neurodivergent and neurotypical participants — the study aims to explore how factors such as stigma, diagnosis, administrative barriers, and cultural background shape access to academic support. It also includes insights from interviews with a neurological team lead at the university's Accessibility Services, offering a complementary institutional perspective. Special attention is given to the experiences of international students and those without formal diagnoses, whose needs often fall outside standardized support systems. By incorporating both student and institutional viewpoints, the study seeks to identify systemic gaps, highlight underrepresented voices, and promote more culturally responsive and flexible approaches to accessibility. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to ongoing conversations on educational equity and to support a shift toward inclusive structures that recognize neurodiversity as a form of human variation rather than a condition to be accommodated.

Presenter(s): Duofei Liu

Student Life's Strategic Plan: an Ethnography of Organizational Culture in Higher Education

Social institutions, such as universities, both engage with and continuously construct values and practices, creating a symbolic identity and subjectivities, from student subjects to professional employee subjects. My ethnographic research at Student Life (i.e. the division of Strategic Planning and Annual Reports) examines the practices in the production of mission statements and reports and the rationality/mode of reasoning applied to making the abstract goals enunciated in SL's Strategic Plan actionable, legible, and measurable. I examines three modes of reasoning of particular importance. The first concerned fungibility: the large scope of services offered and the complex needs of students should and could be firmly categorized to meet the criteria required by government/stakeholder economic policies. The second mode foregrounded a link between substance and form: curated language and imagery could successfully reflect SL's intrinsic values. The third mode hinged on professional training: the skills required to write a strategic plan or conduct assessments of organizational changes could be attained through formal academic and professional training. By categorizing diverse services to align with funding policies, crafting narratives and visuals to convey coherence and inclusivity, and cultivating expertise through professional training, SL exemplifies how institutions navigate the pressures of accountability to students and stakeholders while maintaining its legitimacy.

Presenter(s): Daisy Sanchez Villavicencio

Discussion

2467 The Anti-Refugee Machine: Interpreting Global Migration Control

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel presents a subset of papers published in a special issue of *Migration & Society* (vol 8, 2025) and currently under contract as a book with Berghahn Books (2026). The Anti-Refugee Machine: Interpreting Global Migration Control addresses how interventions that purport to address the root causes of migration and regulate mobility worsen the conditions of displacement and further undermine the political and legal basis for recognition and rights. Informed by ethnographic case studies that span Somalia, Libya, Eritrea and Italy; Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon; Central America and the US-Mexico borderlands, we offer a novel interpretive frame to think with in relationship to current analytical and explanatory approaches. The title of the panel (and journal and book) riffs on the late James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), which examined how development interventions aggravated poverty by depoliticizing its causes and producing various "side effects." Our panel and project illustrates how global migration control regimes exacerbate migration while eliding its political, economic, and historical foundations in accumulation-by-dispossession, further criminalizing mobility, empowering governments to detain and deport, encouraging trafficking and smuggling, inflaming xenophobia, entrenching dispossession and exploitation, and pre-empting political belonging, legal rights, and recognition. The ARM may also be manipulated by actors with conflicting and varied agendas, from persecuting governments engaging in migration control partnerships, petty bureaucrats, and police and security forces, to

exploitative labor and containment development schemes, to migrating people themselves, who are systematically converted from possible refugees to putative economic migrants (i.e., not-refugees) by the binary coding processes of the ARM. That is, the machine is "anti-refugee" because its complex operations and side effects undermine the exceptional category established in the Refugee Convention that, for better or worse, remains essential to the "right to have rights" for tens of millions of displaced people. Our approach illustrates the many complex intersections – both past and present – of Global North interventions, policies, and priorities that aim to minimize Global South mobility and maintain northern hegemony. However, trajectories of power do not correspond easily to geographical and even geopolitical restrictions, and the ARM framework allows us to see how asymmetrically empowered actors, including in countries of origin, which are largely in the Global South (but not exclusively) leverage the machine for their own interests. The Anti-Refugee Machine (ARM) is an invitation to analyze migration today through a wide range of empirical, ethnographic cases that share patterned histories, similarities, and relationships, and to address ways that migrants and non-migrants alike disrupt its operations.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Tricia Redeker-Hepner, Arizona State University, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Chair: Tricia Redeker-Hepner, Arizona State University, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Presenter(s): Tricia Redeker-Hepner, Arizona State University, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Roberto Barrios, University of New Orleans, Department of Anthropology, Abby Wheatley, Fiori Berhane, Malay Firoz, Arizona State University, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Lupe Flores, University of Washington

Presentation(s): Introducing the Anti-Refugee Machine

In this paper, we develop the Anti-Refugee Machine (ARM) framework and metaphor to illustrate how interventions intended to address forced migration often reinforce existing power structures. Beginning with an ethnographic case study on Eritrea, we draw on Ferguson's Anti-Politics Machine (1994) to argue that rather than alleviating poverty or addressing the root causes of migration, Global North interventions empower elites and bureaucratic institutions, thereby perpetuating the conditions that drive migration. The ARM operates as a complex apparatus rooted in the historical trajectory of capitalist modernity that entangles various actors and interests across the globe while deepening inequalities and undermining the political and legal frameworks designed to protect refugees. Situating the panel's case studies, the introductory paper is also a call to action, urging readers to recognize the systemic injustices embedded in the migration control apparatus and to consider strategies for resistance and reform.

Presenter(s): Tricia Redeker-Hepner

The Reflexive Subaltern History of Central America–US Informal Migration

Contemporary discourse on the part of the US State Department and immigration authorities represents informal migration from Central America as a transgression of dubious and potentially criminal subjects who assail the United States. Such a representation relies on a memory that

draws a purposeful blind eye to the history of colonial extraction and post-colonial "development" that has marginalized and brutalized Central America's indigenous populations and working poor, as well as US involvement in sustaining and enhancing the root causes of informal migration. This paper asks how we can narrate the history of informal migration's root causes in Central America, and how such a narrative illuminates the operations of the Anti-Refugee Machine in this part of the world.

Presenter(s): Roberto Barrios

Deadly Seascapes: Navigating the Anti-Refugee Machine in the Central Mediterranean

In this paper, I bring together the Autonomy of Migration (AOM) approach with the Anti-Refugee Machine (ARM) framework to examine the lived experience of migrants rescued in the Central Mediterranean and disembarked in Lampedusa, an Italian island between Tunisia and Sicily. I contend that the Mediterranean Sea is transformed into a deadly weapon through restrictive immigration policies, militarized policing, and enforcement measures to manage migrant mobilities. However, in this context—where migrants risk death to continue life—I also argue that migrant journeys cannot simply be read through a politics of death. Migrants navigate and challenge their exclusion by activating and utilizing the complex rescue and reception apparatus managed by Italy and the EU, and sometimes effectively steer the ARM for their own benefit.

Presenter(s): Abby Wheatley

"Integration is a Gift from God": Blackness, Externalization, and the Figure of the Refugee

Focusing on the case of Italy and border externalization mechanisms in the Horn of Africa, this paper argues that refugeehood has become interpellated with Blackness in the Mediterranean world and beyond. Departing from integration discourse and bringing together the Black Mediterranean and Anti-Refugee Machine frameworks, I demonstrate how the move to elide the refugee category with Blackness has attenuated violence, disenfranchisement, and mechanisms of preemptive detention against Black Africans and other racially marked groups. Moreover, externalization policies have fundamentally altered broader institutional policies, making meaningful integration almost impossible to achieve in either the Global North or South. Refugee integration is a "gift from God" insofar as it maintains the categorical exceptionalism that constitutes the category.

Presenter(s): Fiori Berhane

Incubating Futures: Temporal Violence, Durable Solutions, and the Anti-Refugee Machine

Incarnations of humanitarian-development policies linking refugee productivity and self-reliance in the Global South have circulated in the international aid sector for decades but have reemerged in response to concerns about the refugee "crisis" in the Global North. Proponents have referred to these approaches as "incubation." Focusing on Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, we juxtapose the success story told about incubation with the failure of these programs to secure rights and protections. We utilize a temporal analysis to raise questions about whose ends are

ultimately achieved through these policies and argue that incubation fails at its stated objectives but succeeds as part of the Anti-Refugee Machine.

Presenter(s): Malay Firoz

Co-author(s): Nathalie Peutz, Jennifer Riggan

"That Machine Does Not Want Us": CBP One™ and Migrant Im/mobility at the Extended Mexico-US Borderlands

This chapter examines how restrictive U.S. asylum policies and digital technologies at Mexico's extended border shape migrant experiences. Focusing on the CBP One™ app and humanitarian parole programs, it explores how these tools exacerbate violence and waiting. The chapter theorizes CBP One™ as part of the Anti-Refugee Machine, producing automated inspections and digital deterrence. While migrant bodies are immobilized, their data circulates freely through exclusionary infrastructures. Ethnographic fieldwork reveals acts of techno-disobedience, as migrants resist and critique the digital technologies imposed upon them. These dynamics expose the dehumanizing consequences of tech-driven migration control.

Presenter(s): Lupe Flores

3289 The Real Crisis of Anthropology: A reflection on the limits of various disciplinary exorcisms to date, and the problem with anthropology on the moon

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

It's no secret that anthropology fancies itself in constant crisis. More to the point, these crises are serial, parallel across the various subfields, and often involve some manner of exorcism. After all, at root, most of these crises involve a sober reckoning with what disfavoured disciplinary ancestors did, and a struggle to free ourselves from their demonic legacies. We, as a discipline, are in a state of perpetual and vexatious haunting that we don't quite know what to do with.

This panel convenes the contributors from a forthcoming edited volume from the School for Advanced Research Press called, *The Real Crisis of Anthropology*. The contributors come from all subfields of anthropology and will briefly explain the crisis in their subfield, offer notes on how and why these crises are often parallel, and then offer a vision of an unpossessed discipline, one that has finally shaken its crisis doom loop. This vision offers a roadmap for cross-field collaboration, and a vision of a professional association with a clearer and more active mandate to advocate for the professional wellbeing of anthropologists.

Michael Scroggins and Daniel Souleles -- "Crisis is our Brand;" "Masking Culutre;" "Anthropology on the Moon"

Agustin Fuentes -- "What the Hell is Biocultural? A Crisis of Disarticulation in Anthropology"

Nicola Sharratt -- "Lessons for the Future: Archaeology of and as Crisis Response"

Elizabeth Falconi and Steven Black -- "Indigenous Languages, Crisis Discourses, and the Past and Future of (Linguistic) Anthropology"

Aja Lans -- "The Black Skeleton in Crisis: The Grammar of American Physical Anthropology"

Jess Beck -- "Stubborn Architecture: The Jobs Crisis in Academic Anthropology"

Jennifer Van Tiem -- "All of this is a Choice: Two Interviews on Applying Anthropology"

Bernard Perley -- "The Un/Certainty Syndrome: Anthropology's Crises in the Making."

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Daniel Souleles, Copenhagen Business School, Michael Scroggins, University of California, Los Angeles

Presenter(s): Nicola Sharratt, Georgia State University, Elizabeth Falconi, University of West Georgia, Department of Anthropology, Steven Black, Georgia State University, Department of Anthropology, Aja Lans, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Jess Beck, University of Cambridge, Jennifer Van Tiem, Bernard Perley, University of British Columbia

Discussant: Agustin Fuentes, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

2684 Tackling the Everyday: Race and Nation in Big-Time College Football

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bonaparte

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable will celebrate and introduce readers to one of the first ethnographies about college football, *Tackling the Everyday: Race and Family in Big-Time College Football* (University of California Press, 2025). Author and Black feminist anthropologist Tracie Canada presents on the research that led to her richly detailed and theoretically accessible ethnography about the extraordinary, but also ordinary, lives of Black college football. This book shows how college football programs particularly harm the young Black men who are overrepresented on gridirons across the country. Although coaches and universities constantly invoke the misleading "football family" narrative, this book describes how a brotherhood among Black players operates alongside their caring mothers, who support them on and off the field. Canada introduces the theoretical concepts of corporeal concern and kindred care to orient readers to the contradictory logics that shape American college football and continue to entice the families and players that participate in it. By centering Black athletes, *Tackling the Everyday* discusses a niche population that often receives heightened public attention yet is hardly understood from an ethnographic, person-centered perspective. This roundtable brings together cultural and Black feminist anthropologists to situate this text within urgent anthropological discourse around race and racism, care and kin,

order and power, and violence and injury. With over four million participants in football and over five million viewers of collegiate football every year in the United States, Canada invites readers to be critical of the sport and challenge the American obsession with such a dangerous and exploitative sport. In relation to this year's theme, Tackling the Everyday, exemplifies that the enduring legacy of anti-Black racism rooted in slavery's afterlife is not long gone. This timely text reveals how systemic exploitation and plantation logics continue to harm Black bodies in modern sports institutions in visible and invisible ways.

Section: Association of Black Anthropologists

Organizer: Chelsey R. Carter, Yale University, Laurence Ralph, Princeton University

Presenter(s): Lee D Baker, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Todne Thomas , Adia Benton, Northwestern University, Department of Anthropology, Tracie Canada, Duke University, Department of Cultural Anthropology

4494 The Enduring Lives of Museum Collections: Approaches to Care at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has a long history of collecting people, objects, art, animals, plants, organisms, earth, and documents, and capturing people, places, and events through images, sound recordings, and written descriptions. These collections are housed in units across campus and during their tenure at the university have been used, modified, dispersed, moved, neglected, misplaced, forgotten, found again, rehoused, and displayed. Such collections have historically been treated as though dead or extinct, or otherwise deprived of their agency. More recent frameworks for collections emphasize practices of care, highlighting the continued relationships and interactions between the people, beings, and objects in collections and those professionals who care for them. Collections professionals at the University of Illinois prioritize such care-based approaches to the people, beings, objects, and archives with which we work. Today, there are multiple units on campus working to address these harmful histories and to reimage the lives of the people, beings, objects, and records that make up the collections that are in the university's care. In this roundtable, faculty and staff in the University of Illinois Archives, Department of Anthropology, NAGPRA Office, and Spurlock Museum of World Cultures discuss approaches to responsible stewardship and the future we are working towards for the collections within our units.

Historically, museums are places where objects and art go to die. They are locked up away from communities for the sake of preservation, to save them for future generations. When they are always kept for "the future" no one in the present can connect to them, learn from them, or be inspired by them. They have no power, no life. Access is limited to scholars, museum professionals, and only those deemed worthy and appropriate by museum staff. The works are thought of only in the past tense, as artifacts of their past lives, with little relevance in the present, only kept to remind

us of how people lived, thought, loved, and died in the past. Alternative approaches are applied by University of Illinois professionals and campus units in order to identify and enact respectful, collaborative, and ethical collections care in the form of community consultation, co-curation, repatriation, and other avenues. Ideally, museums and collections spaces should function much like community archives, to serve the descendants and communities tied to the people, collections, and works housed within them. These frameworks emphasize campus partnerships with internal and external parties in order to determine appropriate standards of care for the wide variety of collections types housed at the University. We provide examples for other practitioners of how these partnerships can help us move toward our shared goal of consultation, collaboration, and care for museum collections in their post-acquisition lives.

Section: Council for Museum Anthropology

Organizer: Krystiana Krupa, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Presenter(s): Jenny Davis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology, Bethany Anderson, Aimee Carbaugh, Elizabeth Sutton, Katelyn Bishop, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Krystiana Krupa, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

4676 Sorcery, Solidarity, Voicing, and Labors of Faith: Colonial Hauntings in the Dominican Republic and among the Dominican Diaspora

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How might we conceptualize the legacy of colonialism as an ongoing spiritual haunting of the state, landscape, language, and people? What are the everyday practices that marginalized subjects use to inform moments of solidarity and resistance while engaging with the sorcery of coloniality? What conceptual, methodological, and theoretical spaces emerge when metaphorical and literal instances of hauntings and possessions collide? And, what is our role as researchers studying secrets, spiritual embodiments, and marginality? This panel brings together scholars in socio-cultural anthropology, sociology, and linguistic anthropology who delve into archival, literary, and ethnographic moments in which spirits, ghosts, and hauntings have material consequences in boundary-making and social differentiation projects. Drawing on Black Feminist theory and decolonial methodologies, each panelist reflects upon the tensions, the possibilities, and the limits of colonial hauntings within contemporary Dominican life to explore not only the racialized divisions and state-sponsored violences that emerge, but also the narratives of joy, love, care, and kinship that are often overlooked and erased by dominant anti-Black and anti-Haitian gazes.

The panelists will discuss: (1) national narratives and biopolitical practices that occlude trauma and camouflage state sorcery; (2) instances of kinship between women at border markets that invoke the "ghosts" of historical solidarities; (3) Dominican women elders' performance and engagement with emotional and intimate labor (of faith) in La 21 División; and (4) ideologies of race

and language that are intertwined with the voicings of misterios (spirits). By examining the hauntings of coloniality from these various perspectives, each of these talks contribute to anthropological and sociological discourses of memory, citizenship, place-making, siblingship, racialization projects, folk religions, and magic.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Noelia Santana, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Virginia Martinez

Chair: Virginia Martinez

Presenter(s): Karina Beras, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, LICELOT CARABALLO, Virginia Martinez, Noelia Santana, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Discussant: Elena Guzman

Presentation(s): Citizens in Question: Sorcery, Silencing, and Sorting in the Dominican Republic

In this paper, I argue that in the Dominican Republic the state's hold over its citizenry is dependent upon varying degrees of silencing, sorting, and sorcery. Specifically, I contend that the state promotes anti-Haitian propaganda to infiltrate the nation's collective subconscious and is especially reliant on this narrative at moments of perceived threat against the state. In this way, the Dominican state establishes a continuity, which Foucault (2003) proposes is a necessary task in maintaining law and order. The Dominican Republic's anti-Haitian ideology is sustained by selective amnesia, archival manipulation, and a dominant national narrative that fabricates, falsifies, and forgets events as a form of repressing trauma and camouflaging performances of state sorcery. Literary myths, arbitrary applications of the law, biased news coverage, lack of or substandard documentation, and forgetful minds are all complicit in creating and sustaining a divide between Dominicans and Haitians.

Presenter(s): Karina Beras

Haitian-Dominican Linguistic and Landscape Genealogies: Toward a Vision of Solidarity in Hispaniola

This paper explores how Haitian-Dominican historical, and contemporary, forms of solidarity and interconnectedness exist in the island of Hispaniola, as both populations coincided in efforts to prevent future colonial occupation, according to historian Anne Eller (2016), and through present forms of borderland and transnational networks, as elaborated by Milagros Ricourt (2016). These "ghosts" of past solidarities, political efforts, and distant genealogical connections are invisibilized through contemporary dominant realities and discourses of violence, anti-birthright citizenship, and anti-Haitianism. Drawing from preliminary ethnographic fieldwork and literature on themes of "siblingship," as conceptualized by Charlton Yingling (Yingling 2022), present-day border solidarities, and reconfigurations of the Dominican identity in a post-TC/0168/13 (or La Sentencia) Dominican state, this paper maintains that while present Haitian-Dominican relations remain contentious, there are instances of solidarity that invoke past histories of transnational collaborations, and which help challenge dominant narratives of hostility in Hispaniola today.

Presenter(s): LICELOT CARABALLO

The Intimate and Emotional Labor of Dominican Women Elders in La 21 División

In this paper, I draw on Nwokocha's (2023) ethnography of Haitian Vodou ceremonies and her engagement with Casselberry's conceptual framework (2017) on Black women's labor to explore two forms of labor of faith—intimate and emotional—performed by Dominican women elders in La 21 División. Intimate labor refers to embodied personal interactions involving acts of care and support, whereas emotional labor encompasses the public and private interpersonal interactions navigated in both religious and social settings (Casselberry 2017; Nwokocha 2023). Over the course of several months of ethnographic observations and interviews, I examine the ways in which elders spiritually, emotionally, and physically engage with devotees, *caballos de misterios* (horse of mysteries), members of their communities, and *los misterios* (the mysteries), forms of labor that are often underappreciated and invisible. Through my engagement in meaningful participant observation with elders, I center their voices, lived experiences, and unwavering labor of faith to the practice and the communities they serve.

Presenter(s): Virginia Martinez

Voice, Morality, and El Misterio in the Dominican Republic

What do spirits have to say? To whom do they say it and how do they say it? What do discourses about various linguistic features of the spirits' voices tell us about the connections between coloniality and materiality in the present day? This talk centers on moments where the voices of spirits are quoted, discussed, criticized, celebrated, and embodied. Drawing on 25 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the Dominican Republic, I consider how ideologies of race, language, and national belonging are intertwined with the voicings (Agha 2007, Bakhtin 1981, Keane 2001, Hill 1995) of spirits. At the same time, I consider the ways in which spirits- and their language- become racialized as part of a broader discussion on boundary-making projects within the Dominican Republic. This talk then reflects on the colonial hauntings within *el misterio* (folk Catholicism) that connect notions of morality and responsibility to senses of (racial) belonging. In doing so, I engage with ethnographic refusal (Simpson 2007) as a decolonizing methodology (Harrison 2011; Smith 2012) to recenter the voices of marginalized peoples who challenge hierarchies of knowledge and of knowledge production.

Presenter(s): Noelia Santana

Discussion

7705 Sovereignty, Populism, Post-Truth: Navigating Media and Power in Contemporary Turkey

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable examines how media in contemporary Turkey has become a key battleground for the making and unmaking of political authority. Since the early 2000s, the Justice and Development

Party (AKP) has reshaped the media landscape by enabling pro-government business takeovers of major outlets and criminalizing dissenting journalism. What was once considered "mainstream media" has largely collapsed, giving way to a highly polarized environment where trust is fractured and narratives are tightly controlled. The COVID-19 pandemic unfolded within this polarized setting, amplifying public distrust and enabling the rapid spread of misinformation. This roundtable examines how individuals navigate these conditions--cross-checking sources, relying on affective cues, and interpreting media not just for information, but for orientation in a contested reality. Media users respond to the current media landscape with everyday tactics: searching across platforms, interpreting conflicting cues, and developing new, affectively grounded forms of trust.

What is often described as "post-truth" in Turkey does not signal a collapse of truth, but rather the consolidation of a new mode of governance, one in which legal exceptions are expanded or strategically bent, and where media, beyond merely reporting on the law, assumes a central role in the performance of populist rule. In this context, the enactment of populist sovereignty is emotionally and aesthetically structured through various media narratives and genres such as dizis (TV shows). Sovereignty is not only codified. It increasingly depends on channeling the public's affective, habitual, and performative responses, desires, and engagements into the very framework that governs them. A key question, then, is how the public--both as media users and as producers--becomes implicated in this formation. The roundtable focuses ethnographically on the media practices the public embraces to disrupt, embody, or modify such frameworks of governance.

Questions guiding this roundtable are:

- 1) How do historical patterns of media control shape contemporary strategies employed by both authorities and media users?
- 2) How do individuals combine and critically evaluate diverse information sources--from social media platforms to television--as they navigate the polarized media environment shaped by AKP policies?
- 3) How do dizis and other media genres structure the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of populist sovereignty through their narratives, and how do audiences engage with, interpret, or resist these mediated forms of political power?

The current dynamics explored in this roundtable are deeply rooted in Turkey's historical trajectory of media-state relations. These histories do not remain inert; they persist as ghosts, haunting contemporary practices. By connecting past patterns of media governance to present-day realities, the roundtable traces the spectral logics through which sovereignty is mediated.

Section: Middle East Section

Organizer: Nazli Ozkan

Presenter(s): Nazli Ozkan , Suncem Kocer , Hikmet Kocamaner, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Department of Anthropology, Josh Carney , Halide Velioğlu

Discussant: Suncem Kocer

2667 Spreading It Around?: New Perspectives on Redistribution

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM through 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Economic redistribution formally addresses economic inequities by redirecting wealth from beneficiaries of economic systems toward those whose livelihoods fall short. Although standard approaches measure outcomes-especially income increases for the least well off-anthropologists are focusing on the processes of redistribution. These often obscure both social and political entanglements that catalyze hidden financial flows and produce unanticipated effects. This is especially true when redistribution takes financial form, by channeling wealth building to housing supports, or by tying wages, austerity-reduced welfare payments, and even modest cash transfers to debt. Contributions, tributes, and tithes also form redistribution channels which can reinforce or reshape social and political power. This panel will consider these concealed forms and examine unexpected outcomes to advance a more fully anthropological perspective of active efforts to spread wealth around.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Caitlin Zaloom, New York University, Deborah James, London School of Economics

Chair: Caitlin Zaloom, New York University

Presenter(s): Erik Bahre, Leiden University, Miranda Sheild Johansson, University College London, Deborah James, London School of Economics, Inés Escobar González, Williams College, Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Caitlin Zaloom, New York University

Discussant: Gustav Peebles, Stockholm University

Presentation(s): Private Health Insurance in Brazil: Redistribution and the Market in a Divided Society

Private insurance is at the centre of global capitalist markets but it is at the same time also a form of redistribution. Anthropological theory has typically examined redistribution as a political system that ideally reduces the inequalities caused by the market. What makes private insurance theoretically challenging and therefore interesting is that it is this ogre that does not fit in anthropological theory. Insurance is market and solidarity and redistribution and anonymous institutions and abstract calculations and care and kinship. Based on my fieldwork on private health insurance in Brazil I explore what this awkward form of solidarity in the market means and does to health insurance clients and their families; actuaries and other professionals working in the insurance sector; and legal professionals who take insurers to court. I show how situatedness of the expectations of health insurance and try to understand the legitimacy and morality of private health insurance in a divided society.

Presenter(s): Erik Bahre

Payment Matrices in Practices of Redistribution: Taxes, Cuotas, and Fees in Highland Bolivia

This paper pays attention to the relationship between different types of payments involved in short- and long-term practices of redistribution and 'getting by' in highland Bolivia. Drawing on data from peri-urban areas in the city of Cochabamba, and the array of payments happening there e.g. property taxes to municipalities, commercial fees, and union dues, I theorise the 'payment matrix' to understand what payments are and can do in this setting. For instance, receipts for commercial license taxes and property taxes paid provide people with the right to make other kinds of payments, such as fees to local neighbourhood associations and unions. Taxes paid thus afford new and increased political and economic choices, and access to shared resources. In turn, the relationship between the taxes and these other fees fundamentally effects the character of each, the taxes gain particular meaning as enablers of other payments, and the fees gain legitimacy due to their link to taxes. Redistribution is then partly a factor of how people manage this matrix of payments, and a payment does not mainly mark the end, or a moment of release, of/from an economic relationship, instead it offers new possibilities to pay, the re-signification of payments made, and access to other spaces of redistributive opportunities.

Presenter(s): Miranda Sheild Johansson

Clawing Back: Redistribution in Precarious Times

Redistribution is said to be a tool to counter inequalities: to curb the worst effects of capitalist exploitation and free trade. It can also aim at redress, compensation for a loss, access to some kind of commons. When work becomes ever more precarious, and when social protection regimes are increasingly squeezed under austerity regimes (in the global north) or expanded through the drip-feeding of miniscule cash transfers (in the global south), people make use of wages, welfare and debt to constitute relations and futures, to engage with the state, and to convert between commodified and non-commodified relationships. This paper, with cases from the UK and South Africa, shows how people rely on activist-intermediaries to 'claw back' resources that look likely to be withdrawn, and to negotiate their relationships to three sets of actors: the private or state institutions to which (or individuals to whom) they owe money; those in market or state settings who employ them and pay their remuneration; and the government agencies, nongovernmental organisations or charitable institutions through which they seek, and sometimes find, social protection.

Presenter(s): Deborah James

From "Patrimony" to "Homes Like Drugs": How Redistribution Became Rentierism in Mexico

Through an examination of the institution of homeownership, this paper traces the takeover of the post-revolutionary Mexican state's redistributive infrastructure and the rise of a post-liberal rentierism. Mexican welfare and upward mobility have hinged on national housing agencies designed to redistribute national wealth by creating "patrimony," following post-revolutionary mandates that forced the federal government and the employer class to match the savings of the working class towards homeownership. At the height of neoliberalism, as the interests and logics of venture capital and financial banking took over Mexico's housing agencies, the country's post-

revolutionary infrastructure and the funds stewarded by these housing agencies were used to turn a fifth of Mexicans into mortgage-based homeowners, mirroring the boom of vulnerable, low-income homeowners and risky, predatory finance that was simultaneously transforming the United States. Today, these homeowners have not been evicted but liken their homes to "drugs," as a formally redistributive strategy to spread patrimonial wealth has entangled them into webs of extractive debt that fundamentally disempower them, consume them, and endanger their capacities to socially reproduce. Far from subsidized contributions towards the progressive acquisition of an inheritable asset, or "patrimony," these mortgage payments have become fixes or panacea, just as they are experienced as "shakedown" or "another rent" needed to stay a

Presenter(s): Inés Escobar González

The Credit Compromise: How Redistributing Opportunity Beat the Culture Wars

Can personal finance redistribute opportunity by helping young people out of debt and poverty? Unlikely allies answer yes. In this era of hyper-polarized politics, personal finance has been mandated in high schools across U.S. states that regularly repudiate each other, like Texas and California. Culture warriors frequently battle over what public school should teach. Not so with personal finance. As of 2025, 27 U.S. states have instituted mandates to teach budgeting, managing credit cards, making consumer choices, and paying for college, with the years following the pandemic showing the most rapid increase. Since then, 16 states have passed mandates. Why is this requirement so uniquely uncontroversial? I'll argue that personal finance fuses two opposing positions that have defined US higher education for more than a century—one that seeks to educate students to change the current industrial order and the other that teaches students to manage their place within it. Each views teaching personal finance as a means to prepare students for greater autonomy, redistributing not funds but future possibilities.

Presenter(s): Caitlin Zaloom

Discussion

5487 Haunted Pedagogy: Confronting our Ghostly Moments, Students, and Histories

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

All academic fields possess their own positive and negative legacies, which scholars must inevitably reckon with as they transmit disciplinary knowledge to new generations of students. In anthropology, important engagement of this kind includes calls for decolonizing pedagogical practices surrounding everything from course materials to classroom management styles. However, while such calls are very important, there are also subtler hauntings that afflict anthropologists as they take up the art and practice of teaching. This session hopes to bring attention to the less obvious ghosts that bedevil anthropological pedagogy. Participants represent

various career levels, institutions, and (sub)disciplines, and perspectives range from the deeply theoretical to the ethnographically rich and profoundly self-reflexive. Taken together, our papers highlight the many ways in which pedagogical engagements necessarily evoke troubling pasts to explore a series of questions: how do institutional and disciplinary histories influence our coursework? What kinds of pedagogical failures are unique to anthropology and how do these offer important lessons for the future? How do memories of specific students haunt us throughout our careers? When can haunting-in its various forms-act as a helpful teaching tool? By engaging a range of pedagogical contexts, this session adds to current conversations surrounding the role of anthropology during these turbulent times in higher education.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Matt Newsom, Southern Utah University, Department of History, Sociology and Anthropology, Eva Melstrom, University of Chicago

Chair: Eva Melstrom, University of Chicago

Presenter(s): Crystal Koenig, Southern Utah University, Department of History, Sociology and Anthropology, Sharony Green, The University of Alabama, George Mentore, University of Virginia, Eva Melstrom, University of Chicago, Natalie Bourdon, Mercer University, Matt Newsom, Southern Utah University, Department of History, Sociology and Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Specter of Gun Violence in the Anthropology Classroom

Anthropologists are familiar with hauntings. We grapple with the specters of scholars like Morton and

Haeckel, striving to distance ourselves from the racist origins of our field. While our content is clearly haunted, so is the increasingly fraught context in which we teach—one haunted by spirits of students and colleagues facing deportation, racial and gender discrimination, income inequality, and the possibility of gun violence. I specifically address gun violence threats, which have sometimes undermined my effectiveness as an educator. Drawing on my experiences during lockdowns in anthropology classes—one at Washington University in St. Louis and one at Southern Utah University—I explore the impacts of such events on instructors and students. I build upon anthropologist Adam Johnson's reflections after surviving a mass shooting. Johnson invoked Durkheim to examine systemic issues underlying such violence. These issues, including inequality and discrimination, are embedded in complex systems. Even as threats of violence complicate teaching, they highlight the urgency of our work to understand and transform harmful structures. The American Anthropological Association is "dedicated to advancing human understanding and applying this understanding to the world's most pressing problems." I argue campus gun violence is one such problem—demanding we use anthropological tools to examine its effects on students and educators, and to advocate boldly for systemic change.

Presenter(s): Crystal Koenig

Probing Our Shared Past in Haunted Dwellings and Beyond in one Southern Town

Since my arrival at the University of Alabama in 2012, I have used Tuscaloosa, the college town where I teach, as a "lab" to help my students and the broader community learn more about our

shared past and present. My efforts, which were chronicled in a recently published textbook, involve my inviting students to leave the classroom and learn about often challenging histories that animate the spaces on and off campus. The students are often eager because they have heard such dwellings, among them the newly renovated old Bryce hospital, are haunted. Ghosts are one thing, but storytelling is increasingly also haunted by what all gets said and what must be intuited as my students and I, and others, grapple with historical actors who, not unlike people still living today, were quite complicated. Whether talking about monied planters, an enslaved man turned freed architect, a mouthy governor's wife displeased with being unable to control her own property, a captured Union officer, and the unknown names of people who walked, slept, worked and inhabited our town, we push ourselves to know how the vibrations of stories linger, challenging us to insert our own selves into the narrative as revealed in an experimental video shared with an international audience. Ultimately, we are left with questions concerning how our own movements push the possibilities of what had once been and what can still be.

Presenter(s): Sharony Green

The Ghost of the Whiteman

White masculinity, clothed in the glittering apparel of Reason, refuses to give up the lingering ghost of its presence in anthropological knowledge. Its haunting hold on the production of Truth deploys a firm grip on the supremacy of human thought over that of felt experience in explanations of the world. The "final vocabulary" must be His discourse with the defeat of hysterical and inferior discourses of irrationality. When the anthropological Other speaks, the work of interpretation invariably necessitates a coded translation from their natal sensibility to our modernist algorithms of phallocentric authority. Ethnographers, trained to be loyal to the patriarchal natality of the discipline, usually end up privileging loyalty to universalist notions of Reason, leaving the relative reality of the Other in its obscure home vocabulary. In such paradigms, the ghost of the Whiteman lingers long after the flesh of his presence has departed.

Presenter(s): George Mentore

A Feminist Anthropologist Caught in a Feminist Hell: A Haunting Year of Teaching

As a feminist anthropologist I am committed to dismantling the hetero, cis, white, male able-bodied legacy of our field. Nevertheless, I must teach alongside the hauntings of anthropological offences of both long-ago and not-so-long-ago, which tends to precipitate an anxious self-reflexivity and incessant self-critique. It is an ongoing striving for a pedagogical project grounded in asking how can I do my best to cultivate a new inclusive and justice-oriented anthropological enterprise. So, what happens when our feminist projects are voided through dark encounters with a student, THE student. The one who haunts us. The one whose words, behaviors, and allegations mobilized a project of persecution borne from our own disciplinary reconciliation with past atrocities, and the ongoing crucifixion, of other discipline's continued imparting of the anthropologist-as-colonist. In this paper, I confront the haunting presence of a lone student who, in their condemnation of our

discipline and me as the "problem embodied", contributed not only to the killing of historically marginalized voices in the classroom, (those whom they believe to be "saving"), but also bedeviled my own pedagogical project, leaving me to wonder, much like Vincent Lloyd (2023), what are the boundaries between an anti-racist, feminist agenda and Luciferian cruelty? And what might we learn from such tales of infamous student hauntings?

Presenter(s): Eva Melstrom

Cultivating "Big Mind" and "Big Heart": Pedagogical Practices of Collaboration and Care

Most doctoral programs in anthropology don't require courses in pedagogy, but anthropologists who enter the academy are expected to teach. Couple that with the fact that many faculty report negative experiences with their teachers/mentors during their graduate studies. Why does anthropology, rooted in care and concern for human beings, not include pedagogy courses in our graduate programs, while we are expected to submit statements of teaching philosophy for academic positions? Will new anthropologists reproduce the hauntings, good and bad, of their pedagogical pasts? In this paper, I will reflect on a week-long yoga teacher training course I took titled, "The Art of Teaching," which has profoundly affected how I teach anthropology. Indeed, yoga and anthropology share many philosophical and methodological similarities: they require patience, listening skills, attention to language, curiosity and reflexivity, and cultivating knowledge and awareness beyond the provincial. At the yoga temple where I study, the roots of teaching are guided by the following principles: kindness, inquiry, non-clinging, seeing oneself as relative to the whole, having energy and courage, and trusting the way. In this paper, I reflect on two negative experiences I had as a student of yoga and of anthropology and how, through "The Art of Teaching" I learned to craft nurturing and collaborative learning environments in my anthropology classes.

Presenter(s): Natalie Bourdon

Confronting Postcolonial Ghosts While Leading an Ethnographic Field School

As many postcolonial ethnographers have shown, long and tragic historical cycles of resource extraction complicate the processes of fieldwork. In contexts where colonial regimes have benefitted from forcibly plucking Indigenous people, minerals, artwork, and knowledge from their communities, how do we conduct ethnography without repeating these cycles? One of several possible answers includes the age-old concept of reciprocity, suggesting that ethnographers seriously consider the contributions they can make to their research communities. This is easily taught in the classroom, but what about the field? In this presentation, I draw on my experience leading a nascent study abroad program to a rural Kekchi Maya village in Southern Belize to ask: how do we confront postcolonial realities without making our ambitious and wide-eyed students complicit with their ghosts? In exchange for novice ethnographic training, our group bolsters the village's increasingly vital cash economy and provides other material and educational support that directly and indirectly benefits many people. But this is not true for all villagers. Our group also contributes to burgeoning inequalities and other social conflict, prompting difficult emotional and

ethical questions among students and professor alike. I reflect on some of these questions and the early lessons I have learned while working to craft a more just and principled student experience.

Presenter(s): Matt Newsom

3399 The Doctor: Contemporary perspectives

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Since the advent of contemporary biomedicine, doctors have been a central category for cultural inquiry. Anthropologists have analysed how doctors are often seen as sources of authority, actors of care and violence, symbols of hope and national modernity, and even (demi)gods in some cultural contexts. At the same time, the standardization of disease screenings and treatment protocols, the routinization of the use of medical diagnostics, and the everydayness of 'eating drugs' produces contexts where 'everyone is a doctor.' In contexts of rising medical scarcity, people seeking medical attention find themselves in situations where there are no practicing doctors and yet draw upon the widespread availability of medical advice, loose medicines, and even doctors' prescriptions without actually visiting a doctor. This allows for new actors to arise, such as the well documented prevalence of informal practitioners who dabble in biomedicine, but also the auxiliary actors through state policies that attempt to fill the widening gap between patients and health systems. This pushes us to think about the changing biosocial orders that get made and remade through biomedicine, as well as the evolving pedagogical practices of public health and biomedicine.

Therefore, in this panel, we ask: 'what is a doctor?' Building upon longstanding discussions of what happens 'when there is no doctor' and the responsabilization of medical risk for biosocial citizens, we are interested in how patients and medical doctors ascribe meanings to the symbol of 'the doctor.' Further, we are interested in how the phenomena of the clinical encounter is reframed through auxiliary actors like health officers, multi-purpose nurses, health volunteers and digital technologies like telemedicine that now mediate doctor-patient relationships. As more and more somatic and interactive clinical-work becomes mediated through actors and technologies other than the doctor, we traverse the space between a doctor and patient to rethink the clinical encounter and its actors. The papers in this panel unpack the idea of 'the doctor' and how the contemporary moment of stratified care generates new ideas about what constitutes 'a doctor.' This includes: how doctor-patient interactions are mediated through technologies that replace the somatic work of the doctor, reshaping the clinical encounter; how patients increasingly turn to informal practitioners that define cure by the alleviation of symptoms rather than disease; how public health models intensify standardized treatment protocols and control strategies with the help of semi-professionals; how doctors themselves must mobilize cultural forms to establish relationships of trust with patients, drawing upon religion, nationalism, political ideologies, and more, in order to maintain patients' supplication to their biomedical authority; and, how structures of inequality restrict and enable patient-biomedicine-doctor relationships.

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Robert D. Smith, Geneva Graduate Institute, Sreya Dutta Chowdhury

Chair: Robert D. Smith, Geneva Graduate Institute

Presenter(s): Harshal Sonekar, Meghna Roy, Mirko Pasquini, University of Gothenburg, Sreya Dutta Chowdhury, Purbasha Mazumdar, Geneva Graduate Institute, Jürg Bühler, University of Lucerne

Discussant: Sarah Pinto, Tufts University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): 'Doctor-like': Transferred Legitimacy and Reproducing Hierarchies

This paper studies how power hierarchies manifest between Feeding Distributors (FDs) who serve as nutritionists and patients in Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs) where malnourished children receive dietary rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh, India. Drawing on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork, I analyse how FDs reproduce doctor-patient power dynamics despite their distinct institutional position from medical doctors. Through participant observation and daily interactions with FDs and mothers at the NRC, I demonstrate how medical authority is constructed through specialized knowledge, clinical expertise, and caste status, collectively enhancing their socio-medical authority. I introduce the concept of 'transferred legitimacy' which describes how expert knowledge of medical doctors, applied through standard procedures, legitimizes the profession of FDs. This concept helps theorize how institutional arrangements confer FDs with 'doctor-like' authority beyond their formal training. Transferred legitimacy reveals that medical authority is embedded not merely in technical knowledge but in socially constructed privilege of caste operationalized through the FD role. By tracing how these power relations are enacted through anthropometric examinations and patient diagnosis, I show how this reproduces existing social inequalities. This analysis contributes to understanding how authority is shaped in rural healthcare settings where professional boundaries are not clearly defined.

Presenter(s): Harshal Sonekar

Legible Futures: How trainee counsellors mobilize the figure of the doctor in India

This paper asks: how do trainee counsellors in India craft their future professional identities amid uncertain infrastructures of care? Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at a postgraduate counselling psychology programme in a private university run by an indigenous congregation in Bengaluru, I consider training as a speculative, futures-making practice. In the absence of state regulation, trainees mobilize the culturally authoritative figure of the doctor to render their occupation socially legible. Many had once aspired to become doctors and now position themselves in relation to biomedicine to claim legitimacy and articulate their work to family and peers. Through a person-centred ethnography of one trainee, I examine how therapeutic sensibilities are cultivated alongside aspirations, anxieties, and moral imaginaries shaped by India's privatized healthcare landscape. Trainees fear their profession may follow the medical path toward exclusionary, commodified care, even as they invoke its authority. By reframing treatment difference as a treatment gap, they promote awareness and help produce an emergent ontology of mental health. I

argue that the ambiguity of their professional status opens a space for ethical world-making—where counselling is not yet fixed, and its meanings are shaped by those training to embody it.

Presenter(s): Meghna Roy

The Evasive Doctor: Reshaping the Subjectivity of the General Practitioner through Telemedicine Communication in the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy.

Infodemic, as too much information including false or misleading information, has been widely documented by journalists and commentators. Its long-term effects over health care organizations, however, remain understudied. In places like Italy, the COVID-19 infodemic prospered over the massive introduction of telemedicine, that expanded exponentially in the face of lockdowns and other drastic measures of social distancing.

During my fieldwork in 2021-2022, many General Practitioners (GPs) told me they bought new phones for work. They opened new WhatsApp, Face-Book and Instagram profiles. Social platforms have become a primary source of contact with patients and discussion with colleagues. GPs created new emails accounts and hired communication professionals to filter phone calls. But the ever-increasing number of requests for care still created an overburden of calls, emails and text messages. Such a tempest of information, whose management is widely improvised, ended up creating a backlash of mistrust. GPs are accused by multiple parties of having failed their gatekeeping role while practicing care by distance during the first and second wave of the COVID-19, with disastrous repercussion for patients' health and hospital overcrowding rates.

The paper explores the infodemic in the Italian primary care, asking: how does telemedicine have a long-term impact on clinicians' subjectivity, judgment and their role within the primary healthcare system?

Presenter(s): Mirko Pasquini

Medicine in search of people: Doorstep programs and diabetes prevention in Tamil Nadu

In this paper I explore the politics of 'Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam' or medicine in search of people, a diabetes outreach and prevention program in Tamil Nadu. The increasing burden of non-communicable conditions in India has manifested a policy rhetoric of control and management, foregrounding proceduralism and continuity of care for chronic disease. These new programs recruit diverse actors with varying professional medical expertise into the fold of state medicine. Health volunteers home deliver diagnostic services, diabetes medication and peritoneal kits for dialysis patients, and the domestic space becomes a threshold for life improving services provided by the state. It invokes an intensified politics of state tactility, and 'doorstep governance' as a cultural and political strategy mobilized by ruling political parties. It also reconfigures the clinical encounter as cascade of care across multiple actors such as NCD nurses, community health officers, digital technologies, and spaces like the outpatient desks, field surveys, doorsteps, leading to a frequently hailed question, "where is the doctor?" This paper explores how these programs govern therapeutic journeys and experiences of chronic living, the content of standardized prevention and care

projects across home and clinic, the figure of the community doctor as bureaucratic agent of state medicine, and what it means to 'prevent' diabetes.

Presenter(s): Sreya Dutta Chowdhury

“GPs with Panache”? An emergent medical specialisation within a profusion of specialisations

In this paper, building on 14 months of ethnography with Infectious Diseases (ID) specialists in a corporate tertiary care facility in India, I demonstrate how an emergent medical speciality attempts to carve out a space for itself within the morally vexing world of corporatised care. Within discourses of the imminent global health crisis of Antimicrobial Resistance, corporate hospitals in India have emerged as particular loci of consternation and ID physicians have emerged as the primary "stewards" of antimicrobials. ID physicians tread a territory in which they attempt to both disburse a specialised form of care—by invoking the category of "hospital infections" and "bedside" medicine to distinguish themselves from GPs and clinical microbiologists respectively with whom their abilities converge and concerns overlap—and retain a "generalist" investment in the patient and his/her disease. This paper illuminates the moral and social labour involved in the articulation of a medical specialisation, which paradoxically wants to retain its "generality", within the highly specialised medical space of tertiary care.

Presenter(s): Purbasha Mazumdar

Revisiting professional boundaries and hierarchies: Cooperation and Gender in Doctor-Nurse Interactions

The figure of the 'doctor,' a cultural icon for authority and prestige, draws not just from medical knowledge and training, but is also enmeshed within other hierarchies particular to the South Asian context. While these hierarchies are rigid, doctors' everyday activities vary and they heavily depend on other professionals in the hospital to complete their tasks, particularly, nurses. Drawing on fieldwork with male nurses in a corporate hospital in Kolkata, I argue that the role of doctors is not fixed but gets crafted amidst the socio-technical settings of the hospital. In general wards and partly in ICUs, doctors' work is limited to specific tasks, primarily related to decision-making based on the assessment of documentation provided and updated by nurses. Here, collaboration with nurses is heavily mediated by paperwork and relatively distanced. In other departments, such as the emergency or OT, doctors collaborate closely with nurses in providing direct care to patients. This opens the possibility for close and collegial relationships between them. In these male dominated medical domains, social identities, first of all gender, but also age, caste and language, play an important role in the crafting of such relationships and the playing out of its hierarchies. Looking at doctor-nurse relations from the perspective of young male nurses, this paper explores the contingencies and interdependencies in the construction of doctors' roles and boundaries to other professions.

Presenter(s): Jürg Bühler

Discussion

8674 Ghosts in the Frame: Tracing a Great-Grandfather Through Family Archives

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Jackson

Type: Installations

This installation presents a poetic 4-minute video essay composed from over 20 hours of found VHS footage from my parents' wedding in Kazakhstan. The film centers on a quiet reflection about my great-grandfather-someone I briefly knew in childhood, yet whose presence continues to linger in family stories, gestures, and inherited silences. Engaging with this footage has allowed me to process personal questions about him. Through the textures of tape, objects, and memory, I've begun to sense a kind of presence that is both affective and embodied: haunting not as absence, but as a quiet, enduring intimacy. Through layered footage, narration, and stillness, the work explores how personal and familial memory haunts the spaces we inherit.

Framed as a methodological engagement with autoethnography, affective archives, and multimodal anthropology, the project treats the family archive as both material and medium. The process of rewatching, sorting, and reassembling found VHS footage becomes an ethnographic act-one that enacts memory work, kinship, and inheritance through tactile and sensory engagement.

The piece also reflects on how familial memory is transmitted through gesture, atmosphere, and inherited media. Drawing on Avery Gordon's concept of haunting, the work approaches haunting not as spectral absence, but as intimate presence-mediating domesticity, attachment, and the lingering force of the nearly forgotten.

The video will be projected onto a textured fabric surface using my own portable projector. It is composed in a split-screen format: the main narrative with audio appears at the center, while smaller embedded windows-or "tabs"-loop unedited clips from the original wedding footage. This layered composition is fully integrated into a single video file and projected as one unified piece.

The physical space will be gently expanded with material traces of memory: pieces of fabric resembling wedding garments or household cloth, small Soviet-era objects like a matchbox, a teacup, or a children's book, and printed photographs from both my parents' wedding and my great-grandfather's life. The installation includes several paper boats-simple, familiar shapes my great-grandfather once taught me to fold. These items function as quiet anchors, offering tangible touchpoints for viewers and deepening the affective resonance of what is emotionally and visually evoked on screen.

This installation closely aligns with the Ghosts theme, treating haunting not as horror, but as intimacy: the enduring presence of those nearly forgotten, remembered through gesture, image, and the spaces they once inhabited.

Organizer(s): Aizere Yessenkulova

2567 Specters of Policy: Interdisciplinary Tales of Warning from Canada, Ireland, and the United States

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This session considers how ghosts manifest in various cultures around the world as a result of unjust and devastating policies. Through a series of six presentations from interdisciplinary approaches, we tell the stories of ghosts which manifest from deleterious policies. Presentations will cover diverse case studies and/or theoretical frameworks, demonstrating the ways policies leave ghosts in their wake as reminders to not repeat the past. Several of the case studies also explain how these ghosts reveal the past in productive ways for present and future policy formation, including through public memorial work. Particularly in these times of political unrest, we explore what values these ghosts reveal and are at the core of the human experience. Specters of policy bring those reflections upon social and cultural values. The topics covered will be diverse, including how Trump's immigration policies leave specters of once vibrant communities in their wake, ways in which public memorials of violence and policy inadequacies haunt Vancouver, B.C.'s Downtown Eastside, particular to missing and murdered Indigenous women, an exploration of the houseless crisis in the United States and the ghosts brought on from policies that attempt to uphold the farce of the American dream and prize property ownership over lives, a close examination of a self-published memoir from a family in Belfast whom experienced a violent haunting during the political violence in Northern Ireland commonly known as "The Troubles," the ways in which the enduring policies and memories wrought in Candyman (2021) and the National Memorial of Peace and Justice or "the lynching museum" in Montgomery, Alabama demonstrate how the ghosts of black racial terror violence remind us that the present is doomed by a violent past because of unjust policy that allows for repetition of black racial terror violence, and an assertion that ghosts are real to understand the specter as representing a genuine material presence/potential—a kind of reality that never fully takes form in the hauntological reinterpretation. Finally, a philosophical exploration of the thread that binds each of these spectral manifestations in order to remind us all how we ought to recognize, witness, and respond to these ghosts in an ethical and humane manner.

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Aaron Thornburg, Eastern Oregon University, Department of Anthropology/Sociology

Chair: Tiara Good, Eastern Oregon University, Department of Anthropology/Sociology

Presenter(s): dustin ellis, Katherine Richards, Aaron Thornburg, Eastern Oregon University, Department of Anthropology/Sociology, Jesse Fivecoate, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Tiara Good, Eastern Oregon University, Department of Anthropology/Sociology, John Lundy, Eastern Oregon University, Department of Anthropology/Sociology

Presentation(s): Haunted Migrations: Specters of U.S. Border and Immigration Policies

This paper explores how U.S. immigration, refugee, and border policies actively produce spectral figures, analyzed through the interdisciplinary lenses of hauntology and cultural anthropology. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology—where specters embody the presence of

absence and unresolved histories—this analysis considers how enforcement practices such as detention, deportation, and border militarization materially and symbolically generate ghostly presences. Anthropological methods illuminate how these specters manifest culturally and socially through migrant narratives, collective memory, ritual practices, and embodied experiences of loss and absence among border communities. The study reveals that spectral figures—such as disappeared migrants, separated families, and the unsettled spirits invoked by state violence—circulate powerfully within transnational imaginations, profoundly influencing community identities and mobilizations against systemic injustice. This "spectral ethnography" argues for a deeper, culturally nuanced recognition of how hauntings shape lived realities, inform political action, and critique dominant policy discourses surrounding migration and border security.

Presenter(s): dustin ellis

Spectres of Colonial Violence: Haunting and Memorial in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

The spectre of violence against Indigenous women is always present in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. From the development of a memorial to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2Spirit People, to missing person signs on street corners, loss defines the fear-laden space. How does this presence of colonial violence and its subsequent memorialization shape the Downtown Eastside? How does memorialization of these violences haunt this place? This paper explores how fear is embodied within the physical memorials of missing and murdered Indigenous women who disappeared from this impoverished and frightening space. This paper will complete a content analysis of a monument within Vancouver's Downtown Eastside that memorializes missing and murdered Indigenous women and will tease out the relationship between fear and memorialization.

Presenter(s): Katherine Richards

Unhoused Ghosts: Unintended Consequences and Unseen Actors in U.S. Housing Policy

The United States is in the midst of an ongoing housing crisis. Housing costs, including rent prices, continue to rise, far outpacing inflation. Mortgage rates have, likewise, risen to highs we have not seen for decades (Callaci and Vaheesan 2024). Rejection of recent plans to intervene in this situation promises the propagation of continued "trust-the-market" policies that will likely perpetuate the precarity of a significant proportion of U.S. population in the name of profit. This presentation will employ an interpretive policy analysis approach (Shore, Wright, and Però 2011, 6) to explore historical and current housing policies to explore the causes of and possible solutions to this continuing crisis. What are the unacknowledged cultural understandings (ghosts) that are reflected in these policies? What unseen actors benefit from their continued enforcement? And, what might be done to effectively respond to the continued implementation and enforcement of these marginalizing policies? These are questions that will be explored.

Callaci, Brian, and Sandeep Vaheesan. 2024. "The Market Alone Can't Fix the U.S. Housing Crisis." Harvard Business Review. September 12. <https://hbr.org/2024/09/the-market-alone-cant-fix-the-u-s-housing-crisis>.

Shore, Cris, Susan Wright, and David Però, eds. 2011. *Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power*. Oxford: Berghahn.

Presenter(s): Aaron Thornburg

The (Social) Politics of a Haunted House: Ghostly Encounters, Stigma, and Housing Policy During the Northern Irish Troubles

This paper examines a self-published memoir that tells of a Belfast family experiencing a violent haunting during the most recent episode of political violence in Northern Ireland, commonly referred to as "the Troubles." The Skillen family had lived in the council housing for roughly four years before the ghostly visit began. Once the haunting started, the family turned to the local council for a new place to raise their five growing children, but were denied. The Skillens endured stigma from neighbors as they tried to make their claims of supernatural experience public. This paper investigates the intimate politics of supernatural experience, looking at family dynamics as presented in the memoir *Number 91: A Belfast Ghost Story*, community politics of access to housing during the Troubles, local housing reassignment policy, and lastly, the social memory and forgetting at this time and as it continues to play out in digital spaces online. The experiences chronicled in the memoir have become a legend (understood in the anthropological definition of the term) unto itself as the Skillen family has sought to restrict further publications of the book and has legally challenged the digital reproduction and distribution of the book. The row house has since been demolished, but the local interest in the story remains. *Number 91* is at once a narrative about haunting and an insight into the political dimensions of the remaining presence of the Troubles in contemporary Northern Ireland.

Presenter(s): Jesse Fivecoate

Demanding a Witness: Candyman and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice

In this paper presentation I will analyze two memorials to violence against black communities in the United States that demand witnesses in unique ways. I demonstrate how Nia DaCosta's 2021 film *Candyman* and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice contribute to commonplace witnessing. Furthermore, my analysis demonstrates how they rhetorically demand witnesses to the horrific past and continued violence against communities of color. They also, importantly, constitute a collective for change. By putting them side by side, we see how *Candyman* and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice demand witnessing, refuse the White logics of closure of racism in the United States, insist on an open space to productively give voice to, and recognition of this legacy of ongoing trauma and violence. Finally, how they demand change through a rhetoric of reckoning. I demonstrate how the vengeful entity *Candyman*—effectively a ghost violently haunts on the big screen—and the ghosts of black racial terror violence in the physical location of the NMPJ memorial and in the soil from the locations of the lynchings across the south.

Presenter(s): Tiara Good

A Haunting in Progress

Ghosts, and most particularly their characteristic penchant for haunting the living, have been a pervasive metaphor used by an array of socially and politically oriented thinkers across an array of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives across the social sciences and humanities. The focus here is on how the concept of haunting by a spectral entity might best be deployed to understand the idea of progress, broadly conceived—to shed light on how positive social and political change can take place in the unfolding of human history.

Hauntology, a central concept first deployed in 1993 by Jaques Derrida in "Specters of Marx," has been an influential take on haunting with a broad and lasting influence on thinkers within many disciplines. Hauntology represents a reinterpretation of Marx's "specter of communism," which is foundational for the modern use of ghost metaphors in social and political theory.

I begin by unpacking the hauntological and Marxian conceptions of the specter and highlighting their relevant differences. I suggest that Marx's own conception remains more useful, particularly for any contemporary form of socialism or critical theory that understands itself as progressive. Ultimately, I argue that ghosts are real. That is to say, if it is going to be capable of playing a role in progress, we must understand the specter as representing a genuine material presence/potential—a kind of reality that never fully takes form in the hauntological reinterpretation.

Presenter(s): John Lundy

3704 Phantom Relatives: Biogenetic Considerations of Relatedness in Donors and Children Born through ARTs and Surrogacy

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon B

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Biogenetic links loom large in western concepts of relatedness and kinship (Edwards & Salazar, 2009). With the widespread use of technologically assisted reproduction—including the use of frozen embryos, donated gametes, and surrogacy in family formation—there are often biogenetic unknowns and unknowables and in-betweens. Children born by means of these technologies and practices may have anonymous donors, or donors or surrogates who are distant and not present in their lives; donors often do not know the destinations or results of their donation, depending on the laws and customs in different cultural contexts (Tober, 2025), and, depending upon where surrogacy occurs, the very women who carry and birth other people's children, may be discouraged or prevented from interacting with the families formed through their help (Smietana, Rudrappa, Weis, 2021). People who have embryos frozen in cryogenic tanks may have complicated sentiments about what those embryos are as potential future children. While there seems to be a general consensus that children have a basic human right to know their origins, and these origins are often framed biogenetically; there is no corresponding right for reproductive donors to receive any information about the people born through their donations. How do people go about pursuing these phantom relatives? How do people think about eggs, sperm, embryos as potential relatives? Why do some consider it important (or not) to know about or meet the people--reproductive donors,

receivers of donation, donor siblings—to whom they are biogenetically linked in some way? Why do these phantom relations, product of disrupted reproductive processes (Becker, 1997), haunt people, sometimes for years to come?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Nancy Anne Konvalinka, Diane Tober, University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Diane Tober, University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Manon Lefevre, University of Pennsylvania, Arianna Injeian, Zsuzsa Berend, University of California, Los Angeles, Nancy Anne Konvalinka, Diane Tober, University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Cold Custody: Thermal Politics and the Afterlives of Abandoned IVF Embryos

Abstract: This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork in a U.S. IVF laboratory (in 2022-2023) to explore how cryopreservation technologies mediate not only biological life, but social and moral imaginaries of embryo kinship, care, and abandonment. Focusing on the mundane labor of embryologists and the material practices of freezing and storage, I trace how cold becomes more than a technical medium: it emerges as a register of temporal suspension and ethical uncertainty. Through the lens of "abandoned" embryos—those left in cryogenic storage for years or decades without instruction for disposal—it considers how thermal regimes shape institutional responsibility and emotional dis/engagement. While embryologists routinely freeze embryos to fulfill patients' hopes of reproductive futures, many are never reclaimed, and so remain in storage tanks indefinitely. The absence of patient contact, combined with legal requirements for notarized consent, forces laboratories into indefinite custodianship. Cold, in this context, ceases to signify care or preservation; instead, it indexes estrangement. By examining the entanglements of labor, bureaucracy, and affect, the paper offers a thermal ethnography of reproductive time, abandonment, and the bureaucratic afterlives of assisted conception.

Presenter(s): Manon Lefevre

Personhood, Power, and Reproductive Governance in Alabama

The granting of legal personhood to embryos in Alabama resurrects historical ghosts of reproductive control while creating new spectral entities in reproductive healthcare. Drawing on preliminary findings from my first phase of dissertation research investigating fertility providers, intended parents, and egg donors, I analyze how embryos have become powerful phantom relatives—granted rights that often supersede those of living women. The February 2024 Alabama Supreme Court ruling that applied the Wrongful Death of a Child Act to frozen embryos disrupted fertility care statewide, transforming microscopic cell clusters into what the court termed "extrauterine children"—entities with legal standing but no physical presence. Egg donors, too, navigate the embodied experience of contributing to these potential phantom relatives, even as their own bodies become invisible once their genetic material enters the fertility bioeconomy. From state legislation to clinic protocols to individual bodies, this paper

investigates how power operates across multiple, intermingling scales, creating new forms of reproductive governance. Data were collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews with fertility professionals, intended parents, and egg donors as well as observation in clinical settings. The creation of embryonic phantoms reanimates historical patterns of control over reproductive bodies, as arguments that granted personhood to embryos extend the same logic that restricted abortion

Presenter(s): Arianna Injeian

“Intentions make parents” as well as surrogates

Surrogates I studied repeatedly deny having maternal feelings for their surrogate babies and it's often received with skepticism. Such skepticism illuminates assumptions about the centrality of gestation for motherhood. Critics argue that gestation, a nurturing relationship, is constitutive of motherhood (Rothman, Radin). My findings show that surrogates are trying to articulate an emerging new social understanding and social meanings, albeit not out of thin air. Nurturing and intentionality have been part of our Western/American understanding of relatedness and kinship (Schneider); social behavior, not simply biogenetic facts, constitute kinship in practice.

Surrogates focused on the intentional and planned creation of a child for the intended parents (IPs), whether genetically related to the baby or not. Intention makes parents, surrogates explained. Surrogates called attention to gestational experiences that they considered to be "proof" of the IPs' parenthood in cases when it was the IPs' genetic embryo, and underlined differences between the surrogate pregnancy and their own past pregnancies in all cases. Thus, surrogates were intentionally connecting the baby-to-be to its parents-to-be, supporting and helping their bonding. They were instrumental in building a new reproductive reality, focused on intentional planning, that both highlighted and understated genetic relatedness. When IPs cut ties after birth, it's seen as a denial of friendship rather than relatedness.

Presenter(s): Zsuzsa Berend

From Close Relative to Phantom Relative. US Surrogates' Experiences of Surro-family and Surro-baby Relationships

Women who gestate babies for others often have an idea of the kind of relationship they wish to have (or to avoid) with the intending parents and the child or children born with their help. Different influences may help mold these ideas: the narratives of women with experience in surrogacy (Teman, 2010; Berend, 2016), the conceptions promoted by psychologists who evaluate and assist them, or the ways surrogacy is framed by the agencies they may use and which may depend, at least in part, on the framing of surrogacy in different national legal contexts (Smietana et al., 2021). Based on interviews with 9 surrogates, some with multiple surrogacies for different parents, this paper will discuss the range of relationships these women have experienced with these families. These relationships vary from lifelong kin-type or strong friendship relationships, through cordial but distant kin or non-kin relationships, to a more tapering or abrupt termination of the relationship, with a feeling of loss, of phantom family and babies with whom one had a close connection and

whom one remembers but cannot contact. Exploring how women who have borne babies for others understand and explain the differing intensity, closeness, duration and quality of these relationships with both the families they have helped and the babies they have gestated and given birth to will provide clues about how expectations, which can be exceeded, fulfilled, or incompletely fulfilled, are managed in this process.

Presenter(s): Nancy Anne Konvalinka

Phantom “Egg Babies”: From Imaginary to Real Relationships Between Egg Donors and Their Donor Conceived Offspring

Egg donors donate with the understanding that they will be anonymous, have little information about recipients, and never meet children born from their eggs. Ancestry testing in the US disrupts the promise of anonymity, as people sharing genetic ties can now find one another. While most egg donations in the US are anonymous, there is flexibility to this standard. Some donors undergo known donations, providing eggs to a friend, family member or stranger they met online. Some do open-identity donations, so a child born from their eggs can meet them once they turn 18. Others undergo anonymous donation but may later connect with a person born from their eggs. This paper examines how anonymous, open identity and known egg donors think about the children born from their eggs and how their thinking may change over time or with contact. Anonymous donors may hope to connect with their genetic child, imagining a potential relationship. Known donors navigate complex relationships with recipient parents and their children to maintain contact that could be disrupted if the donor does not honor the parents' demands. While donors understand they provide genetic material for someone else's child, the reality of being a donor—not a mother—may not align with their feelings. By examining the real and imagined relationships among donors, recipient parents, and donor conceived offspring, this work illuminates the complexities of biological and social kinship, with roles transformed via technology.

Presenter(s): Diane Tober

1980 Home-Work: Rethinking Collaborative Methods in and with Community

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

While anthropologists have a long history of "going" to the field-as a site that is new or unfamiliar-fieldwork in an ethnographer's home community, however home may be defined for them, can pose barriers but also open up possibilities. We maintain that such "home-work" offers particular opportunities for decolonizing methodologies, collaboration, research designed and directed by interlocutors, and multiple forms of autoethnography that blur the lines of researcher-research participant. This session focuses on current graduate student research being carried out "at home" and with our own communities. We consider the potential for collaborative and autoethnographic research to disrupt the power imbalances that have harmed communities through unjust

ethnographic practices. From the power of Indigenous hip hop artistry, to debates about water use among Lake Tahoe residents, to the place of Israel in the lives of American Jews, to intimate views of the daily lives of women immigrants and asylees, our projects center innovative methodologies as a way to coproduce knowledge, follow the leadership of community members, shift power dynamics, and inform just policies. We also understand our home-work to be directly tied to our graduate studies-indeed, anthropologists in training may be uniquely positioned to innovate ethnography moving forward.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Sierra Meszaros , Patrick Burt, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Deborah Boehm, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sierra Meszaros, Itzel Perez, Patrick Burt, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology, Kylie Papson

Discussant: Shannon Speed, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): “Dear Abba”: Letter Writing as Interlocutor-Centered Research Method in US based Israel Discourse

Israel centered research is situated at the intersection of politics, religion, and identity particularly in American Jewish communities. The nature of this intersection, specifically post October 7, 2023, is highly personal and fraught with tension. As an ethnographer it can be difficult to understand how to relocate the locus of power in research design around topics that are not only sensitive, but may make interlocutors vulnerable in myriad ways. This project explores letter writing as a method to place storytelling squarely in the hands of interlocutors. In this project, research participants were asked to write a letter to someone in their lives reflecting on what Israel means to them. The instructions were limited, allowing the author to drive the narrative and subject matter. Through analysis of the letters interlocutors wrote, I demonstrate how this and other collaborative methods can enhance research design and guide ethnographic inquiry in novel ways, especially through the co-creation of new questions and directions for the project.

Presenter(s): Sierra Meszaros

Labor Hands: Facilitating Autoethnography among Migrant Women

While anthropological research about gendered experiences of migration has fruitfully focused on the narratives of people who cross borders, these experiences are always mediated and curated by ethnographers. To further push the possibilities for collaborative work, I propose using what I consider to be a form of guided autoethnography that draws on videography conducted by interlocutors in spaces of work and home without the researcher present. In the project, I invited Latin American migrant women with a range of immigration statuses to film themselves working and also spending time doing activities they enjoy outside of work as a way reflect on their experiences of migration to the United States. Because I provided open-ended guidance, and was

not present as women videotaped their experiences, research participants had certain autonomy over what to film—or not film—and to what extent they took part in different aspects of the research more generally. The primary contributions of this work is continuing the conversation on decolonizing ethnographic methods through exercises of individual agency.

Presenter(s): Itzel Perez

Rhythms of Resurgence: Indigenous Hip-Hop as Resistance and Reclamation

Indigenous hip-hop is a powerful cultural force, blending contemporary music with experiential knowledge to challenge settler colonialism. Central to this movement is the concept of resurgence, which emphasizes resisting the constraints of settler colonial systems and reclaiming Indigenous identities. My research examines how Indigenous hip-hop enacts and engages with resurgence, asking how artists use music to confront historical injustices and express cultural autonomy. Building on an ethnographic approach, the project centered the words and musical performance of a prominent Indigenous artist and activist Nataanii Means. Through participant observation of a musical performance and an in-depth interview with the artist, the research captured resurgence in action, revealing Indigenous hip-hop as artistic expression, but above all as a form of lived resistance grounded in ancestral traditions and contemporary struggles. By documenting these practices, the project contributes to broader discussions pertaining to Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor's concept of "survivance," offering possibilities for collaboration in the study of both artistic expression and Indigenous resurgence in a range of contexts.

Presenter(s): Patrick Burt

Shifting Waters: Rethinking Policy Design Through Collaboration and Activism

In growing local communities, including those in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the development of public policy can be a contentious process infused with power and unequal access to resources. Collaboration and activism can provide a way to address injustice, identify what is important to community members, and create policies that respond to a community's diverse needs. Through collaborative methods and decolonizing ethnographic research in the Lake Tahoe Basin and surrounding watersheds, this project aims to bridge the gap between anthropological studies, public policy, and environmental protection. This will be accomplished by engaging different perspectives through methods like margin writing, question design, and photography that will be integrated into the research, and evaluated for use in policy design processes. As the demand for the fresh waters of Lake Tahoe increases, my research shows how decolonizing and decapitalizing water policy design can promote equal access to the fundamental human right to clean water and a healthy environment.

Presenter(s): Kylie Papson

Discussion

1174 Affective Technologies of Spectrality: The Making of Flickering Attachments

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon D

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

To live with ghosts is to live in flickering environments - worlds shaped by loss, rupture, and technological mediation. War and exile, ecological collapse, pandemics, neoliberal productivism, and the limits of scientific inquiry fracture bonds between beings, places, and histories. Yet these detachments do not erase presences entirely - they generate traces, spectral and incomplete. This panel explores how contemporary technologies conjure, stabilize, or negotiate these chasms, not by restoring what is lost but by making detachment itself an object of experience and negotiation.

Here we examine how infrastructures of spectrality operate as affective and material apparatuses for sustaining fragile connections, managing uncertainty, and confronting disappearance. We focus on socio-technical dispositifs capturing the flickering - ephemeral presences slipping between visibility and erasure, attachment and detachment.

Our panel explores a range of cases to map how people turn to technology to mend the rifts of disjointed forms of life. Biospheric simulations manifest miniature ecosystems, making environmental loss and ghost species (McCorristine & Adams, 2019; Searle, 2022) tangible. Neuroscientific tools transform fleeting mental dream images into data, echoing older spirit and thought photography (Geurts, 2018). AI-generated conversations with the dead, anticipated in digital horror cinema, now extend beyond the screen as networked spectral technologies (Chabot, 2024). Meanwhile, encrypted channels in wartime Ukraine allow exiled men to flicker in and out of communal life, living as *êtres à éclipses* (Callard, Esquerre & Delaplace, 2023). Other spectral assemblages include digital spaces mediating COVID19-related grief, medical technologies crafting relationships with phantom limbs, and virtual houses bought online becoming safety nets for Chinese youths struggling with precarity.

Across these cases, we ask:

- What types of intermittent collectives and identities do technologies of spectrality shape?
- What regimes of visibility and temporalities do such uncanny technologies sustain as they invoke spectral beings - whether exiled persons, extinct species, digital memorials, virtual houses, phantom limbs or neural traces of dreams?
- What anxieties and desires emerge around these technological mediations, and what forms of sociality or exclusion do they enable?
- How are such flickering attachments valued across different contexts?
- To what extent does scientific inquiry, through new modes of mediation, 'return' to the realm of the spiritual? (James, 1904; Piron, 2022)

Tangentially, with a group composed of several French scholars, we would find ourselves curiously situated in New Orleans. Louisiana, haunted by French colonial traces, offers a fitting site to reflect on anthropology's own ghosts - particularly those of its French lineage. What does it mean to engage with them today in a transatlantic dialogue?

Organizer: Elie Danziger, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

Chair: Sophie Gleizes, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)

Presenter(s): Sophie Gleizes, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Amelie Barbier, Elie Danziger, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Siyu Tang, Helma Korzybska, CNRS UMR 7186 Lesc (I894)

Discussant: Amelie Barbier

Presentation(s): Spectral infrapolitics: digital resistance among conscription-aged men in wartime Ukraine

For many conscript-age Ukrainian men of Romanian descent, war violence lies in the suppression of their right to mobility and subsequent spectralization, as they are forced into a precarious life with grim prospects—either desertion or death on the front. Feeling discriminated against as an ethnic minority, they reject the war as not their own. This paper explores how these men regain agency by leveraging spectralization through digital tools, manipulating regimes of (in)visibility to remain visible to the village community while avoiding military detection.

Smartphones become a crucial lifeline, enabling men who have fled—reduced to revenants and digital traces—to participate in communal events via video calls. Their online presence highlights the tension between the desire for community and enforced exile, creating a new social fabric of flesh and screens, yet conjuring loneliness and dispersal. Meanwhile, anti-military groups on encrypted channels help men who have stayed disappear from public space and avoid military recruiters. Voluntarily adopting a ghostlike existence becomes a survival strategy in a landscape of constant risk.

I term this oscillation between regimes of (in)visibility spectral "infrapolitics" (Scott 2008). This refers to modes of existence that emerge in the shadows, where apparent absence and intermittent digital presence challenge oppressive forces of war, as these men resist systems that seek to control their identity, mobility and belonging.

Presenter(s): Sophie Gleizes

Flickering Signals: Neuroscientific Technologies and the Spectral Mediation of Dreams

In a French sleep lab, neuroscientists explore new communication channels with sleepers. They ask lucid dreamers with narcolepsy, described as "dream experts", to signal emotions in real time through facial codes. This paper follows spectral, fragmentary traces of dreams as they circulate from the body to screens and are reassembled with memory reports upon waking. These attempts to decode dream activity echo historical efforts to contact invisible worlds through technologies of the imagination.

Like 19th-century thought photography, which aimed to materialize mental processes as visible imprints, neuroscientific tools conjure dreams in new forms (Geurts 2018). Here, neuroimaging (EEG) and infrared video act as dreamcatchers, conveying an aesthetic ideal of transparency (Klein 2011) - yet their power flickers as dream signals emerge, distort, or vanish, exposing the opacity of the sleeping body.

A "techno-intimacy" (Vorhölter 2023) unfolds between sleepers and scientists, sometimes moved by the signs they receive. How do these dispositifs reconfigure attachment to dreamed images, places, entities - rendering them at once graspable and forever out of reach? I argue that they operate as "technologies of hope" (Leibing 2010), sustaining aspirations to "unlock" the mind's mysteries and explore the "terra incognita" of dreams, regarded by neuroscientists as a "last frontier" in understanding the extent of human consciousness and expanding the limits of the self.

Presenter(s): Amelie Barbier

Miniature Biospheres and Spectral Attachments: Experimental Ecologies and the Techniciation of Loss

Experimental ecological infrastructures such as Ecotrons and Biosphere 2 reconstruct miniature ecosystems in laboratory settings, aiming to model the conditions of life. Yet, far from producing fully controlled environments, these infrastructures materialise forms of ecological loss and spectrality. Species disappear and reappear, environmental variables fluctuate, and the boundaries of what constitutes an ecosystem remain uncertain. Through ethnographic research in these experimental sites, I explore how scientists and engineers negotiate the instability of their models, engaging in constant adjustments that reveal ecosystems as both technical and spectral objects. These biospheric simulations do not merely enclose life but stage a spectacle of its flickering presence — an aestheticised vision of threatened worlds, all the more elusive as they verge on extinction. Like the fragile forest domes of *Silent Running* (Trumbull, 1972), where contemplation is shadowed by impending disappearance, these miniature biospheres invoke a longing for an environment that is already vanishing. The more one seeks to apprehend a biosphere as a totality, the more it dissolves into contingent assemblages and ephemeral patterns. In this talk, I argue that ecological experimentation operates as a technology of spectral attachment, shaping new forms of relating to a world increasingly mediated by loss and simulation.

Presenter(s): Elie Danziger

Home at the end of the world: Phantasmatic futures via virtual housing at China's rust belt

This paper explores the flickering connections of Chinese youths with the housing they purchased virtually in Hegang, China's city with the cheapest housing price in the northeast rustbelt. Based on a 14-month ethnographic fieldwork conducted offline in Hegang's real estate agencies, and online as a Hegang realtor on TikTok, I examine how the virtual homes became a ghost-like apparatus that mediated reality and not-yet-reality, while dictating temporal frames of precarious present and fantastical futures.

Although a rustbelt city experiencing post-industrial decline since the 1990s, Hegang witnessed an unexpected "revival" in both online and offline worlds since 2018, when young people struggling amidst precarity in urban China started purchasing its cheap apartments. Among this apartment-buying population, as much as 70% never came to the city before or after the purchase, and completed their transactions entirely on social media, where Hegang realtors posted "room tour" videos.

While existing discussion on unoccupied real estate often focus on aspects of housing as financial instruments, the Hegang homebuyers yet perceived the home-at-distance as the "safety net" to fall on in scenarios of personal failures and global (political and ecological) disasters. I thus consider how, for Chinese youths at the economic bottom, housing became not just a material end but a spectral apparatus animating messianic imaginations of future on personal and global scales.

Presenter(s): Siyu Tang

Revealing the entanglements of sensory, perceptual, and affective spectres in phantom limb experiences

According to scientific literature, most amputees experience phantom limb sensations, at least temporarily after surgery. These sensations can be painful remnants of nerve trauma (Ramachandran & Hirstein, 1998 ; Anderson, 2018) or sources of pleasure (Raffin et al., 2012; Crawford 2014 ; De Graaf et al., 2016 ; Touillet et al., 2018). While these experiences vary widely, the feeling of the amputated limb's presence differs from its memory and is inherently unstable in both time and space (in relation to the residual limb).

Ethnographic research on medical and neuroscientific infrastructures used to capture painless phantom sensations shows that, although individuals often struggle to recognize them, diagnostic and mapping tools and methods (such as questionnaires, interview methods, specific vocabulary and visual representations) all act as technologies to "conjure, stabilize, or negotiate" different levels of consciousness and sensory nuances of the phantom experience.

This paper focuses on how these techniques reveal multiple representations and perceptions of the absent limb, showing ephemeral presences that flicker between the ghost of the amputated limb, the memory of its touch, the awareness of its former location, and the current sensory experience. These "regimes of visibility" also mediate spectres of past and present affective relationships to both the lost limb and the new body.

Presenter(s): Helma Korzybska

Discussion

6720 The Spectral Terrain of Gendered Crip Ecologies and Environmental Racism

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

Some terrain is meant to maim, others, to heal. Some terrain is slated for natural resource extraction – logging, mining, highways, dams, and human dwellings – others qualify for "ecological restoration," but rarely, if ever, with land-back justice as an organizing concern. Whether it's tactical infrastructure (de Leon 2015; Jusionyte 2018; Kim 2017) emblematic of occupation (Weizman 2007; 2024) or "disabled ecologies" (Taylor 2024), the nonhuman landscape can be deployed to inflict injury on humans and more-than-humans. In the burgeoning scholarship that weaves eco-crip theory, feminist, queer and trans perspectives (Alaimo 2010; Kafer 2017; Ray and Sibara 2017) with Indigenous knowledge and critiques (Clare 2017; Schmidt 2024; Tallbear and Willey 2019; Wölfe Hazard 2022) the eco-social politics of contamination, pollution, and toxicity manifest unevenly for different people, especially in a settler-colonial context (Liboiron 2021). Claims that certain land is "barren" often justify land-grabs in the name of making it "productively fertile" once again (Goldstein forthcoming). Different kinds of environments affect human reproduction and such environments may also reproduce and re-instantiate trauma (Theidon 2022). Here, already marginalized populations are further maligned as "unable" to care for the land, and perhaps even for themselves.

This roundtable takes eco-crip approaches to environmental harm, examining the political repercussions of "conditions of debility" (Schmidt 2024) as they are racialized, classed, ageist, gendered and sexualized. How might one cite environmental damage to support an "environmentalism of the injured" (Taylor 2024), tracing human-ecological wounding without (further) pathologizing human and more-than-human disability? That is, how does taking an approach of the "environmentalism of the injured" act as a powerful method for disentangling the appropriation of disability and environmental justice rhetoric? Land-body woundings can be strikingly visible at times. At other times, they appear a ghostly, almost imperceptible, haunting presence. When making claims about historical harms, how might the landscape itself serve as environmental archive (Galvis-Rubiano et al 2023) – from lake or ice sediment cores to tree bark and leaves, fossilized beings to rocks formations? This roundtable will focus on (un)earthing moments of environmental injury that both challenge harm-inducing ableist structures while also inspiring resistance and care for humans as well as more-than-humans who experience pollution.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Ruth Goldstein, University of Wisconsin - Madison | AnthroClub, Angela Castillo

Presenter(s): Tailyn Osorio , Sophie Moore, Louisiana State University, Aida Arosoaie , Sebastian Rubiano-Galvis, University of Washington, Thomas Pearson, University of Wisconsin, Stout, Department of Social Science

5918 "Selling In, Selling Up, Selling Out and Shutting Up:" Examining these Myths via the Lived Experience of Business Anthropologists

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In academic communities of anthropology, business anthropologists are often questioned (often implicitly, sometimes even explicitly) about the ethics of their applied work. The myth of "selling out" to Corporate America is a frequent assumption of their practice. Addressing these "ghosts" of professional credibility is important now given the reduction in federally funded anthropology research and the relative stability of practicing business anthropologists based in business schools and corporate America. This panel of business anthropologists will address the common myths and critiques of their ethics, methods and theories directly and honestly based on their years of research experience in business. The diverse panel of practicing anthropologists includes scholars of consumer anthropology based in marketing, advertising and anthropology academic units, as well as applied anthropologists working in corporate consumer research. The focus of this panel will be on the practice of anthropology as it supports the investigation of producers, consumers, users, branding, consumption and the innovation of products and services. The goal of the roundtable is to create space for active dialogue among the panel and audience allowing for a discussion which illuminates the nuance and complexity of what it means to create anthropological knowledge within the context of capitalism, and to what ends.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: E. Gigi Taylor, University of Texas at San Antonio

Presenter(s): E. Gigi Taylor, University of Texas at San Antonio, Patricia Sunderland, Cultural Research & Analysis, Inc, Timothy Malefyt, Clinical Professor of Marketing, Fordham University, Gabelli School of Business, New York, NY, Ann Jordan, University of North Texas, Department of Anthropology, David Crockett, University of South Carolina, Charley Scull, Practica Group

Discussant: E. Gigi Taylor, University of Texas at San Antonio

7830 "The Intimacy of Difference: Transformations and Continuities"

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In superdiverse contexts, new forms of intimacy are emerging that challenge traditional notions of homogeneity and intermixing. Urban environments and rural experiences of marginalization, often shaped by social media, generate unfamiliar encounters and transform social relations the world over. These interactions open new possibilities for boundary-making, appreciation, resentment, envy, projection, and negotiation among groups. They also raise questions about the creation of new norms regarding inappropriate desires and behaviors when experiencing loneliness or isolation. We invite contributions that examine friendship, love and sexual relationships, marriage arrangements and experiences of isolation. The goal is to reflect on transformations and continuities of intimacy, social connection, and erotic life in superdiverse societies globally. How are intimacies socially organized in current contexts, both online and offline?

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi

Chair: Vanessa Rau

Presenter(s): Reecha Das, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Department of Anthropology, P.

Steven Sangren, Chikako Ozawa-de Silva, Emory University, Department of Anthropology, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Vanessa Rau

Discussant: John Borneman, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Transgressive Intimacies: Love and Law in North India

In North India, many couples face adverse consequences when choosing their romantic partners. The consequences include being disowned by the family, false accusations of rape and abduction against men in consensual relations or, albeit rare, even honor killings. With the ascendance of Hindu nationalism, inter-faith relationships are further scrutinized by religious communities and vigilante groups. Moreover, conspiracy theories such as "love-jihad", fueled by social media, routinely target Hindu-Muslim relationships, turning them into criminal acts. Yet, young couples from diverse caste, religious, and ethnic backgrounds transgress these societal and familial impositions in myriad ways. Based on fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh, India, this paper explores how young men and women experience transgressive romantic relationships outside the expected norm of endogamy. Specifically, it examines how romantic relationships are both shaping and are shaped by the unintended use of law.

Presenter(s): Reecha Das

Complexities, Doublebinds, Subjection, and Endogenous Resistances in the Cultural Construction of Male Identifications and Friendships

This paper draws upon on somewhat "auto-ethnographic" work on topics including surfing, SEAL training, the cross-over appeal of African-American music, and crew/rowing. Connecting these inquiries is an argument to the effect that desire shapes cultures in ways largely overlooked in more conventional notions regarding "cultural construction." I focus in particular here on SEAL training and complexities revolving around how what I term a desire for self-possession, autonomy, and agency interacts with a need for recognition from others in the dynamics through which such activities become loci for the cultural construction of identities. Among complexities are how competition, self-assertion, (sometimes devolving toward narcissism), on the one hand, and solidarity, comradeship, identification with a group, and mutually constitutive recognition (on the other) interact. I invoked Butler's ideas regarding "subjection" to help unpack how double-binds manifest in these processes and how endogenous resistances to subjection almost inevitably emerge and are assimilated to the constructive process.

Presenter(s): P. Steven Sangren

Intimacy and Loneliness in Japan and Abroad: Empathy and Nakama in anime and manga as tools for addressing social isolation

For Japan's 1.5 million shut-ins (hikikomori) and for shut-ins elsewhere in the world, achieving friendship and intimacy can be a very high bar. This paper explores the potential of "nakama" or "comradeship," based around shared identity and goals, as a means for understanding and

addressing social isolation, using ethnographic research from the fandom of Japanese anime and manga.

Presenter(s): Chikako Ozawa-de Silva

Science / Art / Politics: Empathy and the Bridging of a Divided World

The realms of science, art, and social change are institutionally divided in our current world and in academia, but these divisions rest on the division between personal intimacy and generalizable knowledge, and emotion and reason, that blur or break down upon critical inquiry. This paper provides a theoretical approach to engaged work that seeks to bridge these divides, drawing from ethnographic examples of scientific art projects, socially engaged art research, and museum installations across the US and Japan.

Presenter(s): Brendan Ozawa-de Silva

Zakir, Bharat, and the Collapse of Distance

What happens, when a subject encounters what suggests animosity but fails to be sufficiently other or different? Through an analysis of two encounters, this paper deals with overwhelming experience in the context of intimacy and violence in India.

Presenter(s): Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi

Diversity in Intimacy in turbulent times: Relationships in the context of (forced) migration

With the arrival of large numbers of refugees since 2015, urban diversity in Germany has increased. The question of sexuality and romantic relationships of refugees has barely been addressed in academic research. In the case of refugees from Arab speaking or African countries, refugees' alleged sexuality has been discussed in the context of sexual assaults, not seldom bearing orientalist and racist stereotyping. My study of intimacies between refugees and permanent residents looks at the lived experience and negotiation of difference, diversity and boundaries in terms of status, race, class and gender, religion and the negotiation of power and hierarchies in Love relationships. Taking the biographies of couples, this paper demonstrates how differences are negotiated among mixed couples. While often focusing on 'cultural differences' as the obstacle for 'Love' to work, I rather suggest, that the migration regime and structural inequality significantly affect intimacies. In my paper, I will show how the concept changes in the course of migration trajectories and the experience of intimacy in diverse relationships and migrants and migration influence existing societal ideas of relationships and intimacy. Focusing on the individual biographical experiences of refugees and permanent residents and their negotiation of differences, I will discuss the nexus of power, Love and desire in the practice of relationships in the context of their socio-political realities.

Presenter(s): Vanessa Rau

Discussion

3572 Early Birds Get the Work: Research as an Undergraduate Instructional Tool at a Florida Public Teaching Institution

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 2

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Academia is under increasing political scrutiny in the US for its alleged role as an elitist harborage of radical ideas that indoctrinates students to views in contradiction with American values. This derision inaccurately portrays students as passive receptacles devoid of agency. Moreover, such assaults not only dismiss the value of university research to American civil society and the global community but publicly cast doubt on the veracity of scientific knowledge in general. Rebuke of science and the academy is not new, but while few in academia predicted the resurrection of these malevolent ghosts, this haunting point in time instigates critical reflection of our value to students. Most university students do not pursue academic careers, so it behooves academic scholars to consider how well we equip undergraduates with the skills, knowledge, and experiences to prosper in their careers. This is especially pressing for the anthropological discipline, as most anthropology graduates who seek careers beyond academia will find positions that are not specifically labeled "anthropologist." Anthropology is at its core a toolkit for perceiving the world and understanding people in any context; one need not possess the job title of anthropologist to do anthropology. In this sense, anthropology has much practical knowledge and skills to prepare students for manifold industries. However, prioritization of research as the central focus of anthropology obscures its pragmatic value for many students, especially those at flagship universities with R1 status and a vast research endowment. This is less the case at regional public universities in which scholarly resources are limited and 75 percent of the faculty workload is "instructional." Such is true of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), a regional public teaching institution in Florida that primarily serves the local citizens of Southwest Florida. The challenge for FGCU "Eagles" faculty is maintaining their scholarly pursuits while also delivering a practical education for students that reinforces the broad value of anthropology to all careers. One solution is using research as an instructional tool: not simply recruiting students as research assistants but creating opportunities for them to realize their own research interests, an endeavor otherwise inaccessible to students before graduate school. Whether students ultimately pursue academic careers or directly enter the workforce, this early bird approach to research allows students to deploy broad skills through experiential learning and builds confidence both in their individual abilities and value to diverse career fields. This session features three examples of such research studies conceived, designed, and carried out by anthropology majors at FGCU. In a broad sense, these three projects offer evidence to counter critics' claims that anthropology is a useless degree with no job prospects. On the contrary, anthropology is for everyone.

Section: Society for Anthropological Sciences

Organizer: Max Stein, Florida Gulf Coast University, Department of Social Sciences

Chair: Liara Descartes

Presenter(s): Liara Descartes, Mackenzie Weiner, Alexandra Besu

Discussant: Max Stein, Florida Gulf Coast University, Department of Social Sciences

Presentation(s): From Pique to Maví: Exploring Cultural Resilience through the Ponce Fermentation Festival amid Gentrification in Puerto Rico

Contemporary migration literature emphasizes the role of homecoming festivals in Latin America and elsewhere as a gateway that connects first- and second-generation descendants of immigrants to their home culture. In Puerto Rico, the US-mainland-based grassroots organization "LA Menu" hosts an annual Fermentation Festival in Ponce, PR focused on reviving traditional foodways to encourage food sovereignty as a means of cultural resilience against the effects of gentrification. Organizers established the festival in 2023 to assist local island communities such as Ponce and Mayagüez to reclaim agency in their available food choices and rediscover traditional recipes displaced by the influx of imported canned goods following World War II. Drawing on the range of ethnographic methods, including participant-observation and interviews with local and non-local attendees, this paper highlights how mainland Americans with family ties to Puerto Rico have resurrected folk dietary knowledge passed down from older generations to connect with their heritage and counter gentrification through food sovereignty, cultural preservation, and community education.

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Presenter(s): Liara Descartes

Co-author(s): Max Stein

Behold Man the Non-Hunter!: Do Western Ideas about Social Dominance over Humans and Animals Shape Meat Consumption?

While current consensus among biological anthropologists has reconceptualized the notion of prehistoric man from "the hunter" to "the hunted," the former remains influential in Western constructions of maleness; specifically, the trope of men as rugged meat-eaters whose destiny is characterized by social and ecological dominance over other cultures and species. This research explored how traditional Western (binary) gender roles influence the association of social dominance in human-to-human and human-to-animal relationships to understand how they collectively shape meat consumption. Specifically, does gendered prejudice toward humans and animal exploitation also shape meat-eating attitudes? We hypothesized positive correlations among social dominance, speciesism, and meat-eating using the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Social Dominance Human-Animal Relations (SD-HARM), and Meat Consumption and Intention Scale (MCIS). Results showed strong positive correlations among social dominance and speciesism, with independent associations of each to meat-eating that were intensified by traditional constructions of maleness. Findings suggest that the human inclination toward hierarchical systems reflect a tendency toward environmental compartmentalization that also influence and regulate dietary preferences and behavior.

Presenter(s): Mackenzie Weiner

Co-author(s): Max Stein

Constructing a Singular National Identity through Propaganda in Multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Balkan Peninsula has historically been a cultural and geographic crossroads of religious, ethnic, and political identity, strategically connecting European, Middle Eastern, and Asian cultural spheres across millennia. Despite the region's storied diversity, current constructions of national heritage within the Balkan states are modern creations that may conflict among neighboring countries and disregard elements of historicity that do not fit with contemporary political motivations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, predominantly Muslim Bosniaks, Eastern Orthodox Serbs, and Roman Catholic Croats vie for claim over the country's national identity, each reinforcing their own legitimacy through propaganda such as national monument construction. Propaganda as a means to assert national identity is a relatively peaceful alternative in a region that 30 years prior was mired in warfare and ethnic cleansing that further widened ethnic and religious divisions. Twentieth-century political upheaval in the Balkans has nonetheless left Bosnia and Herzegovina with a legacy of religious strife over which of the major religions are the foremost or founding faith. This paper presents the results of exploratory ethnographic research in Banja Luka--the second most populous city in Bosnia and Herzegovina--evaluating how each ethno-religious group deploys propaganda in diverse forms to elevate their identity and history as the nation's singular heritage.

Presenter(s): Alexandra Besu

Co-author(s): Max Stein

Discussion

4517 The Value of Loss: How Absence and Rupture Are Valorized

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In an increasingly perilous world, loss is almost an inevitability. Sometimes loss is acute, something -- a job, a friend, a limb, a life -- here one second and gone the next. Sometimes loss is chronic -- health, relationships, places, hope -- eroded over time until all that is left is its memory. Other times, it is hard to tell the difference between the two. Acute losses can spiral out into chronic ones; the slow grind of decay can give rise to a critical rupture. Gone does not mean forgotten, however. Anthropologists have long been sensitive to the ways in which losses take on lives of their own, animated through their remembering -- voluntary or otherwise -- towards particular social, political, and economic ends. But not all losses are remembered equally, nor are they remembered for the same amount of time. Not every ghost is able to haunt those who remain. This panel, therefore, is interested in the question of how and when particular losses become worth remembering. In doing so, it seeks to examine how intersections of identity, class, and historical moments give rise to the need to remember and its dark twin, the ability to forget. Drawing on research about the role of gender in determining whose wounds are worth representing in the

aftermath of the Bangladeshi protest movement, how people are pressured to forget tragedies such as hurricane Katrina, the place of queer ghosts in the envisioning of queer futures, how changes in food provide insight into "home" as something always already partially lost, the possibilities for new familial relationships to emerge out of the loss of health caused by long-term illnesses like chronic liver disease, and how trans and queer losses take on value as signifiers of both social progress and urban development in South Texas, this panel meditates on the following questions: Who or what gets remembered, and why? Who gets to do the remembering, and to what end are such remembrances mobilized? What future opportunities are created and foreclosed through loss and its marking, and who do these processes benefit?

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Sara Becker

Chair: Sara Becker

Presenter(s): MD Shakhawat Hossain, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology, Katharine Serio, Scott Olson, Guido Sprenger, Ramón Casillas-Salazar, Sara Becker

Discussant: Kelly McKowen, Southern Methodist University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): The Politics of Wound: Visible Bodies, Invisible Lives

On August 5, 2024, following a month-long insurgency, the Sheikh Hasina regime was ousted in Bangladesh, leaving thousands dead or permanently wounded (Reuters 2024). While scholarship on politically wounded bodies has emphasized trauma, heroism, and masculine sacrifice (Açıksöz 2019; Barbosa 2022), this study foregrounds everyday meaning-making among both male and female survivors groups often unevenly represented in dominant narratives (Addlakha 2013; Wendell 1996). Using ethnographic methods, it explores how gender, class, and political identity shape reintegration after injury. Trauma is approached not solely as individual rupture, but as a socially embedded, politically mediated experience negotiated through kinship, memory, and institutional encounters (Das 2007; Han 2012). While wounded men may be valorized as heroes, women's injured bodies evoke complex questions of shame, visibility, and exclusion (Jayawardena & de Alwis 1996; Ong & Peletz 1995). Engaging gendered disability and body politics (Goodley 2014; Towghi & Vora 2014), this research examines how survivors navigate social belonging and political subjectivities (Goffman 1963; Wool 2015). Ultimately, this study contributes to anthropological debates on disability embodiment, trauma, and political violence by analyzing how the wounded body reconfigures subjectivity in post-movement Bangladesh

Presenter(s): MD Shakhawat Hossain

Ghosts of Hurricane Past: An Autoethnographic Exploration of the Effects of Hurricane Katrina

Twenty years ago, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the surrounding areas and would change the direction of countless lives including my own. Taking inspiration from the theme and location of this conference, in this paper, I employ an autoethnographic approach to explore the specter of the hurricane. I came of age in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, abruptly displaced and disconnected from a home I would never really return to. However, while most of the region was

dealing with unimaginable pain and devastating loss, in the ensuing weeks, my material positionality was revealed to be increased. The resulting guilt and shame I felt led me to deny the sense of loss and powerlessness I was experiencing. I was haunted by these feelings, shutting down and refusing to acknowledge them or downplaying and attempting to forget the pain and loss of becoming uprooted. Utilizing ideas of displacement and survivors' guilt, I will investigate the pressure to forget and the consequences of this forgetting. I believed that losing a sense of belonging and community was insignificant, not worthy of attention. The ghost of Hurricane Katrina followed me silently, stealthily until a misguided visit to the Presbytère Museum twelve years later that forced me to remember and acknowledge the trauma of this disastrous event. I hope to add to the discourse of loss in displacement by considering how individuals are haunted by the denial of their own distress.

Presenter(s): Katharine Serio

The Future of Queer Death: Loss and Memory in a Berlin Queer Cemetery

In a cemetery (Kirchhof) in central Berlin known for its many queer tenants, one sprawling burial plot houses the remains of almost one hundred people who lived with HIV. Another serves as the final resting place of a famous gay author and AIDS activist; known for camp and gallows humor, the plot's headstones subtly resemble male anatomy. Another plot tells the stories of the women interred there in an effort to resist lesbian erasure. These plots, along with others in the cemetery, reveal a particularly queer connection between loss, memory, and the future. Drawing on an earlier debate over queer time and relationality (Dinshaw et al. 2007, Muñoz 2009), recent scholarship has characterized the work of queer memory making as something that produces and is the product of diffuse queer relations (Sutton 2020) or, more concretely, kinship (Evans 2023). Using ethnographic work I conducted in and around the Alte Sankt Matthäus Kirchhof in Berlin, I argue queer memories of death reorient the experience of loss towards the future. Understanding the temporality of loss, in this case, is vital because it underscores how memory not only facilitates relationality in death but presses feelings of loss beyond the individual into the construction of a collective with a politics and a future. The ghosts of the Alte Sankt Matthäus Kirchhof are haunting precisely because they remind queer visitors they are not alone and must carry with them not-yet-realized visions for queer life ahead.

Presenter(s): Scott Olson

"Home" as Loss: Non-human Belonging and the Memory of Food in Laos

In many ways, "home" emerges as a value of collective belonging when it is already lost, or on the brink of disappearance. "Home", for many people, denotes a complex entity composed of experience and imagination, identity construction and sensory access. However, this seeming "whole" sometimes only gains its contours in the aftermath of its (partial) disappearance. This will be argued for food as a main indicator of the experience of "home". In Laos, a country with high biodiversity and a large rural population, many people rely on the food they grow, raise, hunt or collect in their immediate environment. Each meal thus brings a network of beings to the table,

some domesticated and some wild, some local and some bought on the market. Local food is charged with affect – certain species represent memories and places of earlier belonging, but also serve as expression of affection. This comes into strong relief when the environment changes, through resettlement, hydroelectric dams or monocropping. Thereby, the contours of human-non-human belonging, realized through the lens of food, become visible as an image of a whole that is always incomplete. This talk presents work in progress in the Cooperative Research Center "Home(s)" at Heidelberg University.

Presenter(s): Guido Sprenger

Losing a Liver, Gaining a Family: Cirrhosis, Family Values, and Experimental Intimacies in the Urban U.S.

How does bodily loss become re-valORIZED as a gateway to familial integration? Both medicine and anthropology often treat chronic illness as loss of normal functioning (Canguilhem 1991). Yet medical anthropology shows that illness is also productive, forging new forms of belonging (Nguyen 2010, Petryna 2022), kinship (Franklin 2013, Rapp 1999), and moral personhood (Kleinman 2009, Shohet 2021) through medicalization or assumption of caregiving roles. Drawing on ethnography among low-income people with cirrhosis and their families in the urban U.S., we highlight a different path by which deterioration fosters generativity. Loss of liver function, we argue, may itself create the conditions for novel ways of being together. Starting from the statement, "He lost his health, but I got my family back," we trace how post-diagnosis shifts in needs, desires, and behaviors permitted one family to experiment with alternative domestic intimacies. While cirrhosis should hardly be romanticized, lived experiences of it suggest illness may be a matter of not better and worse, but otherwise.

Presenter(s): Ramón Casillas-Salazar

Co-author(s): Utpal Sandesara

Missing But (Now) Not Forgotten: Urban Development and Trans Disappearances

Kimberly's sister dropped her off downtown around 2:30 am in 2017. She never caught up with the friends she was there to meet, disappearing on the dark streets of downtown Brownsville. Black and brown trans women face an increased risk of violence, especially when they are participating or are perceived to be participating in sex work. Trans scholars have drawn attention to how violence against trans women of color often comes to stand for violence against all trans people, effacing racial and labor causes. Such narratives are used to fundraise or promote the passing of anti-hate crime legislation, bolstering a carceral state that already disproportionately harms trans women of color. Kimberly's story has been used to generate a different kind of value. Today, downtown Brownsville has been transformed. The streets shine with lights, business is booming, and Kimberly's family has been invited three times to host a display in the city's June Pride exhibit downtown. Drawing on 9 months of research and an analysis of documentaries made on her disappearance, I argue that the Kimberly's loss has become worth the city's attention because it can be folded into the narrative of Brownsville's development into a modern, cosmopolitan city,

valued for its ability to demonstrate how things have changed even as factors that contributed to her loss continue. In so doing, I ask what the limitations of remembrance are here at the looming end of the very long twilight of equality.

Presenter(s): Sara Becker

8853 Living Ghosts of Junkyard Play: A Reconfigurable Installation of Projection, Scrap, and Marked-Up Memory

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 12:00 PM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 5

Type: Installations

Living Ghosts of Junkyard Play is an interactive exhibit, based on multi-sited ethnographic research in adventure playgrounds across New York, Tokyo, Chiba, Berkeley, and Sacramento.

Organizer(s): Lucius Von Joo

3660 Not Quite Land: Troubling Enclosure within Ambiguous Ecologies

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Techniques of making property such as land titles, leases, maps, surveys, and permitting laws

often attempt to fix ecologies into mutually exclusive categories: land or water, private or public, industrial or residential, wild or domesticated, empty or inhabited. Icecaps, wetlands, seascapes, airdscapes, and other ambiguous ecologies defy these binaries, yet continue to be governed through socio-legal regimes that have been developed in relation to fixed, dry land. Such socio-legal regimes animate infrastructure projects that transform hard-to-define and hard-to-enclose ecologies into places that can be governed in ways that align with terrestrial land; in ways that can be claimed, propertied, and cultivated. Embankments and channels make swamps less wet and more dry in service of making something that can be recognized as "land." The bodies, movements, and migrations of nonhumans become imbued with a sense of property and national identity. Boundaries and borders fragment governance across connected places, seasons, and species. Despite these efforts, ambiguous, shifting, and porous ecologies- along with the humans and nonhumans within them- continue to challenge the land-based logics that maintain techniques of property, possession, and enclosure. In this panel, we ask: How do concepts of "land" and "property" become applied to places, processes, and species that defy these categorizations? How do land-based logics "haunt" fluid, shifting, and porous ecologies? Finally, how do materialities of ambiguous ecologies, and experiences of humans and nonhumans within them, reveal limitations, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the land-based logics that govern them?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Suraiya Luecke , Sita Mamidipudi

Chair: Darcey Evans, SUNY-Stony Brook University

Presenter(s): Martin Nestepny, Holland Haverkamp, Sita Mamidipudi, Darcey Evans, SUNY-Stony Brook University, Shalini Iyengar

Discussant: Chitra Venkataramani, Australian National University

Presentation(s): Topology of Disturbance: Large Carnivores and Scalar Enclosure in the Slovak Carpathians

This paper examines how brown bears & wolves disrupt property regimes, scalar governance, & territorial affiliations in the Poľana Reserve, Central Slovakia. Based on fieldwork with hunters, conservationists, & rural residents, I argue that these animals unsettle territorial logics through which states, NGOs, & local actors attempt to govern ecologies. Conservation zoning, EU biodiversity policies, & post-socialist land reforms rely on fixed notions of land and use—but carnivore mobilities defy such fixity. Their seasonal, unpredictable movements across forests, pastures, & villages challenge efforts to enclose or label land as "wild," "private," or "pastoral." These encounters expose the porous materialities of the Carpathian landscape and shift scalar affiliations: local vs national, EU vs village, human vs nonhuman. A bear in a village or a wolf among livestock becomes a catalyst for rethinking belonging and the appropriate scale of governance. I propose a topology of disturbance to theorize how mobile, more-than-human ecologies destabilize territorial categories and compel scalar shifts. These movements trigger recursive reconfigurations—up- and downscaling, fracturing—in patterns reminiscent of fractal dynamics, revealing the limits of rendering ecologies legible through property, law, or map. Large carnivores thus make visible the contested, overlapping, & shifting scales of governance and land-based belonging in post-socialist Central Europe.

Presenter(s): Martin Nestepny

Governance at the Edge: Wetlands, Wind Energy, and the Contest over Ambiguous Ecologies

Ambiguous ecologies such as wetlands, estuaries, and tidal landscapes resist Eurocentric categorizations of land and water, yet contemporary infrastructure projects continue to govern these spaces through land-based logics of property, enclosure, and development. Through a feminist political ecology (FPE) approach, this paper examines the contested siting of a proposed offshore wind port at Sears Island, Maine—a coastal island long entangled in land-based struggles for conservation, development, and access. Employing an interdisciplinary analysis of species surveys, environmental law interpretations, meeting transcripts, and interviews with community members, scientists, and policymakers, I explore how regulatory techniques attempt to render ambiguous ecologies "land-like" for infrastructural transformation. At the same time, the material vitality of wetlands—migratory bird movements, seasonal flooding, multispecies habitat entanglements—continually disrupts efforts to fix and settle these spaces as land. Aligned with FPE arguments and insights, I argue that efforts to govern Sears Island reinscribe the hauntings of colonial property regimes while simultaneously exposing their limits. Ambiguous ecologies and their more-than-human communities both reveal and resist the contradictions at the heart of

enclosure-driven governance. This case offers insight into broader tensions in contemporary environmental decision-making where land, law, and life do not easily align.

Presenter(s): Holland Haverkamp

Land Flows: Contesting Land-Based Logics in a Waterscape

In this paper, I examine the messy, everyday practices through which fishworkers and industrial salt manufacturers make contesting claims to the Little Rann of Kutch, India, a region that shifts between a shallow estuarine lake for a third of the year, and saline desert for the rest of the year. I examine a legal case contesting leases obtained by industrial salt manufacturers for thousands of acres in the region, who then built embankments that block creeks and destroyed mangrove forests, turning it permanently into 'land'. Using the figure of the Desert from Elizabeth Povinelli's *Geontologies*, I ask how the legal and ecological category of banjar or barren land is produced and enacted in this region. I argue that land-based logics of tenure, mapping, survey and classification are applied to this place that is shifting, porous and ambiguous, by creating a slippage between affectively-charged, legal and ecological categories of "wasteland" and "barren" land, invisibilizing and dispossessing fishworkers from this marshy ecosystem. Fishworkers, though, make claims to flows of water arguing that "they can say the land is theirs, but the water is ours," questioning the separation of land from water in this region.

Presenter(s): Sita Mamidipudi

Seabed Empires: Making Land and Property at Sea

In marine waters worldwide, parcels of the seabed are being leased and developed by aquaculture, mining, offshore energy, and other ocean-based industries, in part facilitated by a legal categorization of seabeds as "submerged lands." This paper draws on conflicts over industrial aquaculture in the coastal waters of British Columbia to trace how the political-economic turn to the submerged lands of the sea is part of long histories and imagined futures of state and economy-building in Canada. I first detail the legal calculus through which seabeds became reclassified as submerged lands, expanding the types of territory the state could lay claim to. I then describe how state-industry partnerships transform the seabed into a form of property in accordance with certain biophysical characteristics. However, as fish, people, and industrial waste traverse the boundaries of aquaculture facilities, the effort to make and maintain property boundaries is troubled by the same ecological materialities and political conditions that the aquaculture industry comes to depend on. In considering how concepts of "land" and "property" emerge and are contested at sea, this paper questions how aquaculture infrastructures transform spatial relations within coastal waterscapes as part of a broader reconfiguration of marine space in the blue economy.

Presenter(s): Darcey Evans

From Protection to Enclosure: Bans and Zones in the Bay of Bengal

Over the last four decades, the Indian state has accelerated efforts to create a marine resource frontier in its territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone. These attempts, recently framed as a

move towards a "Blue Economy" have aimed at increasing fisheries production in order to improve export earnings. As a consequence, small-scale fishers (SSF) have found themselves occupying a world that has been fenced and flattened, serrated by a fluctuating system of zones and bans that have carved up waters long managed through common property regimes.

However, the material realities of the fluid waterscape, plunging fish numbers and the heightened impoverishment of SSF have led to increasing questions around the legal regime for marine regulation. How did zones and bans come to be the dominant frame for the regulation of marine space? How, in spite of emerging from SSF efforts, did they result in their dispossession? In this paper, I draw on historical and ethnographic research with SSF in coastal Bengal to examine how SSF are negotiating the legal system and articulating their understandings of place and belonging in order to (re)claim their rights and boundaries in the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, I study the long histories and imaginaries undergirding the current legal framework for marine fisheries in order to understand how their operation has resulted in enclosing marine commons.

Presenter(s): Shalini Iyengar

Discussion

8978 Lives Lived, Lives (Un)Forgotten: the Marriage of Archaeology & Ethnography to Center African American (Oral) Histories and Foil Archival Silence

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Gallier AB(4th fl)

Type: Late-Breaking Oral Presentation Session

In today's sociopolitical climate, it has become imperative to preserve cultural artifacts and oral histories. When so much is being re-written or even intentionally erased, Anthropology is primed to respond with public scholarship, practice that could yield the strengths of two disciplines that rarely collaborate: Linguistic Anthropology and Historical Archaeology. In fact, these subfields provide the "source material" needed to either give context and validity (i.e., for the purpose of archeological interpretation) or physical and tangible evidence (i.e., artifacts that substantiate oral histories) that when operating alone, these disciplines' findings can seem incomplete. Essentially, oral histories provide the necessary details for accurate interpretation, the archeological record and other numerical or tangible data can corroborate narrated histories. This is important in the work of collecting and documenting artifacts and oral histories for enslaved Africans and their descendants in the U.S.

Part of white supremacy's attempt to dehumanize and displace African Americans from the historical record of the U.S. has been to continuously destroy or deny their inclusions in archival spaces. This intentional erasure not only dispossesses descendants of both the physical and empirical evidence that legitimize their ancestor's struggles, but it also denies them the status of belonging afforded to their oppressors – whose lives are fully accounted for in repositories and

preservation projects. Because of archival silencing, many scholars (i.e., archaeologists, folklorists, ethnographers and / or archivists) are struggling to capture the full spectrum of what it meant to be an African in America as well as to be their surviving descendants. Yet, all hope is not lost.

This panel of researchers will present timely data that illuminate the possibilities of disrupting archival silence when archaeologists and linguistics anthropologists partner to collectively restore and re-story the lives, language, and cultural practices of African descendants of the enslaved. These projects will also show how narrative data may complement archaeological findings, connecting material culture to once living or living beings so that "things," or artifacts, are no longer disconnected from people and vice versa.

Overall, this panel promotes these disciplines, along with other interdisciplinary partnerships, as a force of activism that is strengthened when paired together. Our presentations will also elucidate the urgent need to make these histories more visible, accessible, and comprehensive for public consumption and utility – particularly as elders age and transition, taking their histories with them. While this work may not completely foil current political strategies and racist agendas to remove the African American experience from American history, these preservation projects offer restorative justice that will impact current generations and those to come.

Organizer: Tiffany Jones, Spelman College

Chair: Andrew Agha

Presenter(s): Tiffany Jones, Spelman College, Brianna Doe, Nicole Isenbarger, Andrew Agha

Discussant: Jaylah Cosby, unaffiliated, Jarrett Drake

Presentation(s): Archives (Un)Silenced & Oral Histories

This presentation not only reveals the urgency and practicality of ethnographic research as a means for documenting the narratives of my ancestors that are preserved by elder 80+ descendants but also why such work must be publicized and treated as a national crisis – one that can be revoked with urgent responses by anthropological applied, public scholarship and community engagement projects. The Oxford, GA research highlighted in this presentation is put forth to rouse support and urgency amongst scholars who are primed to do this work.

Presenter(s): Tiffany Jones

Studying Tragedy from an Africana Epistemology

The precarity of Black being is fraught by an emergent erasure that facilitates and is facilitated by the archive—between (1) Black people and their genealogy and (2) Black scholarship and the canon determining what scholarship is. I work with the archive in a literal and interpretive sense.

This research explores how alternative kinship formations are embodied, self-determined, and disseminated by Black matriarchs in the U.S. who make and keep life as a liberatory practice within the enduring legacies of antebellum racial formation—what Black social theorists have termed the "afterlives of slavery." In this paper I ask, what sort of imperative should exist in the work to close the chasm between academic and quotidian archival practices? I will explore how experimental

methodological practices deploy material culture and oral histories to amplify, and therefore preserve, Black life—to re-write marginalized people back into existence.

Presenter(s): Brianna Doe

Marks that Bind: Forging New Links in ARCH Data

By tracing the linkages between iron and pottery production, this work highlights how materiality and symbolism intersect, reframing these marks as vital cultural expressions rather than incidental decoration. Beyond documenting their presence, this paper argues that such symbols point to a broader African diasporic epistemology. Drawing on oral histories and ethnographic accounts from both Africa and the Americas, I situate these symbols within a transatlantic context. These sources reveal their widespread use across the Atlantic World and suggest deep cultural meanings that transcend specific ethnic affiliations, reflecting a deeper shared worldview that linked participating African-descended peoples across vast distances. Ultimately, this research challenges long-standing disciplinary silences and repositions these marks as significant to understanding the intellectual and cultural life of enslaved Africans in the Americas.

Presenter(s): Nicole Isenbarger

By Silencing Archaeology, You Silence Ancestors

Throughout my nearly 30 year career as an historical archaeologist I have faced countless demands to change, alter, and completely omit my interpretations of sites once occupied by enslaved Africans. I have watched numerous colleagues, including my mentors, leave some artifacts unprocessed, thus they go unreported and ignored, while other well known and identifiable artifacts were improperly and purposefully misidentified and labeled as something else. As archaeologists we are ethically bound to report on all of our findings and as professionals we are obligated to tell everyone, especially our peers, what it is we have found. Why, then, are things ignored, data changed or lost, and important interpretations silenced and censored? Why have I been told to discount the historical narrative of the African American past when I apply it to my archaeology This paper discusses how I actively combat recent censorship of my work on a nineteenth century plantation.

Presenter(s): Andrew Agha

Discussion

Discussion

4282 Cosmographies of Comparison and Commensuration II: Thresholds, Tipping Points, Politics

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Grand Ballroom E (5th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Are "commensuration" and "comparison" the same, but different? How do practices of equivalence-making show up in our fieldsites and theories, and what do they accomplish? This panel centers on the "tensional" (Dewey, 1938; see Savransky, 2021) relation between rubrics of commensuration and comparison used both by social scientists and the people we work with and learn from. We pursue a wide range of questions about equivalence-making from a reflexively "cosmographic" angle. Franz Boas (1887, 140) defined "cosmography" as the science which attends to individuality, on its own terms, in order to recognize "totality in the individuality" of social life (1887, 140). Quasi-naturalistic "comparative" methods, he argued, enable the opposite, locating "individuality in the totality" (ibid). By working towards a "cosmography of comparison," members of this panel seek to extend Boas's critique by revisiting longstanding but underdetermined roles that "commensuration" and "comparison" play in ethnographic theory and practice.

"Commensuration" has long been commonly deployed as a rubric across the social sciences to characterize social (and nominally "economic") processes that bring two or more entities into enumerative (and thus evaluative) relation through reference to a common "metric," where the metric in question may range from decibels to dollars. Building on the sociological work of Espeland and Stevens (1998), social scientists have more recently moved beyond scientific framings of "commensuration," approaching it instead as part of humans' everyday equipment for living.

Linguists have also conventionally framed "comparison's" grammatical categoriality with reference to paradigmatic relations between entities that share different degrees of the same gradable property (e.g., height). Comparison in these accounts is categorially and co-textually emergent, a discursive-semiotic phenomenon that inflects humans' aspirations or "navigational capacities" (Appadurai, 2004), and so helps configure the rhythms of everyday life. Anthropologists, while not fully engaging insights from formal linguistics, have nevertheless moved beyond a linguistic focus on sentence-level denotation, attending to comparison's co-textual dynamics or "social life," shedding light on how tacitly presupposed thresholds or context-sensitive "points of departure" (Sapir, 1944; see Kennedy, 2008) are ethnographically revealable through careful attention to the patterned, chain-like dynamics of everyday talk.

This panel moves beyond questions of "comparison" and "commensuration" as "impossible" (but indispensable) scientific "method[s]" (Evans-Pritchard; Candea, 2018), to examine how people reflexively explore, evaluate, or otherwise enumerate and so reckon the tropological "more-or-lessnesses" of life.

In this, the second part of a two-part panel, we explore issues ranging from wokeness, to violence, to homelessness, to domestic work, to the semiotics of play.

Section: Society for Linguistic Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew M. Carruthers, University of Pennsylvania, Adrienne Cohen, Colorado State University

Chair: Xiao Schutte Ke, University of Pennsylvania

Presenter(s): Matthew Archer, Maastricht University, Benjamin Slightom, Yale University, Tri Mac Phuong, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Asif Agha, University of Pennsylvania

Presentation(s): Too Woke

In the early 2020s, rightwing pundits and politicians in the US started calling asset managers like BlackRock and multinational corporations like Costco "too woke" because they feigned concern for the social and environmental impacts of their investments and operations. When viewed through the lens of an emergent "anthropology of intensity," such an accusation raises interesting questions about the threshold of acceptable wokeness and what happens when that threshold is crossed. In addressing these questions, this essay shows how critiques of wokeness are inseparable from more widespread fascist and ecocidal discourses, all of which turn on the regimentation of specific and related modes of commensuration, comparison, and causation. Paying attention to intensity helps us see how speakers and writers make their discourses coherent in the context of other, potentially contradictory, discourses.

Presenter(s): Matthew Archer

Quantifying Homelessness?: Enumeration and Ethnographic Methods in U.S. Efforts to Count Every Homeless Person

This paper traces a history of U.S. efforts to count the number of people experiencing homelessness. Beginning with an historical overview of the Census Bureau's engagement of an anthropologist of the urban Romani, Matt T. Salo, the essay traces how racialized and gendered assumptions are foundational to homelessness counts, the tool we use to prioritize funding for aid initiatives. Blending archival research of this counting method with ethnography of low-income Black women volunteering for the federally mandated Point-in-Time (PiT) count, the article considers how this history shapes policies which undercount the prevalence of women, children, and queer and trans people experiencing homelessness by privileging chronic and street-based homelessness, contexts that overwhelmingly skew male and cisgendered. I recount the lives of women who lived out of their cars, in "abandoniums," with abusive partners, or out of motels they paid for with survival sex work, all of whom were unable to receive aid, despite meeting legal standards for homelessness, because of these policy oversights. I argue for grounding these erasures in the historical development of enumeration standards that has shaped housing policy which assumes homelessness is an urban male labor issue, an assumption that has reinforced the validity of these faulty counting methodologies in ways that entrench Black women's marginalization.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Slightom

The Value of Play

Cosmography is a way to elaborate peoples, things, and exchange as a mapping of culture – drawing on a dialectic of commensuration and comparison. Based on fieldnotes from Vietnam, this

paper explores what happens when a cosmographic imagination (or social universe) shifts in an encounter of abrupt and unexpected mutual (re)valuation between agents. In an underground club, three novice players discover a new playground with different rules, etiquettes, and metrics. The frame of interaction between the constitutive players and their methods of play transform value (a sort of measure of worth) and values (a sort of ethics of the game), thereby revealing an alternative cosmography of political society. Value creates universes (Graeber 2013), and universes collide in the reshaping of values— a cultural terrain travelers must navigate without yet having a map of that world (Kockelman 2010).

Presenter(s): Tri Mac Phuong

Discussion

6938 Negotiating Masculinities: The Rationality-Religiosity Dichotomy in Turkish TV Series

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Conversation/Debate

As a rarely discussed topic, the representation of masculinities in Turkish TV series, particularly through the lens of religious and secular discourses, plays a pivotal role in both perpetuating and challenging traditional gender roles. This study focuses on two popular series, *Kızılık Şerbeti* and *Kızıl Goncalar*, exploring how religious male representations are constructed and their impact on viewers, while also deconstructing the complex intersection of masculinity, rationality as a reflection of secularism and religion. Based on Turkey's political and ideological memory, the representation of the religious and the religious body have been an ongoing debate in depicting and legitimizing the public. As a context where 'modern secularity' and 'traditional religiosity' have long been in tension, TV series have emerged as key sites for articulating identity politics and moral debates in Turkey. In this respect, both series offer narratives that foreground male protagonists whose personal journeys are imbued with the dual imperatives of rationality and religious sentiment. Theoretically, this study draws on Connell's notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' and its critique by other scholars. Based on discourse analysis of the content and focus groups with the audience, this research discovers how male identities are constructed as hybrid embodiments of both 'religious' and 'secular' virtues and how this ultimately challenges perceived simplistic binaries in contemporary Turkey's context, through 'hegemonic masculinity' that is understood here as a culturally dominant ideal that is both historically contingent and subject to continuous reinvention. The 'rational versus religious' discourse creates a framework in which male characters are situated within a context of patriarchal authority and religious duty. The depiction of these characters in these series offers a multifaceted analysis of masculinity, presenting not only hegemonic forms of it but also those that resist epistemic violence by challenging dominant patriarchal norms. In particular, the characters navigate the intricate boundaries between religious authority and rationality, often embodying an ambiguous position where they simultaneously consent to being objects of control and claim subjectivity by asserting autonomy over their actions.

In conclusion, the representation of masculinities in these series offers a nuanced examination of how gender, religion, and rationality are intertwined in constructing male identity. Through the depiction of male figures, both series expose the contradictions within religious and rational discourses and highlight the complex ways in which masculinity is constructed, challenged, and resisted in Turkey's context. The multifaceted representation of male identities challenges the conventional dichotomy between rationality and religion and reflects the broader cultural dynamics of Turkey's society in transition.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Rumeysa Ertuğrul

Presenter(s): Nesibe Demir , Rumeysa Ertuğrul , Besra Betül Akın , İrem Üstün

Discussant: Nursem Keskin Aksay , Zeynep Kevser Şerefoğlu Danış

4666 Empire's Ghost: hauntings of labor, mobility, and postcolonial aspirations

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable proposes to explore the hauntings of empires and the ways in which their labor and land regimes continue to dictate (im)mobility, aspiration, embodied interaction, and postcolonial navigation. We examine how the afterlives of empires and colonial histories persist in material infrastructures, regimes of labor migration, affective attachments to eliteness, and structures of local economy. These colonial inheritances contour the ways people live, move, and imagine their futures. In attending to the modes by which individuals and communities navigate, contest, and are constrained by these imperial formations, we ask how decolonial, postcolonial, and anticolonial aspirations are shaped-and at times enclosed-by the very histories they seek to transcend.

We examine how the various ghosts of empires crystalize/materialize in local contexts: how "elite" becomes an increasingly aspirational class positionality in Cairo, Egypt, where reproducing postcolonial elite subjectivities through gated community securitization increasingly demands entrenchment in new and precarious regimes of consumer debt; how the military sex industry, formed through Japanese colonialism and US military imperialism in South Korea, continues to persist despite the post-Cold War downsizing of US military forces and how it shapes the contemporary (im)mobility and gendered labor of migrant sex workers; how, amidst the post-COVID surge in remote work, European "expats" in Tangier, Morocco pursue upward class mobility and lifestyles inaccessible in their countries of origin, even as their presences and everyday practices echo and reproduce the spatial and social hierarchies of earlier French and Spanish colonial labor and mobility regimes; how the embodied labor of demining-the removal of landmines planted during Yugoslav colonial rule in Kosova, the sanitization of violence from the border, and the

paranoid navigation of mined land-informs political horizons and shapes emancipatory imaginaries of the future as well as the reframing of the past.

This roundtable invites participants to think with the ghostly: how do the specters of former colonizers, cosmopolitans, and infrastructures of empire persist in the shaping of contemporary aspirations, routes of movement, and embodied encounters with space and economy? What happens when efforts to carve out new futures, through relocation, infrastructural rearrangement, and political reimagining, collide with the residual architectures of colonial power, revealing the uneven terrains upon which postcolonial life unfolds? How can anthropology study affective attachments, shadowed movements and labor, and informal economies through the cultivation of ethnographic sensibilities attuned to the invisible? Can the ghost of empire be exorcised-is it a residual remain that weakens and disappears, or does the rotting flesh of empire have the possibility to bring forth terrifying rather than liberatory futures?

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Adam Mikhail, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Marisa Breathwaite, Elbunit Kqiku, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Jihyeon Kim, Adam Mikhail, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Adam Mikhail, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Marisa Breathwaite

5512 Hidden Figures: “Politicals” That Hide in Space in Time

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropologists have long critiqued the gatekeeping of realms associated with "the political." While our social science counterparts have been drawn to the more well-guarded political sites of elections, political parties, and well-defined social movements, anthropologists have studied political movements from the margins, showing how ethnographic analyses of power reveal a much more capacious arena of what should be considered "political." In recent decades, anthropologists have studied political movements through the lens of everyday forms of resistance (Scott 1985), social nonmovements (Bayat 2007), unmovement (Howe 2016), crowd politics (Chowdhury 2019) and other explorations of motion implicit in movements.

This panel asks: how can we study contemporary movements and practices that are not predicated on momentum, and rather occupy liminal spaces that are not visible or spectacular in public spheres? How do we see and represent political actions that hide in space and time and what are the stakes of doing so? What types of methods, lenses, and questions should anthropologists use to study political spaces that are hidden, concealed, and effuse?

By exploring the hidden, concealed, or invisible elements of political organizing, this panel brings together papers exploring less visible forms of social and political practices undertaken by ordinary individuals or those who may not be associated with organized, political movements. In the context

of growing media surveillance, punitive state politics, and threats of violence, attending to hidden figures and practices offers alternative ways of reimagining political decision-making, leadership, and organization in neoliberal and autocratic landscapes. This panel particularly seeks discussions of hidden figures and movements that include gender, ethnic, or other minority groups across various axes of differentiation.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Katharine Lindquist , Sana Malik, Emory University

Chair: Katharine Lindquist , Sana Malik, Emory University

Presenter(s): Jameelah Morris, Western University Canada | AnthroClub, Jaro Stacul, University of Warsaw, Katharine Lindquist, Sana Malik, Emory University

Discussant: Adeem Suhail, Franklin & Marshall College, Department of Anthropology, Leela Riesz, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Space of Assembly: Black Youth Storying, Space, and the Politics of Becoming in Cartagena, Colombia

What happens when we take seriously the self-storying practices of Black youth as method and political labor? This paper centers practices of assembly as both a method of self-construction and a political practice that emerges from the spatial and affective labor of Afro-Colombian youth struggling against gendered-racialized criminalization and state violence. In Cartagena, Colombia, the Black youth association Benkos Ku Suto has organized and trained Afro-Cartagenero youth as political subjects through radical political education and grassroots organizing since 2002. Drawing from over six years of participatory ethnographic and archival research in Cartagena, I explore how practices of *parchar* (to hang out) emerge and are narrated as spaces of political formation and community reconstitution. In *el parche*, youth narrate how they come into relation through forms of invitation that operate as a structuring force for building political worlds in the wake of accumulating violence. Drawing on Aimee Cox's (2015) attention to Black girls' storying, Saidiya Hartman's (2018) theorization of wayward assembly, and Rubén Hernández Cassiani's (2014) writing on Afro-Colombian micropolitics, I argue that rather than conform to coherent forms of resistance that fit dominant registers of political impact, Afro-Colombian youth offer a grammar of political becoming grounded in improvisation, intimacy, and the feeling of presence central to the affective dimensions of Black political life.

Presenter(s): Jameelah Morris

Populism and the Suspension of the 'Political' in Contemporary Poland

Populism has surged back into use in anthropological debates with the consolidation of increasingly populist regimes and rhetoric in Europe and the Americas. Yet underlying populism is a paradox: while at the level of discourse populist movements' leaders draw a clear-cut distinction between 'the common people' and the 'enemies', many of these also claim to stand outside of the 'political'. Drawing upon ethnographic information collected in Poland, the paper discusses practices undertaken by individuals organizing walking tours, who set out to present accounts of

historical events from the perspective of the 'common people'. Despite the populist character of these initiatives, its organizers refuse to be associated with organized political movements, and seek instead to promote a vision of Polish history as something 'made' by the 'common people'. The narratives and aesthetics developed by these individuals center on the suspension of the 'political,' suggesting that there are symbolic spaces irreducible to formal politics despite their association with Polish political history. Paradoxically, although the cultural logic of these activities centers the suspension of the 'political', they continue to produce significant political effects. This paper argues that anthropologists are well situated to contribute to understanding populism's 'non-political' nature by focusing on the sites where populism itself happens, which are not reducible to spaces of institutional governance.

Presenter(s): Jaro Stacul

Fiction as Cover: Technologies of Disguise in Kampala's New Political Frontiers

In 2019, Bobi Wine – a famous Afrobeats singer – announced his candidacy for president of Uganda, representing the most formidable opponent in recent history to the thirty-five year incumbent, Yoweri Museveni. In what was deemed a far from fair and free election, Wine lost in the midst of some of the most acute political violence since Museveni's rise to power in 1986. The scars of the election marked my fieldwork in Kampala from 2022-2023, as the public spaces for political organizing of any kind became narrower in a city with heightened state surveillance and frequent reports of politically-motivated disappearances. This paper explores the "politics" deemed possible when political organizing itself could be a prison sentence. Using a book club as my ethnographic starting point, I chart the different technologies used to disguise and shield collective political spaces. Using fiction or entrepreneurial branding, Kampala's new political frontiers often hide in plain sight. I argue that to see these new "politics" requires both an ability to hold them in tension with neoliberal and illiberal formations as well as an understanding of the form of time within which they operate. Unlike progressive linear time where the political is measured by the outcomes of planned actions, the collective political spaces this paper charts operate within what I call the "time of somehow" – a sense of time that relies on the premise of crisis-proof futures that somehow work out.

Presenter(s): Katharine Lindquist

(Invisible) Leadership in Women's Activist Spaces in Urban Pakistan

The politics of leadership has been a central concern for scholars of social movement studies and anthropologists studying political movements of the 21st century. This literature has increasingly emphasized a shift from movements led by leaders to "leaderless movements" where decision making and strategizing are carried out by the multitude – quite literally the many. Utilizing 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork with women's rights activists and politically engaged women in urban Pakistan, this paper explores the politics of leadership within the women's movement through the lens of liminal actors who are alienated from leadership positions. While the women's movement in urban Pakistan is not leaderless, this paper attends to figures who do not occupy

leadership positions within the movement, yet perform behind-the-scenes, critical labor and knowledge production in activist spaces. I argue that these actors provide "invisible" leadership to the women's movement, often becoming "more than leaders." In doing so, they are able to carve out opportunities for themselves that exceed the domains of the women's movement in Pakistan, and gain access to other gendered, transnational, public spheres.

Presenter(s): Sana Malik

1935 Ecological work and ecological labor: Value, repair, and accumulation in the green transition

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

As global economies are more and more driven by environmental fixes, a growing body of research examines how earthcare practices are incorporated into and transformed by circuits of capitalist accumulation. This panel explores the analytical distinction but also the often-empirical fusion and ambiguity between ecological work-activities that sustain human and non-human life outside of capitalist valorization-and ecological labor, where these activities are horizontally and/or vertically subsumed into market logics.

Taking inspiration in the foundational work of authors such as Neil Smith, Maria Mies and Maurice Godelier, this panel asks what kind of natures are actively produced through particular labor regimes and what kind of labouring people are constituted through the commodification of such natures. Conservation projects, for instance, often capture earthcare work and increasingly – and precariously – employ local communities in ecological restoration, embedding them in circuits of commodification through carbon offset markets or eco-tourism (what Huff and Brock have recently termed "accumulation by restoration"). Agroecology, often framed as a site of resistance to industrial agriculture, can also generate markedly uneven labor regimes mediated by organic certification schemes and fair-trade markets, operating within global supply chains. Likewise, the so-called "green jobs" sector-ranging from "renewable" energy to decommissioning and "green" mining-raises questions about whether such industries fundamentally alter extractive dynamics or merely relocate them within a sustainability discourse. Last but not least, subsistence and domestic work including energy economizing, housing construction, or waste sorting function as unpaid, devalued ecological labor, disproportionally carried out by women and racialized populations.

Drawing on insights from feminist political ecology, economic anthropology, and queer ecologies we seek to understand how activities of sustainable provisioning for human and nonhuman life, what Stefania Barca calls the forces of reproduction, enter into capitalist valorization; how commodified ecological labor gets embedded and acquires meaning within cultural, socioecological relations of mutuality and obligation; how social actors navigate tensions within new sites of socioecological struggle, constructing hierarchies, legitimacies and contestations,

creating continuities and change. The panel engages with case studies that analytically and theoretically question the dichotomy between production and reproduction, and where the boundaries of ecological work and labor blur.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Theodora Vetta, Universitat de Barcelona, Jaume Franquesa, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology, Christian Zolniski, University of Texas, Arlington, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Chair: Jaume Franquesa, SUNY University at Buffalo, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Natalia Buier, Karen E Hebert, Carleton University, Theodora Vetta, Universitat de Barcelona, Dimitra Kofti

Presentation(s): The elusive reproductive subject: the Doñana groundwater crisis and the subsumption of ecological work

This paper explores the tensions between and convergence of ecological work and ecological labor by analyzing the confluence of three labor regimes brought together by the groundwater crisis in Doñana, Andalusia. Known as one of the most important wetlands in Europe, Doñana is a region that has received international attention due to groundwater depletion. In recent years, a long-standing conflict between the distribution of water for ecological reproduction and its role as a key input in export-oriented agro-industrial berry production has resurfaced. I approach this conflict by trying to identify and compare the labor regimes that support the different development visions that have been part of it: agricultural modernization, sustainable development, and restorative conservation. The labor regimes encoded by these different development visions, I argue, are characterized by the tension between their concrete unfolding and their abstract representation. This tension is expressed as the contradictory unity of situated labor processes and performative representations of productive and reproductive labor. While there are meaningful differences between these different labor regimes, I argue that they are ultimately characterized by a subsumption of ecological work under ecological labor, a major impediment to a lasting solution to the groundwater crisis.

Presenter(s): Natalia Buier

Ecological Labor: Environmental Care and Exploitation in Coastal Alaska

What it means to make a living in coastal Alaska has shifted. As climate change, global competition, and geopolitical instability reshape extractive industries, many tout their approach to the natural world as care rather than conquest. This rhetorical shift has salient effects for those charged with cultivating, rather than capturing, ecological value. In this paper, we draw on ethnographic research across two different coastal Alaskan regions to examine the rise of emergent modalities of environmental care work, which we theorize as ecological labor. Constituted by everyday enactments of attentiveness, attunement, and stewardship, ecological labor enlists historically feminized and racialized qualities of work for new projects of environmental recuperation. Through an engagement with Marxist feminist scholarship, recent debates over value theory, and analyses of extractivism, we explore how these changing relations alter residents'

engagement with one another and nonhuman species. Our research suggests that rather than reversing the longstanding devaluation of gendered and racialized labor, the ascendancy of environmental care in creating economic value introduces fresh angles for exploitation, as the costs of preventing, repairing, and mitigating ecological degradation are foisted onto workers themselves. At the same time, the reciprocal exchanges that sustain life in coastal Alaska continue to provide a picture of what life beyond capitalist labor relations

Presenter(s): Karen E Hebert

Co-author(s): Danielle Dinovelli-Lang

Between Ecological Labor and Green Jobs : Capital and the Cost of Sustainability

In response to anthropogenic climate change, "green transitions" promise to reconcile environmental care with economic growth. Yet dominant approaches to greening the economy often ignore how capitalist accumulation—and the labor regimes and struggles it entails—fundamentally shape what counts as "nature" and sustainability. This paper compares two contrasting cases. In rural France, the ecological work involved in sustainable housing construction struggles to gain recognition as waged ecological labor, remaining unpaid and undervalued as a form of reproductive work within households and communities. Because it cannot be commodified or scaled, it is often dismissed as a lifestyle choice or futile activism, slowing thus its broader adoption. In Greece, "green jobs" in solar park construction are celebrated as sustainable employment, yet they remain detached from ecological care. These projects depend on precarious labour and cheapened land, while raising deeper questions about extractive supply chains and energy justice. In both cases, capitalism refuses to pay for the conditions of its own reproduction—whether through unpaid/undervalued labor or the appropriation of land—while simultaneously capitalizing them. Together, these cases reveal how capital shapes not only ecological degradation but also the limits of ecological solutions.

Presenter(s): Theodora Vetta

Co-author(s): Ieva Snikersproge

Between green cooperatives and heavy industries. Diverse regimes of labor and value in a Bulgarian industrial town

Steel workers and miners in Pernik, a Bulgarian post-socialist industrial town, often keep ties with systematic small-scale agricultural work. This paper analyzes industrial workers' parallel activities in rural places and their struggles to deal with diverse regimes of labor, including ecological labor, and legal regulations that often jeopardize the continuation of their agricultural work and communal animal breeding. By taking into account a variety of practices, ranging from family food production to village green cooperatives, I ethnographically look at how formal and informal work relations in both industrial and agricultural sectors intertwine with relations of social reproduction: tensions and divisions at the industrial shop floor cannot be understood without taking into account workers' activity in the land and vice versa. The ethnography will look at workers' struggles

and claims for green economies and ecological forms of labor and it will explore how sustainably working with the land takes forms of resistance to ongoing and deepening precarization.

Presenter(s): Dimitra Kofti

Commodification of nature and alienation of labor in extractive green industries

This paper discusses the transformation of nature into market commodities by examining the extraction and commercialization of beach rocks from Mexico for export markets in the United States. The growth of extractive "green industries" to cope with water scarcity and climate change in the U.S. has fostered the mining of beach cobbles along the coast of Baja California, generating new forms of labor precarity for Indigenous workers employed in this sector. In this paper, I examine the types of "green jobs" that the mining of beach pebbles has generated and the social organization of production and labor reproduction in this industry. As the beach rocks move along the transnational commodity chain, the labor and environmental impacts of capitalist extractive activities are incrementally obscured. The intensification of extraction of this natural resource raises issues about racialized and invisible labor in "green mining," and the social and symbolic erasure that occurs when natural resources are siphoned through transnational commodity chains.

Presenter(s): Christian Zolniski, University of Texas, Arlington, Department of Sociology & Anthropology

7596 The Planetary Milieu: Equipping Life for a Transformed Environment

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

As philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem described it, the milieu was the place between things where living occurs, as experienced by particular beings through their needs. In a classic 1952 essay, he wrote: "the notion of milieu is becoming a universal and obligatory mode of apprehending the experiences and existence of living beings." But today, we might say, the notion of milieu needs to be amended for an age of planetary-scale transformation. Processes such as zoonotic disease emergence and anthropogenic climate change challenge us to equip living beings to manage new threats. Indeed, as Peter Redfield has noted, "the politics of life may now exceed the inherited institutions and forms of expertise developed for its governance." The papers in this panel explore the invention of equipment to help living beings-human and nonhuman-as they struggle to adapt to an altered planetary milieu. The panel will explore a range of cases of technologies for adjusting to ecological crisis, including air-conditioned trains in India, viral banks in Hong Kong, a refrigerated salmon hatchery, and research into sun-protection products.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew Lakoff , Frederic Keck

Chair: Alex Nading, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ashawari Chaudhuri, Frederic Keck, Andrew Lakoff, Alex Nading, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Peter Redfield, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Relating Metabolism with Milieu through Technologies of Comfort

This paper explores the relation between Marx's concept of "metabolism" and Canguilhem's notion of "milieu" through technologies of comfort like air conditioners in India. In October 1937, a decade before the end of the British rule in the country, a newspaper article titled "Air Conditioned Train-- Demonstration Run" explained a test run from Delhi to Agra and back: "The four coaches which were used for the occasion were remarkable for the harmonious and restful blend of comfort and utility in the internal fillings but the real difference between the old and the new became evident as the train left Delhi's environs behind and gathered speed." Throughout the 20th and the 21st centuries, words like "comfort" and "comfort cooling" have been discursively used to tie space with bodies---to demarcate a protected inside from the harmful outside or mark difference between laboring and non-laboring bodies. For Marx, metabolism simultaneously signifies transformation of one form to another as well as the constant capacity of capitalism to resolve contradictions that it creates and keep sustaining itself. In *The Living and its Milieu*, Canguilhem traces the relation and evolution between that which is singular (like an organism) and the whole (like the milieu) historically. In this paper, I want to ask, how do postcolonial relations between space and the body carved out through technologies like air conditioners complicate or conjoin metabolism and milieu?

Presenter(s): Ashawari Chaudhuri

The Cryopolitics of Planetary Health: From Viral Banks in Hong Kong to Bacterial Repositories in Dakar

In this talk I want to develop the concept of cryopolitics, defined by Emma Kowal and Joanna Radin as the technologies of power to let live and defer death (or not let die), by comparing the two sites in which I have done ethnographic research over the last twenty years. In Hong Kong, viral banks are conserved in fridges and online to compare emerging viruses to known viruses and launch alert in case they appear as pandemic. In Dakar, human remains in laboratories and museums are preserved as testimonies of the role of the Senegalese people in the history of the human species, and in some of them, bacteria are sequenced in their calcified dental pulp to find « pre-modern microbiome ». In these two sites, living beings are equipped to detect early warning signals of biological threats caused by human modes of life, such as an avian influenza pandemic or a reduction of the human microbiome. How can these sites work as sentinels for planetary health and produce solidarity between species at the local level?

Presenter(s): Frederic Keck

The Refrigerated River: Vital Needs and Infrastructural Norms on a Warming Planet

This talk will focus on the relation between vital needs and infrastructural norms on a warming planet. It looks at recent controversies in the management of a critical node in California's system of water supply, the dams and pumping plants that convey water from the Bay Delta in the north of

the state to the farms and cities in the South. Water resource managers must balance between the demands of human water users, on the one hand, and the needs of endangered species of fish on the other. One of the most vulnerable endangered species is the winter-run chinook salmon, which hatches its eggs after returning to spawn in the early summer. As climate change leads to warmer water temperatures on the river, the rate of survival of the eggs has plummeted. In turn, fish biologists, tribal leaders and water system operators have sought means to keep the eggs cool enough to ensure the species' future survival. These means include a massive temperature control device embedded in a dam, a refrigeration system near a hatchery, and, as a last resort, trucking salmon eggs to higher ground.

Presenter(s): Andrew Lakoff

The Ultraviolet Milieu

This paper reflects some preliminary ethnographic and historical research on the science and market for sun-protection products, specifically commercial sunscreen lotions. Sunscreen, a chemical-mineral amalgam, has been used for nearly a century to regulate human bodies' absorption of ultraviolet radiation. Health authorities in the USA regulate sunscreen as an over-the-counter drug, but its benefits are touted as simultaneously medical and aesthetic. Defense from UV radiation not only prevents cancer; it can stem the visible signs of aging. In this paper, I consider the milieu as a space for thinking the intersection between health and appearance. I discuss some of the ways in which chemists, government regulators, and cosmetic industry representatives navigate this milieu. As it turns out, sun protection for middle class leisure travelers and health and beauty conscious individuals provides an early picture of what planetary health looks like when rolled out as an ethical and practical posture to bodies and environments. If skin care is a form of planetary health, then it should come as no surprise that NASA scientists speak of the ozone layer as "Earth's sunscreen."

Presenter(s): Alex Nading

Discussion

3367 Uncanny Ecologies and Spectral Politics in India

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together five projects from different ethnographic sites and historical concerns in India. On one hand, our papers address the intensification of climate change, agricultural and medicinal production, infrastructural development, and caste and religious divides. While on the other hand, they trace the decline or fleeting quality of human life, crops, language, water, and temporality itself. Lodged at an anxious juncture of past and present, we've come to experience and have been taught how our ethnographic sites are haunted. In Rajasthan, the specter of caste opens insights into ways exclusivist Hindu-right politics and religious identity is inscribed across and challenged through nonhuman bodies and consumptive practices. From apple-growers' negotiation

of the changing climatic conditions in Himachal Pradesh, the entanglement of the agricultural industry, capital, and consequently adaptive social practices becomes salient in the specter of heat. The specter of the snakebite in Tamil Nadu complicates how to understand ways in which indigenous place-based economic and spiritual practices intersect the relationality between humans, snakes, and deities. Spanning North India, the specter of Urdu poetry disrupts otherwise intractable religious and linguistic divides between Hindu and Muslim identities. The specter of an earthquake is captured by memories of disaster resurfaced as fear and animated for political activism against a dam in Assam. Collectively, we take Mayanthi Fernando's (2022) concept of an "uncanny ecology" as a uniting, generative provocation to think about what haunts our field sites and interlocutors. Fernando argues that in the "multiplicity of nonhuman presences in South Asian social life – cows, dogs, monkeys, [i]devis[/i] and [i]devatas[/i], [i]jinns[/i] and [i]bhuts[/i], [i]raksas[/i] and [i]yakas[/i] – the region has become a particularly rich site from which to theorize multispecies worlds, although scholars have tended to consider [i]either[/i] animals [i]or[/i] gods and spirits." Rather than natureculture, Fernando argues that, in undoing the nature/culture binary, we need to attend to supernatureculture and take seriously the agency of gods, spirits, and otherwise forces (not rendering them to just belief), to think more capaciously, and less secularly, about what constitutes the nonhuman. As in Fernando's own work, this panel dwells with the ways uncanny ecologies disrupt anthropological theorization of not only intersubjective (human) and interspecies relations but supernatural and spectral worlds, as well. To this effect, we suggest that concentrating on the "more-than-human" in our empirical research ultimately renews consideration of the uncanny within dominating forms of order in India and broader anthropological analysis.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew Kerr, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Parijat Jha, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Andrew Kerr, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Parag Jyoti Saikia, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Kyle Trembley, University of Washington, Department of Anthropology, Rabindra Willford, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Parijat Jha, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Towns Middleton

Presentation(s): "This is not a time for poetry:" The Specters of Urdu Poetry in North India

In North India, Urdu poetry circulates through literary festivals, bookshops, classrooms, formal performances, and celebrations at Sufi dargahs. It also maintains another type of presence that pervades non-literary spaces of daily conversation, the market, protests, and occasionally, parliament. Anchoring this pervading presence, Urdu poetry is often characterized by scholars and aficionados alike through a discourse of nostalgia, both about its content and a past glory of its production. Drawing from ethnographic and documentary fieldwork in Delhi and Mumbai, this paper complicates that discourse of nostalgia. Bracketing the literary and affective framing of Urdu poetry in or as nostalgia, what if, instead, one first attends to the poetry's presence itself, to

consider Urdu poetry's uncanny emergences? To unravel the question, this paper walks with the ghost of 19th century poet, Mirza Ghalib, traces the shadow of Ghalib in discourses about Urdu poetry, and examines the specter of Urdu poetry in language ideologies of Urdu. The uncanniness of such happenings curiously reveals particular temporalities and socialities of Urdu in North India that disrupt typical communal laminations of Muslim-ness onto the language. By extension, this paper shows how the uncanny productively accommodates a wide array of frameworks — spectrality (Derrida 1994), mimesis (Benjamin 2019), chronotope (Bakhtin 1981), interdiscursivity (Silverstein 2005), and commensurability (Hankins and Yeh 2016).

Presenter(s): Andrew Kerr

When Disasters Repeat Themselves: The Uncanny Similarities between an Earthquake and a Dam in Northeast India

In October 2023, people living along the Subansiri—the largest tributary of the Brahmaputra—in Assam, were able to catch fish in the river with bare hands. Throughout fieldwork, my interlocutors often shared how their parents or grandparents had done the same more than seven decades ago in August 1950. This shared, strange phenomenon was caused by two disasters. The 1950 Great Assam Earthquake, measuring 8.5 Richter Scale and its subsequent earthquake-induced landslides blocked the river in the hills and dried it up for three days. In 2023, again, landslides blocked the diversion tunnel of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (SLHEP), causing the river to dry downstream. The specter of the 1950 Assam Earthquake has haunted SLHEP since its inception in 2005. The memory of 1950 and fear of dam failure led to anti-dam protests in the downstream that suspended SLHEP's construction in 2011. After reevaluation of its seismic resistance capacity and a lengthy legal battle, construction resumed in 2020. Disaster, however, repeated itself before the dam's completion. Thinking with these uncanny similarities of disasters, this paper bridges Fernando's scholarship on uncanny ecologies (2022) with anthropological scholarship on infrastructure. This paper argues that the temporality of infrastructure makes disasters part of the new experiences produced by infrastructure (Larkin 2015), even though neither the infrastructure nor the disaster is experienced similarly by all.

Presenter(s): Parag Jyoti Saikia

To Walk, Untouched, through a Cremation Ground: Tawiz, Meat Consumption, and the Spectral Politics of Caste in Rajasthan

The Valmiki community is a Scheduled Caste or formerly "untouchable" community, whose members are primarily relegated to sanitation labor across North India. Often considered untouchable even by other Dalit communities, Valmikis did not extensively participate in the anti-caste mobilizations of the twentieth century, and Valmiki commitment to Hindu-right wing movements has haunted anti-caste activism and critical caste studies scholarship (Lee 2021). Drawing on fieldwork in Deshnok, Rajasthan, this paper follows conversations with Valmiki interlocutors on the consumption of meat, the wearing of tawiz made by Muslims, and protection from [i]bhuts[/i] and [i]iprets[/i], or ghosts and spirits. The politics of meat consumption in India is

deeply embedded in caste, gender, and Hindu nationalism, and if and what types of meat an individual consumes are primary indicators of social identity. This paper explores how caste and religious identity become articulated across nonhuman bodies, but also how the (non)consumption of certain nonhumans becomes grounds for shared affinities between Muslims and Dalits. Following calls to think more expansively, and less secularly, about the nonhuman (Fernando 2022), this paper considers the possibilities and the issues of taking seriously the agency of nonhumans, including animals, ghosts, spirits, and goddesses in the context of caste untouchability and Hindu-right politics in India.

Presenter(s): Kyle Trembley

Calling upon [i]Vettai Sattan[/i]: Interspecies Risk and the Supernatural among Irula Snake-Catchers

In India, snakes and snakebites evoke terror across material and supernatural registers, yet snakes also manifest as revered, divine beings in Hindu folk traditions. Ethnographic fieldwork among the Irulas, a community of Adivasi (indigenous) snake-catchers in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, however, reveals a different kind of relationality between humans, snakes, and supernatural entities. Irulas capture venomous snakes and extract their venom for sale in pharmaceutical supply chains. Doing so, they draw upon histories and knowledges rooted in ancestral hunting-gathering practices. Irulas ritually call upon a hunting spirit known as [i]vettai sattan[/i], an unseen, uncontained, and liminal entity that grants the snake-catchers permission to capture snakes and guides their search. At the same time, [i]vettai sattan[/i] does not control the actions of snakes, who may bite or escape from the Irula snake-catchers. This paper explores how the presence of [i]vettai sattan[/i] conditions the unruly relations between the Irulas and snakes, such that the deadly risks of snakebite are normalized within everyday work. Recognizing the uncanny across more-than-human ecologies, following Fernando (2022), I argue that Irula people reframe the specter of snakebite from a calamitous event with supernatural implications, to a feature of shared, yet unpredictable multispecies spaces.

Presenter(s): Rabindra Willford

Troubled Apples: Spectral Politics of Heat in India's Western Himalayas

Over the last couple of decades, apple growers in Himachal Pradesh, "the apple state of India", have faced numerous challenges in their production due to rising mean temperatures and the emergence of unprecedented heat. As the snowline in this mountain-state recedes, and the treeline moves upwards, apple growers lament the conditions of cultivation amidst a rising specter of heat. The cast of actors negotiating this specter of heat includes laborers, scientists, [i]Devta[/i]s, rats, insects, state officials, chemical companies, and, of course, apple growers. Drawing on fieldwork in Kotgarh, Himachal Pradesh, this paper first explores how this specter of heat is being exploited in the interests of industrial agriculture and, in turn, the intensification and expansion of capitalism. This paper, then, draws connections to how changing environmental conditions are also playing a role in changes to social reproduction practices associated with

particular seasons. By posing questions about what varied accounts surrounding this specter of heat might reveal about work and life in "troubled ecologies", this paper bridges Fernando's (2022) work on the uncanny with scholarship in the anthropology of work that calls for intersectional engagements with labor and environmental politics in a contemporary moment riddled with planetary uncertainty (Blanchette and Besky, 2019).

Presenter(s): Parijat Jha

Discussion

6684 Four Field Anthropology after the Flood: Responding to Climate Catastrophe in Western North Carolina

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D2 (3rd fl)

Type: Conversation/Debate

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene ravaged western North Carolina. Normally tranquil rivers and creeks swelled to unprecedented levels, flooding low lying places and ripping bridges, cars, and homes into the current. Landslides carried mountainsides downhill, along with buildings or roads once perched there. Winds snapped electric poles and trees, leading to short-term power outages and long-term devastation to forests of Southern Appalachia. The people of western North Carolina lost over 100,000 homes to Helene and suffered nearly \$60 billion in damages. Over 100 people died, and others are still missing.

Months later, the landscapes and lives affected by Helene remain transformed. Bureaucratic red tape and lack of funding continues to slow recovery, as residents wait for financial support to repair and rebuild their homes, communities, and lives— all in a region with more people living in poverty than the national average. As anthropologists who live and work here, we ask, what is the role of anthropology in communities impacted by a "once-in-one-thousand-year" storm? What does it mean to take part in the experience of and the recovery from a historic flooding event? How can anthropologists use the methods of the discipline and resources from our institutions to support communities?

Floods are part of the fabric of Southern and Central Appalachia. The memories of past floods endure in family stories, the bends of waterways, networks of care, and decades-old spectres of interrupted infrastructure. The people of Appalachia are no strangers to environmental disasters. In 1972, the Buffalo Creek Flood in West Virginia killed 125 people. In 2022, severe thunderstorms in Kentucky caused deadly flooding made worse by unreclaimed surface coal mine sites. In March 2025, wildfires spread through areas of western North Carolina that were already devastated by Helene, compounding the very real consequences of global climate change.

In this context, a community-based, applied anthropology can transcend disciplinary divides. This calls for conversations across temporal frames that consider how fractured ecologies are embodied, how community priorities have and will continue to shift, and how to describe this

particular event within a new understanding of storm presence and strength. We bring together anthropologists from the four fields to discuss the possibilities for rethinking what anthropology is and what it can do when "historic" storms and climate disasters escalate in scale and frequency. From archaeological monitoring along rivers where floodwaters commingled centuries-old and contemporary material culture, to working with farmers navigating a new growing season within a changed ecology, to assisting and documenting the efforts of mutual aid networks, this session navigates the emergent, ever-changing meshworks of community care that connect resources to needs in surprising, creative, and hard-to-follow ways.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Julie Shepherd-Powell, Appalachian State University, Sophia Dent, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Georgia Ennis, Western Carolina University, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Scotti Norman, Warren Wilson College, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Sophia Dent, Appalachian State University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Alice Wright, Appalachian State University, Julie Shepherd-Powell, Appalachian State University

7432 Ghostly transformations: Embodied Manifestations in Landscapes of a Lingering Present

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Our panel is inspired by the idea of "constant transformation". It explores ghostly embodiments manifesting themselves in landscapes experiencing armed violence, dispossession, and extraction as traces of struggles that linger between past, present, and future across geographies. A city shaped by war and reconciliation, an unfulfilled mining frontier heavy with the echoes of extraction, a river flowing through constant and evolving dispossession, ancestral conversations on agency across volcanoes and islands, the contested sacredness of "destroyed" temples, and remnants of old Chinatowns that act as evidence of indispensability of migrant communities.

We visit lithium landscapes in Bolivia resisting their colonial mining history, yet depending on extractivism to obtain "progress". We then center on collective memories that are being made and kept in the Orontes River in Antioch which simultaneously meanders through and embodies organic and chemical materials. Such remnants of the past are also present within the agentic (and ghostly) capacities of material entanglements as they unsettle commonsense and disrupt the existing social relations in Indonesian archipelagos where volcanoes and islands struggle to find agency through ancestral knowledge and storytelling. Thus, we question how, in landscapes of racial and settler-colonial violence on the foothills of D.C. and California, the ghosts left behind help—or not—balance Asian American activists' claims to justice. Lastly, we look at how demobilized female combatants in Medellín, Colombia try to merge into "mainstream" society, while being haunted by

their "warrior" past. In other words, we explore human and other-than-human aspects of these transformations, their possibilities, and limitations. What happens when ghosts manifest in and transform the very grounds on which they inscribe the past and traverse the present?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Anamaria Trujillo , Caroline Risacher

Chair: Irem Aydemir, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Anamaria Trujillo, Caroline Risacher, Irem Aydemir, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology, Elena Burgos Martinez, Wageningen University, Wei Gan, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Irem Aydemir, University of California, Davis, Department of Anthropology, Anamaria Trujillo

Presentation(s): From the Jungle to the City: A Story of Reincorporation of Female Demobilized Combatants in Medellín

This paper takes place in Medellín, Colombia, a city haunted by its violent past, which transformed through "innovation" (voted most innovative city in 2013). The city is facilitating the reincorporation of demobilized combatants from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), who, after waging war in the Colombian jungle for over 60 years, surrendered their weapons in 2016. Their resettlement in an urban setting has put them in a liminal phase. Not fully city dwellers nor "jungle people", they try to discover and reinvent themselves in a place not made for "leftist insurgents." As they merge with the city, they are forced to put their past aside, feeling pressure to hide their identities as former guerrillas to fit into a politically conservative city. Yet, their past continues to haunt them in unexpected ways such as economic precarity, stigma, and fear of exposure. This leads them to re-invent the meaning of social reincorporation.

Presenter(s): Anamaria Trujillo

The Emergence of a Desert Landscape: Lithium Dreams in Uyuni

The Salar de Uyuni, in the southwest of the Bolivian altiplano is a vast and flat expanse of salt, filled with 20 million tons of lithium which remain mostly "unexploited". Unlike other mining sites on the Bolivian altiplano which are currently being exploited and/or have been depleted leaving ghost towns behind (the silver mines of Potosi, Pulacayo, etc.), lithium extraction has not been able to fully materialize. Lithium, in the Bolivian political discourse, represents a rupture in the continuous plundering of resources by foreign companies since colonial times and is supposed to be the key to open a path for industrialization with the national production of batteries. Progress has been hindered due to technical, political, and geographical reasons. Echoes from the past, which are being instrumentalized in political agendas, are heavily resonating in Uyuni and in all conversations around lithium. In this paper, I am focusing on the (ghost) histories embedded in this space/place. By following Uyuni through the explorers and natural scientists who described it, in the accounts and maps produced since the 1825 Bolivian independence, I try to unearth a localized and situated genealogy of extraction in order to understand what could set this specific region apart from other

histories of extraction in the Bolivian altiplano. Can lithium in Uyuni break with a Bolivian history of resource extraction and open a new space for alternative temporalities?

Presenter(s): Caroline Risacher

The River Remembers: Loss, Infrastructure, and Politics of Flow in Lower Orontes Basin

Orontes River rises in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley, flows through Syria, and meets the Mediterranean in Antioch, Turkey. Defying coded understandings of rivers by flowing northward and crossing mountains inspired its local name, Asi ("rebel" in Arabic)—long before its division into three nation-states following the dissolvment of French mandate in the Levant. This fragmentation, alongside modern extraction, militarization, and infrastructure projects, mirrors the struggles of local communities, particularly Arabs and Armenians who have been subjected to genocide, dispossession, and assimilation. Once strong enough to host commercial ships, Orontes has become a debilitated and polluted nuisance for Antioch's locals, and recent 2023 earthquakes deepened this melancholia by turning the river into a massive flowing graveyard of human bodies, rubble, and hazardous chemicals. This study explores Orontes not merely as a vehicle or site of oppression but rather as an active holder and maker of material and collective memory of its cohabitants.

Presenter(s): Irem Aydemir

The (un) told stories of the earth in the (un) making of silence

This paper centres around the stories of one of the most famous volcanoes in the world: Merapi (Indonesia), as told by entities beyond the human; ancestral conversations that are often silenced by the hegemony of scientific knowledge and the state, but are key to understanding how extractivism in the mining industry is perceived, experienced and resisted in Indonesia. This paper centres around ghosts ('pasar malam') at the Merapi Volcano in Java, and their agency in re-negotiating power relations around the mining industry. Through storytelling, this piece will critically engage with ancestral knowledge systems that have been muted by industry and science, and will zoom in to what animates mountains perceived as gigantic and somehow inaccessible, becoming spaces of chaos for the nation-state. This talk is divided into two parts: fire and air. Fire (Merah Api) will centre the agency of volcanoes as epicentres of epistemic disobedience involving more-than-human power, and a second part: Air (the sounds of the 'pasar malam') will connect all the spaces of everyday resistance offering a picture which invites the reader to continue the conversation beyond essentialist narratives and approaches to environmental extractivism and those who resist it. Ultimately, this talk concludes that silence does not exist and that to become muted is also a form of resistance where entities beyond the human engage in disobedience in regimes of knowledge that discriminate against them.

Presenter(s): Elena Burgos Martinez

Debt, justice, and all their ghosts: On philanthropy and Asian American activism in the settler colony

In 2022, a small nonprofit based in Chinatown, Washington, D.C., dedicated a memorial at Congressional Cemetery to the first Chinese residents of the city. They were buried there, alongside members of Congress, other prominent Americans, and Native leaders, during the years of Chinese exclusion from the United States, though their bones were later disinterred and shipped back to China. Also in 2022, the same organization began a survey of the remnants of old Chinatowns in the valleys and foothills of California, preparing for the nomination of Summit Camp, above Lake Tahoe, as a National Historic Landmark. The camp contains artifacts of Chinese laborers who dug through the Sierra Nevada to build America's first transcontinental railroad, but its rocks are also the site of Native glyphs and art. Drawing from research on the relationship between philanthropy, nonprofits, and Asian American activism, I show that these traces of nineteenth-century Chinese have become integral to narratives of Asian American contributions to American nation-building, which in turn galvanize the demand for philanthropic investment in contemporary Asian America. These accountings for debt necessarily elide the theft of Native land and life while also conjuring their presence in performances of solidarity. On these palimpsestic landscapes of racial and settler-colonial violence, how does Asian American activism balance its claims to justice with – or in spite of – all the ghosts left behind?

Presenter(s): Wei Gan

3749 Nurturing Change: Time of Rapid Social Transformation in South Korea

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the dramatic transformation under what Kyung-Sup Chang has termed "compressed modernity" (Chang 2011) as it is realized in socialization and Confucian ideology. As Chang notes, compressed modernity is not merely a timeline of accelerated growth, but a "civilizational condition" where "mutually disparate historical and social elements" coexist and collide, often mediated by a strong familial order. In just a few decades, South Korea has undergone intense economic, political, and social change. As an example of this, South Korea's inflation adjusted per capita GDP surged from \$158 in 1960 to over \$35,000 in 2021 (Worldbank.org). Over a similar period of time, South Korea's birthrate dropped from 6.0 to 0.72 (Worldbank.org). These rapid shifts have restructured the way individuals interact across generations, institutions, and everyday life.

This panel examines five distinct yet interrelated social dynamics: classroom relationships between teachers and students, maternal networks of support, intergenerational expectations around eldercare, the role of gesture in cross-cultural communication, and media's influence across age groups. Together, these studies offer a multi-layered view of socialization and the interplay of Confucian/cultural understanding in a society navigating the rapid changes in accepted beliefs and practices. Ultimately this panel seeks to illuminate how South Korea's "multiplex theatre society" (Chai 2022) becomes a site for understanding the complexities of modern

transformation, continuity of cultural values, and the lived experience of compressed modernity.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Camilla Lathrop

Chair: Kenya Dennert , Jacob Gilbert

Presenter(s): Kenya Dennert, Paige Walsman, Alisa Funke, Jacob Gilbert, Camilla Lathrop, Annika Tifft

Discussant: Rachel Larson

Presentation(s): Teachers' Role in Socialization: How Teachers in a South Korean Preschool Classroom Utilize Discipline and Praise to Teach Children "Good Behavior"

This study examines how South Korean preschool teachers use discipline and praise in their teaching and how these practices are indicative of cultural values. Son (2021), Lee and Lee (2021), and Ahn (2015, 2021) show that teachers' talk about socialization in South Korean schools often follows a more individualistic ethos directed at creativity and independence (dokribseong - 독립성) while the actual practices that teachers engage in follow a more collectivist ethos directed at relationality (gwangyeseong - 관계성). This research builds on theirs by exploring these potential contradictions in the context of discipline and praise. Through a better understanding of how "good" and "bad" behavior are defined, the underlying values of the teacher and institution are revealed, leading to a better understanding of the educational landscape in South Korea.

Presenter(s): Kenya Dennert

Individual Accommodations and "Bean Sprouts" in the South Korean Preschool Classroom

The bean sprout metaphor of education is often cited to point to the importance of students growing and learning together. Just like bean sprouts packed tightly in a pot help each other to grow straight and upright, a community of students supports each other's growth and development. In this context, the teacher nurtures her students, who in turn nurture each other to create a strong class community (Jung, 2021). Yet, in a different context, one might ask: How should a teacher react if one bean sprout happens to need more water than others? This seems particularly relevant in an educational setting. Children usually do not enter school with the same level of intelligence or curiosity. I intend to examine how a South Korean teacher navigates inequalities among her/his students, and whether s/he relies on group dynamics to address individual inequalities or accommodates individual differences directly with students. The purpose of examining these interactions was to investigate how, when, why, and if individual accommodations exist in that classroom. Through participant observation and subsequent ethnographic fieldnotes, I investigate the ways in which one teacher in South Korea nurtures her bean sprouts, whether that be on an individual or collective level.

Presenter(s): Paige Walsman

More Than Words: A Cross-Cultural Study of Gesture in Meaning Making and Multimodal Communication

This research investigates how gestures are utilized in communication and adapted to cross language barriers by examining Korean and English speakers' storytelling methods to both Korean and American listeners. Using the Merrie Melodies Canary Row cartoon as a prompt, participants retell the story of events to a fellow Korean/American, and then to their counterpart participant who has limited to no Korean/English proficiency. By comparing these two contexts, the study seeks to understand how gestures compensate for verbal limitations and create meaning and connection across cultural and linguistic divides. The project analyzes gesture dynamics and shifts that occur when speakers attempt interlinguistic communication and explores gesture as critically language adjacent through cultural nuances, such as universal contextualization cues that are universal and those that are meaningfully ethno-specific despite nonverbality. In addition to these structured sessions of data collection, I conducted ethnographic observation of real-world interactions where gesture was vital in crossing language barriers while myself and my peers were temporarily living in Korea. By combining controlled elicitation with naturalistic observation, this study examines how people use embodied communication to convey meaning when verbal language falls short, contributing to the broader critique of gesture as much more than supplemental to language.

Presenter(s): Alisa Funke

South Korea's Filial Piety Law and Intergenerational Relationships.

This study examines how the South Korean government, society, and youth support the elderly, how the elderly perceive their society, and how they expect to be treated by others. At 0.72 in 2023, South Korea has the world's lowest birth rate (Lee & Kim, 2024). This low birth rate has led to an increasing proportion of Korea's population being elderly, thus creating a crisis in care and support for the elderly as there are relatively fewer young people to support them. In 2007 South Korean legislature passed the Filial Piety Law to ensure Koreans would care for senior citizens, and to promote traditional values of respect for the elderly (Walker 2019). Yet, some studies have shown that younger people have begun to be critical of elderly people's reliance on the labor of younger people (Kim 2017). Using the primary methods of participant observation and interviews, I explore how the South Korean government, society, and youth support the elderly, and how these forces shape the elderly's perceptions of society and their expectations for care. By contributing to the broader discourse on aging and care, this research aims to understand how a country like South Korea grapples with the challenges of a rapidly aging population. This research aims to aid efforts in identifying meaningful strategies to improve the well-being of elderly populations worldwide.

Presenter(s): Jacob Gilbert

Fostering Connections: Maternal Communities and Social Life in Seoul, South Korea

This paper explores how motherhood is lived, supported, and understood within the everyday lives of mothers in Seoul, South Korea. As the country faces a persistently low birth rate- a record low of 0.72 in 2023 – which has led the Korean public making arguments that the decline in births have

been attributed to a transformative shift in the roles of Korean women (Lee 2023). Over the course of many decades, there has been a gradual shift of women primarily working within the home to the modern challenge of balancing both domestic labor and workplace duties. Another aspect illustrated in this study is the display of support available to mothers and how it potentially changes parenting behaviors. As Jung illustrated, the interactions among mothers can become competitive which has caused many mothers to reconsider having children, but in other cases has led to many mother fostering support systems found within a variety of socioeconomic circumstances (Jung 2024). Through participant observation in mother support centers and interviews with women from diverse backgrounds, this research investigates how mothers access and create support systems found in formal institutions as well as informal networking. By gathering different perspectives and observations of everyday practices, this paper offers insight into the cultural, emotional, and political dimensions of being a mother in South Korea today.

Presenter(s): Camilla Lathrop

The Mediatized Self: Generational Belonging and Media Practices in South Korea

This paper examines how individuals across different age groups in Seoul engage with and make meaning of media in their everyday lives. Building on existing scholarship that highlights generational divides in media literacy, platform preferences, and psychosocial outcomes (Jeon, Choi, & Jang, 2020; Ahn & Seo, 2014; Park & You, 2015; Lee, 2023), this study seeks to uncover the lived experiences and cultural meanings behind these patterns. Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and digital ethnography, the research investigates how youth, middle-aged adults, and older populations navigate increasingly hybrid media environments. Findings reveal that while younger participants fluidly integrate multiple media platforms into their daily routines—favoring immediacy, interactivity, and personalization—older adults often engage with media more cautiously, shaped by past habits, technological barriers, and intergenerational influences. Media is both a tool for information or entertainment, and a symbolic resource used to maintain identity, express values, and foster community. These practices reveal how age-based experiences intersect with social norms, access, and digital competence. By bringing ethnographic depth to existing findings, this study contributes to broader conversations on mediatization, digital inequality, and generational identity in South Korea's evolving media landscape.

Presenter(s): Annika Tifft

Discussion

3246 Writing for not just about ethnographic participants: Reflections on medium, genre, voice and other aspects of rhetorical strategy

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

For most of anthropology's history, anthropologists have dedicated themselves to writing about

their ethnographic subjects, and only on occasion, on the side, in the background, or perhaps indirectly, have produced text for the people who participated in their research. With renewed emphasis on decolonization both in and outside of anthropology in recent years, greater ease of long-distance communication via social media, and the digitization of knowledge production, anthropologists now face new expectations and opportunities to communicate their research findings to not just the public but the people who so graciously opened their lives, experiences and communities to them. Whether drawing inspiration from alternative framings of anthropology such as collaborative anthropology, dialogic anthropology, activist anthropology or others, there are many ends to and media in which writing for one's interlocutors can be developed. Writing for might be one stage in the process of writing with one's research participants, or it might be a task that a researcher engages in on the side of or embedded in their academic publications to make their findings accessible, of use and ultimately up for the evaluation of their participants.

This panel brings together scholars engaged in writing, producing or creating in some shape or form for their research participants or communities to reflect on their creative processes and share strategies and learnings with regards to medium, genre, voice and other aspects of rhetorical strategy. Panelists reflect on their experiences creating for and with their interlocutors bilingual books, in-person and digital presentations, interactive workshops, resources shared on social media, informational handbooks, and collaborative artwork. Together, the papers consider how shifting from writing about to writing for one's interlocutors at various scales and stages of an ethnographic project can be fraught with epistemic ghosts that seem to patrol the confines of a scholar's voice and creativity. While alternative framings of anthropology and ethnographic methods are helpfully orienting, "ghosts" of previous anthropological paradigms such as the detached observer, the hierarchy of academic above vernacular theory, or the privileging of etic over emic perspective, can haunt, inhabit or perhaps thwart efforts to shift from writing about to writing for one's interlocutors. Additional specters spotlighted by these papers include: standards of tenure and promotion, structures for disconnection between anthropologists and subjects, the dichotomy of insider and outsider positionality, restrictive definitions of what counts as knowledge, and an ethnographer's discomfort with disagreement. This panel illuminates needed shifts in praxis and alternative structures for knowledge production that contribute to an anthropology beholden to ongoing dialogue with communities outside of the academy, especially our subjects of research.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Gaya Morris, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Gaya Morris, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Ashley Fitzpatrick, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology, Gaya Morris, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology, Joyce Bennett, Bates College, Department of Anthropology, Dana Vanderburgh, Indiana University, Bloomington, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Caitrin Lynch

Presentation(s): Empowerment Through Co-Creation: The Egg Donor Handbook

Reproductive anthropologists navigate complex politics and landscapes, requiring creative methods to capture a dynamic field and amplify affected voices. My research investigates egg donors' experiences with anonymity and digital privacy in a setting where technology outpaces policy, leaving donors vulnerable to identification and surveillance. As a former egg donor, I position myself alongside my interlocutors, identifying with their experiences and fears. Through autoethnography, I build connections with fellow donors and open avenues for co-creation. As part of my commitment to the egg donor community, I am facilitating the co-creation of The Egg Donor Handbook, a collaborative guide for egg donors that offers advice and tools to empower donors during the donation process. Through the co-production and sharing of knowledge, my work seeks to break down the walls that have historically separated anthropologists and subjects, instead celebrating the creativity that emerges from connection. I will speak to the rewards and challenges that come with prioritizing writing with and for our interlocutors, with a focus on the early stages of collaboration. I will elaborate on handbooks as a genre and creative method which works to bridge the divide between academic and public writing. Finally, I will consider my own positionality as a former egg donor and egg donor recruiter as categories which simultaneously enable and complicate my work.

Presenter(s): Ashley Fitzpatrick

What If You Disagree?: Bridging the Gap Between Emic and Etic Perspectives in Writing for Ethnographic Participants

The crux of decolonizing ethnography may be involving participants at the stage of not just data collection and but also analytic writing, but what if the anthropologist and participants disagree in the end? In this paper I reflect critically on how I am working through this question in my dissertation project on Wolof-French bilingualism in elementary education in Senegal, as I begin the process of sharing off-shoots of the main dissertation text with my research participants in writing, digital presentation and in-person meetings. I argue that while disagreement might seem to threaten the basis of collaboration, it might be an essential part of the process in which a researcher strives to offer alternative, counter-hegemonic perspectives on daily life. Further, in research on linguistic practices in education, disagreement is likely, as linguistic anthropological theory often centers mixed and non-standard language practices that are devalued by monolingualist ideologies naturalized for most educators. Drawing on formulations of dialogic anthropology (Dwyer 1977) and accompaniment (Bucholtz, Casillas and Lee 2017), I consider how writing for my participants requires shifting my positionality from listener and learner to "teacher-student" (Freire 1970, 80), as I strive to explain the theoretical perspectives that inform my analyses but also invite disagreement.

Presenter(s): Gaya Morris

Writing in the Shadows of Ghosts: A Case for Changing Tenure and Promotion Standards to Support Writing with and for Anthropological Collaborators

Writing for the Kaqchikel Maya women I work with has always been a motivating goal of mine because it is central for engaging in respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, particularly given my positionality as a settler scholar (Smith 2012). Yet, examining my career and written products reveals how today's modes of knowledge production remain tied to colonial structures, particularly those related to tenure and promotion (Bejarano et al. 2019). Upon earning tenure in 2022, I began explicitly writing for the women I work with, producing public opinion pieces in US newspapers that women asked me to write; a bilingual book in English and Kaqchikel (in press) that will be open access via the Amherst College Press; and a series of reports to the grassroots organization of women I collaborate with, the Asociación Feminil del Desarrollo de Sacatepeques. Even with an inaugural Wenner-Gren Engaged Research Grant (2022) to support collaboration, the privileging of peer-reviewed, solo-authored work is a presence in my career planning. The specter of anthropologists more senior and the shadow of higher education's normative practices continue to influence what I write. In this paper, I argue that without aligning our structures to support writing for the communities we work with, anthropologists will continue to be discouraged from doing this work, even when we simultaneously understand it as a fundamental component of a more just anthropology (Bucholtz, Casillas and Lee 2017).

Presenter(s): Joyce Bennett

Voicing from Within: A Creative Exercise in Ethical Engagement and Collaborations in Manitoba

This paper reflects on the work I have undertaken with a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to develop an interactive artistic curriculum for participants to creatively explore the ways hydroelectric damming impacts Indigenous people and communities across Manitoba. Through this journey, we have endeavored to creatively enact ethical forms of research, community work, and activism in a "good way" (Ball & Janyst 2008). In this paper, I seek to articulate the theoretical underpinnings of the development of our creative praxis and the ways in which we navigate our own questions of identity, power and ethics in the process. This paper also draws upon our own creative reflections derived from some of the curricular exercises we developed. Through this approach, I hope to model the ways in which creative methodologies can serve as a powerful vehicle for ethical research and respond to the charge that: "[w]e need to listen to and elevate all stories: all knowledge presents us with knowledge and stories that are valuable to understanding our world" (Kimmerer 2013, 46). In doing so, I advocate for the increased acceptance of arts-based inquiries and praxis within the growing movement towards the ethical engagement with communities, people, and knowledge.

Presenter(s): Dana Vanderburgh

Discussion

7297 Presence: A/effectuating almost existing/ence (part two)

Start Date: 11/23/2025 8:30 AM **through** 11/23/2025 10:00 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel draws on the rich interpretative and political affordances of "presence" (Ferguson 2021) to negotiate and realize agents' participation in communities they cannot be members of. It sees presence – the condition of being here, among us – as obligating acknowledgement and, consequently, (potentially grudging and hostile) responses from members of these communities. However, presence is never self-evident; "being here" requires work, materially and semiotically rendered as such and, thus, constitutes loci of everyday politics. Presence is – like specters and shadows – ephemeral, inconclusive, liminal, and unsettling.

The second session of our two-part panel explores the cultural politics of constituting and reckoning with the presence of spiritual and "other" entities and how it disrupts categories and relations of property, law, ontology, and belonging. Drawing on studies of graves and temples as communal landmarks in rural China, the constitutional absence of the enduring socio-legal presence of ancestors in post-apartheid South Africa, the spatialized cognition and relational worlding among Maya communities in Mexico, and maternal bodies performing artillery shows in frontline Kinmen, Taiwan, our panelists portray insistent and insidious practices that constitute contested obligations and relationalities. Together, we seek to expand the cultural theory of the eerie processes of "being together," the ever-shifting and mutating grounds for ethical futuring (Keane 2025).

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Chun-Yu (Jo Ann) Wang, Pitzer College, Eduard Fanthome, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department

Chair: Eduard Fanthome, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department

Presenter(s): Yi Wu, Clemson University, Sindiso MnisiWeeks, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Norbert Ross, An-Ru Chu, University of California, Irvine

Discussant: Andrew Johnson, Stockholm University, Webb Keane, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Demarcating and Negotiating Community Boundaries: Ancestors, Spirits, and Landmarks in the Rural Landscape of Southwest China

Rights over land, the most salient form of property, are at the heart of controversies concerning the transformation of rural China. Since the 1950s, land traditionally held by village communities has been subject to the impacts of tumultuous socio-political processes. Drawing on ethnographic and historical data from Southwest China, this paper explores an overlooked modality of politics in the configuration of rural land ownership — how villages employ the existence/presence of ancestors and spirits to demarcate and negotiate their community boundaries and assert land rights in China's rapidly changing socio-economic context. As an integral part of village life, ancestors, deities, and ghosts bring forth widely shared social imaginations in rural areas. The presence of these spiritual beings was effectuated through graves and temples, which often have the status of quasi-private property despite China's rural land being legally collectively owned. My research shows that the quasi-private ownership, along with the sacredness and efficaciousness associated with the graves and temples, gives villagers a sense of entitlement to the land where graves and

temples are located. These dwellings of spiritual beings have become landmarks demarcating village territory and a key focus of the contestation between villages and local governments. The coalescence of living and spiritual beings constitutes one form of rural agency to cope with land grabs and call for an equitable society.

Presenter(s): Yi Wu

Ukuvusa Abalele (Waking the Sleeping): Politico-legal Contestation over Transformative Constitutionalism and 'Ubuntu' in Post-1994 South Africa

Methodologically grounded in constitutional ethnography and historical linguistics, this paper explores the constitutional absence of the enduring sociolegal presence of 'abalele' (the ancestors) in post-apartheid South Africa. It therefore examines the profound dissonance between the normative convictions of the majority of the Black African population (82%) of South Africa, 'aba-Ntu', as 'residues' from their indigenous ancestors, on one hand, and the 'common' law that should rightly be called the uncommon law, on the other hand. It thus considers the invisible (vernacular) law that is grounded in the invisible existence of 'abalele' as a way of better understanding and thus otherwise conveying the sheer urgency of undoing the colonial afterlives of *lex nullius* in South Africa most profoundly expressed in and through the ordinary South African's still fractured relationship to the land 'underneath' (*de facto terra nullius*). Many anticolonial scholars argue that the Constitutional Court of South Africa's concept of 'Ubuntu' (which reduces the concept to the right to 'dignity') is deeply impoverished because it disregards the richer and more fulsome indigenous African notion of Ubu-Ntu as an entire world-sense centring on the very materiality of human(e)ness as relational ontology and mutual dependency for multigenerational survival, and thus expansively applicable throughout society and in relation to non-human *ntU (that is, 'things', 'be-ings', 'existence').

Presenter(s): Sindiso MnisiWeeks

Other Perspectives and Individual Presence: Taking Place in Space

In this paper I present data from research among Maya children in southern Mexico. I use long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the area to explore findings from a well-known experimental task exploring spatial cognition. Looked from the perspective of ontology and worldmaking the task reveals the different perspectives and positionalities participants claim when locating themselves in space. One groups specifically seems to reject the idea that they themselves take up the central position in the space they inhabit. For these individuals the ways they solve the spatial task indicates that for them the world does NOT revolve around them. Rather they constitute one part in it. My argument is not one of age-old traditional Maya. Instead, ethnographic evidence suggests that the results are the outcome of complex interactions of a wide set of historical / political forces and influences that shape ongoing creations of worlds.

Presenter(s): Norbert Ross

Cannon Drills and Maternal Bodies: Negotiating Presence in Taiwan's Cold War Tourism

"After so many years here and having three Taiwanese children, why do you still doubt me?" asks Chengmei Shi, a PRC-born marriage migrant who performs daily artillery shows for tourists in Kinmen—a former Cold War frontline turned military tourism site just miles from China's coast. These women paradoxically load cannons once aimed at their homeland while navigating suspicion from both Taiwanese and Chinese publics. This paper examines how their performances render visible the contested embodiment of women situated at the threshold of Taiwanese belonging—officially recognized residents, yet shaped by lingering affiliations and structural ties to the PRC. Drawing on ethnographic observation, interviews, and archival research, I analyze how they move through Cold War spectralities and articulate complex positionalities in this liminal space. Building on Roger Caillois, Elin Diamond, and Michael Taussig's explorations of mimesis, I propose the concept of "dramaturgical camouflage" to analyze how they strategically modulate visibility. Often excluded from soldierly ideals and frontline narratives, these women reclaim their maternal identities as protective affective claims: they perform for their children or would "shield the cannon with their bodies." This case reveals how presence in militarized borderlands becomes a form of embodied negotiation, where national and gender identities are unsettled and reconfigured through performance.

Presenter(s): An-Ru Chu

Discussion

Discussion

3946 Confronting 'Fantasmas': Resilience in Urban Brazil

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Bacchus

Type: Oral Presentation Session

'Fantasmas' (ghosts) linger in Brazilian society from centuries long ago. Colonization and oppression have left a stain darker than the red dye of the Brazil tree, from which the space is given its current name, as it was the first resource stolen from the natives. Soon after, it is estimated that 5.5 million Africans were enslaved and brought to this area. Fast-forward 525 years to urban areas haunted by systemic violence, drug-trafficking, racism, misogyny, and lack of resources, which are all a result of this exploitation. How are communities confronting these ghosts of the past in forms of resilience?

*In the social periphery of the Mata Atlântica in Rio de Janeiro, communities are uniting to map community-based resources, environmental threats, and provide local solutions to sustain long-term monitoring of climate threats as these communities have a noted history as sites of drug trafficking, forced displacement, gender-based violence, coastal erosion, deforestation, and landslides.

*In Rio de Janeiro, the role of cultural protective factors (such as family and community support, storytelling, and cultural pride and resistance), raising critical consciousness, and community organizing in healing from collective wounds in spaces of poverty, social exclusion, multi-level

violence, and discrimination. This trauma is passed down through generations and impacts identity, mental health, family relationships, and community conduct and resilience.

*Up the coast in Salvador, progress and shortcomings of Black resistance versus Afro-Brazilian exoticism is highlighted, as manipulation of 'blocos afro' and Black Bahian culture and music for purposes of promoting the city as an Afro-diasporic capital of the Americas while these communities continue to suffer from severe racial inequities, police violence, and lack of basic education and health care needs.

*In another capital in Belo Horizonte, sounded protest in the form of whistling provides direction and empowerment for a group of all-women drummers and a sense of solidarity to women in the area while echoing past acts of gendered violence.

*And further south in São Paulo, the Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira created by enslaved peoples offers a form of social inclusion and community to people who are victims of structural violence alongside drug-trafficking, violence, crime, murder, and the "hidden slavery" of the system. However, the community is not without it's own shadows. In 2021, it was publicly reported that the leaders of the capoeira group in my research community were accused of violent crimes against children and adolescents.

When confronted, some ghosts disappear, while others will continue to haunt for generations to come....

Section: Critical Urban Anthropology Association

Organizer: Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Chair: Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Presenter(s): Jason Scott, Virginia Commonwealth University, Jessica Glass, Emory University, Cody Case, University of Florida, Abby Rehard, Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter, Carlos Abraão Moura Valpassos

Presentation(s): Resilient Roots: Creating a Hub for the Mata Atlântica's Periphery

This paper examines possibilities for a sustainable collaborative resilience network composed of four marginalized communities along Brazil's Mata Atlântica. I discuss a hypothetical program that unites civil society members from Rio de Janeiro's favelas (informal communities or shantytowns), Afro-Brazilian quilombos (communities descendant from enslaved peoples), indigenous aldeias (villages), LGBTQIA2S+ and feminist organizations, and eroding coastal communities in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia. These communities have a noted history as sites of drug trafficking, forced displacement, gender-based violence, coastal erosion, deforestation, and landslides. We propose a three-year training of 20 youth activists from Rio's favelas to map community-based resources, environmental threats, and local solutions through the use of augmented reality, 360-degree virtual reality imagery, as well as heat, air, and water sensors. By the end of the project, the team will produce empirically validated reports for each community that assess the potential for artificial intelligence/machine learning to sustain long-term monitoring of climate threats on the social periphery of the Mata Atlântica. Research will be presented at a 2027 coastal resilience summit as well as in smaller community-based meetings.

Presenter(s): Jason Scott

Living Memory: How the Past Haunts the Present in Brazilian Favelas

This paper explores and analyzes the dynamics of generational and collective trauma among residents of Brazilian favelas, marginalized urban communities that are still haunted by the legacy of centuries of colonization and slavery. Based on ethnographic fieldwork spanning more than a decade and drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship including anthropology, psychology, public health, and history, this study examines how persistent exposure to poverty, social exclusion, multi-level violence, and discrimination creates a shared experience of trauma that compounds individual suffering. This trauma is passed down through generations and impacts identity, mental health, family relationships, and community conduct and resilience. This research highlights the role of cultural protective factors (such as family and community support, storytelling, and cultural pride and resistance), raising critical consciousness, and community organizing in healing from collective wounds.

Presenter(s): Jessica Glass

Salvador Capital Afro: Fifty Years of Blocos Afro in Bahia, Brazil

The 2024 Carnival in Salvador was a monumental year for blocos afro. A bloco afro is a Carnival organization consisting of percussionists, dancers, singers, musicians, neighborhood residents and fans who celebrate an Afrocentric theme during Carnival and organize events and community services throughout the year in Salvador, Brazil. This paper examines the city of Salvador's manipulation of blocos afro and Black Bahian culture and music for purposes of promoting the city as an Afro-diasporic capital of the Americas. All the while, these very Black communities continue to suffer from severe racial inequities, police violence, and lack of basic education and health care needs (Pinho 2021). Christin Smith (2016) notes this paradox in describing the exoticism of Salvador as an "Afro-Paradise," and the city government's role in promoting this reputation. However, ethnomusicologist Larry Crook (1993) first noted this dilemma among blocos afro in questioning whether the commercial globalization of blocos afro in the 1990s—especially after Olodum's collaborations with Paul Simon and Michael Jackson—partially eclipsed the initial intentions of Afro-Brazilian consciousness and Black resistance. Many developments have occurred since then. In 2024, the city finally gave deserved credit and financial investment to blocos afro, officially recognizing their critical role in Salvador's Carnival popular music—generally known as axé music. Through original audiovisual footage and analysis of m

Presenter(s): Cody Case

Echoes of Violence and Whistling in Solidarity: Listening to Women's Sounded Resistance in a Brazilian City

How do our listening practices as ethnographers change our understanding of events? Which sounds get prioritized or ignored? Which sounds echo in our ears long after we've left the field? How do our interpretations of these sounds deepen as we situate ourselves among our informants?

Based on my participant-observation fieldwork during the International Women's Day March in Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil, I will examine how sounded protest in the form of whistling provides direction and empowerment for a group of all-women drummers and a sense of solidarity to women in the area while echoing past acts of gendered violence. This ethnomusicological case study will explore these questions and generate more.

Presenter(s): Abby Rehard

A Dance of Shadows: Capoeira Beyond the Game

The Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira creates a form of social inclusion and community to people who are victims of structural violence. But this essay isn't about that. Many discussed drug-trafficking, violence, crime, murder, and the "hidden slavery" of the system. In 2021, it was publicly reported that the leaders of the capoeira group in my research community were accused of sex crimes against children and adolescents. Aside from those in this report, there are other cases of sexual abuse in the capoeira community at large, with other capoeira mestres imprisoned for such crimes. During this process, I did not know how to process any of it and stayed up at night questioning if I was being the good anthropologist. I continued to remind myself that in anthropology we do no harm to the communities where we work. But what if the individuals in the community state they are being harmed? I started to consider that in not doing harm to some I was doing harm to others- those women and children whose voices are silenced by the structural violence that the system allows. Regardless, it was overwhelming, and I am not sure I had the tools or support. But perhaps that's reflective of the lives of so many humans on this planet attempting to survive in the vulnerable systems of structural violence that impacts us all on different levels.

Presenter(s): Jaclyn Donelle McWhorter

Atafona and the waves of affliction: liminality and communitas on the Brazilian coast

Atafona is a beach on the northern coast of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where, in the early 20th century, a regional elite built their summer homes. About 60 years ago, the sea began to advance over the built-up area, putting at risk the houses that, for generations, had been the scene of summer sociability. In this paper, I present the process of erosion of the houses and discuss the summer sociability experienced in Atafona, in contrast to the sociability experienced during the rest of the year in the city of Campos dos Goytacazes. From this, I recover the concepts of liminality, by Victor Turner, and of communitas, as discussed by Victor and Edith Turner, to think of Atafona as a resort of affliction in a landscape of ruins, where the joy of summer communions was crossed by the uncertainties of the advancing sea.

Presenter(s): Carlos Abraão Moura Valpassos

8261 Anthropology and the specters of science 2

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony I

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology and the specters of science Anthropologists across many areas of inquiry have struggled to account for multiple forms of scientific knowledge, in particular, when working in interdisciplinary spaces or when negotiating data with findings from other sciences. Many have educated themselves to become competent in scientific worlds other than their own. Others have treated the sciences as phenomena to be studied, questioning scientific systems of knowledge as they have emerged from specific histories and ideologies, such as the Enlightenment, capitalism, or Cartesian dualism, exposing the discrimination, assumptions, and biases that saturate scientific discourses. Scholars of indigenous knowledge have juxtaposed cultural systems to show how vastly different knowledges emerge from unique histories and lifeways. In some cases, they have not only unsettled scientific truth but also leveraged anthropological awareness to contribute to scientific practice. Much of this work involves reflection on the limits of scientific findings, but also a deep engagement with it. This panel seeks to explore tensions produced among the different sciences when in deep multi-disciplinary engagement. We start from the awareness that scientific knowledge permeates late modern life, but cannot address many aspects of human experience, such as aesthetics and ethics. We invite reflection on the nature of interdisciplinarity, the sharing of methods and data, the making of some knowledges commensurable or protecting that which is incommensurable. We are particularly interested in phenomena that cannot easily be examined, isolated, or quantified, especially phenomena that haunt the sciences, teasing the boundaries of what can be known. We are also interested in what remains when scientific institutions are faced with public and policy challenges to their epistemologies and practices. Scientific knowledges and expertise are criticized, among other reasons,

Will current challenges encourage us to reconsider our differences and strengthen our commonalities or will attempts to create mutual understandings disappear in a scramble to preserve the status quo?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Luisa Cortesi, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Rachel Prentice, Cornell University

Presenter(s): Natalie Baloy, Western Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Mia Rodarte, Courtney Addison, Victoria University of Wellington, Samiksha Bhan, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Britta Acksel, Luisa Cortesi, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Rachel Prentice, Cornell University

Presentation(s): A Hurricane Hits Science: Ethnographic Research in the Storm Surge

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration "storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted astronomical tides... storm surge is often the greatest threat to life and property from a hurricane." This paper suggests that science, specifically climate and community-engaged science, is caught in the storm surge of uncertainty after a hurricane of executive orders, threats and cuts to funding, and political debates about the

role of science and institutions of higher education. This hurricane hit after tides were already rising beyond predicted tides and the storm surge is causing further damage. Our emergent research is coinciding with this storm: we share autoethnographic and ethnographic analysis of scientists and institutions of science scrambling – for safety, for cover, for resources, and for ways forward. We specifically address how efforts to diversify and democratize science through community partnership are especially vulnerable in this storm and also all the more vital. As science faces an external existential threat, we examine how internal academic and community critiques of conventional science practices have been initiating an ethical and relational turn toward collaborative and community-engaged science. Our initial assessment is that research and community collaborations founded on relationality will survive this storm and the storm surge of uncertainty and anxiety, perhaps against the odds.

Presenter(s): Natalie Baloy

Co-author(s): Mia Rodarte

Indigenous Relationality and Relationships

How do scientists form relationships with each other in team collaborations and with the land and communities where they work? How do their relational, ethical, and epistemological practices and commitments shape science? This paper explores the culture(s) of science collaboration through the critical lens of Indigenous ways of knowing, concepts of political relationality, and decolonizing methodologies. We share autoethnographic and ethnographic analysis of emergent partnerships and relationality in practice in a multi-year, multi-disciplinary, and multi-institutional project that aims to support and enhance community-engaged research in the geosciences. As the social science team on this project, we are engaging with decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies to study the team's inner workings and navigations of broader cultural expectations in higher education institutions and in community and their support for fellow scientists to engage in community-grounded work. Primarily authored by a member of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, the paper analyzes Eurocentric ideas of relationships that play out in science collaborations, including individualism, conceptions of time, and workflow priorities, and emphasizes that relationality must be engaged for ethical, epistemological, and practical reasons across all stages of research.

Presenter(s): Mia Rodarte

Co-author(s): Natalie Baloy

Poison politics: Evidentiary contestations and the limits of expertise in New Zealand conservation

In Aotearoa New Zealand a broad body of research examines the toxicological, ecological, and welfare aspects of 1080, a poison widely used to kill introduced pest species that pressure native flora and fauna. Researchers generally agree that the case for 1080 is settled. The evidence collected to date indicates that it disperses swiftly in water, carries a middling welfare profile, and is relatively safe to handle and spread according to existing regulation. However, researchers and conservationists are frustrated that these assurances are unheeded by those opposed to 1080. This

latter group pickets poisoning operations, objects through official bureaucratic channels, and maintains a lively social media presence. They frequently voice their objections in scientific terms, contesting specific pieces of research or broader claims that the scientific community regard as settled. 1080 use continues despite this pushback, but few people are happy about it: those using the poison feel vulnerable and have at times been targeted by opponents, while opponents feel they are dismissed and derided, and have also at times been targeted by police. This talk will explore the contours of this impasse, which raises scalar questions about how evidence travels and adheres in place (or fails to), and how theories of agonistic pluralism might be brought to bear on epistemic questions.

Presenter(s): Courtney Addison

Untouchability and the proof of risk: Thinking at the limits of race and its critique for genetic sciences in India

The haunting presence of race and racialisation in genetic science and technology has been a point of generative critique for anthropologists of science. That genetic testing and its incorporation as a public health good remains inflected by contentious histories of racial and biological difference that includes under-represented groups by marking them as different is a powerful critique relevant in many parts of the world. In my presentation, I pose the haunting presence of racialisation in genetic health services in India today to ask what happens when genetic risk gets scripted onto low caste and previously untouchable communities in India who mobilise it towards diagnostic and therapeutic ends. Drawing from the literary traditions, intellectual discourses around caste and interviews with sickle cell patients, I speculate the possibilities of thinking differently about the relationship between untouchability to genetic risk as how Dalit (low caste) sickle cell health politics in Nagpur, Maharashtra- a region known for its anticaste social movement- mobilises genetic risk and thus biological difference to overcome the social codification of untouchability and caste-based health exclusions. I argue that thinking about the relationship between untouchability and risk can offer a different orientation and thus critique of the scientific in social life.

Presenter(s): Samiksha Bhan

Opening the toolbox – formats and tools for interdisciplinary facilitation

Much has been written about interdisciplinarity, about its logics, its translation problems, its (epistemological) frictions. Anyone who has or has worked or tried to work interdisciplinarily knows about the many challenges involved. Nevertheless, one of today's commonplaces is that existing problems and crises do not care about disciplinary boundaries; inter- and even transdisciplinarity is called for. Research and research institutions are often valued, justified and funded (or not) according to how publics and policy perceives their "impact". With this in mind, it is not surprising that the number of formats and toolboxes aimed at facilitating interdisciplinary work is growing.

This paper looks at formats and tools that aim to facilitating interdisciplinary work, and explores practices and proposed practices to enable interdisciplinarity. Interests lie in how disciplines and interdisciplinarity are enacted and problematised in these formats and tools including promises,

opportunities and challenges. What kinds of knowledges are targeted, included or excluded? What roles do different kinds of frictions play (or not)? And how are power dynamics dealt with and addressed (or not)? The thematic focus is on sustainability research.

Presenter(s): Britta Acksel

The interdisciplinarity of water and its (in)consequentiality

Modern debates about water are fertile ground for rigidly incommensurable forms of expertise - could they also be catalysts for some form of mediation between them? In North Bihar, India, water is saturated with and carries multiple social and physical toxicities, which I explored through long-term ethnographic fieldwork informed by socio-cultural anthropology, science and technology studies, and development studies, as well as hydrogeology, river morphology, and the biochemistry of water. Several years after the fieldwork, I am interested in reflecting on the possibilities of interdisciplinary fieldwork and the research identity that emerged from it. In an era of hyper-specialization, what does it mean to reject the either/or? What choices are imposed by deliberately muddying the epistemological and methodological waters, even in the absence of their accepted convergence? Breaking the mold of finding the inadequacies of the hard sciences, I am interested in looking for a rapprochement (or at least its potential) between conceiving water as a natural resource and focusing on its socio-cultural status.

Presenter(s): Luisa Cortesi

Discussion

2890 Connecting the Dots in Climate and Energy Justice Research

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony J

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Ethnographic and community-based participatory research require long-term engagement and partnership with specific communities. Yet climate justice issues are planetary in scope and require "connecting the dots" between the global and the local, between different ways of thinking and being, between multiple stakeholders/actors (e.g., researchers, CBOs, and government officials, etc.), and between anthropology and other fields. In our effort to "connect the dots" between disciplines, affected communities, and policy realms, we are inspired by calls for "participatory convergence" (Roque, et al. 2021, Castro-Diaz et al. 2024). How do we scale up community-based projects and bring climate justice communities into conversation and solidarity with one another? Panelists will briefly present their climate justice research projects, which include residential energy issues in western Massachusetts (Caverly, Rhiney, and Harper), Nature-Based Approaches to coastal zone and water resource management in Boston, Massachusetts (Castro-Diaz and Kirshen), environmental health and water security in Vieques, Puerto Rico (Negrón, Melendez-Mateo, Estrada-Martinez), utility-scale solar siting conflicts in Sardegna, Italy (Cao), and contentious local politics around renewable energy in Portugal and the northeastern United States (Afonso).

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Krista Harper, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Nicholas Caverly, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Rosalyn Negrón, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Department of Anthropology, Nicholas Caverly, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Anthropology, Laura Castro-Diaz, Ana Isabel Afonso, Umberto Cao

Presentation(s): Militarized Pasts and Climate Futures: Localizing Environmental Justice in Vieques, PR

In this paper we examine the complex landscape of community organizing and climate and environmental justice in Vieques, Puerto Rico, where a history of military occupation, colonial neglect, and environmental contamination converges with climate change to produce what we conceptualize as cascading disasters. Drawing on ongoing community-based participatory research with the Vieques, Ambiente, Salud y Acción Comunitaria (VASAC) initiative, and efforts to organize for climate resilience through water security, we explore the socioecological aftermath of U.S. Navy bombing exercises and their enduring effects on health, land access, and trust in institutional actors. Informed by ethnographic sensibilities and a critical public health lens, this project engages with grassroots leaders, scientists, and long-time residents to analyze intersecting threats to community well-being, including toxic exposures, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and vulnerabilities to climate-related events. We highlight how ideological diversity - among progressive activists, moderate stakeholders, and religious conservatives - shapes engagement in community organizing. At the same time, a pervasive distrust rooted in the legacy of U.S. militarism and Puerto Rican governmental neglect complicates research collaboration and calls into question the role of outside actors, including researchers. We examine how insider-outsider dynamics are mediated through long-standing attachments to place and conteste

Presenter(s): Rosalyn Negrón

Co-author(s): Lorena Estrada-Martinez, Kiani Melendez-Mateo

Energy justice is a housing problem: Some evidence from the Holyoke Community Energy Project

This presentation contributes to bridging knowledge on housing and energy justice. It does so by way of ongoing, community-driven research in Holyoke, Massachusetts. This research, the Holyoke Community Energy Project, entails collaboration among anthropologists, urban planners, community organizers, a housing agency, engineers, city residents, and other actors. Through interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, our team of university and community-based researchers are identifying barriers and opportunities for household energy systems that advance the desires of low-to-moderate income people in Holyoke. Across our work, we have routinely grappled with the ways energy injustice and housing injustice are deeply entwined, as people who contend with increasingly unaffordable rents and poorly maintained buildings also contend with spiking energy costs. At the same time, recent state and federal policies intended to drive household-scale renewable energy transitions disproportionately benefit people who own their homes and exclude people who rent. Moreover, when landlords receive public subsidies for energy

efficiency and electrification upgrades to rental housing, existing residents can lose their homes, raising legitimate fears of green gentrification. This presentation builds from the insights of Holyoke residents to connect the dots between energy and housing justice. It does so by way of bills, drafty apartments, aging boilers, landlord-tenant disputes, and other

Presenter(s): Nicholas Caverly

Co-author(s): Krista Harper, Teniel Rhiney

Advancing Justice and Resilience: Implementing Coastal Nature-Based Approaches through Participatory Convergence

Nature-based approaches (NBA) hold significant promise for advancing grand challenges such as sustainable food production, enhancing coastal zone and water resource management, and mitigating floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. However, the benefits and trade-offs of these approaches are often distributed unevenly across different social groups, raising important questions about equity and inclusivity. The implementation of equitable and just NBA demands innovative systemic approaches that actively engage local communities, such as the Participatory Convergence Approach. This approach breaks down traditional disciplinary silos by prioritizing systems thinking, solution-focused strategies, and meaningful community engagement. By fostering collaboration among residents, stakeholders, and researchers from diverse fields, Participatory Convergence has demonstrated its effectiveness in addressing pressing grand challenges, including water insecurity, energy justice, and disaster resilience, through tailored and equitable solutions. For instance, it has allowed local communities in the Amazon to co-design off-the-grid energy systems. It has been used to co-develop along the U.S.-Mexico border adaptive and decentralized water systems. Using Boston Harbor as a case study, this presentation investigates how implementing NBA for flood risk reduction through Participatory Convergence can optimize benefits while mitigating potential drawbacks. We will emphasize how utilizing th

Presenter(s): Laura Castro-Diaz

Landscapes of Energy Transitions: Who Owns the Wind and the Sun?

Renewable energy transitions are not merely technical shifts but contested renegotiations of who controls nature's infrastructure. Comparing ethnographic work in Portugal (wind/solar) and Massachusetts (Falmouth's publicly owned turbines), I examine how governance legitimacy—not just ownership—determines success or failure. In Portugal, rural communities facing agricultural decline often accept renewables when projects are mediated by traditional institutions, the Assembleia de Compartes, who manage the commons (baldios), enabling direct negotiation with developers. Here, wind and sun become collective assets, revitalizing both economies and participatory governance. By contrast, Falmouth's municipally owned turbines—installed at a wastewater facility without meaningful community input—were dismantled after courts ruled their health and nuisance impacts intolerable. This paradox—public projects failing where community-led ones thrive—reveals a core tension: even well-intentioned climate solutions collapse when they sideline local knowledge and justice. I argue that energy transitions must treat wind and sun as

embedded in social and moral landscapes, where legitimacy flows from procedural equity, not just technical or governmental authority. Linking Portuguese and North American cases, I propose ethnography as a tool to "connect the dots" between planetary urgency and place-based sovereignty, scaling climate action through—not over—the communities who inhabit energy landscape

Presenter(s): Ana Isabel Afonso

The “green energy invasion” of Sardinia: Between technoscientific promises, economic speculations and social resistances

The supposedly inescapable nature of energy transitions and the rhetoric of urgency with which they are usually framed in the public arena limit and/or inhibit our capacities as researchers 'to engage with and address them' (High and Smith 2019: 11), drastically reducing the realm of possibilities. Indeed, the planning and prediction of energy scenarios tends to rank and limit the range of possible futures (Strengers, Pink, and Nicholls 2019). Yet the effects of changes in resource extraction and energy use stimulate social imagination and reconfigure political systems (Szolucha 2018). The European Renewable Energy Financing Mechanism ('RENEWFM') launched to accelerate the decarbonation of member countries (European Union 2023), makes this sector particularly attractive to private investors. In recent years, Sardinia has received thousands of requests for authorisation of renewable energy production plants (Lupo and Fadda 2024), mainly wind but also solar, both onshore and offshore, of various sizes. As a result, large-scale protests broke out in Sardinian society against what was termed the green energy invasion, leading to numerous civil resistance initiatives, a citizens' initiative bill and the promotion of a popular referendum (Cossu 2024). This presentation addresses the implementation of energy policies and the social, political and cultural arguments behind the Sardinian "invasion."

Presenter(s): Umberto Cao

3894 Towards a Critical Anthropology of Impunity (Pt. 2)

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony K

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Hauntings and ghosts evoke unresolved past events that are often violent in nature. These unresolved or unacknowledged events can be described through the language of law and the absence of law or "impunity."

Since the war between Israel and Hamas began in 2023, "impunity" has circulated in global political and legal discourses in a wide variety of contexts from protests to the International Criminal Court. More recently, "impunity" has entered into popular discourse in the United States as the Trump administration continues to pursue a political agenda that functions outside of or beyond "the law."

Historically, impunity has been taken to mean the absence of legal or punitive redress for violence in the global south, however there is an urgent need to think about impunity theoretically and

ethnographically in diverse contexts. Building on the recent work in establishing an anthropology of "justice" (Brunnegger 2019; Clarke 2019; Cooper 2018; Greenberg 2018), this two-part panel brings together anthropologists working on the question of impunity in diverse contexts and geographies.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Claire Branigan

Chair: Dolores Figueroa Romero

Presenter(s): Dolores Figueroa Romero, Alana Ackerman, Veysel Firat Bozcali, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Richardson, Yasmine Lucas, Knox College

Discussant: Ellen Moodie, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Archives of Solidarity: Ethnography of the transnational dimension of the struggle for justice

This paper is based on an anthropological interpretation of international advocacy work in solidarity with Mexico and Central America during the Cold War through historical archives. The entry point of analysis is the political construction of (in)justice in the perceptions, notions and actions of activists and scholars in Canada who set about the task of forging different types of transnational solidarity networks. International cooperation played a key role in building an ethic of solidarity with resistance struggles in Latin American countries experiencing dictatorial regimes, civil wars, and the brutality of police repression (North, 2023; Jelin, 2002, 2017; Sieder, 1996). The solidarity work not only involved gathering information, writing specialized documentation, contextual analysis and on-site reports, but they were also repositories of resistance archives of peasant, workers' and indigenous organizations (North, 2023). The legacy of these transnational political communities and their ability to reverse the state's cover-up of human rights violations will be explored.

Presenter(s): Dolores Figueroa Romero

Legal Recognition as Political Violence in Necropolitical Ecuador

Under what conditions does legal recognition function as a form of political violence? Some scholarship has approached refuge as a structure of legal recognition that mediates the decision between who will live and who must die (for example, Rosas 2023). In contrast, this paper contends that the state's provisioning of refugee status does not necessarily constitute a letting live, but may also constitute a letting die. I approach Colombian refugees' experiences of legal recognition in Ecuador in tandem with forms of life-threatening violence they navigate and contest in a space of purported refuge: political persecution, labor exploitation and policing, and anti-Black and anti-Colombian racism. In this context, the state reproduces necropolitical conditions—"the subjugation of life to the power of death" (Mbembe 2003, 39)—not primarily through the construction of a detainable, deportable, or excludable migrant population, but through the provisioning of a documented status that obscures state-based and extralegal violence, and that allows the state to evade further accountability or international critique. I argue that legal recognition must be ordained in conjunction with other forms of support, resources, and accountability, based on what refugees themselves desire and demand.

Presenter(s): Alana Ackerman

Lawfare as Impunity: Criminalization of Social Media in Turkey

This paper examines how Turkish authorities have used lawfare—the weaponization of law—to restrict the circulation of documentation of state-committed human rights violations in social media. In doing so, the authorities not only suppress visual and audiovisual records of abuses, such as videos or photographs, but also seek to discredit the legitimacy of rights violation claims more broadly. The paper focuses on criminal prosecutions of social media users who shared such materials or criticized state authorities for these violations. These users are typically charged with disseminating "terrorist propaganda," or "insulting public officials/the President." In some cases, dissident citizens also face additional charges based on earlier social media posts, extending the logic of lawfare as a strategy of deterrence and intimidation aimed at discouraging future circulation of records of state violence. In these trials, defendants and their lawyers seek to contest the charges and redirect the prosecutorial gaze toward state authorities and the judiciary. By repurposing court documents and legal arguments, they expose acts of violence and highlight the judicial impunity work, the biased or deliberately incomplete evidence collection practices. These efforts aim to re-inscribe state violence into the legal record as well as undermine the authorities' use of lawfare as a technique of impunity.

Presenter(s): Veysel Firat Bozcali

"Living the Impunity: The Social Dimensions of a Spectral Configuration of Power"

Widespread, entrenched impunity stands as a perennial contextual feature in discussions of political violence in Colombia, but impunity itself less frequently takes center stage as an object of analysis. When centered, it is most often figured as an issue of juridical debility or institutional corruption. The experiences of surviving kin of victims of State-perpetrated crimes against humanity in Colombia, however, show impunity to be not an abstraction, institutional anomaly, or legal status, but rather a lived social process—both a productive social force and a structuring condition that saturates and shapes daily life. Drawing on fieldwork with surviving kin of victims of state violence, this paper presents the analytic living the impunity to study impunity empirically as it emerges, alongside law, in the social world. The paper first traces the development of the analytic in partnership with a mother of a victim of extrajudicial execution and then describes one aspect of living the impunity: a situation of what I call semiotic upheaval in which conflicting modes of symbolic communication subvert sensemaking. These colliding semiotic registers show the damage caused by widespread impunity as sited in and actively impairing broad systems of meaning-making—rather than acting and manifesting solely in the persons harmed. Impunity, I argue, is a mode of power apprehensible by tracing its palpable, haunting presence in daily life.

Presenter(s): Sarah Richardson

Affective Impunity: Holocaust Restitution as Judeo-Christian Alliance

Sublime feelings, and especially those inspired by Holocaust remembrance, supply neoliberal rationality with an affective supplement. I develop this argument by revisiting second wave Holocaust restitution claims. Infamously, Norman Finkelstein (2015) contends that financial gains largely bypassed survivors, benefitting technocrats and Zionist organizations instead. However, rather than interpreting this as mere profiteering, I propose that figures such as Stuart Eizenstat—Jimmy Carter's Chief Domestic Policy Adviser (1977-1981) and U.S. Ambassador to the European Union (1993-1996)—were primarily motivated by the broader goal of embedding American Jews within the neoliberal socio-political order. Through an anthropological reading of archival documents, and Eizenstat's memoir and political writings, I argue that his involvement in second-wave restitution reflects a commitment to American neoliberalism—a framework Eizenstat sees as inherently aligned with Jewish values, particularly after the impact of the 1961 Eichmann trials and the 1967 Six-Day War. For Eizenstat, restitution became a vehicle for uniting Jewish and Christian values under the auspices of neoliberalism. This sometimes-unconscious instrumentalization of Holocaust memory manifests today in ongoing memorial practices (beyond Holocaust remembrance) that cover over neoliberalism's contradictions subsuming them in sublime feeling.

Presenter(s): Yasmine Lucas

Discussion

4495 Engaged Anthropology in the Contemporary Context: Grappling with Ghosts of Anthropological Theory, Practice, and Legacy

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony L

Type: Conversation/Debate

Participatory methods of anthropological research emphasize horizontal models of collaboration, positioning interlocutors as theorists, and producing meaningful knowledge to be leveraged for social transformation. However, Sophie Chao (2023) reminds us that ethnography is historically entangled with ethical dilemmas of extraction, representation, and sweeping generalization. A hesitant anthropology, she argues, requires transparency about the debates and disagreements that shape ethnographic knowledge to contest the singular narratives of traditional fieldwork. How do engaged anthropologists grapple with the legacies of power, coloniality, extraction, or racialization of the communities with whom we work? How does community-based research push anthropologists to confront harmful relationships that preceded their presence in the community? This panel discussion addresses experimental methodologies, collaborative pedagogies, and community-based partnerships to explore ghosts of research past. Discussants will draw upon community-based research experience to narrate the practicalities of conducting research in the shadow of imperialism, systemic neglect, and racialization. The contemporary moment of the discipline demands a reckoning with extractive research-participatory and community-driven research addresses the call for bottom-up knowledge production through mutually reciprocal relationships.

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Sarah Buckmaster

Presenter(s): William Leggett, Middle Tennessee State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Kiana Nadonza, University of Oregon, Department of Anthropology, Sarah Buckmaster

Discussant: Alysa Handelsman, Wofford College, Sociology and Anthropology Department

4120 "Aftermaths and Afterlives: Infrastructural Disjunctures and Uncertain Futures in Southeast Asia"

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Balcony N

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how communities in Southeast Asia live with the shifting temporalities, uncertainties, and political consequences of infrastructure. From urban transportation in Phnom Penh to flood management in Kuala Lumpur's peripheries, from proposed hydropower development in the Philippine uplands to volcanic risk zones in Bicol, the papers trace how infrastructures-planned, proposed, or abandoned-shape everyday life. While infrastructural development often promises stability, efficiency, or preparedness, our ethnographic cases reveal how such projects generate complex "afterlives" and "aftermaths" that persist well beyond their immediate implementation or failure. We consider how state-led planning and scientific rationalities intersect, and often clash, with Indigenous and local ways of knowing, anticipating, and responding to environmental transformation. Rather than focusing on the materialities of urban and rural planning, we also foreground its temporal and affective dimensions-how it structures time, shapes expectations, and produces new forms of vulnerability or agency. Our panel also interrogates the scalar disjunctures between national development agendas and localized experiences of risk and resilience. Drawing from grounded fieldwork across Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, we highlight how communities as well as institutions negotiate infrastructural uncertainties: how they adapt, resist, or reimagine future possibilities. In doing so, this panel contributes to ongoing anthropological conversations on infrastructure, temporality, environmental precarity, disaster management, and the politics of planning in the Global South.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Yi-Yu Lai , Ci Yan Sara Loh

Chair: Yi-Yu Lai

Presenter(s): Zhiyi Wang, University of California, Riverside, Yi-Yu Lai, Ci Yan Sara Loh, Katrina Jacinto

Discussant: Ting Hui Lau, National University of Singapore, Department of Sociology

Presentation(s): “ចូលស្ទឹងតាមបត់(enter the river, follow the turns)": Planning in Uncertainties

This paper examines a test road reconfiguration project and its aftermath in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, especially how it affected the Phnom Penh City Bus (PPCB), as responsive planning was

needed instantly. In June 2024, a sudden road reconfiguration project in central Phnom Penh panicked the road users and the city's nascent public bus system. The government-led test project aimed to lessen traffic pressure by converting an existing two-way road to one-way. While this effort was halted before long due to public pressure, the roadblock installed on one side entrance to the bus terminal remained and was made permanent, urging the bus system to swiftly re-route and re-schedule the affected lines. Focusing on the uncertainties produced by and during the implementation of this project, the paper explores how planning as a practice can be constrained and challenged by ongoing processes and forces. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and media analysis, I argue that planning should not simply be envisioned as a blueprint for the future but, in many cases, a reactive project in response to the immediate present instead. In the midst of uncontrollable/ungraspable factors in urban Phnom Penh, as in other urban areas, especially in the global South, it is necessary to revisit the concept of planning and its ultimate goal as we continue envisioning and moving towards a promising future.

Presenter(s): Zhiyi Wang

The Dam That Wasn't: Unbuilt Infrastructure and the Politics of Anticipation in Ifugao, Philippines

This paper explores the political afterlives of proposed—but unbuilt—hydropower projects in the Cordillera of the Philippines, with a focus on Kalanguya Indigenous communities in west Ifugao. While recent proposals such as the Tinoc and Alimit Hydropower Complexes remain on hold, these projects nonetheless generate profound effects, from heightened surveillance and environmental regulation to intensified counterinsurgency operations in the name of watershed protection and electricity generation. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research, this study traces how the legacies of past development schemes continue to shape local resistance, memory, and modes of political engagement today. The paper bridges historical and contemporary hydropower politics, analyzing how Indigenous communities positioned at the headwaters of the Agno, Chico, and Magat River Basins navigate the contradictions of national development, environmental governance, and militarization. In addressing these tensions, the paper foregrounds the role of "unbuilt infrastructure" in producing zones of anticipation, contestation, and deferred transformation. By situating west Ifugao within a wider network of past and present energy infrastructures—including downstream projects like Ambuklao, Binga, San Roque, and Magat—the paper offers a nuanced understanding of how Indigenous actors negotiate futures shaped by the ghosts of both memory and planning.

Presenter(s): Yi-Yu Lai

Disciplined Diversions, Unruly Floodwaters: The Temuan Orang Asli and the Fluid Aftermaths of Kuala Lumpur's Urban Sprawl

Kuala Lumpur's urban sprawl has radiated out to its peripheries as part of Malaysia's endless march towards economic growth. In 2021, major floods in Peninsular Malaysia exposed how the lives and livelihoods of per-urban communities are entangled with the externalities of this development. This paper is situated in a peat swamp on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that the Temuan Orang Asli (a

subgroup of Malaysia's original peoples) have called home for many generations. Their ancestral forests are being cleared to accommodate new industrial, commercial and housing developments; their rivers are being engineered to manage potential disaster risks; amidst a backdrop of pressure to assimilate into the perfect Malaysian urban citizens. Through ethnographic research, policy and social media analysis, I examine floods and their management as sites for understanding hydrosocial relations that are shaped by this urban sprawl. I trace land use plans and the creation of manmade pathways for water diversion; and water's resistance to these disciplinary mechanisms, by insisting on being unruly. I conclude by examining how the Temuan community is adapting to water's disciplining and unruliness, and also how they are confronting the unsettling entanglements between rapid development and the increased threats of disasters - through everyday resistance and resilience.

Presenter(s): Ci Yan Sara Loh

Risky Business in the 6-KM: The Making and Managing of Mayon Volcano's Permanent Danger Zone

Known as both the most active and most beautiful volcano of the Philippines, Mayon Volcano is a major geotourism attraction and cultural figure in the province of Albay. However, entry to the mountain is heavily regulated by the state. This paper studies the 6-kilometer radius around Mayon's crater known as the Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ), an area drawn by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. Due to the risk of unforeseen volcanic unrest, the 6-KM PDZ is intended to be "permanently pre-evacuated." Yet, in reality, the PDZ is bustling with social and economic activity, from ATV tours and agriculture to quarrying and highway construction. This stark disjuncture illuminates the PDZ as a contested site. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the mutually constitutive relationship between abstract ideas of risk and preparedness, on one hand, and tangible qualities of Mayon's geology, on the other. This relationship, mediated by politics of disaster governance, leads to unequal encounters between labourers, scientists and civil servants who work on Mayon. Through the lens of political geology, this paper maps their coexisting and at times contradictory methods of sensing and managing risk. Plural geological lifeworlds thus abound within the PDZ, creating uncertainty despite infrastructural attempts to eliminate it. This paper advances efforts to situate disaster studies within the lived experience and spatio-temporal reality of communities on the ground.

Presenter(s): Katrina Jacinto

Discussion

8398 Haunted Classrooms: Pedagogy, Curriculum and the Presence of Ghosts

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Beuregard

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable provokes the haunted dimensions of pedagogy and curriculum. Drawing on

Derrida's hauntology alongside Black feminist, decolonial, and Indigenous critiques of epistemic violence, we ask: What ghosts linger in our classrooms, syllabi, and curricular frameworks? How do historical absences and silences shape what can be taught, known, or imagined? This roundtable contributes to anthropological conversations on temporality, affect, and power, positioning pedagogy as a vital site of spectral inquiry.

Rather than viewing pedagogy and curriculum as linear transmissions of knowledge, we approach it as a haunted practice-shaped by what is no longer present yet continues to act. Engaging curriculum as a spectral archive of presence and absence, we investigate the ghosts of colonial logics, racialized histories, and deferred futures that haunt our institutions. Papers trace how curriculum is haunted by unacknowledged harms, unresolved injustices, and unrealized possibilities. Themes include intergenerational memory, pedagogies of absence, teaching in ruins, and the ethics of navigating haunted institutions. Participants attend to how teaching practices-methodologically, affectively, and institutionally-are shaped by what is felt but not always named.

Hande Ozkan explores how the ghostly emerges in reflexive pedagogies, examining the tensions between vulnerability, care, and authority in the classroom. Drawing on long-standing work on intersubjectivity and reflexivity, she explores how the personal and structural ghosts of slavery, coloniality, and neoliberalism disrupt and inform our practices as educators.

Kimberly Powell reflects on moments from her classroom where haunting reveals itself through method and method-making. She explores spatial, place-based research practices-such as mapping and walking-as ways students confront loss, memory, and migration. She also highlights arts-based approaches that foreground the sensory and vernacular, creating openings for new meanings and disrupting normative knowledge structures. Finally, she reconceptualizes curriculum as *currenre*-a lived, temporal experience connecting personal and public histories across past, present, and future.

Brian Thomas brings a hauntological lens to teaching statistics in anthropology. Moving beyond computation, he focuses on the ethics and politics of data. This approach confronts the ghostly legacies of positivism and challenges how statistical practices may dehumanize or erase. By emphasizing data ethics and inclusive research, the classroom becomes a site to engage with what data shows-and what it fails or refuses to capture.

Harisur Rahman examines Generative AI (GenAI) as a spectral force transforming academic communication in Bangladeshi universities. Drawing on Actor-Network Theory and postcolonial tech studies, he reveals how GenAI both enhances efficiency and erodes critical thought, intel

Section: Society for Humanistic Anthropology

Organizer: Kimberly Powell, Pennsylvania State University

Presenter(s): Kimberly Powell, Pennsylvania State University, Hande Ozkan, Transylvania University, Sociology/Anthropology Department, Brian Thomas

Discussant: Kimberly Powell, Pennsylvania State University

3020 Asian and Asian/American Hauntings: Ghosts in/as Multispecies Theory

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 1

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable reflects on whiteness as a structuring force in multispecies theorizing and knowledge-production in anthropology. While multispecies anthropology has received critique for the ways it champions abstract human and nonhuman relations at the expense of asymmetrical power dynamics, the material realities of knowledge production, and other political responsibilities of research, in recent years a decolonial movement in multispecies ethnography has attempted to produce theories and narratives of multispecies life grounded in critical local traditions from the Global South, unsettling Euro-American citational politics, extractive research practices, and ways of relating to the nonhuman.

What would it mean to assert that Asian/America haunts multispecies theory? Reflecting on Sylvia Wynter and Frantz Fanon's sociogeny, this roundtable will reflect on the racialized discourses of 'Asianness' that exist as ghosts, perpetuated or challenged through Euro-American multispecies work in Asia and beyond. This panel will also feature a range of Asian/American ethnographers-graduate students and faculty members across continents-whose work share spans from India and Taiwan to Malaysia and Zimbabwe, who trace landscapes and diverse nonhuman encounters as active zones of livelihood, historical hauntings, and contemporary realities, critically highlighting the asymmetrical power dynamics between often marginalized human communities, ecological resources, and encounters with various agential nonhuman beings.

In what ways do Asian/American scholars write multispecies life through and against inherited forms of real and epistemic violence? How do we grapple with the haunting of colonial ways of engaging the nonhuman in multispecies theory? How do Asian/American ethnographers bear witness to landscapes and ecological processes as political sites of relation-making, historical haunting, and future possibility?

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Kymberley Chu, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Tayeba Batool, University of Pennsylvania, Aaron Su, Colorado College, Department of Anthropology, Yuka Suzuki, Bard College, Anthropology Program, Nga Shi Yeu, Stockholm University, Kymberley Chu, Princeton University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Radhika Govindrajan, Sophie Chao

4626 Professional Ghosts in the Infrastructures: Ethnography in Big Science

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 2

Type: Conversation/Debate

Standing deep in the midst of large scale knowledge production systems and sites affords a close look at their operating structures and cultures. But being inside also means contributing to these knowledge production processes in ways that pose conceptual, methodological, and ethical challenges for the ethnographer. This conversation seeks to make visible some of the difficult questions and tradeoffs of working in big science. Mirmalek has decades of experience working in aerospace, planetary and lunar science exploration with robots. Nyssa has decades of experience working in environmental big data projects including climate and environmental modeling and monitoring.

This conversation will cover a number of questions such as: i) what does it mean to gain entry to large-scale infrastructures and to establish trust; ii) how may we understand ethnographic agency as participant observers in these systems; iii) what does it mean to contribute to the development of spaces for ethnographers and ethnographic knowledge in socio-technical systems; iv) why it matters to define reciprocity, exchange, or collaboration; v) when it is time to leave a system, what traces—ghostly or otherwise—are left behind when one does.

Despite conducting applied research in different types of knowledge production projects, with different aims, work practices, organizational structures, and funders, we each found ourselves going through the same archive of materials related to early American space exploration. This conversation will be illustrated with archival material related to the first human mission to the Moon. Primary source material from the Armstrong archives illustrate some of the tensions of ethnographically working within work cultures in complex systems.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Work

Organizer: Zara Mirmalek

Presenter(s): Zara Mirmalek , Zoe Nyssa, Purdue University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Madisson Whitman

4027 The Ghosts of Coloniality in Latin America: Old and New Specters Haunting the Continent

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 3

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This roundtable explores haunting as a methodological lens to examine Latin America's evolving political and social landscapes. Building upon anthropological engagements with the spectral and

decolonial thought (Segato 2022), we ask: What does haunting reveal about the region's enduring colonial structures and their contemporary transformations? Beyond analyzing Latin America, can we think with it also in terms of coloniality aspects that keep haunting us all? And how do spectral traces reveal coloniality's chronic nature and its affective, embodied reverberations?

We examine key ethnographic dispatches from the region to trace how current formations are animated by lingering regimes: plantation logics, migration trajectories, extractive violence, and generational inequality. In Brazil, the expansion of agribusiness and mining under recent administrations has intensified environmental degradation and displaced indigenous communities, echoing colonial exploitation patterns observed in other Cone Sur countries. In Colombia, despite the 2016 peace accords, new extractivist ventures have exacerbated land dispossession and reignited conflicts, particularly impacting Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations. Similar neo-extractive processes have been seen throughout the region. At the same time, the region faces complex migration and crime dynamics. Economic hardships, political instability, and environmental crises have driven significant outflows, as highlighted by the Venezuelan refugee situation, where over seven million have fled since 2015 (UNHCR 2024). Conversely, countries like Mexico are becoming destinations for those seeking refuge, navigating their roles as both transit and host nations.

Drawing on examples from these and other countries, we present and explore ethnographic works on topics such as rural elites, precarious labor, migration, intimate archives, and the medical and affective challenges faced by adolescents and families. We will offer grounded insights into what lies beneath the surface of contemporary ethnographic work in, on, and with Latin America—both conscious and unconscious, silenced and hyper-visible—proposing a methodology attuned to the felt, the concealed, and the unresolved. Following Good, Chiovenda, and Rahimi, we ask how haunting elicits "a sense that the past is never settled" (2022, 443) and thus pries open history, the contemporary, and their chronic entanglements to what is unknown, 'unspeakable and unspoken' (Good et al., 443) but nevertheless endured.

Ultimately, we approach haunting as not metaphor but mode and method, tracing how race, gender, class, labor, and value are entangled in the temporal afterlives of a continent shaped by coloniality. These ghosts are not inert residues but active presences—unsettling official narratives of development, democracy, and peace. Together, we question what it means to live with, speak to, and learn from ghosts in a region where the past refuses to remain buried.

Section: Society for Psychological Anthropology

Organizer: Angela Leocata, Stanford University, Lucas Eduardo Allegretti Prates

Presenter(s): Giselle Sanchez, University of California, San Diego, Department of Anthropology, Natashe Lemos Dekker, University of Amsterdam, Christian Robles-Baez, Stanford University, Angela Leocata, Stanford University, Lucas Eduardo Allegretti Prates

Discussant: Whitney Duncan, University of Northern Colorado, Department of Anthropology, Byron Good, Harvard University

5515 Agrarian Transitions: Socio-Spatial Transformation, Social Movements and the Geographies of Populism

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 5

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Bringing together insights from Marxism, eco-socialism, urban theory, and critical agrarian studies, this session investigates how 'rural' spaces and actors actively contest, reshape, and negotiate the trajectories of capitalist development. Challenging the assumptions of various modernization theories, the session emphasizes that the experiences and actions of farmers, peasants, and agricultural workers are not peripheral but central to the socio-spatial transformations unfolding across scales.

Building on longstanding anthropological traditions-while pushing beyond tired teleologies and essentialisms-the papers in this panel foreground the agrarian as a critical site through which to rethink both historical and contemporary processes of capitalist development. Each contribution seeks to center agrarian questions in accounts of socio-spatial change, revealing the complex, contested, and often surprising ways in which rural actors engage with and transform capitalist dynamics.

One paper, for example, reconsiders the role of 'settler peasants' in the expansion of capitalism in a South Indian region. By tracing the region's agrarian history, it reveals how uneven access to land and credit today reflects enduring structures of domination-resaped by colonization, settlement, and racialized spatial imaginaries that continue to inform narratives of progress.

Another paper examines the formation of U.S. and Mexican nationalisms in relationship to the attempted imposition of slavery over Mexican territories as determined by violence over competing agrarian-labor regimes.

Another paper disrupts the rural-urban binary by examining processes of urbanization that unfold well beyond metropolitan centers. In these contexts, agrarian transformation and urban expansion are deeply entangled, making it difficult-if not impossible-to analytically separate the two. The paper argues that in countries like India, 'the urban' is inseparable from 'the rural,' and that agrarian life is not a fading remnant of the past, but a constitutive force in shaping urban presents and futures.

The final two papers extend these analyses by exploring movements and practices that challenge dominant paradigms. One engages with the 2020-2021 Indian farmers' protests to consider how agrarian struggles articulate demands for justice in the context of a global populist moment. The other examines practices of commoning as a transformative alternative to enclosure and privatization-reimagining land governance and reconnecting labor and nature in the wake of capitalist alienation.

Together, these papers offer a critical reappraisal of agrarian spaces, not as static or residual, but as dynamic sites of resistance, innovation, and possibility in the making of the contemporary world.

Section: Culture and Agriculture

Organizer: Moa Zachariah, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Cassandra Cronin

Chair: Nikhil Ravipati, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Cassandra Cronin, Meghana Prasad Nuthanapati, Nikhil Ravipati, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Moa Zachariah, CUNY, Graduate Center, Department of Anthropology, Mar Ovalle-Meda

Discussant: Mar Ovalle-Meda , Meghana Prasad Nuthanapati

Presentation(s): Commoning, the Metabolic Rift, and Futurity

Private property is a foundational logic of capitalism and a core ideology of the United States. Yet, it is abundantly clear that the interlinking forces of privatization and profit accumulation are driving dual crises of socioeconomic inequality and ecological devastation. My work grounds this dynamic in the U.S. agrarian system, and asks, what happens when we see land as commons instead of private property? In the face of the challenge of land access today (responding to both contemporary financialization and histories of racialized dispossession) many young and beginning farmers and especially the marginalized are increasingly embracing commoning as a solution. Using community land trust (CLT) models among other creative legal innovations, they contest the private property regime in order to collectively access, work on, and care for land. Based on collaborative research with some of these farmers engaged in commoning praxis, I will extend Marx's theory of the metabolic rift to explore how commoning offers an alternative to the dominant agro-extractivist system, how collective relationships alter political subjectivities, and how commoning contributes to an argument for reparations by addressing primary accumulation and dispossession by enclosure. I argue that commoning creates the conditions of possibility, the infrastructures, for a socio-ecological future.

Presenter(s): Cassandra Cronin

Urbanization Beyond the Metropolis: A Study of Urban-Agrarian Change in Provincial Towns in India

Increasingly, post-colonial urban theorists have called for 'new geographies of theory' that displace dominant Euro-American epistemologies of urban theory. To overcome the limitations posed by dominant theories, these theorists have advocated a shift in focus from 'metropolises' to 'megacities' of the global South. This essay argues that we need to go further to locate new geographies of urbanization beyond 'the city', and its teleology culminating in the 'metropolis'/'megacity', to understand socio-spatial processes in their totality in countries like India where agrarian questions remain at the center of urban transformations. This essay seeks to contest dominant discourses of the 'urban' by foregrounding the experience of socio-spatial transformations in Armur, a 'provincial town' in the Indian state of Telangana, where urbanization unfolds through the recomposition of agrarian social formations, caste-segmented labor and land

markets, kinship networks, and informal economies, as a crucial site for theorizing the urban condition in India. In particular, I will explore how the 'state', 'market', and 'household' are constituted as apparently distinct 'levels' in Armur through circuits of production and social reproduction in which petty commodity production plays a central role. By foregrounding these dynamics, this dissertation proposes that regions like Armur are not urban anomalies or residual zones awaiting development; they are constitutive of India's urban present.

Presenter(s): Meghana Prasad Nuthanapati

From 'New Farmers' Movements' to Anti-Farm Laws Movements in India: Towards a 'Left-Populism'?

Two aspects of the 2020–2021 anti-farm laws struggle have received much attention: (1) its broad social base cutting across socio-economic differences; (2) its success in opposing Modi's authoritarian populism. This essay examines how these unusual aspects came to be by comparing them with the 'new farmers' movements' (NFM) of the 1980s which, despite sharing many demands and bases, were characterized as: (1) conservative populist mobilizations; (2) supportive of right-wing populism. The comparison raises pressing questions in our 'populist era': how can 'left-wing' or 'class-conscious' populisms be advanced? How can right-wing populisms be opposed? I argue that it is misleading to see the 2020-2021 struggle as a confrontation between agrarian and authoritarian populisms. It is better understood as a defensive 'popular-democratic' mobilization that undermined authoritarian efforts to 'win the people' by enlisting key constituencies from their base into an oppositional front. Crucially, unlike the NFM, the 2020-2021 struggle did not reflect a coherent project founded on a 'people'. Rather, the struggle's broad social base emerged from the defensive mobilization of various classes of capital and labor amid a class-specific agrarian crisis. Farmers had to reach beyond their identity as 'peasants' to lead the struggle. Finally, this conjunctural unity was made possible by the independent initiative of strong movements centering differentiated classes of labor prior to 2020.

Presenter(s): Nikhil Ravipati

Settler Peasants: Migration, Modernization and the Agrarian Frontier in South India

The peasant is a key figure in revolutionary politics and resistance in agrarian societies. In other contexts peasants are also on the front lines of settler colonial projects shaped by racializing imaginaries of social and spatial difference. How do conceptualizations of the peasant shift when considering their role as settlers? And how does settler colonization shape the peasantry as a social formation? Focusing on the social relations of land and agriculture in the Wayanad district of Kerala, south India, this paper seeks to address these questions in the context of two major developments in the twentieth century - the in migration and settlement of Christian farmers, and state-led land reform and agrarian modernization. Settlers in Wayanad formed a new constituency within the wider peasantry of which Adivasis (indigenous communities) had historically formed a major part. Their success in securing land rights came as a consequence of mobilization as pioneering peasants. This paper looks at how uneven access to land and credit today reveal

structures of domination that have been re-shaped by colonization, settlement and racializing imaginaries of space and narratives of progress. Looking at land as a focal point of contests over its multiple affordances I argue that the concealment of difference in the peasantry must be understood in relation to extant patterns of land use, histories of unfree labour, and projects of developmental modernity and modernization.

Presenter(s): Moa Zachariah

Fugitivity as a Motor of History: Nationalism, Citizenship, and Warfare in Antebellum Texas and Mexico

Fugitives of U.S. slavery engaged in direct action and formed a frontline of abolitionism, forcing the hand of Mexican statecraft toward armed defense against enslavers and defining citizenship against slavery. Driven by depleted soils of the old agrarian economy of the U.S. South and the prospects of newly available lands in The West, enslavers sought to expand slavery through the dispossession of Native and Mexican people. This paper brings into conversation critical agrarian studies and transnational social movements through a study of fugitivity as a front of warfare during Antebellum Texas. The terms of engagement between subjects and the state projects of Texas and Mexico during the 1850s were rooted in different land-tenure projects, upon which were fought battles to construct competing labor and racial regimes. Agricultural-ecological transformations were dictated by the emerging global political economy exemplified by the rise of cotton as an essential agrarian commodity necessary for the industrial manufacturing of textiles. Anglo enslavers battled with Mexican peasants and military forces, which many fugitives joined to pick up arms against the state actors enforcing human bondage. I examine the legal codes produced in the service of enslaving and abolitionist forces as enshrined cultural artifacts; history objectified in law. I argue that, in this context, nationalisms were born out of competing land-tenure systems.

Presenter(s): Mar Ovalle-Meda

2556 From Field to Cooking Pot to Feminist Anthropological Futures: Engagements with Florence Babb's Research and Scholarly Practice

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galerie 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel features diverse engagements with the work and contributions of Florence Babb. An Andeanist and Latin Americanist anthropologist whose career has included fieldwork in Peru, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Mexico, Babb has consistently offered nuanced and sophisticated ethnographic analysis of gender and ethnoracial inequality, cultural politics, and women's work and day-to-day lives. What's more, Babb's support for students and younger colleagues within and beyond appointments at Colgate University, the University of Iowa, the University of Florida, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill can be understood in relation to enduring commitments to world anthropologies, decolonization, and feminist scholarly practice. Babb's mentoring has

impacted multiple generations of anthropologists who can be found working today in academic, activist, and policy settings throughout the Americas.

The session brings together a group of Babb's former students who draw inspiration from different facets of her work as a teacher, mentor, and scholar. The thematic diversity of the papers reflects the breadth of topics and anthropological debates with which Babb has engaged, along with her enduring impact on anthropologists of varied interests, backgrounds, and professional trajectories. Eric Thomas and Achsah Dorsey take up Babb's interventions in economic anthropological discussions about female producers to understand the realities of small-scale entrepreneurs in Chile who receive support from state initiatives aimed at advancing gender inequality and economic development. Maja Jeranko employs Babb's more recent ethnographic perspectives on gendered, racialized, and class inequalities to investigate how women in rural coastal Ecuador use informal and collective labor to navigate changes associated with climate-related disasters and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Babb's decolonial feminist perspective on the notion of gender complementarity informs Lucía Isabel Stavig's examination of efforts to promote healing among forcibly sterilized Quechua women in Cusco.

Amy Cox Hall's and Joseph Feldman's papers reflect on Babb's legacy as a mentor. Cox Hall highlights the way Babb's mentoring style's centering of care and relationality provides a model for confronting the continued marginalization of women scholars and others who do not neatly align within masculine spaces of the traditional academy. Feldman's paper considers the practices, lessons, and sensibilities that anthropologists absorb as graduate students, illustrating the enduring influence of graduate mentoring at different life and career stages.

Section: Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Organizer: Joseph Feldman, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Chair: Camee Maddox-Wingfield, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Public Health

Presenter(s): Eric Thomas, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Maja Jeranko, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Lucía Stavig, Indiana University Indianapolis, Department of Anthropology, Amy Cox Hall, Bard College, Joseph Feldman, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Discussant: Florence Babb, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): “Se mantienen, no más”: Rural Women and the Distributive State in Chile

In Chile's remote Aysén Region, government initiatives to advance gender equity, economic development, food security, and household nutrition have created a range of public distributive programs. Among other benefits and entitlements, state agencies have recently introduced new grants, low-interest loans, and modern market infrastructure for female producers who grow and market agricultural products in the region. Our paper examines the role of one such agency, INDAP (Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario). Drawing on visits to rural homesteads and interviews at newly constructed farmers' markets, we argue that—like the Peruvian market women of Huaraz that

Babb profiled nearly fifty years ago—female producers are unlikely to resemble capitalist entrepreneurs seeking to formalize or expand their economic activities. Instead, these heads-of-household are successfully "maintaining themselves" in the face of rapid political, economic, and ecological change. This suggests that rather than providing temporary support so low-income citizens can realize their entrepreneurial ambitions, public distributive programs established under neoliberal regimes serve as permanent "safety nets," protecting rural people from market failures that could otherwise lead to political-economic instability.

Presenter(s): Eric Thomas

Co-author(s): Achsah Dorsey

Care as Resistance: The Women's Circle and the Making of Other Worlds in Coastal Ecuador

This paper draws on long-term ethnographic fieldwork to examine how women in rural coastal Ecuador mobilize radical care as a form of resistance amidst overlapping crises—including climate-related disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and intensifying socioeconomic precarity. Building on Florence Babb's decolonial critique of gender, class, and informal economies in Latin America, I examine how shifting conditions—such as the pandemic, the decline of small-scale fisheries, and the rise of precarious labor—have created openings for women to mobilize care work and mutual aid. These practices not only challenge entrenched heteropatriarchal structures but also resonate with and extend Babb's insights into how women navigate and resist structural inequalities through informal and collective labor.

These structural shifts have not only exposed deep inequalities but have also catalyzed new forms of grassroots organizing. In response, women have come together to form a "Women's Circle," cultivating spaces of collective power and solidarity through workshops and the creation of a communal kitchen. In this context, radical care has emerged not only as a survival strategy, but as a political-affective force that unsettles power, fosters inclusion, and reimagines community futures beyond the state.

Presenter(s): Maja Jeranko

Healing and Gender Complementarity in Ayllu: Dispatches From the Field

In her critical reassessment of feminist debates regarding gender in the Andes, Babb asks a provocative question: "Could a decolonial feminist view of complementarity bring greater recognition to the significant place of women in household economies based on an ethics of interdependence and reciprocity, as well as address gendered violence and exclusion where it occurs?" (2018, 12). Based on 18 months of ethnographic work with forcibly sterilized Runa (Quechua) women, I argue that healing practices at the Mosoq Pakari Sumaq Kawsay healing center in Cusco revalorize Runa women's roles as makers of relation, community, and culture, linking their healing to broader decolonial struggles. It is quite the case that a revalorization of the ideals of gender complementarity do not automatically translate into harmonious relations between men and women—or respect for non-heteronormative genders and sexualities that were once part of

Runa life (Horswell 2005; W. Stavig 1996). However, at MPSK, gender complementarity emerges as a tool for contesting coloniality, which has de-valorized Indigenous women and commodified pachamama—a living entity—as mere land, a feminized resource to be owned and exploited. Thus, in seeking to remember and re-member the ayllu, including the tenets of gender complementarity, affected women contest the de-valorization of Runa peoples, Runa women, and the earth, by creating a space of survivance that is working to revalorize the feminine and heal ayllu.

Presenter(s): Lucía Stavig

Mentoring Toward Collaboration: Supporting Ideas and People in Academia and Beyond

Drawing on my nearly 20-year relationship with Florence Babb I reflect on mentorship in the academy. Specifically, I explore different styles of mentorship and ask what it means to have a mentor that centers relationality and care with intellectual curiosity and rigor. I explore the kinds of support she offered to me, support that vastly differed from other advisors, and how that support helped to nurture specific outcomes professionally. I suggest that a specific type of relational care is needed in the academy to sustain female scholars and others who have not aligned neatly within the traditional academy. Further, without this type of mentorship, alternative ways of thinking and writing, different methodological approaches, and underrated subjects of interest will continue to be ignored and dismissed. The academy remains a highly masculine space with persistent hierarchies for scholars and their scholarship which translates into specific kinds of relationships that remain pervasive and detrimental to inclusive scholarship. A supportive, care-centered network can nurture scholars to expand approaches and thinking.

Presenter(s): Amy Cox Hall

After (My Sexual) Revolution: Reflections on Anthropological Training and Life and Career Transitions

Drawing inspiration from Florence Babb's research on societies in transition, along with her personal narrative of "arriving late for the revolution," this paper reflects on the value of arriving late to lessons and sensibilities we are exposed to in anthropological training. As a graduate student, I pursued research on topics that corresponded with several of Babb's areas of specialization: tourism, Peru, cultural politics, and the making of national representations, among others. Yet my dissertation project and first book did not engage with the anthropology of gender and sexuality or queer and feminist ethnographic traditions in a meaningful way, despite these areas forming part of my graduate training. Now, as a professor at a teaching-focused university and someone who is more comfortable being "out" in the field, in the classroom, and on the proverbial balcony (Babb 2009), I find myself connecting with Babb's work and influence in new ways. I illustrate these links through observations from recent fieldwork centered on the history and politics of sexuality in a Colorado town as well as reflections on my changing relationship with Peru and anthropology.

Presenter(s): Joseph Feldman

6332 Moral Economies in Practice: Leveraging an Old Theory to Address Contemporary Resource Challenges

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Galvez

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This round table interrogates how anthropologists can leverage moral economy theory to advance resource security for households and communities. While moral economies scholarship has historically focused on theoretical explanation, we seek to advance conversations around the potential uses and broader impacts of moral economy research. A moral economy is a system of social norms in which cultural understandings of justice instigate normative practices that regulate the distribution and exchange of vital resources (Beresford et al. 2023). Historically, scholars used the concept of a moral economy to theorize the drivers of riots and rebellions, showing how communities leverage collective values to resist economic structures they perceive to be unjust (Scott 1977; Thompson 1971). Newer strains of moral economy research show that communities rely on moral economies to cope with environmental uncertainty (Bollig 1998; Schweiger et al. 2022; Trawick 2001; Wutich 2011), counteract economic and environmental injustice (Drew 2021; Fantini 2014; Orlove 1997; Simmons 2016; Tilt 2014), and enhance self-reliance in the face of weak or failed state resource governance (Zug and Graefe 2014). Together, this body of scholarship suggests that moral economies are a key form of social infrastructure that can advance resource security for households and communities. But how can we leverage this knowledge to practically address the resource challenges communities face today? We bring together anthropologists and environmental social scientists to discuss how our knowledge of moral economies can address real-world problems or inform actionable interventions, advocacy, policy innovations, or community-based solutions. We will also discuss what new directions must be taken in moral economy scholarship to better address contemporary resource challenges and needs.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Melissa Beresford, San Jose State University, Department of Anthropology, Amber Wutich, Arizona State University

Presenter(s): Robin Nelson , Margaret du Bray , Anahi Yerman , Patrick Thomson

Discussant: Anais Roque, Duke University, Elisabeth Ilboudo Nebie, Arizona State University, School of Human Evolution and Social Change

7009 To the zoomiverse, and beyond! Adventures in policy transformation through meeting ethnography in the pluriverse

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon A

Type: Oral Presentation Session

For cultural anthropologists, the meeting is arguably the most important and most undertheorized

ritual within which contemporary fieldwork is conducted. Whether in policy organizations or NGOs, labor halls or religious institutions, schools or corporations, ethnographers so often find that formal and associated informal meetings are often where the action is. Meetings are sites where power is produced and enacted, dynamics of identity and hierarchy are negotiated, organization is determined and challenged, policies are produced, and the status of policy actors is negotiated and performed. Meetings are, in many ways, one of the core contemporary rituals of governance, underpinning policy processes in crucial ways. Meetings are part of the doxa of everyday life; we take them for granted to the point that, although we all may encounter them in fieldwork, there has been no concerted effort to theorize the relationship between meetings and policy or to strategize fieldwork around them. Of course, this is precisely the province of anthropology: to make the familiar strange.

The pandemic lockdowns shifted the taken-for-granted architecture of meetings across many contexts around the world, from the presumptive in-person meeting with bodies in a single space to the presumed virtual meeting with many faces, on many screens, in many physical spaces and time zones. What did this "zoomiverse" shift mean for our ways of making organization, making relationships, and making change? This panel explores the significance of meeting architecture, with a focus on what socio-political possibilities are made and foreclosed by distinct circulations of bodies and faces. What do meetings in the zoomiverse make? What is the significance of the zoomiverse? And what happens now, in what we call the meeting pluriverse, where organizers, workers, and activists must choose, perpetually, from among a seemingly infinite set of virtual, hybrid, and in-person architectures? Here is where meeting ethnography can be helpful. The purpose of this panel is to explore meetings as both ethnographic objects and as sites of ethnographic inquiry..

The session will provide space for participants to share strategies, challenges, and insights on and from "meeting ethnography" in various spaces where policies are imagined, made, implemented, negotiated, and contested. The panel involves a diverse set of papers that interrogate how we conduct ethnographic research in – and on – these near-ubiquitous sites of fieldwork. In addition, the papers in this panel present various understandings of how digital meeting architectures have opened and closed spaces for particular forms of relationships among meeting planners, participants, and the various policy worlds that they navigate and attempt to transform.

Section: Association for the Anthropology of Policy

Organizer: Jen Sandler, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Renita Thedvall, Stockholm University

Chair: Renita Thedvall, Stockholm University

Presenter(s): Jen Sandler, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Urgyen Joshi, Kysa Nygreen, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Discussant: Renita Thedvall, Stockholm University, Jen Sandler, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Presentation(s): Meeting to end solitary confinement in Massachusetts: exploring the ease and comfort of “zooming in”

This paper explores the significance of meeting architecture, inviting us to consider what socio-political possibilities are made and foreclosed by the ways distinct meeting forms circulate bodies and faces. The goal of the grassroots organization Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement (MASC) is to end solitary confinement – a form of carceral torture – in prisons and jails throughout the state. Long-term political and pedagogical engagement with MASC staff and the survivors of solitary confinement who comprise MASC's base reveals that the zoomiverse shift of 2020-2021 had several divergent effects on the organization's work. The zoomiverse facilitated expansion of MASC's relational solidarities, enabling MASC to engage meaningfully with national and international networks engaged in similar struggles for policy change. It also enabled new strategies for elevating survivors' voices in policy and elite-run advocacy meetings. But the zoomiverse also undermined the power and efficacy of this strategy. For potential allies outside of the survivor community, hearing the stories of survivors of state torture entails profound bodily discomfort, which we suggest is itself psychically transformative. The accordion architecture of zoomiverse meetings enables participants to easily dissociate from discomfort, to evade what we call "affective disconcertment." Such evasion seems to inhibit the transformation of consciousness of potential allies that is necessary to change policy.

Presenter(s): Jen Sandler

Co-author(s): Renita Thedvall

Power, Policies and Spiritual Principles; What the BIPOC movement in 12 step programs can teach us about collective liberation

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of mutual support, centered around meetings—both in-person and, increasingly, virtual. This paper explores how the confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the George Floyd uprisings in 2020 contributed to a rapid growth of black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) meetings, and the effects that this demographic shift has had on the overall Fellowship of AA. Based on publicly available meeting minutes and ethnographic engagement with members of this community beginning in 2020, I consider how AA's organizational structure allows for individual and collective agency over the interpretation of AA's governing principles: the twelve traditions and twelve concepts for world service. While these "policies" for collective governance are closely followed, embodied and enacted throughout the AA ecosystem, there exists no enforcement mechanism, nor codified process for interpreting or implementing them. The BIPOC movement emerged out of a contest between dispersed yet patterned interpretations of AA's 10th tradition, which states that "AA has no opinion on outside issues" and has often been used to silence the racial dynamics of BIPOC alcoholics' navigation of recovery and recovery spaces. In responding to this silencing, the BIPOC movement in AA has created a space which is differently politicized, refusing to erase questions of power, identity and relationship to structural violence in the path to recovery from alcoholism.

Presenter(s): Urgyen Joshi

Community organizing for school-based ethnic studies in a post-Covid world: Collective power in a virtual public meeting

This paper draws from a long-term ethnography of a multi-generational grassroots organizing campaign to save a public-school ethnic studies program in the northeastern United States. The year-long campaign was led by a coalition of high school teachers and students, former-students, parents, community members and university partners. Meetings—virtual, hybrid, and in-person—were a constant feature. Applying Sandler & Thedvall's (2017) framework of meeting ethnography, we conduct a close reading of one pivotal School Board meeting in which the coalition advocated for the ethnic studies program and against administrative cuts that would weaken it. The presentation was both an attempt to persuade district leadership to support the program by meeting the coalition's demands, as well as a public display of power to put pressure on them to do so. But, since it was conducted over Zoom, their collective power was effectively neutralized. In this paper, we explore the power dynamics that were revealed and enacted through this meeting, while focusing on the significance of the zoomiverse as both a setting and object of inquiry. We show how the zoomiverse shifted the embodied experience and impact of the meeting by obscuring the coalition's large community turnout, eliminating possibilities for co-regulation, and centralizing control of the meeting in the hands of district leadership.

Presenter(s): Kysa Nygreen

Co-author(s): Dana Altshuler, Jen Sandler

3822 Rhetorical Demons and Community Spirits

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB - Salon C

Type: Oral Presentation Session

How does political rhetoric in diverse mediums and forms enact violence? We engage ethnographic explorations in the United States to understand how and why political rhetoric engages power flows and structures for un/intended consequences on a range of vulnerable communities in Texas, including cancer patients; first generation Latine college students; parents of trans children; intersectional families or families with neurodivergent children in alternative educational settings; US-Mexico borderlanders; and future healthcare professionals in undergraduate second language classrooms.

Our collaboration is predicated on shared commitments as anthropologists to surface everyday violence in the United States stoked by dominant narratives, pretheoretical assumptions, and common political rhetorical strategies that become enshrined in public discourse, legislative action, and policy-making intended to limit bodily, parental, educational, and academic freedoms.

Where possible, we also highlight creative interventions by these communities to reappropriate, redirect, or outright challenge such rhetorical violence during a time with increasingly dangerous

repercussions for dissent. We attend to the paradoxical effect of rhetorical violence as a powerful organizing force for countermovements and actions, such as everyday acts of care, fugitive pedagogies and practices, social movement knowledge and language, and creative reappropriation of rhetoric.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of North America

Organizer: Jill Fleuriet, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Lacie Allen-Bey

Presenter(s): Amanda Camarillo, University of Texas at San Antonio, Lacie Allen-Bey, Daisy Paredes, University of Texas at San Antonio, Michael Menzies, University of Texas at San Antonio, Jill Fleuriet, University of Texas, San Antonio, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): We Will Not Be Haunted: Mutual Care and Future-Making in the Fugitive Commons, Part I

Our work investigates how marginalized communities create and sustain fugitive commons—contextual, relational spaces that emerge in marginalized communities in response to capitalist enclosure and privatization that is mediated and exacerbated by mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. These spaces are enacted through networks of care that refuse the normative structures imposed by state-sanctioned systems of education, medicine, and social reproduction. Drawing from our respective field sites—an educational cooperative centering marginalized identities and a support group for transgender children and their caregivers—we explore how these community spaces challenge inherited systems of oppression (i.e., Ghosts) and attempt to remake relational life around practices of mutual care. We examine how rhetorical violence—particularly racist and transphobic narratives and policy discourse—reinscribes racialized and gendered ideas of childhood that haunt the everyday lives of marginalized families. We explore how our research sites, these fugitive commons, are shaped by and actively resist those hauntings. We pursue three shared lines of inquiry: 1) how refusal and fugitivity are enacted within these community networks, 2) how affective care labor circulates within and sustains them, and 3) what futures become imaginable through participation in them. This work contributes to conversations of the commons, the affective labor of care, and alternative childhoods beyond the state.

Presenter(s): Amanda Camarillo

We Will Not Be Haunted: Mutual Care and Future-Making in the Fugitive Commons, Part II

Our work investigates how marginalized communities create and sustain fugitive commons—contextual, relational spaces that emerge in marginalized communities in response to capitalist enclosure and privatization that is mediated and exacerbated by mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. These spaces are enacted through networks of care that refuse the normative structures imposed by state-sanctioned systems of education, medicine, and social reproduction. Drawing from our respective field sites—an educational cooperative centering marginalized identities and a support group for transgender children and their caregivers—we explore how these community spaces challenge inherited systems of oppression (i.e., Ghosts) and attempt to remake relational life around practices of mutual care. We examine how rhetorical violence—particularly

racist and transphobic narratives and policy discourse—reinscribes racialized and gendered ideas of childhood that haunt the everyday lives of marginalized families. We explore how our research sites, these fugitive commons, are shaped by and actively resist those hauntings. We pursue three shared lines of inquiry: 1) how refusal and fugitivity are enacted within these community networks, 2) how affective care labor circulates within and sustains them, and 3) what futures become imaginable through participation in them. This work contributes to conversations of the commons, the affective labor of care, and alternative childhoods beyond the state.

Presenter(s): Lacie Allen-Bey

Fugitive Care: Political Disarray and Adaptations in Texas Higher Education

When higher education institutions are targets of state discipline on ideological grounds, can acts of care become fugitive practice? I examine two years of ethnographic study at a South Texas university, exploring how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as concepts and praxis persist in an environment increasingly hostile to such work. The southernmost region of the United States is a leading zone for the increasingly aggressive dismantling of legislative, civic, and educational infrastructures and activities that traditionally challenge, criticize, and circumvent structures of colonial and neoliberal governance. Through participant observation, policy frame analysis, and pláticas (conversations), I consider how care practices for students, colleagues, and specific marginalized populations—such as Latine first-generation college students—adapt and evolve under institutional constraints. To do so, I bridge anthropological analyses of political economy and DEI in higher education, cultural values as political tools and products, theories of institutional and fragmented care, and Jarvis Given's concept of fugitive pedagogy.

Presenter(s): Daisy Paredes

Far-Right Political Rhetoric and its Impacts on Vulnerable Communities in Texas

Political rhetoric, particularly under the Trump and Abbott administrations, enacts violence against and perpetuates inequities for vulnerable communities in Texas. Through media analysis and ethnographic accounts, we examine the impacts of the demonization of Latines, the declaration of English as the official language, and attacks on free speech and universities. These policies have profound implications for access to medical care for Spanish-speakers and undocumented residents and the future of Hispanic Serving Institutions.

I will speak to how current far-right rhetoric reinforces power structures that further marginalize patients with non-English language preferences, college students at HSIs, and the current and future medical professionals charged with caring for these and other vulnerable communities. By analyzing legislative actions, policy-making, and political discourse, I will shed light on the everyday violence stoked by false narratives and pretheoretical assumptions.

I foreground creative interventions by these communities to reappropriate, redirect, or challenge rhetorical violence. These include everyday acts of care, fugitive pedagogies, social movement knowledge, and creative reappropriation of rhetoric. This crucial research champions the

countermovements and actions of racialized and marginalized communities, demonstrating their resilience and agency in the face of increasingly dangerous repercussions for dissent.

Presenter(s): Michael Menzies

Rhetorical Placemaking in Trump Times: The U.S.-Mexico Borderlands

National narratives about the U.S.-Mexico border during Donald Trump's first term and runup to second term rhetorically leverage U.S.-Mexico borderlands for voter appeal and presidential action. We use thematic analysis of political and media narratives about U.S.-Mexico borderlands to examine how rhetoric enacted symbolic, infrastructural, and personal violence in the borderlands and, by rhetorical extension, immigrant communities. Rhetorical strategies included: emotional appeals through victim narratives; fear mongering through imagery and militarized language; and linguistic positioning of a borderlands in profound crisis and as an existential threat to an American imaginary. The common rhetorical cycle was emotional manipulation, dehumanization, reordering of geopolitical logics, and a great savior solution. Trump's rhetorical strategies, often reproduced in a wide range of news media, produce paradoxes and impossibilities: 1) placemaking of a geopolitical space as geographically distant and an immediate threat to all U.S. communities; 2) immigrants as "the border;" and 3) American citizens and legal permanent residents denied American civil liberties and legal protections. Borderlands become a place only acted upon. Effectively silenced are humanitarian and economic strength narratives. We conclude with emerging data about rhetorical strategies deployed by borderland leaders in south Texas to reintroduce agency, complexity, and breadth to national border narratives.

Presenter(s): Jill Fleuriet

Co-author(s): Zeina Hijazi, Daniela Paniagua

1214 The spirit of evidence: ethnographies of testimony, truth, and memorability

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon E

Type: Executive Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores the place of 'evidence' in social life. What, exactly, counts as 'evidence' in different cultural and institutional contexts? How is evidence produced or procured to render intangible claims tangible in the present? How do people produce evidence to prove the existence of religious, miraculous, ghostly, and supernatural phenomena that might otherwise be met with ridicule and scepticism by contemporary society? The notion of the 'witness' – whether as an implicated observer, or the anthropological positionality more generally – has received considerable attention (Rosen 1977; Chua and Grinberg 2021; Laban Hinton 2022). But anthropologists have been less outspoken on 'the concept of evidence' (Engelke 2008), an issue which is closely related and socially fraught. This panel explores how both powerful and socially marginalised groups marshal different modes of evidence to support truth claims about past,

present, and future. Whilst the terms 'evidence' and 'testimony' typically connote the legalistic domain, we understand these categories in their broadest anthropological sense and theorise across archaeological, medical, policy-oriented, curatorial, ghostly, and spiritual contexts. With diverse ethnographic insights from India, the UK, the US, and Chile, the panel raises questions such as:

- What visual, performative, material, or textual forms of evidence are needed for different types of knowledge claims?
- What social and historical imaginaries do public testimonies create? What political and state-building projects does evidence afford? How do evidence and testimony support – or undermine – ideas about the past, belonging, or justice?
- What evidence do bodies create and how is witnessing experienced by and through differently socially situated bodies?
- What makes a testimony memorable and what causes it to resonate within – or even haunt – particular systems of truth?
- How and when is evidence produced responsively, in reaction to counterclaims and a socio-political context that might be seen as threatening?
- What spaces of harm or possibility are created when a particular testimony fails to meet the formal markers of credibility established by different truth regimes? What new inequalities can it engender?
- What constitutes – and motivates – the 'destruction' of evidence, and what are the exclusionary consequences of such acts?

Organizer: Nicholas Lackenby, University College London, Department of Anthropology, Sandhya Fuchs, University of Bristol

Chair: Nicholas Lackenby, University College London, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sandhya Fuchs, University of Bristol, Piergiorgio Di Giminiani, Anastasia Badder, University of Cambridge, Mads Daugbjerg, Meenakshi Nair Ambujam

Discussant: Matt Hodges

Presentation(s): The Haunted Court? Mythical Legal Pasts and Contested Judicial Memories in India

How do legal professionals imagine their role as historical actors in times of violent political transformation? This paper draws on extensive ethnographic fieldwork at the Indian Supreme Court in Delhi to analyse how the evocation of a mythical judicial past guided by secular principles allows advocates to imagine and enact the possibility of a democratic future during a time of authoritarian threat. Since the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party came to power 2014, legal professionals have expressed concern that the Supreme Court "is no longer a bastion of justice" because court judgements are now "guided by faith rather than proper legal evidence". While some have argued that the tale of a once perfect secular court is a treacherous haunting that keeps legal professionals from responding to Hindu nationalist pressures (Mehta 2022), this paper proposes

that the legal spirits of the past serve as an animating force for advocates to formulate and perform new visions of democratic legal resistance.

Presenter(s): Sandhya Fuchs

With and beyond evidence: truth-telling at the interstice of institutional reparation and collaborative historiography in Indigenous Chile

Through a comparative analysis of historical knowledge production in Indigenous land claims, and a case of collaborative historiography involving a rural Mapuche community from Chile, I show how the past articulated through institutional means of evidence recollection is not merely imposed upon local memory but rather contributes to the articulation of truth claims about the past subject to multiple and often controversial interpretations of Indigenous continuity and colonial disruption. While institutional colonial reparation establishes locally produced official histories, grassroots projects of memory restoration provide multiple and often controversial new ways of arranging the relationship between past and present often at odds with institutional premises of cultural continuity and in line with decolonial focus on critical self-reflection. The relationship between institutional and grassroots production of evidence is hauntologically productive, as they prompt the re-imagination of specters from the colonial past and their legacy in today's ordinary life.

Presenter(s): Piergiorgio Di Giminiani

Local waters for local people: Producing spiritual evidence about Cambridge's rivers and the risks they face

Across Cambridge (UK), neo-pagan and spiritual water activists are building cases for extractivist orientations as drivers of water degradation, recognition of water's spiritual dimensions, and the need for alternative human-water relations. This involves a complex of evidences rooted in diverse modes of knowledge production, including stats on water quality, performances of grief over loss of intimacy with local waters, eclectic rituals around water bodies and framing certain characteristics of those bodies as mystical, and excavating pre-Christian Iron Age sites near contemporary waters. Their work aims to instigate water conservation but simultaneously produces evidence that bolsters existing inequities: that "local waters [are] for local people" and that some people – migrants – pose threats to those waters. Cashed in cultures of environmental action and human-nature connection, such evidence appears more digestible and is being taken up in unexpected and unsettling ways in some corners of sustainability work. Drawing on ongoing fieldwork with spiritual water activists in Cambridge, this paper examines how evidence is produced to demonstrate the spiritual nature of water and move people to new actions, including protecting water from a growing range of perceived dangers, and the harms this rhetoric engenders. I argue the same evidence used to support truth claims about expanded relationalities and care inadvertently supports claims about national borders and belongings.

Presenter(s): Anastasia Badder

Evidence, doubt and the infrastructures of legitimacy among Gettysburg's ghost hunters

The dead of the American Civil War (1861–65) are evoked, honored and animated through a wide range of commemorative media. The conflict, its symbols and remnants have become key elements of the raging American 'culture war' and its new battlegrounds. At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the most famous field of the conflict, authorized and unauthorized modes of remembrance proliferate, each resting on different truth claims and infrastructures of legitimacy. This paper explores one alternative branch of historical truth-seeking – the popular 'paranormal' investigations of the spirits and ghosts alleged to linger here following their violent deaths during the battle. Ghost hunters are part of a local tourism economy where commercialism and performance are hard to separate from the practices of 'serious' hobby groups and spiritualists of various kinds. Some locals view their activities with skepticism, scorn, or as a desecration of the fallen at this emblematic American 'hallowed ground'. Based on fieldwork amongst paranormal practitioners, I explore the technologies, techniques and bodily practices through which certain certainties are established and discuss the fraught, interrelated relationship between 'normal' and 'paranormal' kinds of knowing and testimony creation. I argue that the ghost hunters' production of alternative evidence are ongoing, socio-material computations of inescapable existential doubts that also, paradoxically, energize existing doubts and assert new ones.

Presenter(s): Mads Daugbjerg

Contested Claims: Bureaucracy, Land Rights, and the Materiality of Evidence

Using land rights contestations as a point of entry, this presentation explores how adivasis in Telangana, India, negotiate their land claims within socio-juridic spaces such as bureaucracies and courts. Focusing on select documents— titles, land records, & court files— I show how competing land claims are evaluated and examine the material practices through which bureaucratic documents are rendered trustworthy, permitting them to operate as evidence and proof (Hull 2012; Weichselbraun 2020). Specifically, this presentation asks: What qualifies as 'sound' evidence when competing land claims usher in similar kinds of textual and material artefacts? Whose claim survives? Grounded in ethnography, I show how bureaucrats and government functionaries partake in forms of interpretative work that rely on the materiality of paper, annotations in the margins, the colour of ink, and other markers to assess if the artefacts qualify as 'credible' evidence of 'good quality'. This, in turn, reveals the complex power relations of caste and class, as bureaucratic documents become sites of both credibility and manipulation, making some claims more 'valid' than others. At the same time, adivasis too labour to substantiate their land claims, piecing together textual and material artefacts to proactively and responsively engage with counterclaims, seeking to meet the presumed threshold of evidence in socio-juridic spaces— both in terms of quality and quantity.

Presenter(s): Meenakshi Nair Ambujam

Discussion

7072 Inscription, Sedimentation, and Counter-Memorialization: Contemporary Artistic Engagements with Endurance and Fracture

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** MGB Salon F/G

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This collection of critical experimental engagements with sonic, spatial, and atmospheric registers, foregrounds timely political/ontological questions about historical and temporal endurance and fracturing.

We pick up on a recent symposium at Yes We Cannibal in Baton Rouge which was part of the programming for a gallery show and performance by artist Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste whose work engages with decommissioned police sound technologies and sculptural configurations to prompt questions about the efficacy and limits of contemporary and historic systems of value and speculation as they relate to bodies, objects, and sites.

Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste's ongoing project *There, Eyes Were Watching...* investigates a Louisiana plantation-turned-bed-and-breakfast where his ancestors were enslaved. The current site is promoted as "heritage tourism," while the artist presents his plan for a "monument by subtraction" against the site's current status as a memorial that masks the plantation's afterlives beneath layers of aesthetic and economic rebranding.

Ryan C. Clarke's *Carbon Capture* draws from Caribbean and Black southern thought to theorize CO₂ as both ecological crisis and ontological residue - a "kindred vapor" through which genocide and ecocide coalesce, tracing violence through levees, dredging, oil spills, and the aftershocks of racial capitalism.

Chris Taylor's sound-based and cartographic work across the Rio Grande and Salton Sea reimagines mapping as temporal portraiture, where sound and sediment archive not meaning but movement, memory, and decay.

Dr. Thomas Stanley presents Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste 2025 performance at Baton Rouge's Brave Cave as the prototype for ritualized, collaborative art practices that confront and symbolically inter the lingering power of colonial empire. Drawing on the Garifuna *beluria* funerary rite and situated within a broader analysis of necropolitics, the project proposes that ritual-when fused with site-specific, globally coordinated artistic intervention-can function as a distributed form of resistance and real counter-power, to sever the hold of imperial structures on contemporary social life.

Discussant Mat Keel draws from his dissertation on dissociation and the post-plantation in the Gulf South. Engaging psychoanalytic thought and affect theory, he theorizes dissociation as an indexical but non-coherent mode of social inscription that is neither metaphoric nor necessarily related to memory.

These presentations have been curated in relation to Toussaint-Baptiste's work. Each offers a resonant engagement with the possibility of temporal intervention and doing history otherwise. All

are positioned against dominant modes of memory that enclose, symbolize, or monumentalize history, and instead directly face the persistence of racialized and ecological violence by non-linear, indexical, and dissociated forms of relation by working with sound, gesture, vibration, criticality, and refusal.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Mat Keel

Chair: Mat Keel

Presenter(s): Thomas Stanley, George Mason University, Chris Taylor, Texas Tech University, Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste, Ryan Clarke, Mat Keel

Discussant: Mat Keel

Presentation(s): Art as Ritual, Ritual as Resistance: Burying Power with Art

A global assessment of necropolitics in the post-colonial contemporary reveals a tragic logjam of power frozen largely in familiar metropolises (recent structural developments like BRICS notwithstanding). Violence, brutally demonstrative where necessary, but more often muted and institutionally metered out in doses and on terms calculated to sidestep outrage, remains the means by which former colonial powers maintain and extend hegemony. This presentation explores the Brave Cave Intervention as a model for art as ritual and posits that ritual is – rather than merely an expressive or cathartic practice – a real form of practical (even military) power.

The beluria is a funerary rite of the Afro-Indigenous Garifuna people. Held on the ninth night following the death of a community member, and featuring extended feasting, storytelling, and especially drumming and dancing, the ninth night ritual is a necessary part of severing the dead from the living and resuming the continuity of social life. Colonial Power, while an antagonist, is still a familiar with respect to those under its domination. This presentation builds on the Baton Rouge experience to diagram a massive, site-specific, collaborative artwork, incorporating performative acts of synchronic resistance in locations intended to (literally) circle the globe. These performative acts integrate multiple fronts of opposition into a ceremonial interment of Empire.

Presenter(s): Thomas Stanley

Terminal Sound Pictures and Maps That Tell Time

From frameworks and strategies developing through Land Arts of the American West at Texas Tech University, this presentation will dive into murky terminal waters of the Salton Sea to reveal sound pictures from a solar powered research platform, and then discuss the ambitions and operations involved in the deep multi-lingual / multi-cultural research necessary to collectively create a meander map of the Rio Bravo / Rio Grande from Ciudad Juarez / El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico that describes the undulating and shifting course and character of the river over time. Drawing a living portrait of a living river with maps that tell time.

Chris Taylor was born in West Germany, raised in waters of Southwest Florida, lives in arid American Southwest. An architect, educator, and director of Land Arts of the American West at

Texas Tech University, Taylor is deeply committed to the intersection of human construction and the evolving nature of the planet. The Terminal Lake Exploration Platform, created with support from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, continues to facilitate visual and performative research within under-examined basins and internal aquatic fringes. Taylor studied architecture at the University of Florida and the Graduate School of Design at Harvard.

Presenter(s): Chris Taylor

Where, Eyes Were Watching...

This presentation asserts my ongoing work as a "monument by subtraction" and centers on a property in Louisiana: a former plantation where my ancestors were enslaved, which now houses a bed-and-breakfast pitching an experience of the "bygone days" of the South with "modern amenities," addressing the distortion of history in service of white supremacy but also hospitality, tourism, preservation, etc. via "heritage marketing." While the most conspicuous monuments to colonial-era and Confederate figures have been removed, replaced, or, at least, challenged—along with the corresponding regime of memorialization—sites like the B&B are rarely considered as monuments, however innumerable (and transparent as legacy rebranding).

Monuments tend to glorify historical figures and episodes, objectifying the past for the sake of narratives meant to endure into the future. Counter-narratives often rely on the assertion of alternative figures while engaging in similar forms of memorialization and symbolism. I reject the packaging of history as the representation of an objectifiable static experience, much less the assertion of the legibility or power of such a representation in the future. Instead, this presentation and work look towards an artist undertaking research into their own family history, which has been shaped by environments and forces enmeshed in the transatlantic slave trade, in an effort to offer a more complicated and capacious reading of history and its vestiges.

Presenter(s): Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste

Carbon Capture

This multimedia presentation superimposes similarities between the disruptive potential of rising CO2 emissions and the ontological insistence of the black or non-western subject. Through this framework of socializing organic and non-organic subjugation of the extractive violences of capitalism, I offer a geological (terra, aqua, flora, and fauna) network of social death.

The fungibility of Black life is reflected in/to the land of the American South and witnessed here through levee bombings, canal dredging, oil spills, Louisiana Slavery laws, 20th century governmental neglect, sea level rise, "disenfranchisement, debt peonage, Jim Crow, and legally sanctioned official and private terrorism. (Woods, 1996)", and the evident continuity of western colonialism upon the land via petrochemical externalizations of harm to its surrounding communities. The coal mine is also the canary.

This epistemological shift to the earth and its what it can do for us begets an embodiment of something Tao Leigh Geoff considers a "Maroon Science." Through tracing the history and

provenance of global Carbon Dioxide emissions through the caribbean decolonial studies canon like the Cesairés, Wynter, Glissant, Wilcott, Rodney, Fanon, Braitewaith and New Orleanian black thought from Tom Dent, Marcus Christian, and Kalamu ya Salaam, a kindred vapor to our cries of change becomes an echolocation of objection.

Presenter(s): Ryan Clarke

Dissociation and the Refusal of Metaphor: Experiments with Non-Representational Ethnography

In this paper, I present trauma and dissociation not only as the foci of ethnographic inquiry but also as ontological conditions, drawing on my doctoral fieldwork in the urban Gulf Coast and within geographies shaped by the afterlives of the plantation.

Informed by Pierre Janet's early theory of trauma as psychic disintegration, I frame dissociation not as the obliteration of interiority but as a condition of social life that is both ambient and patterned. In this framing, dissociation and other sequela of trauma become indexical and real, but resistant to legibility, signification, or symbolic integration.

I ask how trauma operates through atmosphere and fractured relation rather than memory or narrative and explore the possibility of attending to this dissociative socius composed of partial, floating, and transient assimilations.

I turn to Guattari's asignifying semiotics and Glissant's opacity, to develop a non-representational ethnography that resists relying on metaphor, confession, or coherence. Instead, I foreground illegibility itself as a mode of presence, and dissociation as a socially distributed condition of prohibited relation in the wake of racial/capitalist world-making. This proposal is juxtaposed against contemporary discourses (academic, popular, institutional) in which trauma is rendered as always already assimilated and resolved into narrative.

Presenter(s): Mat Keel

Discussion

1898 Ethics and Aesthetics of Good Enough Care: Qualities of Scarce Health

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Regent

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropological critique of public and global health centers on the fields' tendency to privilege standardization and scale over collective or personal well-being and care. Yet as both fields begin to use quality of care and patient-centered-interventions as orienting themes, new ethnographic opportunities emerge. We seek to understand the work these terms do by questioning what "quality" care might look like for patients, caregivers, professionals, states, and international organizations. By examining everyday practices of care for an ethics of good enough and an

aesthetics of quality, we develop a new ethnographic language for the critical analysis of medical interventions.

The enactment of medical care in contexts of discursive and actual scarcity is a challenging endeavor. In a policy brief on universal health coverage financing, the WHO urges governments to prioritize only some areas of health care for free in order to meet budgetary demands. Recent biomedical research, in the field of genetics, cardiology, and endocrinology, portrays disease as something to be managed, not cured, in a lifelong process of dependence on the medical industry. In the world's megacities, living conditions facilitate the spread of infectious diseases, among the same people targeted by vertical programs seeking to eradicate them. Physicians find themselves squeezed by budgets and antibiotic resistance. A growing number of people, some organized in religious congregations or social groups, such as anti-vaxxers, reject standard biometric treatments for what are considered curable diseases. Today as the grand promises of developmental narratives for ever-increasing prosperity and well-being sit uncomfortably with the receding horizons of quality and austerity, new ethics and analytics of care emerge.

As an anthropological endeavor, we focus on the practical ethics that emerge from situated contexts of coping with chronic illness, making difficult treatment decisions under conditions of scarce resources, the struggle for life in toxic environments, and attempts at healing exposure to harmful substances. What visions of a good life and death underlie the negotiations of precarious care in these situations of limited agency? How are new relationships between individual and population unfolding? How do healthcare decisions reflect an emerging body aesthetics and kinship relations, and how are they related to arguments about individual sacrifice for the greater social good? What are good and quality anyway?

Section: Society for Medical Anthropology

Organizer: Andrew McDowell, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Ursula Rao

Chair: Ursula Rao

Presenter(s): Julia Vorhoelter, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Andrew McDowell, Tulane University, Department of Anthropology, Robert D. Smith, Geneva Graduate Institute, Edwin Ambani Ameso, Ursula Rao, Laura Meek, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies

Discussant: Maryani Palupy Rasidjan, New York University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): For the Good of the Patient and the Good of the Company? Ethics and Profits of Care in German Insomnia Treatments

According to statistics, millions of people around the world suffer from insomnia. While a diversity of therapeutic interventions exists in the form of pills, psychotherapy, apps, and sleep-supporting accessories, experts have proclaimed a 'treatment gap.' Existing therapies are either ineffective, inaccessible, or have undesirable side-effects. Sufferers, doctors, and the medical industry all long for better insomnia interventions, but their interests in, and understandings of, 'good quality care' diverge quite substantially. Patients want treatments to be effective and convenient; doctors and researchers must ensure that therapies comply with medico-ethical principles; insurance

companies want care to be affordable and limited to those who absolutely need it; and pharmaceutical and tech companies want therapeutic products to be profitable. New treatments – not just for insomnia – rarely meet all these requirements. Given that miracle cures don't exist, what is 'good enough' treatment and – importantly – 'good enough' for whom?

I approach this question through the case of a new drug that has been celebrated as a potential 'game-changer' in German insomnia treatments. Based on ethnographic observations at sleep medicine conferences, I argue that the drug's promotional success depends less on its effectiveness as a substance, than important stakeholders' agreement that the drug is 'good enough' to be helpful (and not 'bad enough' to be harmful).

Presenter(s): Julia Vorhoelter

Particularly Good Enough: The Ethics and Economics "Low Quality" Medical Practices in Mumbai

Private-sector general physicians working among the poor in Mumbai's unplanned neighborhoods often address illness with only meager tools. During 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in their clinics, these physicians describe the tensions created by needs to care for patients' bodies and budgets as well as their own professional and moral reputations as generating a practice of "good enough medicine." This good enough medicine must care for individual, families, neighborhoods and populations to achieve twinned but contradictory goals of fiscal and physical wellbeing. Caught between economic, epistemic, and ethical concerns, good enough medicine relies on inexpensive pharmaceuticals, clinical expertise, and minimal diagnostic testing. For patients and physicians, such tactics often buy cheap relief or time to interpret clinical signs. They are good enough because they care for bodies and budgets. For public and global health, they diverge from biomedical standards and are low quality.

Eschewing frames representing practitioners of good enough medicine as mimics or charlatans, this paper traces how physicians reshape universal biomedicine, bodies, and standards of care by mobilizing particular ethical and epistemological models to that craft a situated medicine. Mumbai's good enough medicine reopens questions about universal bioethics, minimalist biopolitics, and biomedical power through the lens of contestations around quality and object of care.

Presenter(s): Andrew McDowell

Frugal Medicine: Treating the Symptom in/of Delhi's Healthcare System

In 2015, Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party established Mohalla (neighborhood) Clinics: primary healthcare clinics that claimed to provide the poor with universal healthcare. While the Mohalla Clinics increased access to minimal biomedicine, super-specialty cures remain largely out of reach for Delhi's poor. Based on 2 years of ethnographic work with bureaucrats, doctors, and patients in Delhi's Mohalla Clinics between 2021-2025, we examine how Delhi's healthcare system enacts a frugal form of medicine. Neither austere nor improvised, frugal medicine is a type of 'good enough' medicine that allocates scant resources to alleviate rather than eradicate afflictions.

This paper traces patients who begin in Mohalla Clinics and travel through Delhi's healthcare system to show how patients are prescribed frugal medicines — such as paracetamol — for 'big diseases' — such as non-healing ulcers — that risk becoming septic and life threatening. These trajectories reveal that, in a frugal medical system, health becomes an outcome of patient journeys to accumulate frugal medicines from different healthcare institutions. While doing so, patients must battle with the reluctant benevolence of a frugal-medical governmentality that momentarily strengthens the body by treating the symptom rather than the disease, neither 'making live' nor 'letting die.' Frugal medicine is both a state strategy and a necessary ethic of care that is caught between a sovereign panic and a biopolitical modernity.

Presenter(s): Robert D. Smith

Co-author(s): Aditya Bharadwaj

Centering Social Networks of Care and Support To Complement Patchy State Health Care in Kenya

For many Kenyans, social networks of care and support, notably kin, prove essential connecting dots for accessing to care in patchy healthcare landscapes. To reverse this trend, in 2018, the Kenyan government declared an ambitious push for Universal Health Coverage. It made some healthcare services free and reformed the national health insurance. UHC implementation combined strategies such as removing of user fees, strengthening health systems, ensuring supply of essential medicines, integrating community health services and strengthening primary health care. Despite these new initiatives, access remains patchy.

This paper studies how people settle for "good enough care" in a situation of precarity and impoverishment associated with health crises. Along with state recourses, that are never sufficient citizens' rely on ethnicized and communal social practices, harnessing local knowledges and resources as essential networks to provide pathways for treatment. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork on Kenya's experiments with UHC 2019-2020, the paper speaks to how citizens make calculated and difficult choices reworking cultural practices of kinship formation, as they pull onto culture-specific communal institutions of kinning in what I call 'cultural surrogacy', as form of care and support. By paying attention to cultural surrogacy I offer insights on forms of intimate care futures in citizens' everyday negotiations of precarious living in a resource-constrained context.

Presenter(s): Edwin Ambani Ameso

Appropriateness: Partial Ethics of Health Care Decisions in Situations of Financial Hardship

Set in the marginalized neighbourhoods of Delhi, the talk reflects on contentious negotiations between family members and care providers over appropriate health care. Serious illness is a major concern for resource-poor people, not only because of the emotional distress it causes, but also because it is likely to disrupt the family's fragile financial situation. To cure a patient, people sometimes migrate to distant places, usually borrow money to pay huge medical bills, and constantly negotiate hard with providers to get treatment at a budget. In this situation, how do

families agree on what is appropriate? The paper unpacks attempts to come to terms with the situation of serious or chronic illness, analysing the back and forth between expressions of a sense of attachment and duty to care, practical matters of family survival, and careful financial assessment, as well as attempts to overcome structural barriers to access medical institutions.

The fine-grained analysis of the emotional and financial burdens that families bear in making difficult health care decisions unpacks a practical ethic of finding pathways to what is "good enough" for patients, families, and relatives. The argument pushes back against notions of improvisation or ad hocness to acknowledge a complex universe of care concerns that include ethical, emotional, and economic calculations that must be carefully balanced when dealing with the never quite sufficient offerings of the low-cost health care market.

Presenter(s): Ursula Rao

Decolonizing "People-Centered Care": Kin Work, Wake Work, and a Feminist Aesthetics of Care in Tanzania

Decades of neoliberal deregulation and privatization have left the Tanzanian healthcare system under-resourced, compounding epidemiological devastation wrought by colonialism and its concomitant efforts to dismantle local healing practices. Postcolonial scholars elaborate on these legacies of empire as the ongoing operationalization of gendered racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya 2018), entailing entwined political, economic, epistemological, and psychic violence (Mbembe 2017). In response to these conditions, many women in Tanzania engage in embodied forms of kin work and wake work (di Leonardo 1987, Sharpe 2016) by literally tying their bodies with cloth as a way to hold themselves and others. The ethics and aesthetics of this care lies in its ability to suture fractured selves and enable an intergenerational, intercorporeal unity of being. In this talk, I consider such practices in relation to the World Health Organization and World Bank's (2018: 34) claim that attention to "people-centered care is not as prevalent in low- and middle-income countries." Bringing together the work of Sylvia Wynter and Sylvia Tamale, I argue that vernacular feminist forms of healing in Tanzania challenge neoliberal, secular, and biologized definitions of "people-centered," revealing that such global health discourses are, in fact, Man-centered (Wynter 2003).

Presenter(s): Laura Meek

Discussion

7879 Sonic Specters: Cross-Cultural Hauntings, Collective Grief, and Musicking Trauma

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 10

Type: Oral Presentation Session

HBCU students singing spirituals over the graves of the enslaved, a Spanish superstar performing Mexican grief born of colonial violence, the Tét Offensive staged in a campy theater production in

California, child sexual abuse mediated through Vaporwave music, and undocumented Mexican migrants dedicating corridos to a ghost who helps smuggle them across the border. While trauma studies in music typically centers psychoanalytic frameworks or offers theoretical perspectives on close musical readings, this panel proposes a focus on hauntings within music, the resurfacing of pastness and lost futures (Derrida 1993). Trauma, when viewed through hauntings, reveals how musical ghosts "reach and affect living human subjects who are moved to acknowledge, mourn, regret, and possibly take action" (Lincoln; Lincoln 2015). Our papers ask how specific cultures re-perform/reinscribe historical ghosts through musical practices that mediate traumatic memory.

Through ethnography, "Oh Freedom" observes how musical performances of spirituals by HBCU students at a plantation act as a means for contending with the ghosts of slavery, and as a catalyst for reimagining Black identity. "Rocío Dúrcal: la Llorona española" examines how Spanish pop star Dúrcal voices the ghosts within traumatic memories of mestizo and migrant pasts, mediated through the lens of practice-based research and Mexican colonial history. "South Vietnamese Specters" auto/ethnographically draws upon the intergenerational musicking of Little Saigon, identifying singer Khánh Ly as a medium who musically escorts ghosts across the Pacific by centering the material consequences of the Vietnam War. "A Hauntology of Childhood Sexual Abuse Aesthetics" explores how trauma aesthetics from the 1980s–90s, centered on child sexual abuse, continue to haunt the music of contemporary online subcultures. Lastly, "Songs for the Ghost of Toribio" explores corridos (ballads) dedicated to the ghost of a 1920s Mexican priest who undocumented migrants testify smuggles them across the border. This paper analyzes how the corridos, haunted by transgenerational trauma and cultural memory, transcend borders and time as songs of contemporary migrant resistance.

These collective performances of trauma reveal that marginalized communities must often process their pain through ambivalent-at times, abject-performances of specters and grief. Our positionality as researcher-practitioners and the cultural intimacy we share with interlocutors force us to reconsider the call for a discourse of healing, instead embracing an approach that refuses closure. Hauntings shift trauma analysis into lived collectives who re-perform trauma to sustain counter-memory and resist institutional history. Ultimately, we propose that musicking trauma exceeds the bounds of reparative music studies (Cusick 2023), resurrecting the very ghosts we seek to overcome.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jordan Hugh Sam, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jordan Hugh Sam, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Jordan Hugh Sam, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Ramona Gonzalez, Ashley Dao, Jenny Olivia Johnson, Teresita Lozano, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Presentation(s): "Oh Freedom": Rememory and the Afterlives of Slavery through Collective Singing at Mt. Vernon

On October 7, 2023, choir students from Virginia State University (VSU), a Historically Black College and University, performed at the Slave Memorial Commemoration at George Washington's plantation. In a space marked by racial violence, their re-enactments of music created by enslaved people summoned what students described as ghosts. The ceremony opened with descendants offering oral histories, interwoven with the choir's performance of spirituals. As the students processed to the burial ground singing "Oh Freedom," some were overwhelmed, while others embodied the specters—pantomiming enslavement or re-enacting the extraction of teeth to be used in Washington's dentures. This paper centers the experience of VSU choir students to consider musical practice as a conduit for haunting and a way of engaging slavery's cultural memory. Through student testimonials and fieldwork, ghosts emerge as lived, sensory experiences. In addition, singing spirituals deepened students' ties to ancestors and revealed the continuities of racial violence. Their performances unsettled white audiences and provoked strong emotional responses both from students and the attendees. These hauntings echo Black feminist theories (Hartman 1997; Saleh-Hanna 2015; Morrison 2019), which frame ghosts as calls to confront structural racism. They also align with Stoller's (1995) work on spiritual possession, showing how reenactments of historical traumas renegotiate power and articulate collective Black identity.

Presenter(s): Jordan Hugh Sam

Rocío Dúrcal: la Llorona española

Invariably on holiday visits to see my father, I hear the chug-chug-chug of acoustic guitars from his computer speakers. These guitars form the backbone of his favorite ranchera-pop disc *Canta a Juan Gabriel Volumen 6* (1984) by Spanish diva Rocío Dúrcal, with songs written by Mexican singer-songwriter Juan Gabriel. My father's favorite is "Amor Eterno," a heart-wrenching lament Gabriel wrote at only 16. Initially thought to chronicle the loss of a beloved, its true inspiration—Gabriel's mother—was revealed during a 1990 live performance when he ad-libbed the word *mamá*. Since then, "Amor Eterno" has become an archetypal funeral lament within Mexican diasporic culture.

Recently, my father insisted I learn the song, a weighty request given his own mother's early death. Like Gabriel, he was born to a rancher family in west-central México, and his mother too migrated to the borderlands. Yet, he never knew the song's original meaning. For him, "Amor Eterno" was not about mourning, but an unconscious act of remembrance. This paper explores how, through Dúrcal's voice, "Amor Eterno" became a universal song of grief. Using my father's ears, I argue Dúrcal, under Gabriel's tutelage, voices the ghosts of wounded mestizo and migrant lives (Alemán 2013; Lozano 2024), embodying la Llorona as a professional mourner (Anzaldúa 1987) who navigates the specters of Mexican colonial history.

Presenter(s): Ramona Gonzalez

South Vietnamese Specters & More "Significant Ghosts":

The Voice of Khánh Ly Between Saigons

In 2008, *Paris by Night*, a Vietnamese variety show based in Orange County, California, released their 91st episode. Titled "Huế, Sài Gòn, Hà Nội," the program features a reenactment of the Hue Massacre. Quang Lê's warm rendition of "Những Con Đường Trắng" ("The White Roads") is followed by Khánh Ly's sobering performance of "Bài Ca Dành Cho Những Xác Người" ("Song for the Corpses"), where she enters the stage as the only person dressed in black among corpses in white. Khánh Ly is known for her raspy alto voice, described as "seductive" and "smoky" by listeners in conversations that are often accompanied by memories of a lost past, loved one, or homeland. Her discography is characterized by complicated nostalgias, transnational movement, and hauntings of home. Khánh Ly's career is steeped in controversy, as she was reprimanded by the Vietnamese government in 2022 for performing a song that criticized historical cycles of slavery, colonialism, and violence. Drawing upon studies of voice, trauma, hauntology (Derrida 1993; Cho 2008; Lincoln and Lincoln 2015), and memory, this paper explores the afterlife of Khánh Ly's music by focusing on its transnational presence in the ghostly space between Saigon, Vietnam and Little Saigon, California. I argue that Khánh Ly, through community-based performances, serves as a medium between the ghosts of the Vietnam War and the diasporic communities that are haunted by them.

Presenter(s): Ashley Dao

Minotaurs in the McMartin Tunnels:

A Hauntology of Childhood Sexual Abuse Aesthetics on 1980s TV and the 2000s Internet

The end of the 20th century in the U.S. was marked by a series of moral panics around child sexual abuse (CSA). These panics are traceable in the TV shows, movies, and pop songs of the time, whose aesthetics often present CSA as rooted in demonological forces rather than a human technique of subjugation and control. Satanism, ritual abuse, and violations of white patriarchal norms are frequently invoked as the reasons why adults molest children. These labyrinthine narratives reroute the responsibility for sexual violation from human perpetrators to an unknowable evil, in the form of a literal demon or dangerous other. I trace how these 1980s-90s "trauma aesthetics" now comprise "a hauntology of childhood sexual abuse," one that is sensible through contemporary internet cultures such as Vaporwave music, Liminal Spaces, and the Backrooms. I read these cultures through the heuristic of the McMartin tunnels, a physical location beneath the McMartin Preschool where, in 1983, the owners were alleged to have raped hundreds of children in the name of Satan. The labyrinthine walls of these "secret tunnels" provide a metaphor for the specter of CSA as taking place within evil lairs containing demons, rather than in quotidian spaces with trusted guardians. I evoke the Minotaur in the labyrinth to decipher the connections between the demonological aesthetics of CSA in the 1980s-90s and the uncanny ways in which online artists have digested this culture, and remain haunted by it.

Presenter(s): Jenny Olivia Johnson

Songs for the Ghost of Toribio, Santo Coyote: Corridos as Haunted Archives of Survival and Specters of Trauma of the Undocumented Migrant Experience

Based on musical testimonies on social media, undocumented migrants are sharing a collective ghost story of an apparition who helps migrants cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Since 2007, these corridos (ballads), which I define as ghost smuggling ballads, narrate near-death experiences and encounters with the ghost of Saint Toribio Romo, adopted by migrants as the Santo Coyote (Holy Smuggler) and Patron of Immigrants. Toribio was a priest killed in Jalisco during La Cristiada, the 1926–1929-armed religious revolt of Cristeros against the Mexican government. The Catholic Church canonized Toribio in 2000 but has never recognized him as the patron saint of immigrants. Those unable to risk the pilgrimage back to his shrine utilize corridos as musical votives that they upload and share on YouTube, defying geopolitical borders. Inspired by Derrida's conceptualization of "hauntology" (1993) and contributing to theoretical discourse on immigration politics within migrant religious expression (Calvo-Quirós 2023) and transgenerational trauma encoded in music (Cizmic 2012), I analyze how these corridos transcend multiple borders and hauntings beyond Saint Toribio's ghostly intercessions. I also explore how these corridos—a tradition emblematic of the Mexican Revolution—embody cultural memory of trauma and injustices that extends to the current struggles of undocumented migrants, particularly amidst the current U.S. presidential administration's efforts to execute mass deportations.

Presenter(s): Teresita Lozano

2617 Phantoms of the Penetrative State: Violence, Resistance, and Survival

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 4

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel brings together a diverse group of scholars researching in Columbia, El Salvador, Jordan, Italy, and the United States to engage with anthropological theories on the state and the affects and potentialities of state violence. Recent scholarship on the state in and around anthropology has analyzed state violence not through its individual manifestations but as an affective and structural haunting (Aijazi 2024) that particularly targets the (sex)ualities of state subjects (Mikdash 2022; Puri 2016). Despite its atmospheric-like qualities, however, violence is not necessarily nor inherently destructive, as it can produce new forms of subjectivity, sociality, and ways of belonging (Zengin 2024). Nevertheless, this scholarship understands violence to be ever-present, "there is no escape, no outside or place to hide" (Stanley 2021, 16). Yet, much work has been done to destabilize the façade of the structural coherence of the state. Indeed, others have shown how the nation-state manufactures "the state-effect," or the illusion or fantasy of hegemony (Abrams 1988; Mitchell 2018; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Puri 2016) and that the state must continuously rely on reworking a manufactured fantasy of intentionality, systemization, expertise, and control as a way to maintain and further legitimize itself. As such, this panel asks, in what ways are recent anthropological theories on state violence haunted by the phantom state? In other words, how can we conceptually hold in tandem theories of the state that emphasize its phantasmic coherency with the affective and structuring phantasmal "atmospheres" created by state violence? And what are

the ambivalences and potentialities that arise when people both suffer [i] and benefit [/i] from state-sanctioned violence? By centering the experiences of abortion-seekers, women and Indigenous environmental activists, gay Arab men, "gender critical" women's groups, and community-based birth workers, this panel further nuances the complex (and complicated) relationships often marginalized groups have with state violence (Reddy 2011) and, in doing so, not only contributes to contemporaneous debates on the state and state-sanctioned violence but also extends these insights to theories on human subjectivity, affect, semiotics, and morality.

Section: Association for Feminist Anthropology

Organizer: Johnathan Norris, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Johnathan Norris, Boston University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Annalise Gardella, University of Oregon, Department of Anthropology, Andres Restrepo Sanchez, University of Iowa, Department of Anthropology, Maureen Kosse, Johnathan Norris, Boston University, Department of Anthropology, Elisa Muntoni

Presentation(s): Embodied land rights: the limits and expansions of environmental activism under El Salvador's permanent state of exception

Since March 2022, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's administration has installed a permanent state of exception, detaining 85,000+ people and expanding "development" projects. This paper explores the state of exception's impact on women and Indigenous environmental activists' strategies to defend land, water, and bodies from state-supported extractivist operations. This paper draws from Indigenous women and ecofeminist scholars who reimagine the connection between land and bodies and draw distinct parallels between violence committed against women and the colonial, state, and capitalist violence perpetrated against land (Cabnal 2015; Tzul Tzul 2020; Schild 2019; Velásquez Nimatuj 2016). The Salvadoran state's role in development projects—extracting raw material, displacing people, contaminating water, and shielding companies from legal intervention—expands environmental violence, directly targets environmental defenders, and limits activist strategy. However, the state of exception also eliminated the constant, brutal gang violence that characterized the areas where these development projects are being implemented. Although facilitated by authoritarian militarization, the state of exception has provided an opening for activism, allowing organizations and media to enter communities where gangs previously restricted access. This paper examines the complexities hidden in an authoritarian state structure that has infamously increased the scope of state violence.

Presenter(s): Annalise Gardella

Doulas, Midwives, and Pacientes Perdidas: Resisting State Violence Through Homebirth Care

This paper examines institutionalized obstetric violence in Medellín, Colombia, as a manifestation of the penetrative state, exploring how it operates as a biopolitical technique to regulate the bodies and sexualities of pregnant and birthing people. Drawing on ethnographic research and interviews with families, doulas, midwives, and biomedical health providers, I analyze how this form of state-sanctioned medical violence has unintentionally fueled the resurgence of a homebirth model of care that resists institutional logics of medical authority and biomedical control. Situating obstetric

violence within the broader context of Colombia's "post-conflict era," I argue that urban midwives and doulas—who operate outside the health system—challenge the "state-effect" by providing what they consider "humanized care" to patients who have intentionally gotten lost (*perderse*) in the cracks of Medellín's "dehumanized" health system. This study asks how doulas and midwives navigate the "atmospheric constant" of violence (Stanley 2021) while simultaneously challenging the state's biopolitical control over reproductive bodies. It focuses on the affective experiences of birth workers who move beyond fear, pain, and risk to offer homebirth care as an alternative model of healing and resistance. By examining how the homebirth model of care in Medellín, Colombia, haunts biomedicine, this paper contributes to an anthropological understanding of the strategies used to resist the penetrative

Presenter(s): Andres Restrepo Sanchez

Phallus Phantoms: How anti-trans actors invoke the penetrative state to justify transmisogyny

This paper considers how anti-trans groups exploit the idea of the penetrative state to position trans people (particularly trans women) as "deep state" avatars who carry out state violence against women, ignoring the fact that trans people are overwhelmingly the victims of such violence. Linguistic anthropologists have recently turned to the discursive alliances between "anti-gender" Christian far right and "gender critical" women's groups (Borba 2022; Kosse and Hall 2025; Tudisco 2023; Webster 2024). Semiotic analysis of the rhetoric common to both reveals how anti-trans actors leverage narratives about violence against women to construct "phallus phantoms," a controlling image (Hill Collins 1991) depicting transgender people as extensions of a patriarchal state. By subverting signs associated with the harms of the penetrative state, such narratives promote a social order that mystifies a binary model of sex essentialism, justifying everyday violence against gender nonconforming people to "protect" cisgender women from the phallic menace. This paranoid imagining of transgender predation encourages violently intrusive behaviors ranging from "tranvestigations" of cis female bodies to raids on women's bathrooms to remove butch lesbians. The paper argues that as a semiotic frame, phallus phantoms of the penetrative state represent a sinister refashioning of a putatively liberatory feminist politics to haunt the very same populations that anti-trans movements claim to "protect."

Presenter(s): Maureen Kosse

Co-author(s): Kira Hall

Queering Safety in a State of Penetration: Masculine (In)Visibility in Ghāy Amman

Centering the erratic targeting and harassing of the LGBTQ community in Jordan, this chapter demonstrates how gay Arab men (*al-ghāyāt*) in Amman employ a local politics of invisibility to maintain community in the face of state violence. Often glossed under the framework of "safety" (*āmān*) by my interlocutors, I argue that a desire for political and social invisibility incorporates broader social discourses, including respectability (*ihtrām*) and masculinity (*rajūlī/a*). Taken together, these discursive structures inform a constellation of acceptable behaviors that provide the *ghāyāt* with varying degrees of invisibility in everyday life as they blend in, go unseen, and

remain de-politicized. To make this argument, I begin by outlining what I understand to be the ramifications of intermittent state violence by weaving together an analysis of Jordan's Penal Code and the New Cybercrimes Law, ethnographic accounts of state violence, and the literature on the sexual state (Mikdashi 2022; Puri 2016; Rubin 1984; Zengin 2024). I argue that although the Jordanian state creates an affect of fear through their reliance on intermittent violence, the ghāyāt persistently maintain community by appealing to and coopting a degree of normalcy. Through performing an approximation of quotidian masculinity, they maintain individual safety and the ability to form community. However, I also show how as embodied subjects, the ghāyāt are not always consistent in adhering to these invisibility politics.

Presenter(s): Johnathan Norris

Intimate Violence: Abortion, Affective Control, and Reproductive Resistance in Italy

Amid growing concern over Italy's declining birthrate, public policies have taken a markedly pronatalist turn. While motherhood is framed as civic duty, anti-abortion agendas advance under the guise of supporting life and families. These shifts unfold within broader dynamics of reproductive governance (Morgan & Roberts 2012), where state and non-state actors deploy phantasmagrasms of population (Murphy 2017) to reassert control over reproductive life in the name of national survival. Rather than viewing abortion governance solely as restriction, I highlight how its mechanisms operate affectively, shaping decisions through moral persuasion and the modulation of affect. I ask, What feelings are sanctioned or disqualified when violence is enacted through the language of care? Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a northern Italian region where local authorities promote pro-life policies offering economic support to deter abortion, this paper examines how abortion seekers navigate, embody, or resist the intimacy of governance. Interviews and participant observation reveal dissonant affects that defy hegemonic framings of abortion as trauma. By attending to these lived and affective experiences, I reflect on how emotional life becomes both a tool of governance and a terrain of resistance, unsettling the state's atmospheric grip over reproductive bodies.

Presenter(s): Elisa Muntoni

3005 Specters of Consciousness: Bardos and Liminality in Buddhist Perspectives on the Between

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 6

Type: Oral Presentation Session

From the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead to the institution of reincarnated spiritual leaders, among the most historically and culturally significant ways in which Indo-Tibetan Buddhism has captured the "Western" imagination is in the matter of death, the afterlife, and what lies in between. This ranges from the fascination with peri- and post-mortem states such as tukdam or the bardo (which consciousness is said to persist and be in peril of becoming a ghost) to the cultural histories that both haunt and give meaning to contemporary

conflicts and achievements. These are further troubled by the tension between experience and certainty, of where to locate the subject or subjectivity, the uncanniness of the felt presence in this intermediate zone between past and future, populated by material markers of the spectral: relics, skulls, media. These domains converge in the multiplication of liminal spaces, the uncanny domains in which death and life, like the eponymous character of Poe's "Monsieur Valdemar," seem to speak to us in some way.

Each of these panelists are themselves living in between: lay and religious, exile and home, East and West. "Specters of Consciousness: Bardos and Liminality in Buddhist Perspectives on the Between" brings together scholars and practitioners from Tibet, India, Nepal, and Taiwan to speak of the ways in which the specters of East and West engage in matters of soteriological import and contemporary significance. They interrogate both the apparitions and the experiences, haunted by emic questions that will help nuance our epistemological

frameworks for understanding media, memory, and the evocation of possible futures.

Section: Society for the Anthropology of Religion

Organizer: Dylan Lott, University of Chicago

Chair: Dylan Lott, University of Chicago

Presenter(s): Jurme Dorjee, Chun-Chun Wang, Geshe Jamyang Palden, Tenzin Norgyal, Tenzing Chhodol, Tenzing Dhamdul

Discussant: Dylan Lott, University of Chicago

Presentation(s): Shadows of the Real: A Discourse on Death and Liberation

According to Kunkhyen Longchenpa's The Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle (Thekchhog Dzo), all manifestations apart from the inner expanse of primordial purity constitute states of bardos. Thus, this present world is the spectral manifestation of the ground of being; the world is essentially haunted, and we the shadow forms of reality. This paper presents the topic of bardos (intermediate states) within the context of Tibetan culture, focusing on three aspects: the perceptions of bardos in relation to sentient beings, how one remains in samaya commitment, and what specific signs manifest during a yogi's death process

Presenter(s): Jurme Dorjee

(G)host song: Mantra Recitation at the Time of Death

For many cultures, the moment of death is fought with potential and consequence. And many cultures have devised rituals to help guide or control the mind or spirit of the deceased in this potent moment, either to secure propitious rebirth or everlasting peace or, at the very least, to appease the spirit of the dead (and the living) to move on. Drawing on sources from Chinese Buddhist sutras, this presentation explores the practice of mantra recitation at the time of death. Following a review of the history of this practice in Chinese Buddhism and its connection to the sutras, two case studies exploring the practice as it unfolds today in Taiwanese hospital and

hospice settings will be presented, alongside historical and contemporary media portrayals of the practice.

Presenter(s): Chun-Chun Wang

Beacons of the Afterlife: Clear Light and the Bardo of the Moment of Death

While Indo-Tibetan Buddhism posits a panoply of ghosts, oracles, and spectral presences, none of these liminal states of being have so captured the Western imagination - and mobilized its scientific apparatus and imagination - as *tukdam* (Tib. thugs dam) the "dead, but not yet died" state of consciousness of the tantric adept at the moment of death. Combining both first-person reflection and ethnographic interviews, the author will draw on his experience as monastic advisor to Western scientists conducting psychophysiological research on death meditation to highlight the range of empirically significant phenomena excluded from the frame of "objective" investigation. The author will also explore how a re-engagement with the stages of death as presented in key textual sources provide a new frame for investigation these and other phenomena in ways consonant with the Tibetan Buddhist worldview.

Presenter(s): Geshe Jamyang Palden

Beyond the Final Breath: Examining Death, Consciousness, and Miraculous Signs in Tibetan Buddhist Tradition

This paper examines the complex interplay between traditional Tibetan Buddhist approaches to death and contemporary perspectives on mortality. Through analysis of religious texts, personal observations, and sociological research, we explore how Tibetan Buddhism conceptualizes death not as an endpoint but as a transitional state of consciousness. Central to this understanding is the concept of the intermediate state (*bardo*), where consciousness continues after death in a form determined by karmic influences and future rebirth. Drawing from classical texts like the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and *Abhidharmakosa*, the research

explains how beings in this state manifest with complete sensory faculties and typically remain for seven days before transitioning to rebirth. The study investigates multiple aspects of this paradigm, including the various types of *bardos*, death rituals, mystical phenomena during cremation, and the unique integration of death discourse in child-rearing practices. Drawing on comparative analysis with Western approaches, particularly the work of Ariès and Elias on the institutionalization of death, this study highlights how Tibetan Buddhist communities maintain a more integrated relationship with mortality. The paper documents specific practices

such as pre-death practices, post-death rituals, and the systematic preparation for death through meditation and spiritual practice. This research contributes to our understanding of alternative approaches to death.

Presenter(s): Tenzin Norgyal

The Ani and the Aghori: History as Haunting among Buddhist nuns and Hindu charnel dwellers in contemporary Nepal

Aghost is commonly defined as the spirit or soul of a deceased person that is believed to linger in the physical world, often manifesting as an apparition, sound, or unexplained presence stirring at edge of reality and illusion, drifting like echoes of the past. This paper will consider these registers through the practices of Buddhist and Hindu communities in Kathmandu, Nepal. Among the Buddhist community in Nepal, ghosts are seen as real but impermanent beings trapped in the cycle of rebirth due to unresolved karma, attachment, or improper funeral rites. This belief mobilizes rituals following death in order to free these souls and let them pass to next life peacefully, reinforcing the religious perspective that ghosts are real but tied to karmic cycles rather than eternal entities. In Hinduism, particularly among Aghori sadhus, ghosts and spirits are believed to exist in cremation grounds, where they linger due to unresolved karma and attachments to the material world. The Aghoris cultivate these presences in their own spiritual development and meditate in cremation sites to transcend fear, communicate with spirits, and break societal taboos. The author brings her personal experience and ethnographic interviews with members of each community to reflect on the cultural stakes involved in such practices in Kathmandu following the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

Presenter(s): Tenzing Chhodol

From Hungry Ghosts to Haunted Houses: Tibetan Buddhism and Contemporary Youth Media in India

What do Tibetan Buddhist teachings on hungry ghosts share with modern youth's fascination with haunted houses, ghost stories, and the paranormal? Tibetan Buddhism views ghosts as manifestations of unresolved karma and attachment, existing within the cycle of rebirth rather than as mere spirits of the dead. Unlike Western perspectives, ghosts in Tibetan belief are beings reborn into a specific existence due to karmic accumulation, inhabiting a realm that overlaps with the human world. Today's youth engage with spirits through horror films, social media, and ghost-hunting trends, shaping a modern supernatural culture that resonates-or clashes-with Buddhist notions of the bardo and restless spirits. Using ethnographic and archival data, this presentation explores how ancient wisdom and contemporary ghost beliefs intersect, revealing deeper connections between fear, desire, and the search for meaning across cultures and generations.

Presenter(s): Tenzing Dhamdul

Discussion

3728 Ecological Politics in the Age of Green Transitions

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 7

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This panel brings together authors of recently published monographs that critically engage with the

theme of ecological transitions at the intersection of environmental anthropology and science and technology studies (STS). In the early decades of the 21st century, attempts to reconcile economic growth with environmental concerns have frequently manifested as investments in green infrastructure projects, technological innovation, and new forms of ecological governance. This group of monographs examines a wide range of projects ranging from the rise of green capitalism in REDD projects in Brazil (Greenleaf 2024), racial justice and solar transitions in New York City (Lennon 2025), the creation of new data storage facilities and its impact on sovereignty and emerging spatial politics in Iceland (Johnson 2023), environmental justice, toxicity and place-making in late-industrial Baltimore (Ahmann 2024), and grassroots waste politics and ecological city-building in authoritarian China (Zhang 2024). Together, these books show how emerging green technocratic regimes both reinforce and mask longstanding patterns of inequality, including racial, colonial, and rural–urban divides. At the same time, they highlight how ecological and environmental projects are taken up in diverse and complex ways through local engagements with technocratic forms of ecological governance.

This roundtable will explore shared conceptual ground for understanding the ecological regimes emerging in the early 21st century—regimes often described through terms like green capitalism, late capitalism, and technocracy. Together, we ask: how can we think across diverse geopolitical contexts to identify common points of mobilization, resistance, and action? Each author will serve as a discussant for another's work, drawing out core themes, arguments, and questions that connect across their respective studies.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Amy Zhang, New York University, Myles Lennon, Brown University

Presenter(s): Amy Zhang, New York University, Maron Greenleaf, Dartmouth College, Chloe Ahmann, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Alix Johnson, Macalester College

Discussant: Myles Lennon, Brown University

3845 Conjuring Alternative Worlds: Cooperatives, Social Movements, and the Future of Food & Climate

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 8

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Anthropology is concerned about a world haunted by capitalism—a simultaneously material and non-material, omnipresent and totalizing force that orders everyday life. Against this seemingly inescapable predicament, anthropologists have also sought to document oases of community organizing to understand the radically hopeful subjectivities these foster and chart the contours for an alternative world. In the years since JK Gibson-Graham first made the call to de-center capital from theory and popular discourse, several scholars have answered by ethnographically studying a wide diversity of collective formations like producer cooperatives, food sovereignty movements, activist networks, community-managed commons, and more. This panel hopes to follow in this

tradition, bringing together ethnographic findings from diverse contexts. Our presentations draw attention to how the work of collective organizing and communities' socio-environmental innovations enable them to renegotiate their predicament under capitalism. This panel thus ethnographically attends to how these alternatives are conjured-through creative labor, people-centered institutions, and our interlocutors' own theorizations of their place in the world. Our presentations are woven together by questions such as: What unites diverse grassroots activisms reaching for postcapitalist and posthumanist futures? How do these experiments foster radically empowered subjectivities? How are concrete practices and networks of care taking shape in the present? What kinds of resistance do these initiatives face, and how might these be overcome? This panel draws on three key trends in relevant anthropological literature. The first is the immediate question of the economic "viability" of alternative formations (Collins 2017). The scholarship on alternative economies illustrates the diverse motivations under which workers, farmers, and service providers come together to engage with mainstream markets; yet their experiences also warn of how the boundaries between cooperative organizations and state and corporate-entities may be dangerously porous and vulnerable to cooptation (Kasmir 1996; Vargas-Cetina 2011). Second, literature from critical environmental anthropology (Fabricant 2023, Wylie 2018) highlights the collusion of colonial and national states in enabling the extractive movement of capital across contemporary history. These scholars illuminate the complex ways in which state and corporate entities contribute to processes of land dispossession and environmental damage, while simultaneously creating the terrain of resistance to these processes. Third are feminist approaches (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) that center care in the imagination of a postcapitalist and postanthropocentric future. Feminist literature about care problematizes the undervaluation and appropriation of care but also addresses how postcapitalist futures should be imagined as part of broader entanglements and communities of care.

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Molly Doane, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Riya Sharma, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Riya Sharma, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Benjamin Bernard-Herman, University of Illinois at Chicago | AnthroClub, Riya Sharma, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Kevin Suemnicht, Gabrielle Powell, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Luis Gómez Ordóñez, Caitlyn Dye, University of Illinois, Chicago, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Material Spirits: Cultivating Spiritual Forces in Material Goods with Biodynamic Farmers

This presentation examines one group of farmers in the United States who approach their agricultural work as a type of spiritual practice. Biodynamic farmers conceptualize agriculture as a type of "spiritual science," and understand their role as a farmer to be channeling spiritual forces into the crops that they grow. Learning to read and interpret these spiritual forces is one of the central tasks of the biodynamic farmer.

Building on participant observation and interviews with biodynamic farmers in and around Viroqua, Wisconsin, this paper argues that in bringing forth these spirits, and by learning to see the manifestations of spiritual forces in the material products of agriculture, these biodynamic farmers position care for both earthly and spiritual forces as the primary function of agriculture, rather than efficiently producing the maximum possible harvest. Drawing from Anna Tsing's notion of patchy capitalism and applying it to the interior lives of farmers, this paper argues that the framework of spiritual science provides an alternative mental framework through which biodynamic farmers assess the meaning and value of their agricultural practices. Even though the material products of this labor are often sold in competitive markets, the conditions of production for this biodynamic produce create non-monetary meaning and value for both the farmers and their spiritual being.

Presenter(s): Benjamin Bernard-Herman

Cooperative Countercultures and Markets of Possibility: Insights from Southern India

Cooperatives serve as sites of creative engagements with mainstream markets. Particularly in the Global South, rural producer cooperatives are held up as a panacea for economic, agrarian, and environmental crises as members come together to share both resources and risks. However, the viability of cooperatives on the basis of their "ability to compete" in the market continues to be debated. Based on my fieldwork at a prominent collective of cooperatives in southern India, this paper revisits JK Gibson-Graham's concept of "intentional community economies"—initiatives that treat the market as a register for ethical decision-making. Specifically, I draw on their suggestion that alternative organizations like cooperatives exercise their "freedom to act" against and simultaneously resist co-option by its mainstream other. Building on this framework, I analyze how this collective's organic farmers' cooperative and other enterprises insist on "engaging with the market on their own terms"—such as through the use of alternative peer-review organic certification systems, and by intentionally limiting their business operations to a local, sustainable scale.

The paper ethnographically draws out how members pursue their broader self-emancipatory goals—despite recurring challenges like price fluctuations, consumer apathy, changing regulations, and internal organizational disagreements,—in ways that ch

Presenter(s): Riya Sharma

Anthropocene Humanism and the Autonomous Social Imaginary in Southern Illinois

The Carbondale Spring was an organization in Southern Illinois (active between 2019 and 2021) which sought to defund the police and to reallocate these funds to create a variety of ecological and social programs. Specifically, they sought to create a food autonomy program, a renewable energy fund, a team of care workers to replace functions currently performed by the police, and to create workers cooperatives. While ultimately unsuccessful, this organization was able to use their program to collectively think through the problems facing their town and to pose solutions to these problems. In the process, members rethought basic assumptions of their lives and the possibilities for how society could function – and how human society should respond to climate change. I call

this process of (re)subjectivation "Anthropocene humanism." I contrast Anthropocene humanism to ontological approaches toward climate change which, in various ways, argues that altering the ontological categories underpinning modern thought is the essential political task for responding to anthropogenic climate change. Anthropocene humanism, in contrast, thinks about climate change and the subject of climate change through the dialectic of action. Recalling the 'ghost' of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, I argue that ontological approaches to climate change offer an idealist program for climate action, which I contrast with the Carbon

Presenter(s): Kevin Suemnicht

Chicago's Household Gardens & Yards in the Black Freedom Tradition

In *Silencing the Past* Trouillot (1995) notes there was a moment when the Haitian revolution hinged on slaves' demands, one of which was for an additional day to garden. That realization dramatically shifted the lens of this research project, a decade-long study of the social justice movement fighting food apartheid and health disparities in Chicago's Black inner-city, utilizing participant-observation and interviews with school and community gardeners, coordinators of farmers markets and urban agriculture programs. Questions persisted on household resources most conducive for gardening, meal planning, cooking from scratch, as well as why gardening common in the South and in the first half of the 20th century in Chicago disappeared from most Black household practices. This research situates household care and mutual aid practices within the wider Black Freedom Tradition, in conversation with racial capitalism and wider social reproduction theorizing, and feminist visions within Hayden's *Grand Domestic Revolution* (1982). This project is also in dialogue with scholars theorizing and documenting Black geographies and foodways (Benjamin 2022, Garth & Reece 2020, White 2018). The multi-generational household and its function in the invisible economy of the community, prior to urban renewal in the late 20th century, had served many purposes, but looks to have been critical in the reproduction of collective Black family life grounded in cooperative activities.

Presenter(s): Gabrielle Powell

Into the fields: migrant labor, everyday pesticide entanglements, and Midwest plantation regimes

This research reflects on Migrant Farmworkers who are exposed to pesticides in farms and monocrops in the state of Illinois from a critical environmental perspective, which confronts the homogenizing assumption of flat landscapes and resistance in the Midwest. Here migrant farmworkers survive and create networks within chemical geographies and beyond the economic poisoning associated with monocrops and industrial farming. This work was done moving between sites. On the way to doing that, the work uses an approach that reflects on farmworkers' voices and makes visual ethnographic insights to describe forms of violence and state practices while depicting the migrant farmworkers inside the agricultural complex of Illinois. This research describes what it means to work in the fields from the perspective of migrant farmworkers, focusing on the relations between pesticides, agricultural exceptionalism, land concentration, and farmworkers' everyday agricultural practices of resistance.

Presenter(s): Luis Gómez Ordóñez

Ac(Countability): Scale and Quantification in Bolivia's Activist Climate Accounting

As international governance processes have repeatedly failed to confront climate change, activists increasingly seek to challenge systems of accounting for greenhouse gas emissions upheld by institutions like the United Nations. Some of these interventions seek to disrupt greenhouse gas accounting practices that center the scale of the nation state by highlighting the climate impact of wealthy individuals and corporations. Others challenge how accountability for emissions is allocated within the inter-state system.

This paper examines one set of alternative accounting practices undertaken by a network of Bolivian climate justice activists. As part of a pressure campaign to extract stronger environmental commitments from the Bolivian government in the run-up to the 25th annual U.N. Conference of Participants (COP 25) meeting, activists labored to produce their own inventory of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. By enumerating harms they believed would be obfuscated by official government reports, participants in this effort engaged knowledge production towards a goal of contabilidad – encompassing both countability in the sense of quantification, and accountability in the sense of political responsibility. Drawing on participant observation, I examine (ac)countability as a conflicted practice. Even as efforts at counter-knowledge proliferate, they are haunted by dominant scales (i.e. the nation-state) that precondition both knowledge production and political action.

Presenter(s): Caitlyn Dye

7819 Mediations Between Water and Land: Encounter, Transformation, and Collaboration

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Marriott **Room:** Studio 9

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

What is a shore for you? Since Marshall Sahlins' provocative essays, the shore has stood in anthropology as a symbolic site of first contact-of cultural encounter, misunderstanding, and transformation. It is the liminal space where colonizers and the colonized first meet. Meanwhile, with Malinowski's standards of the fieldwork, the shore has also come to signify both arrival and departure: the moment the anthropologist steps into the field, and when they leave to become a ghost until the moment of future return. Yet, from the moment of the singular encounter, the shore can also be seen as a shared and collaborative taskscape (Ingold), where anthropologists and communities work together.

In this roundtable, we keep the spatial and temporal framing of the shore open to initiate a discussion on conceptual, methodological, and ethical dimensions of the shore. We also understand that shorelines are never fixed materially and ideologically; they are always in flux, contentious, and reimagined. In taking seriously the materiality of the shoreline, we are met with

the ambiguous space where land meets water, where tides ebb and flow, where different species meet, and where various forces continuously alter the shape of the shoreline. On the other hand, shorelines are made seemingly stable in and through relations that constitute spatial and temporal meaning-making. While some relations work to abstract and foreclose, others operate on the very ambiguity of the coastal space as an operation of exclusion, bringing even the taskspace into contention that the ethnographer must reckon with. Given the shoreline's tensions-its role in encounters, boundary-making, and competing temporalities-how might the ethnographer approach its ambiguous movements analytically, methodologically, and ethically?

Bringing together ethnographic experiences from different shores of the world ocean-from Fiji to Puerto Rico, from Svalbard to the rivers of India-participants of the roundtable reflect on the shoreline both metaphorically and materially. They discuss transgressions, transformations, and entanglements; and imagine the shoreline as a political space, a site of climate change and interspecies contact, a moment of encounter, a route for engaged anthropology, and more.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nikita Karbasov, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Rishav Kumar Thakur , Paulina Gomez , Nikita Karbasov, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Ty Holtzman , Wilmer Falcon, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Giulio Panettiere

Discussant: Paulina Gomez

3334 When the Void Speaks: Ghostlining and Historical Justice

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Maurepas (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Manjapra (2022) writes that the "ghost line" separates the history of Man from the history of the voids, a conceptual boundary that distinguishes what is preserved in archives and public memory from what is deliberately forgotten, silenced, or otherwise lost. This panel explores how these ghostlines are produced and maintained through both spectacular and subtle forms of historic and ongoing violence. Drawing from ethnographic, archaeological, and historical approaches, we demonstrate how forgetting functions not as the passive counterpart to remembrance but as an active, deliberate process encoded in bureaucratic systems, institutional practices, public memorials, and transformed landscapes.

Our presentations trace the creation of and resistance to institutional forms of forgetting across diverse geographies and temporalities: the coalfields of Central Appalachia, where memories of labor uprisings lie buried beneath literal and symbolic sediment; settler historical markers in New York that overwrite Indigenous histories with myths of disappearance; post-conflict Northern Ireland, where narratives of forgiveness mask deeper entanglements of state violence; and pandemic-era Ecuador, where bureaucratic failures to account for the dead transformed grief into a suspended, unresolvable process. Throughout these examples, we examine how material culture,

land, and bodily absence are mobilized and obscured within memory politics. Simultaneously, we explore the ways communities reclaim histories across the ghostline by challenging dominant narratives, confronting temporal and ecological violence, and insisting on histories that acknowledge dispossession.

Together, these case studies reveal that the ghostline is not a fixed or impermeable boundary, but a site of tension, contestation, and potential rupture. By attending to the mechanisms through which forgetting is enacted and to the agents who resist this erasure, we expose the intimate ties between memory, power, and place. Our collective inquiry underscores that confronting historical silences requires more than recovery; it demands a reconfiguration of how histories are told, by whom, and for what ends. In traversing the ghostline, we not only illuminate the shadows it casts but also affirm the enduring presence of those it seeks to obscure. Reparatory justice, as Manjapra argues, demands ways of retelling the past that listen to those voices consigned to the void (2022).

Manjapra, Kris. *Black Ghost of Empire: The long death of slavery and the failure of emancipation*. Simon and Schuster, 2022.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Ethan Karnes, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Ethan Karnes, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Dusti Bridges, Cornell University, Department of Anthropology, Ethan Karnes, George Washington University, Department of Anthropology, Maria Jose Pelaez, George Washington University, Matthew Gault

Discussant: Charlotte Williams

Presentation(s): Historical Markers and Material Collections: Constructing Imaginary Settler Landscapes in Upstate New York

The New York State historical marker at the Levanna archaeological site, placed in 1935, informs passersby of a theory (long since debunked) of a violent pre-Columbian replacement of one Indigenous group by another. This marker, and others like it, produce a false narrative of Indigenous history born from the settler removal and interpretation of Indigenous material culture. The collecting of this material by both avocational and professional archaeologists was often done under the guise of salvage or preservation, with Indigenous traces and materials removed to institutional collections and separated from the landscape and living communities. Removed in such a way, the absence of these materials and their inaccessibility institutionalizes and supports narratives of erasure and ideologies of dispossession, ghostlining (Manjapra 2023) and denying stolen Indigenous histories and memories. Similarly, the false or inaccurate historical markers that overwrite the Indigenous landscape have since become artifacts to be preserved themselves, with attention centered on their maintenance and restoration, rather than correction. Together, these practices and institutions construct and maintain an imaginary settler geography that enacts and reenacts dispossession, real and imagined, historical and contemporary, across a material and ideological landscape.

Presenter(s): Dusti Bridges

Where Ghosts Gather: Social Forgetting, Organized Labor, and the Politics of Remembrance in Central Appalachia

Folklorist Ruth Ann Musik observed that West Virginia's landscape seemed perfectly suited for ghosts. Hundreds or even thousands, she speculated, could gather nightly among the endless hills and valleys unnoticed. For nearly a century, the violent struggles of the Mine Wars were deliberately excluded from textbooks and national narratives. Unionist miners, threatened with loss of livelihood and freedom, suppressed their personal experiences. As they labored underground, accumulating coal dust in their lungs, miners simultaneously perpetuated environmental degradation and deepened dispossession. Their work reshaped the landscape, contributing to slow violence while diminishing the topographical features that had allowed these historical traumas to remain hidden.

Today, as the altered topography offers fewer hiding places for unacknowledged histories, the material remains of the Mine Wars have emerged as powerful testaments to what official narratives sought to erase. Contemporary union coal miners, now experiencing the consequences of the slow violence set in motion by their forebearers, find themselves uniquely positioned to recognize both past and present forms of exploitation. By reanimating these histories, miners are forging connections between acute violence and slow violence. This remembering serves not merely as historical recovery but as collective action, transforming Musik's ghosts from silent presences into active witnesses.

Presenter(s): Ethan Karnes

"Because you Have Already Buried your Dead": Elsa's Dual Loss and the politics of waiting in Ecuador's COVID-19 Pandemic

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ecuador gained global notoriety as bodies lay abandoned in its streets—a crisis that laid bare the state's patterns of managing death. This paper centers on Elsa Maldonado's struggle to reclaim her mother's remains, revealing how state delays during Ecuador's pandemic response extended beyond Auyero's theorization of "waiting" as a governance. Confronted with ambiguous claims—a marble urn and a buried body both purportedly belonging to her mother—Elsa faced officials who dismissed her grief while demanding payment for DNA tests and mortuary services. Through her story, this ethnography investigates: (1) How do bureaucratic mechanisms for certifying death enable or obstruct mourning? (2) What happens when procedural rituals designed to exhaust poor citizens entangle officials in recursive cycles of verification? (3) How does the state's production of multiple bodies for a single death expose foundational failures in documenting mortality? Drawing on interviews and archival analysis, I argue that Ecuador's pandemic bureaucracy transformed administrative encounters into sites of violence, ensnaring both mourners and officials in an unending loop of evidentiary demands. Ultimately, the inability to conclusively "prove" Elsa's mother's death reflects a broader rupture in state legibility, underscoring how the pandemic magnified existing institutional weaknesses into crises of recognition and care.

Presenter(s): Maria Jose Pelaez

"It's about right and wrong, not Nationalist or Unionist, Protestant or Catholic"-complicated pasts and forgetting in post-conflict Northern Ireland

This paper will explore two acts of intentional forgetting in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland. The first is the forgotten connection between pro-British paramilitaries, the State, and local communities from the formation of the Northern Irish state in 1921 through the 1968-1998 Conflict. By excluding these connections from their history telling, unionists can maintain a narrative of innocence for past violence, excuse state violence as individual acts of "broken military code", and depoliticise conflict, characterising it as criminality rather than resistance. The second is the forgotten voices and stories which challenged the narrative of "forgiveness" that developed in the aftermath of the 1987 Enniskillen Bomb carried out by the IRA. The memorialisation of the 1987 Enniskillen Bomb built on the narrative that Enniskillen was "the town that forgave the IRA". This was a misrepresentation of Senator Gordon Wilson's statement that he bore "no ill will" towards those involved in the death of his daughter. Senator Wilson became central to the post-Bomb peacebuilding efforts and memorialisation process at a time when many other victims and survivors of the bomb were unable, or unwilling, to speak. Challenges to this narrative were characterised as bitter or disruptive to the Peace Process. Both acts of forgetting attempt to sanitise the past, silence inconvenient truths, and erase or suppress narratives which complicate the past and contemporary political and social identities.

Presenter(s): Matthew Gault

Discussion

5247 Is Sustainability Sustainable? Corporate Value(s) Now, Part 2

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A1 & A2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

We live in a time of monsters. Fires, floods, and other disasters (natural and unnatural) abound. Fantasies of disembedded markets -- which anthropologists have long loved to hate -- sound quaint when life seems swamped, swarmed, and stuck in an increasingly disorderly socio-ecological world. At such a time, we ask: what can anthropologists learn from capitalist pursuits of sustainability?

Corporate sustainability may be an unlikely sphere to seek new insights, often critiqued as a "green" fig leaf covering up business-as-usual depredations, and now condemned from different angles as a "woke" assault on capitalism's values. The prevailing anthropological disposition has treated capitalist enterprise as unsustainable (in descriptive and normative terms) and capitalist "sustainability" as a ruse for profit. We might pause here and attend ethnographically to whether, or which, capitalist sustainability actors are keeping on in the first instance, let alone profitably. Advocates for sustainability now seem fewer and farther between in many markets, beset by rollbacks, cutbacks, and backlashes. Existing practitioners grapple not only with external

arguments but also doubts and uncertainties within their projects and workplaces. Where are those holding onto corporate sustainability, amid a diversifying mob of ghosts, zombies, and other returns of sustainability's repressed?

This panel assembles papers that take capitalist sustainability projects, pursuits, and people seriously even at a moment of apparent defeat and disorder in much of the corporate world. Is there more than meets the headlines? We offer anthropological interventions in the political ecology of capitalism, engaged with practices and practitioners of corporate sustainability, SDGs, sustainable finance, etc., as geo-historically situated phenomena and as arenas for ongoing and uneven negotiations of capitalist value(s). What are the contradictions, contingencies, and unexpected convergences involved in making capitalist enterprises sustainable, or trying and failing to? What are the relations, practices, and epistemologies through which profit and other values are sustained, lost, or transformed? How does all this vary in space and time?

We will avoid the analytical traps of capitalocentrism while also holding at bay reflex temptations to imagine otherwise. Instead, scholars will present papers that stay ethnographically with corporate forms, markets, supply chains, ecosystems, and their troubles.

Section: Society for Economic Anthropology

Organizer: Matt Schneider, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Montserrat Perez Castro Perez, Dartmouth College

Chair: H. Nazli Azergun, University of Virginia

Presenter(s): Olivia Norma Jørgensen, Matt Schneider, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Asprey Liu, Columbia University, Department of Anthropology, Montserrat Perez Castro Perez, Dartmouth College

Discussant: Matthew Archer, Maastricht University

Presentation(s): Pragmatic idealism, and the fight for climate change through corporate reporting

This paper offers an account of moral work in the everyday lives of professionals obtaining assurance and ensuring trust in sustainability-related corporate reporting. I draw from in-depth participant observation (2021-2025) in an audit firm in Denmark during the European Union's adoption of a new regulatory framework for sustainability information. I explain how this framework requires collaboration between sustainability professionals and financial auditors, which has led to different understandings of "materiality thresholds" and what they consider important. I focus on everyday moral dilemmas and how sustainability professionals' vacillation between experiences of hope and resentment led them to doubt the frames of which they were a part—i.e., those of a powerful audit firm—without leaving these frames. Their doubts, instead, settled as a newfound hope in what the future has in store: that with the implementation of EU sustainability regulations, companies would change their practices to become more sustainable. I suggest that this premise, that regulatory frameworks and audit standards would lead companies towards more sustainable behavior, creates a particular kind of morality that shaped the shared context navigated by the sustainability professionals, financial auditors, and companies. This new understanding of

sustainability within finance, created through moral tensions, has shaped the business landscape of companies' work with sustainability and beyond.

Presenter(s): Olivia Norma Jørgensen

Is the Elephant in the Room with Us Right Now? Political Anxieties in Sustainable Finance

The 2024 US presidential re-election marked the midpoint of my fieldwork on sustainable finance [hereafter SusFi] in the UK. Reaction at professional convenings and on LinkedIn varied: general dismay; resolute calls for redoubling efforts; pointed questioning of the sustainability "bubble" and its assumptions; rarer proposals to appeal to MAGA world; one interlocutor explained to me in Jungian terms that the President is SusFi's "shadow and projection." In this paper, I interpret that election less as rupture than re-instantiation of SusFi politics, detailing a psycho-affective discourse that was already a principal means for voicing both doubt and due diligence regarding the uncertain effectiveness and disputed ends of SusFi efforts. I treat sustainability professionals' vernacular theories of mind as openings in/on a latent politics of Value(s), beyond obvious problematics of Government and Party. Unpacking the favored cliché of "the elephant [not] in the room," I elaborate often explicit invocations of "the elephant" – sustainability's manifold Others, not only the Big One across the pond – and emic suggestions for understanding or overcoming such entities. I then situate these anxious figures against often tacit theories of "the room," mapping the problem spaces in which SusFi materializes but also the constitutive outsides where professionalized sustainability efforts confront institutional inertia, increasingly vengeful opposition, and potential undoing.

Presenter(s): Matt Schneider

Greenwashing, A Requiem: Financial Narratives, Speculation, and Capitalist Realism in Trump's New World

The contradiction of value(s) in sustainable finance, the financial sector that aims to "do good while doing well," has been litigated in public fora from the Financial Times opinion pages to the HBO/BBC hit drama "Industry." The real-life industry's claim that environmental/social values can be made commensurate with financial "value" (singular) has been increasingly called into question by commentators, regulators, and finally investors. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) funds saw outflows in 2024 amid increased scrutiny and apparently declining faith even before the reelection of U.S. President Donald Trump. The term "greenwashing" once criticized the disjuncture between normative and speculative functions of ESG investing, implying that businesses profited by misrepresenting themselves as providing a positive environmental/social benefit. But with an authoritarian, protectionist, and climate change-denialist at the helm of the world's largest economy, how are financial institutions rethinking their value(s) where liberal consumers, global suppliers, and climate pragmatists still exert a considerable market force? What new forms of "narrative" washing are emerging, and what do they belie? This paper draws on early evidence from fieldwork with sustainable and conventional finance professionals in New York and London to

speculate on the relationship between profit and politics in what institutional investors are calling "a new world."

Presenter(s): Asprey Liu

"Being Realistic": The Affective Ambivalence of Money in Corporate Sustainability

Companies' sustainable sourcing strategies aim to manage raw materials' socioenvironmental impact and secure procurement. Yet, critics consider that sustainable sourcing seeks to maintain corporate power over the supply chain. During my fieldwork (2022-2025) in the palm oil sector in Mexico, sustainability workers were also skeptical of corporate interest in sustainable sourcing. Common sense in the industry is that companies prioritize money over sustainability. Yet, workers considered that the way money circulates in the supply chain is a more "realistic" way to "do something." In this presentation, I analyze money as an ethnographic object that shapes sustainability workers' imaginaries about their jobs, and corporate sustainability (CS) more broadly. I focus on agricultural pilot projects and the experience of field technicians and managers working amidst conflicting relationships between clients, buyers, and suppliers. How money affects trust, competition, and reciprocity in the "conventional" form of trading can contradict or reinforce CS as a realistic approach. By following money as affective and material semiotic device, I argue that workers' experiences of corporate profit-seeking as both a driver of and constraint on their work inform their perceptions of CS as the most "realistic" way to address socioecological problems. Attention to the ambivalence of money opens possibilities for rethinking alienation and the affective potential of critique.

Presenter(s): Montserrat Perez Castro Perez

Discussion

6950 Questioning Everyday Consumerism of Popular Series and Their Reflections on Socio-Cultural Values in Turkey

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR A3 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

The relationship between the worldly and nationally represented Turkish television series and the public culture in Turkey has been a long-standing subject of debate. While there are the arguments that Turkey is predominantly a Muslim society, much of the content produced in television series and digital platform shows is often perceived as being inconsistent with the assumed religious and cultural values of the society. Nevertheless, these series frequently break rating records and run for multiple seasons not only in Turkey but also in different countries. This raises the controversial question, if these media productions do not align with their assumed cultural and religious values, why do people continue to consume and reproduce content that is not compatible with their own cultural and religious values? And how do these media contents affect their daily lives?

This paper seeks to present and discuss the findings of a research that examines with a focus on violence against women in the seven of the most popular Turkish television series from the 2023–2024 season and seven digital platform series using critical discourse analysis. Additionally, the study incorporates data from focus group meetings with the audience of these series. Our findings reveal that the majority of the series features content characterized by especially deep and implicit psychological violence (particularly against women), dysfunctional relationships, mafia involvement, torture, repetitive swearing dialogues and obscure physical violence embedded in different performance all of which are perceived as being inconsistent with the general values, attitudes and practices of "Turkish" society. The most remarkable finding of the focus groups has been the ignorance and unawareness about the existence of deep and constant psychological and emotional violence against women in those series. In this sense, do individuals freely consent to "the art of governing" by the state and global capitalist powers? Foucault's concept of governmentality offers us to explain this process by which individuals are both self-disciplined and directed to certain norms of behavior through the state and other institutions, including media (Foucault, 1991). This situation therefore creates a space of conflict over how to discipline individuals' self-monitoring behaviors.

In conclusion, by exploring the complex interplay between ethical/religious values and the consumption of "problematic" media content, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how media functions within a globalized consumer society, particularly in a culturally and religiously conservative context like Turkey especially through the understanding of violence against women.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Nesibe Demir

Presenter(s): Nesibe Demir , Rumeysa Ertuğrul , Yunus Yesil , Nesibe Şahin , Betül Tozlu , Nüseybe Karagöz , Nursem Keskin Aksay

Discussant: Ravza Altuntas , Nursem Keskin Aksay

2504 An ICC Perspective on 'Houyi 2023': Exploring U.S. and Chinese Civilizations through Concepts of Home, Heroism, and Power”

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR B2 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

In 2021, the scene play Houyi 2023 appeared on the stage of the 4th SFLEP Cup National College Students Intercultural Competence Contest in China. It demonstrated the conflicts between US and China in artworks triggered by the different concepts of homes, heroism and powers in two civilizations. The conflicts in the scene play were the epitome of the more profound ones in the current international arena. To mitigate them, the intercultural communication (ICC) theories were put into the broader landscape of myths, history and civilizations. The paper tries to analyze what do the concepts of homes and heroism in the artworks of both civilizations signify and what

conflicts can be caused even with the communication attempt and cross-cultural awareness. It is ultimately found out that the difference does not necessitate the conflict, and the world is wide enough for both individualism and collectivism.

Section: Society for East Asian Anthropology

Organizer: Jia Xu

Presenter(s): Thomas Bleeker , Lucinda Lee

Discussant: Lihui WANG

3352 How do we care for what remains? Tending the ghosts of transformation through mobility, aging, urbanization, and disaster

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C1 (3rd fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

How do humans maintain and expand practices of care for what is-in bodies, homes, landscapes, communities-amidst radical transformation? Our roundtable addresses this question across contexts between Asia and North America where people are living within rapidly changing embodied, ambient, infrastructural, environmental, and social structures – lives and afterlives often interpreted through tropes of loss, grief, destruction, and being "left behind" or excluded from the spoils of progress. Yet those who remain, along with material and affective components of their lives, endure and adapt. This roundtable considers: how "aging in place" can be reconfigured through mobility and how impermanence surfaces as an embodied practice and a philosophical concept in Buddhist lifeworlds; how furnishings salvaged in the wake of war can be reconceived as sites of memory and rootedness; how people can develop new sensemaking practices following disaster to (re)shape relations with the material world; how refugees are encouraged to take on psychologized, biomedicalized stories in order to heal their "trauma" as defined by medical professionals; how empire's traces drift and linger through space, gesture, and everyday forms of care; and how houses rebuilt after an earthquake can anchor households while members are far away. Through these contexts, we explore human capacities to reimagine practices of care as lifeworlds merge with imagined futures that do not explicitly include space for human and non-human traces of a recently dislodged past. How does tending to these ghosts of transformation enable individuals and collectivities to challenge narratives of complete rupture by integrating parts of themselves across temporalities and scales?

Roundtable participants will reflect upon specific ethnographic contexts as grounding for a broader collaborative conversation. Sienna Craig will consider aging and migration between Mustang, Nepal and Himalayan New York City; Uyen Dang will contemplate vernacular memory in Da Lat, Vietnam; Maya Daurio will discuss human processes of recalibration with the environment in response to fire and flood in the Poudre Canyon, Colorado; Adrie Kusserow will investigate the socializing process of refugee resettlement in Burlington, Vermont; Aika Sato will probe how Japanese empire's traces drift and linger in multi-imperial port cities of Shanghai and Singapore; and Sara Shneiderman will

explore post-earthquake reconstruction in Dolakha, Nepal while offering discussant reflections. In each case, we push against an essentialist 'crisis' (or 'polycrisis') and 'resilience' framing, which can normalize neoliberal relations of power which enable states to frame adaptation as citizens' "personal responsibility." Our conversation cuts across anthropological subfields (aging, mobility, infrastructure, disaster, urbanization, affect) and scholarly generations to expand these debates through a focus on human creativity to tend what remains.

Section: American Ethnological Society

Organizer: Sara Shneiderman, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology, Sienna Craig, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Sienna Craig, Dartmouth College, Department of Anthropology, Uyen Dang, Maya Daurio, Colorado State University, Adrie Kusserow, Saint Michael's College, Aika Sato, Yale University, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Sara Shneiderman, University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology

3785 Locating "American" Waters: Forms, Forces, and Flows of Empire

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C2 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

In this panel, we take a critical "Americanist" approach to water (Cattelino 2010), asking what forms specifically "American" water takes. Here we're thinking about water as located both within the so-called United States, and as an object and conduit of U.S. empire. How is water formed by "American" cultural and political ideologies, legal frameworks, property relations, modes of governance, economic structures, urban-rural geographies, techno-managerial strategies, gender and racial categories? How does the U.S., as a settler society and imperial power, determine water's forms 'at home,' abroad, and at a planetary scale, and with what effects? Following Stewart (2014), we're thinking about water as a "registering form" - a material-symbolic composite charged with "meaning, energy, and potentiality" - through which to analyze the forces immanent to ordinary ways of living. We infuse this notion of "water as register" with Ballestero's (2019) insight that water is not a singular "thing" that can be easily differentiated from its material-semiotic context; instead, water is multiple, heterogenous, and always in motion, manifesting from the specific intersection of other elemental, epistemic, ontological and affective forces. If water (or waters, c.f. Walsh 2021) can be conceptualized as "movement among forces" (Ballestero), what does paying attention to "American" waters' courses and choreographies reveal about U.S. empire's forces and formations? How does following water's constructions and movements allow us to map the specificity of the present, as an intellectual and political practice oriented towards transformation? This panel combines political ecology with cultural poetics approaches to illuminate and analyze the historically-specific, material-semiotic forces. Our panelists draw on a wide variety of methods and modalities--dance, poetry, film, ethnography--to yank together encounters with particularly "American" forms of what we call, broadly, water(s).

Section: Anthropology and Environment Society

Organizer: Hannah Eisler Burnett, Cornell University

Chair: Talia Gordon, University of Michigan

Presenter(s): Ayasha Guerin, Alejandro Garcia Lozano, CUNY, John Jay College, Department of Anthropology, Hunter Kennedy, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Damien Bright, University of Chicago, Teresa Montoya, University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology, Amara Abdal Figueroa

Discussant: Jessica Cattelino, University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Anthropology, Andrea Ballesterio, University of Southern California, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): American Waters: The Tombs by the Collect

Collect Pond is an American horror story. Today the ghost of this water haunts Lower Manhattan's flood maps. The nomenclature of Collect Pond Park serves an environmental reminder at the concrete site – but most New Yorkers pass unaware of the 70-foot-deep waters it once held, of its sacred significance for the Lenape, or the long history of abolitionist organizing there. The earliest colonial treatment of Collect Pond was a boundary that marked the Black side of town and the limit for Indigenous free movement. My research analyzes the events surrounding the polluting of the pond under Dutch and British settlement, its draining and filling, and the displacement of racialized life from the area. I study two tomb sites at the Pond's edges: the city's African Burial Grounds (only rediscovered in 1991, during excavations for the planned construction of a prisoner tunnel to a federal courthouse) and the jail system nicknamed "The Tombs," from the Eighteenth Century to today, where prisoners are disproportionately racialized, Black and Brown people. Taking on Avery Gordon's formulation of ghosts as dense sites, this paper excavates the smothered socio-ecologies of Collect Pond to attend to the violences that continue to pulse at its center. Through a reading of entangled social and environmental site-histories over four centuries, I explore how historical land uses and inhumane treatments continue to haunt this site today, as activists push back against the MCC jail expansion.

Presenter(s): Ayasha Guerin

Between Past and Future Waters: Restoring Relationships with Water in New York City

The waters that surround and flow through New York City often run against gray, impervious shorelines. Where it can sink and infiltrate, water breathes life into salt marshes, coastal dunes, parks and forests. Even so, these waters carry ghosts and monsters from the city's industrial and infrastructural history: toxic compounds from legacy industrial pollution, sewage overflows and fecal pathogens, plastic pollution, threats and realities of flooding. In response, numerous actors and collectives in the city mobilize to create a healthier relationship with troubled waters. This paper examines how some key actors – particularly nongovernmental and civil society groups – respond to this challenge. They do this by: (1) adopting strategic and adaptable roles in contested water governance processes, formal and informal; (2) developing their own interventions and multi-species collaborations to restore ecological functions; and (3) engaging actively and critically with practices of knowledge production that render legible certain qualities of water, contesting

established metrological approaches and developing alternatives. Collectively, these repertoires of action and advocacy allow concerned groups to navigate longstanding and ongoing struggles over the city's waters, often in ways that reframe or resignify as much as they rematerialize lives and relationships. In doing so, they articulate possibilities transforming the city's past and present waters for more hopeful futures.

Presenter(s): Alejandro Garcia Lozano

Water Hazard: The Techno-Politics of Sewage Treatment in Rural Northern Arizona

Golf courses in the Southwest can use up to a million gallons of water each day, exemplifying the wasteful practices that push desert communities to the brink of climate catastrophe. But for the reservation border town of Page, AZ, golf course irrigation is a paradoxical means of municipal growth. Page's course adjoins its wastewater treatment plant; when the grass is watered with treated effluent, state law considers this water "non-consumptively used", and provides Page equivalent "return flow credits" against its total diversion. This loophole allows the City to pump those gallons again, effectively doubling its share of the Colorado River. Utility managers in Page doubt that reclaimed water ever truly rejoins the basin, but exploit frameworks of consumption and use nonetheless. Meanwhile, decades of upgrades to the treatment plant have been funded by taxes on non-residents, many of whom commute to Page from the nearby Navajo Nation. Page also charges tribal governments a fee to accept wastewater, which become return flow credits and thus expanded water rights. This paper argues that water recycling in the arid Southwest constitutes an emerging theater of resource governance and a contemporary modality of settler colonialism. Throughout, I attend to the production and flow of effluent as a hydrological imaginary, colonial geography, and municipal growth strategy in the rural Southwest.

Presenter(s): Hunter Kennedy

Seaweed at a Standstill

What currency does seaweed hold today? Why are reevaluations of this seemingly minor form of life organizing claims upon the future of the US "marine estate"? How does seaweed mediate water? This paper examines a resurgent American interest in seaweed as a means of accessing different waters—from industrial runoff in coastal estuaries to warming ocean currents in the North Atlantic and Pacific. I discuss a fascination with seaweed's potential to "transition" the global order away from modernity's destructiveness. This transition redescribes the problem of climate derangement, often viewed as an unintended consequence of industrialization, as an opportunity to develop new frontiers of industrialized "seagriculture." Drawing on fieldwork among US marine scientists, energy policy makers, and fishing communities, I consider seaweed as a shared medium through which to channel different political, scientific, financial, and affective energies. Here, "weediness" is less a nuisance than a virtue: the expression of a hitherto underappreciated "industriousness" to be harnessed in the name of storing carbon dioxide, revitalizing fishing communities, or defending national security. Crucial to such reevaluations, I argue, is productive ambivalence over the nature of seaweed and water themselves. Such ambivalence sustains

potentially antagonistic concrete political and ethical projects through the abstraction of seaweed as general equivalent for remediating human-ocean relations at scale.

Presenter(s): Damien Bright

Overallocated: Colonial Pasts and Commodity Futures in the Upper Colorado Basin

Water allocation is the lynchpin of settler colonization. In the Grand Valley of Western Colorado, the violent removal of Ute peoples in the late 19th century occurred simultaneously with the construction of Colorado River diversion projects to fuel settler agricultural development. Today over 90% of diversions in Western Colorado support food and livestock crops as well as a sizeable wine industry. However, with heated Colorado River negotiations underway among the seven basin states, the terms and definitions of so-called "wet rights" and "paper rights" are at forefront of interstate and intertribal political debates. In an era of increasing water scarcity fueled by anthropogenic climate change, these imaginaries reflect vastly different realities. Meanwhile, since the early 2000s, private investment firms have been quietly purchasing farmlands in the Grand Valley for its potential in water markets and futures trading. In this paper, I explore to what extent moves towards water financialization converge with state water compact negotiations. I consider how contemporary water proceedings replicate settler imaginaries about land and property as an object to be tamed, controlled, and yes, allocated. Attending to settler characterizations of "wild" water, I argue, helps us to interrogate how such historical tropes emerge in debates today over water management and speculation.

Presenter(s): Teresa Montoya

Water (In)justice: Filter as Tool & Metaphor in Borikén

This presentation takes an experimental multimodal approach to the many scales in which water can meander between control and liberation. My ongoing practice consolidates local clay research and a lived experience of water (in)justice to develop recipes and equipment for locally producing a ceramic water filter; Tierrafiltro as a project emerges from chaos and vulnerability in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Through the process of introducing open source filtration technology to the archipiélago of Borikén, questions regarding the provenance of drinking water and the authorities that manage them become even more relevant: from water filtration technology standardized by Potters for Peace to dams constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Through photography and spoken word, this presentation engages these questions, thinking with the filter as both tool and metaphor.

Presenter(s): Amara Abdal Figueroa

Discussion

7514 Everyday Adjustments: Remaking Relationships through Inconveniencing and Accommodating Others

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR C3 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Sartre famously wrote that "Hell is other people," an acknowledgement that living socially is an experience marked by complications, tensions, and even unpleasantness. Yet as Lauren Berlant has argued, living socially can be an acknowledgment of, and desire for, the messiness and inconveniences of those relationships. Our research subjects regularly engage with others who have different needs, interests, demands, and behaviors: adult children who move back home to live with their parents, relatives who retell embarrassing family stories at family gatherings, coworkers whose approach to shared work activities and spaces reflects philosophical and ethical differences, family members whose behaviors change due to illness or injury, business partners who disagree over financial matters, or even family pets that inhabit and disrupt personal living spaces in non-human ways. These encounters are rarely singular events but are ongoing, such that past inconveniences become hauntings that intrude in and inform present encounters. These encounters of inconvenience and the social adjustments they prompt are such an ordinary, taken-for-granted part of the ongoing flows and rhythms of everyday life that they rarely prompt more than a fleeting moment of exasperation or amusement by our research subjects or even acknowledgment by anthropologists. Yet they are profoundly consequential aspects of people's daily lives because they invite people to remake their relationships and social worlds, frequently reemerging as the irritating or amusing precedents that haunt and shape future encounters and relationships.

This panel explores the inconveniences of everyday life in the company of others and how individuals acknowledge, negotiate, and accommodate the needs, interests, and demands of those with whom they share their homes, workplaces, and communities. Panelists are specifically interested in the types of adjustments that individuals make in their own behaviors and perspectives in order to share their lives, spaces, and worlds with inconvenient others, and, in turn, how these adjustments create possibilities for new forms of relationality and sociality.

Panelists will consider these issues through papers on the financially and socially generative dimensions of disagreement and conflict among women members of a Kenyan mutual finance group, how increasingly limited access to housing in Tanzania prompts new relationships of familial interdependency and adjustment, the ways in which American animal rescuers sacrifice their personal comfort, finances, and living spaces in order to care for sick, injured, and unsocialized animals, and how Detroit's Black technology entrepreneurs navigate the contradictory social benefits and tensions that emerge in coworking spaces.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Melissa Caldwell, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Maia Green, University of Manchester

Chair: Melissa Caldwell, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Maia Green, University of Manchester, Sibel Kusimba, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, Yuson Jung, Wayne State University, Melissa Caldwell, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology

Discussant: Heath Cabot, University of Pittsburgh

Presentation(s): Home Economics: Accommodating Inequalities in Tanzania

This paper explores how relationships shape access to accommodation in Tanzania in the context of rising costs and escalating inequality. Longstanding expectations about building life which centre on constructing a home for one's growing family are becoming unattainable. Ideas about building a life informed by post-independence discourses valorising self-reliance are increasingly detached from economic realities which enforce ongoing relations of interdependency between differently situated persons. Most such interdependencies involve accommodation within the houses of other family members. People build on entitlements enmeshed in relationships with others to gain accommodation in new locations as a first step on the path to building their life in the longer term. Those unable to move on through expected steps from renting, finding a partner and building can find themselves precariously situated as junior resident in someone else's household, inhabiting lower status service roles which they would have expected to have long since socially outgrown. Living with other people, Lauren Berlant suggests, demands ongoing adjustments. Accommodation implies accommodations, inhabiting roles and, in situations of unequal power relations, taking on domestic occupations.

Presenter(s): Maia Green

#NoWomanLeftBehind: Voice, Conflict, and an Informal Financial Group of Kenyan Women Living in the US

In this paper, I consider the important role of conflict, annoyance, and disagreement in the formation and endurance of a novel women's financial group formed by Kenyan women living in the US and Canada in 2016. Its members own shares and take out loans, mostly for the purpose of saving and investing in Kenya. In a financial mutual, members are joint owners of the fund and the group, and they can set and negotiate financial terms for purchasing shares and taking out loans – including interest rates and penalties. In 2017 the Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) was registered with the Kenyan Government although its novel form, a hybrid of formal and informal financial relations, fits uncomfortably in this category. Its (female-only) members buy shares and take out loans, sometimes as individuals, and sometimes as small groups of up to 25 women. Other members of the group have purchased property in Kenya together. In financial mutuals, members have a sense of ownership and agency which Susan Johnson calls voice. In this paper, I recount how the mutual was established and grew among diverse Kenyan women, showing how ground-up relationship building and networking practices used digital media to create an emergent and novel financial institution. I also explore the paradoxically important role that conflict,

disagreements, and even accusations of fraud have played to the successful building and exercising of financial voice and to the endurance of the mutual over time.

Presenter(s): Sibel Kusimba

Belonging and Inconvenience: Coworking Spaces in Detroit's Tech Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Coworking spaces became popularized in the 2000s with the growth of the tech sector, and developed into an integral part of entrepreneurship ecosystems across the world. They provide physical spaces (work desk, lab space for prototype, conference room) and practical benefits (mailing address, minimal office expense). Additionally, "offering a community" is often mentioned as an important element of coworking spaces. But what community means in this context, and how it manifests in the entrepreneur's work routine is not sufficiently examined. Many Black founders hustle to normalize tech in Detroit's emerging tech ecosystem. Part of the hustling process involves making connections and contributing to building a community defined by growing together rather than individually. Coworking spaces can offer visibility and potential for collaboration which is important, but they can also pose challenges and inconveniences for underrepresented tech founders. This paper discusses coworking spaces in Detroit's tech ecosystem to examine the underexplored dimensions and implications of the inconvenience of life in the company of others. What are some needs, interests, and demands that entrepreneurs sharing these coworking spaces have, in order to acknowledge, accommodate, and negotiate some inconveniences? Exploring this question can reveal how different aspects of sociality emerge in coworking spaces, and how tech founders relate to community through their work spaces.

Presenter(s): Yuson Jung

When Fur and Slobber Are Interior Design Aesthetics: Being Grateful for the Disruption of Home Life with American Rescue Pets

American animal rescue organizations often rely on volunteers to provide in-home "foster" care for cats, dogs, and other companion animals who are waiting for permanent homes or are unadoptable due to serious illness or age. The goal of foster care is to provide a homelike setting where animals feel safe and loved and learn how to be good companions for their new families. Yet the care required to turn a rescue animal into someone else's "perfect" family member often entails significant, and even expensive, disruption to animal rescuers' home lives: furnishings and structures damaged by pets; purchase of pet-friendly furniture, flooring, and vehicles; and the reorganization of homes to accommodate crates, feeding stations, training areas, relief areas, and medical equipment. Even as animal rescuers would prefer to minimize damage and disruption to their homes, they express acceptance and gratitude that their sacrifices will contribute to the greater good of the animals in their care and their future families. This paper examines how American animal rescuers adjust their homes and finances to anticipate and prioritize the needs of both the animals in their care and the imagined future families of these animals. In particular, this paper considers how rescuers justify the reorganization of their home lives as a necessary and rewarding commitment to their goal of helping other people create the perfect family.

Presenter(s): Melissa Caldwell

Discussion

3479 Recurating Historical Presence: Tinkering with Time, Tradition, and Trauma

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Napoleon BR D1 (3rd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how minoritarian communities forge material relationships with history, memory, and place through embodied practices. Bringing together ethnographic research from four sites—a Kurdish refugee garden in Nashville, contemporary Egyptian artists' studios, a gunsmithing apprenticeship program in the American South, and a Chinese patrol team in Flushing, Queens—we examine how communities navigate and reurate relationships to traumatic histories. Each site focuses on a different set of embodied techniques and material practices that serve as a mode of reckoning with the past while simultaneously carving possibilities for the future in the present.

A Kurdish garden transforms the condition of 'dar-ba-dari' (wandering from threshold to threshold) through cultivating plants, chickens, and bees, transforming rupture into new relationships with land and time. These spaces become healing sites where displacement's ghosts continue to haunt and nurture new forms of belonging. In Egypt, contemporary artists rework 'antiquity' not as static but as an intimate presence in everyday life. By recombining materials and iconography from different historical periods, these artists challenge institutional monopolies over history, fragmenting 'pristine' artifacts and reattuning us to the ghosts of colonial empires. The sites show how communities carve spaces for collective healing and belonging.

In the dusty interiors of an American gunsmithing workshop, apprentices transform military weapons with violent histories into custom hunting rifles, highlighting how artisans reconfigure politico-historical narratives in the spaces between preservation and ruination. In Flushing, a Chinese patrol team mobilizes walking as a political act that disrupts and reproduces the US's racial-capitalist structures. In walking, participants negotiate various historical narratives and create knowledge that resists and challenges simplified understandings of immigration, governance, and community-making in New York. These two sites expose ambivalent tensions, contradictions, and connections to violence that complicate our understanding of craft and embodied knowledge as sites of resistance.

Across these sites, the panelists interrogate how preservation is not static but fluid, involving repetitive cycles of growth and decay. These communities tinker with inherited practices as modes of intimate engagement. The papers collectively contribute to anthropological debates on materiality, temporality, and memory by highlighting how marginalized communities toy with different techniques for survival and unsettling rationalist understandings of history. Drawing on Walter Benjamin and Tim Ingold, we suggest that material practices are active narrations of pasts that carve alternative futures beyond and within displacement and loss. The panel's central

question explores how narrations of historical experiences re-emerge through embodied practices.

Section: Society for Cultural Anthropology

Organizer: Jonas Johnson, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Chair: Jonas Johnson, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Presenter(s): Yuyi Chen, Johns Hopkins University, Jonas Johnson, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology, Sina Mirzaei, Alaa Saad

Discussant: Valeria Procupez, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): Walking on the margin: the redoing of conservativism through Chinese immigrants' patrol in Flushing, Queens

Walking on the busiest streets in Flushing, a Chinese patrol team advertises itself as "the police's eyes and ears" since 2021. This paper ethnographically examines how the mundane, embodied act of walking destabilizes the assumed political connotation of patrolling, and reconfigures the historical relations between immigration and nation-building. It situates the act of patrolling as one of the patrol team's strategies of making itself legible as a "mainstream NGO" that caters to the changing state and federal funding interest. During this process, the grassroots organization depoliticizes its message, decenters patrol, incorporates it into a range of "community service programs" instead. The moralized daily practice of patrolling faces risks of losing its historically political context - whether it be the traditions of American grassroots vigilantism, or the immigrant community's resort into conservative self-defense. This process of self-preservation reproduces the racial-capitalistic desires of the American empire; but it also exposes the ruptures within the hegemonic meaning-making technologies in urban governance. It reckons with the ambiguities of what actually gives meaning to a political act: economic venues through which liberal governance transforms racial trauma into revenue-driven, apolitical ecosystem of non-profits, or the moralization of walking as a labor that unites the diasporic experiences across histories?

Presenter(s): Yuyi Chen

Rifling Through the Dustbin of History: Gunsmiths as Curators of American Militarism

Sites of gun manufacture sit uneasily within anthropological approaches to artisanal labor. Far from presenting a site of resistance, the professional gunsmith is indisputably engaged in the reproduction of masculinity, whiteness, and empire. And yet, the gunsmith's trade—creating replicas, restoring heirlooms, and re-fashioning military surplus—places their artisanship into discordant dialogue with the military-industrial origins of firearms technology. Drawing on long-term fieldwork in an American gunsmithing apprenticeship program, I argue that gunsmiths both reproduce and confound hegemonic historical narratives.

Representative of the duality, the capstone project of the program involves the production of a custom hunting rifle, using parts stripped from an aged Mauser 98, a standard-issue 20th century German infantry rifle. That these rifles are emblems of the most iconic catastrophes of modernity—the bloodshed of two consecutive World Wars—only deepens the meanings that they crystalize as embodied touchstones in the dustbin of history. As bench-mates within the uniquely

intergenerational workshop share historical fragments and minutia in the midst of manual work, unexpected dialectical images emerge: stories that subtly mark an awareness of a conspiracy of transnational global capital in the arms trade, the ruined myth of American technological superiority, and genocidal horrors of Western expansion.

Presenter(s): Jonas Johnson

The Garden of Azadî (Freedom): Kurdish Refugee Perceptions of Earth in Nashville

How do those uprooted from their homelands attune themselves to the earth through gardening? Drawing on fourteen months of ethnographic research among Kurdish refugees in Nashville, this paper examines how displaced lives reconfigure relationships to land and temporality through a genocide survivor family's garden. As their lives unfold in motion, gardening and becoming, I conceptualize the Kurdish adjective *dar-ba-dar*, which resonates with the historical vulnerability of Kurdish life—marked by movement and wandering from one threshold to another. Simultaneously, this aims to offer a critical lens on anthropological refugee studies in the U.S. and serves as an urgent call against current anti-Muslim and anti-refugee politics. Working in Ahmed's garden, who calls it *jennet* (جنة) or paradise, I show how present and past unfold in various activities from planting to growing chickens to beekeeping and keeping colorful birds that embody both freedom and their imagination of earth as a platform for peace and healing. I argue that the Kurdish experience of *dar-ba-dar* unsettles dominant narratives by framing migration not as rupture or loss, but as a persistent condition of modern life. When such experiences are lived as both psychological and embodied states, we must ask: how does the ghost of displacement continue to haunt the garden—spaces imagined as stable, rooted, or whole?

Presenter(s): Sina Mirzaei

The Weight of Millenia: Reimagining Histories through Artistic Practice in Egypt

In Egypt, images and objects from antiquity are not only central to national narratives but encountered in everyday life, woven into collective memory. What does it mean to live with history—not as a burden, but as an intimate presence? This paper explores this question ethnographically by following contemporary Egyptian artists who reshape and recontextualize the historical record. For them, history is an open book with frayed edges. Engaging the past isn't about preservation but making its haunting presence felt. By recombining materials and iconography from different eras, they show how fragments of history live alongside the present. Through fieldwork and studio visits, I examine how these artists challenge institutional monopolies of history—museums and state archives—by reimagining memory and care. Their use of worn textiles and repurposed materials draws attention to what objects recall, resist, and the weight they carry. Their work embraces history's contradictions and messiness—a collage of unfinished stories. Techniques like glitching and fragmenting 'pristine' artifacts reattune audiences to ghosts of empire and displacement. Preservation, detached from context, severs history's ties to the present. Building on these practices, I argue that history, rather than something to be resolved, is a question to pose—

again and again—in liminal spaces between preservation and ruination, growth and decay. If history is unfinished, what futures might emerge from its ruins?

Presenter(s): Alaa Saad

Discussion

5510 Gender on the Border: New Research from New Scholars

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Nottoway (4th fl)

Type: Roundtable/Town Hall

This round table is designed to highlight the interests and methodologies of student scholars at the cross-sections of gender and border studies. Participants will share their innovative approaches to their subject areas in the field and have an opportunity to make recommendations to their academic peers as they engage new practices. Finally, the roundtable will address approaches (and cautions) to working with a vulnerable population.

This roundtable is also designed to welcome audience participation and will reflect a "socratic seminar." Participants' interests are diverse and their approaches to research are equally diverse.

Section: Association of Latina/o and Latinx Anthropologists

Organizer: Katie Clones

Presenter(s): Chris Clones , Gabriela Aros , Gustavo Sanchez-Bachman , Zaira Martin, Arizona State University

Discussant: Katie Clones

1857 The Ghosts of Futures Past: Predictions that Haunt

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms I (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

Across the globe there is an crescendoing interest among both national governments and publics in various techniques and technologies that allow for the forecasting of the futures in arenas as varied as relationships, energy markets, and disaster preparation (Broeker 2023; Özden-Schilling 2021; Vaughn 2017). While this desire to foreknow in the face of such seeming uncertainty is far from novel (Evans-Pritchard 1932), what happens to predictions after they are considered resolved remains underexplored. When are such techniques and technologies retrospectively considered to possess efficacy or to have been failures? What happens to predictions that are correct yet come to be regarded as based on faulty reasoning? How do people reflect on predictions of the future that resulted in their mobilization? And what consequences of such predictions must people continue to live with?

Despite a disciplinary self-image that has often presented its temporal focus as the past and the present socio-cultural anthropology has in fact long been interested in both futures and predictions

(Collins 2008). Consider early 20th century anthropologists' concern with salvage anthropology, and with divination (Hurstun 1931; Parsons 1942; Reichard 1950). The interest continues through the 1960s and 70s as a new generation followed in Margaret Mead's footsteps, exploring their interlocutors' apprehensions of possible futures and in innovating various methods and techniques to engage in futurology (Camra 1978; Jacobs 1978; Mead 1978; Riner 1987). In the present century anthropologists have extended their interests in both the future and predictions to areas as varied as bio-security simulations, financial planning, and climate modelling (Lahsen 2005; Samimian-Darash 2009; Weiss 2019).

In this panel we build upon this long-standing disciplinary interest in futures and predictions by attending to the remnants of past predictions and their consequences for our interlocutors. Contributors explore the legacies of both anthropological predictions and their interlocutors'. We revive spectral speculations from beyond the grave and ask, how are we haunted by the traces of desires to predict the future and act upon it?

Section: General Anthropology Division

Organizer: Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes , Anthony Pickles, University of Birmingham

Chair: Anthony Pickles, University of Birmingham

Presenter(s): Cynthia Sear, Elizabeth Reddy, Colorado School of Mines, Anthony Pickles, University of Birmingham, Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes, Sarah Vaughn, University of California, Berkeley

Discussant: Bill Maurer, University of California, Irvine, Department of Anthropology

Presentation(s): A Specter is Haunting Predictions - the Specter of Probability: On Many predictions that stalk about in our daily life, from the weather to the amount of money we require in retirement, are calculated using probability. As Ian Hacking discussed (1975), the emergence of probability in the 17th century was not only a mathematical advancement, but an epistemological leap - from which a new way of understanding the future, and our capacity to influence it, was born. While some mathematicians (e.g. de Finetti 2017 [1970]) have called for an exposure of probability theory as an “illusory attempt to exteriorize or materialize our true probabilistic beliefs” (ibid, xv), the fantasy that probability is an ‘objective’ science for mapping the future lingers, cloaking many predictions with an air of certainty.

In this paper I trace this specter of probability via the predictions of people who enter promotional competitions, self-described as “compers”. Promotional competitions are a ubiquitous form of advertising in Australia, found in supermarkets, fuel stations and pharmacies. With prizes such as cars, holidays and cash, winning promotional competitions can be lucrative, and understanding ‘one’s chances’ often gives rise to prediction. Through a discussion of the “gambler’s fallacy” – the ‘irrational’ notion that a series of past losses will lead to a future win – I explore how some compers conceptualize winning as a “number’s game”, i.e. contingent upon the number of times one has entered and the number of other entrants. I then contrast this quotidian calculation with the history of probability, and the ‘rational’ ways in which probability theory clouds our predictions in the social sciences (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937; Bourdieu 2000).

Presenter(s): Cynthia Sear

Predictability as the Paradigm Shifts: Growing A Public Earthquake Safety Industry on the US West Coast

New sensory, analytic, and communication technologies are emerging as part of public earthquake safety efforts. These efforts are also experiencing what insiders describe as a "paradigm shift" away from purely state-sponsored models. For technologists, educators, scientists, and engineers participating in the new public earthquake safety industry on the West Coast of the United States, past predictions and their efficacy are key elements of staging this shift. In this paper, I draw on Tess Lea's 2024 invitation to think through policy ecologies in my efforts to theorize the growth of a public earthquake safety industry. I explore how the ghosts of futures past emerge in participants' simultaneous engagements with earthquakes, infrastructures, industries and financial flows. Doing so, I highlight the conditions of possibility for the paradigm shift that in public earthquake safety that participants herald, as well as the contradictions that their efforts entail.

Presenter(s): Elizabeth Reddy

Political Gambling and The Polymarket Whale: The Bewitching Incentive of Bad Predictions That Come Good

Political gamblers turn predictions into profits and losses by observing perceived likelihoods as prices that they then compare to their own estimations. In October 2024, in the shadow of the US Presidential election, surging interest in the 'prediction market' crypto gambling site Polymarket.com kicked up another notch with news that four accounts had collectively bet tens of millions of dollars-worth of crypto currency on Donald Trump to win. Who was behind it? Were they a partisan group trying to tilt US expectations? Or were they manipulating the market to profit from a pump-and-dump scheme? What did they know? Interest in gambling on politics surged further, with established members of the political gambling scene turning detective to root out the interlopers. One, eventually, spoke to the man behind the money, a lone French financier who had commissioned private polling that indicated a comfortable Trump victory. Polling experts in political gambling circles then argued his 'who will your neighbour vote for?' methodology was worthlessly flawed and amateurish. Yet, of course, the Whale won, and made \$85M. The consensus became that he made a good bet for bad reasons. This concrete example of the financial afterlife of predictions reveals that, during a cultural moment that exalts the entrepreneurial self, ambiguous victory becomes a powerful incentivising narrative drawing others towards their own risky predictions.

Presenter(s): Anthony Pickles

Beyond Mia Mottley: Predictions and Problems in a SIDS' Grid Transition

After Fidel Castro's demise, Barbados's Mia Mottley emerged as the Caribbean's most internationally visible leader. An effective orator and social media user her efforts on reparations drew attention to both her and Barbados. So too did her very public and repeated commitment to the island nation attaining Net Zero by 2030.

Climate change is an existential issue for small island developing states. It brings rising sea levels, fluctuating fish stocks, evermore erratic weather, and, in the Caribbean, sargassum. Central to the Mottley government's decarbonisation strategy is transitioning Barbados's electrical grid to renewable energy sources.

Since its 1911 establishment forecasts of the island's future have meant this large technical system has undergone numerous changes. For example, post-independence, to ensure financial and political freedom, it was projected the grid would need to expand to fuel the growth of the tourism and light industry sectors. Similarly, after the 1970s oil crisis it was predicted that reconfiguring the nation's generators to use bunker oil would limit the impact of rising energy costs. Most recently policies calculated to encourage homeowners to install solar panels have resulted in grid instability.

In this presentation I examine how these past predictions are evaluated, how they haunt current efforts to change what fuels the current flowing through the Barbadian grid, and their continued consequences for Barbadian lives.

Presenter(s): Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes

Building Towers: The Material Cultures of Private Insurance, Accounting, and Financial Speculation

This paper considers the practice and aesthetics of "towers," an accounting mechanism central to private insurance. Attending to the inherent reflexivity of risk management, towers allow practitioners to document the redistribution of risk for the excess losses attributed to multiple perils. First popularized after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, towers made financial speculation between varied (re)insurers possible. Given the contemporary industry's apprehensions about climate/weather exposed property markets, towers have resurfaced to shape debates about the economic objectification of natures. In short, towers gesture to the material cultures of markets and the aesthetics undergirding the diversification of business across space-time.

Presenter(s): Sarah Vaughn

3725 Goodness and Its Ghosts: Contemporary Specters of Goodness, Niceness, and Purity in Everyday Infrastructures and Technologies

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms II (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel explores how our contemporary era is haunted by "good" ghosts which are embedded in the infrastructures and technologies that shape our world. These "good ghosts" are specters of human morals, values, and desires which are themselves haunted by mundane and profane flaws. Beyond easy strawmen for cyborgian infrastructures and technologies—infrastructural creep, bodies electric, and digital architectures—anthropologists must also acknowledge the complexities hidden by the specters of humanity that are inherent in the technologies we create. Far from separate, the

tools we use to facilitate our anti-modern lives are germinated by human beliefs, rituals, and social imaginaries that are at once good and flawed.

Focusing on Anthropology of the Good through the lens of our changing relationships to technologies exhumes the often deliberately buried invisibilized erasures of striving for the good life. Prying apart the "Good" in our tools, we argue, is not a return to Ortner's dark anthropology (2016) nor Robbins's moral witnessing (2013). Instead, the papers in this panel argue that it is through the parallax of encountering invisibilized human specters that we discover what it means to live humanely together to make good, clean, moral, and happy lives.

Section: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology

Organizer: Cristina Ortiz, University of Minnesota, Morris, Heather O'Leary, University of South Florida

Chair: Heather O'Leary, University of South Florida

Presenter(s): Adrian Wong, Heather O'Leary, University of South Florida, Eric Campbell, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, B. Qavvik Croyle Johnson, University of Minnesota, Morris, Cristina Ortiz, University of Minnesota, Morris, Anna Dixon, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, Anthropology Department

Presentation(s): Policy Oasis: Alliances, Labor, and Value of Digital Development Policy Implementation for SMEs in Chile

My paper examines a digital development policy for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Chile. It focuses on how the policy's stakeholders organize their differential interests around specific forms of value. I analyze the tensions, alliances, and maneuvers of four primary stakeholders who labor to realize their principles and values through SME digital adoption: the prominent individuals, institutions, and government actors of a public-private partnership implementing the policy; SME owners, administrators, and workers; digital technology companies; and the independent contractors hired to lay the groundwork for SME digitalization. The backbone of my research is a rigorous, multimodal methodological approach that integrates 22-months of ethnographic observation, 90+ interviews, 11 focus groups, survey data (n = 176) and analysis of multimedia talk and text, including internal and external facing policy documents, reports and data. I will reveal how digital development policy implementation activates a kind of "oasis": a rich and contested terrain of relationships, labor, values, strategic moves, and durable infrastructures. These are the often unseen but critical mechanisms through which the digital technologies that will form the bedrock of socioeconomic life are taking shape on the ground.

Presenter(s): Adrian Wong

Good and Clean: Working sanitation museums in Paris, Brussels, Delhi and Singapore

Beneath the world's most highly developed cities a network of engineered grime meanders, gushes, and stagnates through countless channels, sluices, and pipes. In homes and communities throughout the world, families manage sewage on the surface when and where underground infrastructures fall short. This paper examines confrontations of purity and pollution through museums' intentionally engineered encounters between the public and infrastructures of sewage in

their mundane and profane senses. By documenting the symbolic and interpretive values of water in working sanitation museums in Paris, Brussels, Delhi and Singapore, it demonstrates both the cross-cultural and transcendental ways humans understand sanitation infrastructure as crucial to "The Good Life." It confronts local histories of those on the outskirts of techno-citizenship, moral arguments about human-technological relations, and the phenomenological embodiment of entering the working machinery of human waste. Here, the Good Life is not a realm, rather a process. This research points to new dimensions of moral witnessing and dark anthropology as part of the tourist experience of these fundamental technologies—at once materially and morally purifying visitors.

Presenter(s): Heather O'Leary

"You Must Sleep On the Roof:" Comfort and Heat Adaptation Practices in Jodhpur, India

The desert city of Jodhpur in the state of Rajasthan in northwestern India regularly deals with extreme temperatures during the hot season of April through June. In the nearly six centuries since the city's founding, local residents have adapted to this heat using a wide range of holistic methods, such as vernacular architecture and patterns of activity that make use of the cooler nights. Traditional conceptions of "the good life" draw upon these adaptations, preferring them to air conditioning (AC). While many households who have the means to do so use AC for cooling, there is also a deep-rooted skepticism of this seemingly unparalleled cooling technology. Some Jodhpuris, especially among older generations, cite AC as disrupting the body's internal balance and diminishing people's tolerance for heat over the long term. Other hallmarks of industrial modernity, such as air pollution from vehicles and the removal of urban greenery, can be framed as both making the city more physically vulnerable to heat and signifying a spiritual departure from a more harmonious past. Religion also intersects with this idea: Rajasthan's three major faiths, Hinduism, Jainism, and Islam, all emphasize reverence toward the natural world. In this sense, "the good life" is not defined as living in thermal comfort, but living in harmony with one's surroundings, as well as remaining grounded in age-old adaptation practices.

Presenter(s): Eric Campbell

The Hauntological Analysis of Improvement Doctrines to Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTIs)

Higher education institutions have underserved the needs of Native students, even when active efforts are made to the improvement of services and support. Sense of belonging is a particularly ephemeral point of student's engagement with a campus community, and studies about Native students don't always account for the vast cultural differences between the different tribes and villages, which result in highly variable needs with regard to culturally-specific support. My aim with this study is to present the isolating effects of culturally-nonspecific services and groups on Native students at the University of Minnesota, Morris, a Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI). Employing ethnographic interview methods and discursive and hauntological analysis, I have demonstrated that Native students from non-Plains backgrounds are particularly affected by

feelings of isolation due to lack of culturally responsive programming, even within programs designed to support Native students. This is reflective of a hauntological moment, which limits what we consider Native, or in service of Native-ness, to that which lies within the bounds of the imagined Indian.

Presenter(s): B. Qavvik Croyle Johnson

The Dark Side of Nice: Privilege, Belonging, and Place-based Desirability

This paper unpacks place-based notions of niceness in the rural Midwest and in Scottish social media, exploring how ideals of conviviality and acceptance can also function as affective, aesthetic, and material forms of boundary-making. The specters of niceness include racialized and gendered myths about safety and authenticity, which circulate through narratives of tradition, respectability, and social cohesion. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and social media content analysis, this project interrogates how "niceness" can legitimize and naturalize exclusion and desirability.

In both rural and digital spaces, "nice" becomes a socially acceptable tool for maintaining homogeneity and privilege. Gated communities (Low 2009), militarization of border spaces (Díaz-Barriga and Dorsey 2016), hostile architecture, and educational inequalities (Castagno 2019, Fine & Ruglis 2009) all obfuscate marginalization by foregrounding benefits or solutions offered to privileged groups. In contrast, place-based desirability is produced through layered performances of whiteness, respectability, and safety that often rely on the symbolic and material exclusion of Others. Rendering the dark side of "nice" ethnographically visible, helps trace how violence is reproduced not only through overt acts, but also through the affective, material, and symbolic cues that mediate spatial belonging and exclusion.

Presenter(s): Cristina Ortiz

Fault/lines: Ghosts in the Machine of the Criminal Justice Infrastructure

Anthropologists have always been on the forefront of studies in criminal justice. From Laura Nader's cross-cultural work on the criminal justice system to Foucault's analysis of the very structures of the carceral system, anthropological methods and insights on the nature of crime and justice have proven valuable perspectives to explore the "good" and the bad in the pursuit of justice. This paper conceptualizes the infrastructure of the criminal justice system not only as courthouses, jails, and prisons, nor as the complex system of laws that undergird both tangible and intangible structures, but the infrastructure of human actors who navigate that system. Just as case studies are key components in the fields of law and anthropology, this paper will use a case study from the 19th century that haunts us up to the current day. The 1898 lynching of U.S. postmaster Frazier B. Baker and his family in Lake City, South Carolina and the subsequent attempt to find justice exposed faults in the legal system that were not redressed for over a century later, and then only imperfectly. The ghosts of the Baker case continue to haunt the United States and its search for the good despite a system that is fragmented along cultural and legal faultlines.

Presenter(s): Anna Dixon

Co-author(s): Clayton Roger

2994 Presence: A/effectuating almost existing/ence (part one)

Start Date: 11/23/2025 10:15 AM **through** 11/23/2025 11:45 AM

Venue: Sheraton **Room:** Rhythms III (2nd fl)

Type: Oral Presentation Session

This panel draws on the rich interpretative and political affordances of "presence" (Ferguson 2021) to negotiate and realize agents' participation in communities they cannot be members of. It sees presence – the condition of being here, among us – as obligating acknowledgement and, consequently, (potentially grudging and hostile) responses from members of these communities. However, presence is never self-evident; "being here" requires work, materially and semiotically rendered as such and, thus, constitutes loci of everyday politics. Presence is – like specters and shadows – ephemeral, inconclusive, liminal, and unsettling.

The first session of our two-part panel explores the contentious politics of constituting and reckoning with the presence of non-human elements of the environment and how it affords emergent political claims and strategies. Drawing on studies of mudflats as life-giving bodies in West Timor, Indonesia, waste-ridden backwaters of monsoonal Kochi, India, invisible microbes in the over-extracted Owens Lake, California, to deceased and divine entities inhabiting migrant-settler water frontiers in Pengerang, Malaysia, our panelists trace novel articulations and practices of more-than-human communion and solidarity. Together, we seek to expand the anthropological understanding of the uncanny process of "being together," the always coalescing and never-quite-realized grounds for experimenting with ethical futures (Keane 2025) amidst historical and colonial ruins.

Section: Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Organizer: Chun-Yu (Jo Ann) Wang, Pitzer College, Eduard Fanthome, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department

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Presenter(s): Gillian Bogart, University of California, Santa Cruz, Department of Anthropology, Matt Barlow, University of Pennsylvania, Eduard Fanthome, Pitzer College, Anthropology Department, Chun-Yu (Jo Ann) Wang, Pitzer College

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Presentation(s): Life-giving bodies, livelihood routines, and presence in Kupang Bay

In 1989, customary lands of people in Kupang Bay, West Timor were folded into a corporate land concession that aimed to convert coastal mudflats, deemed by the Indonesian national government as wasteland, into industrial salt farms. These farms, however, never materialized, and in 2018 the mudflats were once again legally determined as wasteland, then returned to the coastal residents who had stayed put despite the concession. Coast dwellers never agreed with the

categorization of their kampung as wasteland, a juridical category inherited from the colonial Dutch. Rather for them, the mudflat is a life-giving body. Extending from this emic conception of the mudflat, this paper brings close attention to more-than-human political economic practices by exploring the mud body's life-giving capacities as well as how the body is itself an assemblage constituted by a profusion of actors. I follow foragers into the mud to show—against imaginations of place as fixed or existing a priori—that it is through routines, that is, repeated movement through space and through time, that a collection of sites held together by actors in motion come to form a shared place.

Presenter(s): Gillian Bogart

Saving the Backwaters: Narratives of responsibility and the opacity of infrastructure

Early in my ethnographic fieldwork in Kochi, a city on the southwest coast of India, I had a conversation with the director for the Center for Heritage, Environment, and Development. He lamented that "Kochi is a big house without a toilet." He was referring to the fact that despite Kochi's trajectory as a modern 'smart' city, there was no sewage infrastructure; much of the city's sewage flowed directly into the many canals, rivers, and lakes that Kochi sits within. These waters, collectively referred to as the backwaters, were once the lifelines of this city, enabling transportation of goods and the identity of the city as a quaint tropical paradise which draws thousands of domestic and international tourists every year. Today the backwaters have become the collective sink of the city, leading to many 'save the backwaters' initiatives aimed at protecting these waters from the city's errant wastes. But this narrative of the decline of the backwaters due to informal and illegal dumping obscures a much deeper and insidious reason for the ongoing deterioration of the backwaters, the constant dredging of the harbor to enable large container vessels to dock at the Cochin Port and the International Transshipment Container Terminal. Drawing connections between the amphibious infrastructures of this monsoonal city, this paper aims to build toward an anthropology of opacity where what is physically absent is politically present, and what is physically present is politically absent.

Presenter(s): Matt Barlow

Salty People, Pasts, and Possibilities: Articulating kinship with and the politics of halophiles in Owens Valley

This paper traces the articulation of the presence of halophiles and other vulnerable elements of the ecology of Owens Valley. Their presence is critical to a broader articulation of care and 'kinship' with non-humans in the valley that forms the basis for a 'stake' in the valley's future. The possibilities of this future itself result from a longstanding political and legal campaign intended to return water to Owens Lake. The Lake was desiccated by the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the purchase of over 95% of the land in the valley by LA, and the subsequent extraction of water from the valley resulting in it becoming the largest source of particulate air pollution in the US at one time, and being designated a 'dust bowl.' Rewatering the valley was a public health, human rights, and quality of life campaign at its inception. The campaign is now expanding to

protect other vulnerable elements of the Owens Valley ecosystem, including halophiles (micro-organisms that thrive in brine and form the lowest trophic level of an ecosystem that supports migratory avian populations). The ethnographic research presented in this paper traces the renderings of the presence of these non-human elements of the ecosystem and their 'right' to be spoken and cared for. The necessary condition of this care, paradoxically, is LA's absentee landlordship – it prevents 'development' (assumed to entail ecological harm) in the valley; a controversial position in the valley.

Presenter(s): Eduard Fanthome

Futuring in the Ruins of Development: Or How to Care for Wild Ghosts and Displaced Gods

This paper examines how the supernatural became political in the old migrant-settler water frontiers of Pengerang, Malaysia. Once a rural area dotted with small fishing villages scattered along the coast, Pengerang is now internationally known for hosting Malaysia's largest and most ambitious national downstream oil development project. However, this green-field project displaced more than 3,000 residents during its construction in the 2010s. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork since 2014, this paper traces place-based spiritual and religious innovations that emerged from diaspora-turned-minority Chinese Malaysians' encounters with state-led relocation and resettlement programs. It shows how caring for and politically representing wandering souls and wild ghosts disturbed by the development afforded the unexpected ascendance of non-elite village leadership during the anti-development movement. It also shows how incorporating material remains of an abandoned 19th-century temple, rediscovered through compensatory agricultural land grants related to the development, allowed the dispossessed multi-generational Chinese Malaysian communities to rearticulate and reassert their long-standing presence in the landscape as undeniable. This paper argues that these spiritual and religious practices are creative and dynamic futuring technologies through which minority groups' belonging is negotiated and socio-moral obligation is experimented with in an increasingly communalized Malaysia.

Presenter(s): Chun-Yu (Jo Ann) Wang