



# Anthro News



College of Arts and Sciences

Fall/Winter 2021-22

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## Dear Alumni & Friends,

This year we've been pleased to see students back on each of our busy campuses and faculty and students active in our classrooms and laboratories, despite challenges related to COVID. While we proceed with caution and flexibility, research across the department is reawakening, including Anthropology field work. The number of anthropology majors continues to grow at the WSU Pullman and Global campuses, and our new Human Biology major, shared with the School of Biological Sciences, has enjoyed impressive enrollment growth in only its second year!

Our graduate program also continues to welcome new students and to celebrate others as they earn their MAs and PhDs. To see what our faculty and students are doing, please browse through this newsletter. You can also check "Anthro in the news" on the department home page ([anthro.wsu.edu](http://anthro.wsu.edu)) and our social media accounts, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (linked from our home page too). Titles of our students' recently completed theses and dissertations, as well as faculty publications, are listed in the e-newsletter.

As we prepare for more active field research, your support is critical. Your gifts to the Anthropology Excellence Fund underwrite opportunities for our graduate and undergraduate students, and we have several funds dedicated to supporting student and faculty research, guest speakers, and student success. If you are interested in supporting Anthropology at WSU, or have any questions about the department or a particular interest you'd like to support, please feel free to contact me at [duff@wsu.edu](mailto:duff@wsu.edu) or the CAS Development team at [cas.development@wsu.edu](mailto:cas.development@wsu.edu) or 509-335-1096.



Sincerely,  
Andrew Duff, *Chair*

## Mythbusting in Archaeology: New course teaches critical interpretations & evaluation of data

By Rachel Horowitz  
Assistant Professor

The concept of using scientific theory to test the merits of well-known rumors and myths was the running theme behind a popular show on the Discovery Channel named "Mythbusters."

"Mythbusting in Archaeology" (ANTH 135) is a new class that debuted at WSU in the fall of 2021. Taught by Prof. Rachel Horowitz, it fulfills the social science credit for the undergraduate distribution requirement. The class focuses on analyzing data and having students evaluate TV shows, movies, and other presentations of archaeological data. As reports of beliefs in ancient aliens, Atlantis, and other pseudoarchaeological stories are at an all-time high (in 2018, 41% of Americans believed in ancient aliens and 57% believed in Atlantis or other "lost" civilizations), dissecting these ideas and their use in modern political contexts is an important opportunity for students to explore how disinformation spreads and how to critically evaluate data.



*Nazca lines drawn by students using ropes.*

Topics covered in the class include Atlantis, "Ancient Aliens" (both the show by that name and its roots in early 20th-century fiction), crystal skulls, pyramids in Bosnia, and more well-known hoaxes, such as the Pilttdown hoax. The course also covers non-hoaxes, such as the authentication of the Grolier Codex (now the Maya Codex of Mexico) as a Maya document.

Students participate in a variety of activities including evaluating pseudoarchaeological TV shows and attempting to make a replica of a Nazca line out of rope to illustrate how these lines might have been created through cooperative activities. By combining these activities with critical evaluation of data, students can better understand how to interpret information they see outside of the classroom and understand the use and misuse of archaeological data in the present day.

### In this issue:

- New Study Options
- Grad Student Highlights
- AGO Updates
- Alumni Spotlight
- Faculty Updates
- Recent MA and PhD Graduates
- WSU Honors Bill Lipe

More online at:  
[anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter](http://anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter)

## Skeleton Keys: New forensic anthropology course created to meet student demand

By Erin Thornton  
Associate Professor

The public's fascination with forensic science is reflected in the number of current television shows and popular books focused on the macabre subject. Moreover, many students who enroll in WSU Anthropology courses have requested course material covering forensic science. To meet this demand, the WSU Anthropology department has begun offering a new undergraduate course (ANTH 280) titled "Skeleton Keys: Introduction to Forensic Anthropology." The course was designed and first taught in fall 2021 by Erin Thornton, an associate professor in the Anthropology department who specializes in human and non-human skeletal analysis. Prof. Thornton applies her knowledge of skeletal anatomy to introduce students to the field of forensic anthropology, an applied area of biological anthropology that assists law enforcement agencies to recover and identify human skeletal remains and estimate the time and cause of death. The new course taps into students' general interest in forensics as a means to engage them in the real scientific methods used in human skeletal identification.



Students learning to identify an individual's age and sex of from skeletal remains

Through this new course, WSU undergraduates are introduced to topics including basic skeletal biology; evidence for disease and trauma on bone; methods of estimating age, sex, ancestry, and stature from skeletal remains; field and laboratory methods; and ethics. Many of the methods and topics discussed are also relevant to the field of bioarchaeology (the study of human skeletal remains from archaeological contexts), which forms a minor but complementary focus of the course. Students explore these topics through interactive exercises and activities conducted both within and outside the classroom. These include a three-hour weekend laboratory exercise in which students are asked to locate, map, document, and recover a simulated forensic crime scene at a dedicated outdoor learning center on the WSU Pullman campus (E.H. Steffen Center).

The department hopes the new course will appeal to students in many majors including Anthropology, criminal justice, biology, zoology, and Human Biology among others. The course was also designed to attract undergraduates needing to fulfill their Inquiry in the natural sciences University Common Requirement (UCORE). Throughout the semester, students are actively engaged in assessing the evidence and logic used to draw scientific conclusions in forensic anthropology. Their experience with this culminates in a final paper that asks them to critique the reality of forensic anthropology as presented in class against how it is often portrayed in the media.

## Also online:

Find out about WSU Anthropology's major role in the latest Northwest Evolution, Ecology, and Human Behavior (NWEH) Symposium and what the Anthropology Graduate Organization has been doing this year. Learn about Professor Emeritus Tim Kohler's new NSF-supported research, international collaborations, and work overseas as a recent retiree... and more at [anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter](http://anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter).

## Recent and forthcoming faculty publications

Anemia in the Amazon; pathogen avoidance in pandemics; sexual division of labor in the late Pleistocene; human adaptation to climate change—WSU Anthropology faculty and graduate students publish widely on a variety of important research topics. Find a broad sampling of their many recent and forthcoming publications in our online newsletter at [anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter](http://anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter).

## Alumnus Profile: Caitlyn Placek (MA '11, PhD '16)

“ Since graduation, I have stayed busy juggling academic and non-academic work, both within anthropology and in global health. For my first year after graduation, I served as an NIH Global Health Equity Scholars fellow with the Department of Epidemiology at Florida International University and the Public Health Research Institute in Mysore, India, where I conducted collaborative mixed-methods research on gender differences in drug use among two populations.

After that, I began my position as an assistant professor at Ball State University, where I teach biological and medical anthropology courses. Since beginning this position, I have forged connections in the College of Health where my colleagues and I are conducting ongoing community-engaged research on maternal polysubstance use in Indiana. This project has generated internal and external funding, research opportunities for students, and the development of a biocultural anthropology lab in my department.



Placek (seated) with a collaborator from the Public Health Research Institute and Jenu Kuruba adolescents during an NIH-funded postdoctoral fellowship, 2016-2017.

In 2019, I co-lead a service-learning course where BSU students partnered with a local organization to study community perceptions of maternal drug use. The students generated final “products” to share with the local community with the aim to de-stigmatize addiction in pregnancy. In addition to this local work, I continue to conduct collaborative research in India on maternal dietary patterns from a biocultural perspective (specifically pregnancy fasting), and women's polysubstance use in urban India. To date, my research has generated over 30 publications in anthropology and public health journals, with some papers that include undergraduate students as co-authors.

In addition to my academic work, I have a part-time gig as a program evaluator for Centerstone Research Institute. In this role, I oversee grants focusing on opioid use disorder and medication-assisted treatment across Indiana, Illinois, and Florida. This opportunity allows me to use my anthropological research skills in an applied setting, and to mentor post-graduates on mixed-methods research, R, and publishing.”

Placek, C. D., Place, J. M., & Wies, J. (2021). Reflections and Challenges of Pregnant and Postpartum Participant Recruitment in the Context of the Opioid Epidemic. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 1-5.

Placek, C. D., Magnan, R. E., Srinivas, V., Jaykrishna, P., Ravi, K., Khan, A., ... & Hagen, E. H. (2021). The impact of information about tobacco-related reproductive vs. general health risks on South Indian women's tobacco use decisions. *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 3.

Placek, C. D., Jaykrishna, P., Srinivas, V., & Madhivanan, P. (2021). Pregnancy Fasting in Ramadan: Toward a Biocultural Framework. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 1-25.

Urassa, M., Lawson, D. W., Wamoyi, J., Gurm, E., Gibson, M. A., Madhivanan, P., & Placek, C. (2021). Cross-cultural research must prioritize equitable collaboration. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(6), 668-671.



## PhD candidate wins Fulbright-Hays grant to study Buddhist women

Daphne Weber, a doctoral candidate in the Anthropology department, received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant for her study of women in Thai Buddhism. She asks why some women pursue ordination as monks despite lack of formal recognition, especially when other, more socially acceptable avenues of female renunciation are available in Theravada Buddhist practice.

Weber postulates that ordination appears to draw people in because of a healing potential of ordination not previously explored or recognized. Based on preliminary ethnographic field research, women appear to share their narratives of suffering with each other to promote affective spaces of empathy and to reconceptualize narratives for why they suffered. However, we do not understand how the ordination process transforms these understandings of suffering and experience and introduces new frameworks for thinking about emotion in Buddhism.

Weber's research will focus methodologically on the motivations of individual actors based on their own lived experience of ordination to expand our understanding of the bhikkhuni movement. Through it, she hopes to identify key salient concepts of how religious reformist movements form new subjectivities, especially as they relate to gendered discourses.



*Daphne Weber lights incense at a Buddhist shrine.*



*Thai Bhikkhuni on alms round in the rain. Photo by Alfie Moore. [www.alfiejackmoore.com](http://www.alfiejackmoore.com)*

## Grad Student Spotlight: Molly Carney

### 2021 Harriette B. Rigas Award Recipient

WSU Anthropology graduate student Molly Carney received one of six Outstanding Graduate Student Awards from the WSU Association for Faculty Women.

Carney was honored with the Harriette B. Rigas Award in recognition of her academic achievements and professional potential.

AFW solicits nominations from faculty who work directly with students to ensure that top scholars are considered each year for the awards, which come with a \$1,000 prize.

“These students represent the highest level of scholarly achievement, leadership, and promise for future contributions to society,” said D.L. Potts, professor and chair of the Department of English and an AFW member.



## WSU honors Bill Lipe highest award

Washington State University selected Emeritus Professor William D. Lipe, an internationally recognized leader in the field of archaeology, to receive its highest award: an honorary doctoral degree. In a career spanning six decades, Lipe has significantly shaped the way archaeological resources are managed and how archaeology is conducted today.

The University bestowed the degree to Lipe at the fall Commencement ceremony in December 2021.

Lipe is one of the most trusted interpreters of the prehistory of the U.S. Southwest. He has chronicled 2,500 years of cultural traditions of the region's Pueblo communities. He has also examined the goals, ethics, and professional standards of archaeological practice, becoming the single greatest contributor to these issues in his field.

### Preeminent scholar in his discipline

Lipe is one of the founders of “conservation” or “public” archaeology—projects that study archaeological sites impacted by the nation's economic development.

From 1978 to 1985, he led WSU's collaboration with the University of Colorado on the vast Dolores Archaeological Program. One of the largest such projects in the nation's history, it became a model for structuring large-scale archaeological investigations.

He also helped develop the nonprofit Crow Canyon Archaeological Center in Cortez, Colorado. The 170-acre “living classroom” provides research opportunities and helps to preserve the rich archaeological record of the Ancestral Pueblo Indian cultures of the region. Lipe served part time as its director of research in the late 1980s and continues to sit on its board of trustees. Two endowments named for him have been established at Crow Canyon's Research Institute.

In the 1990s Lipe was president of the Society for American Archaeology, a professional society that he helped transform into an authoritative resource for archaeological practice and professional ethics. The Society has recognized him with the Distinguished Service Award, its highest honor.

He has sat on the boards of a number of professional societies and is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

### Long-time member of the WSU faculty

Lipe has spent the bulk of his career at WSU as a member of the Department of Anthropology, enthusiastically introducing students to the study of archaeology. He has mentored dozens of graduate students who have gone on to prominent and diverse careers in the field.

In retirement Lipe continues to conduct research, serve professional organizations, and consult with policy makers on issues related to cultural heritage preservation. He also remains an active member of the WSU faculty, forging research collaborations, presenting colloquia, guest lecturing, and mentoring the next generation of anthropological archaeologists.

### Recognizing an exemplary career

As the recipient of a WSU honorary doctorate, Lipe joins a distinguished roster that includes journalist Edward R. Murrow, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Carolyn Kizer, and former Spelman College president and WSU faculty member Johnetta Cole.



Find more articles in our online newsletter at [anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter](http://anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter).



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## Museum of Anthropology

In the late 1980s, the Museum of Anthropology received an impressive collection of masks donated by WSU pharmacy graduate J. Clifford Parr '43. The wooden masks were hand carved by Purépecha artisans. The Purépecha Empire was an extensive Precolombian society on the west coast of Mexico; today, Purépecha peoples are associated primarily with the Mexican state of Michoacán but also live elsewhere in Mexico and in the U.S. Many of the donated items were used in traditional celebrations.

*Photo courtesy of Prof. Anne Pisor.*



Find more articles and information in our online newsletter at  
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Museum of Anthropology/ Washington State University  
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PO Box 644910 / Pullman WA / 99164-4910  
Hours: 9 a.m.–4 p.m.