

Anthropology Newsletter

FALL 2024



*Senior Thesis Presenters (Left to Right)
Eleanor Hedges Duroy '25, Delaney
Owens '25, George Matthes '25,
Hamilton Peacock '25. Not pictured:
Em Huss-Lederman Dec. '24.*

Monty Roper
Associate Professor, Chair

Jon Andelson
Professor Senior Faculty

Emily de Wet
Assistant Professor

Lily DeMars
Assistant Professor

Brigittine French
Professor

Cynthia Hansen
Associate Professor

Kathryn Kamp
Professor Senior Faculty

Owen Kohl
Assistant Professor

Tess Kulstad
Assistant Professor

Laura Ng
Assistant Professor

Maria Tapias
Professor

John Whittaker
Professor Senior Faculty

Vicki Bentley-Condit
Emeritus Faculty

Katya Gibel Mevorach
Emeritus Faculty

Faculty Retirements



Jon Andelson near his home at Rock Creek Lake, ca 2015.

“FIFTY YEARS, AND GOODBYE”

Jon Andelson, Reflections on 50 Years of Teaching

I began teaching anthropology at Grinnell College as a one-year leave replacement in the fall of 1974. It's a cliché to ask, “where has the time gone?” but the question accurately reflects my feelings. My current students were of course not yet born, and neither were many of their parents. For the past decade or so, I have had a few students

who were children of parents who had been my students.

On a day-to-day basis, time is usually easy to process; in much bigger chunks, not so much.

I joined a three-member department of Ralph Luebben, Ron Kurtz, and Doug Caulkins. Many readers know that I had graduated from Grinnell with a major in anthropology. I had had both Ralph and Ron as professors (Doug was hired after I graduated). From Grinnell I went directly on to graduate school at the University of Michigan, did two years of coursework there and then a year of ethnographic research in the Amana Colonies, 50 miles east of Grinnell. One of my reasons for applying for the Grinnell job, even though it was only a one-year position, was to be close to Amana in order to continue my research. The other reason was that, already knowing the school, I felt it would be less stressful at Grinnell to break into what I hoped would be a teaching career.

Back in Ann Arbor, my fourth year of graduate school saw me serving as a Teaching Assistant for three courses, analyzing my field notes, doing ancillary reading, and launching into my dissertation, which was a study of Amana's “Great Change” in 1932 from a communal society into a joint-stock corporation practicing what they called “modified capitalism,” by which they essentially meant capitalism with a conscience. I nearly finished my dissertation by the time I started teaching at Grinnell. Early in the semester the dean called me in and said if I finished the dissertation by Christmas the college would extend my contract for a second year. I did, and they did.

I'm not entirely sure, though, how I managed it. I was teaching three courses – a course in biosocial anthropology called Mechanisms of Human Adaptation, a course in Primate Behavior, and the Anthropology of Religion. I had taken a version of all of these at Michigan, but even so it was a tremendous uphill slog, made worse by Grinnell having

Saturday morning classes; I had one at 9 a.m. I probably would not have finished the dissertation had not my mother come to Grinnell for two weeks to type (in those days before office computers) the whole 400+ pages.

During my second year at Grinnell the dean called me again, this time to say that the college had decided to expand the anthropology department to a fourth position, and I was welcome to apply. You can fill in the next sentence.

Over the years I have taught 40 different courses at Grinnell, including nine different tutorials and a couple of seminars in Environmental Studies. I have been fortunate that my departmental colleagues – and the college -- allowed me to pursue new interests, develop new courses, and let some go. I never was compelled to teach anything I didn't want to teach, but then I don't remember ever not wanting to teach something the department or the college needed. I even did a stint team-teaching the old introductory course in American Studies because that program wanted to add an anthropologist's perspective to those of the history and literature faculty who had always taught it. I have particularly enjoyed working one-on-one with students over the years on independent projects and senior theses.

There are many reasons to love teaching. The old saw is that the three best ones are June, July, and August, but I have two different reasons. First, you learn so much, a lot more teaching a course than taking a course, and the learning just keeps happening, even if you repeat a course many times. I have never taught the same course twice, and I always learn new things even the tenth time I teach it. The second is the unalloyed pleasure I get from seeing students engage the material, maybe struggle a bit with some of it, but then shine when they grasp a complex idea, or make a telling point in class discussion, or come up with an original insight, or write a great paper.

People often ask me how the students have changed over my time at Grinnell. In the most fundamental thing, they haven't: they were, are, and always have been intelligent and a delight to teach. Engaged, curious, articulate, and diligent, almost without exception they embrace the ethos of the liberal arts. They graduate, go out into the world, and make a difference. How much added value the faculty provide is a matter of debate. The late Des Moines Register columnist, Donald Kaul, once famously quipped that of course Grinnell graduates smart and talented students, largely because it admits smart and talented students.

Part of a teaching appointment at the college or university level is to engage in scholarship. My research on Amana has continued throughout my time at Grinnell, and I



Jon Andelson giving a presentation at the Amana Church, Amana, Iowa, ca. 2000.

have branched out into the study of other intentional communities and written my share of professional articles about them. I have also done research on Iowa agriculture. Most recently, I have embarked on a modest scholarly project about the Meskwaki, a collaboration with Johnathan Buffalo, the Meskwaki tribal historian.

Over the years I have been blessed with smart and stimulating colleagues, too. Ralph was the first of the originals to retire, and his position was filled by Kathy Kamp and John Whittaker. Over time we added Vicki Bentley-Condit, Katya Gibel Mevorach, Monty Roper, Maria Tapias, Briggittine French, Cynthia Hansen, and Laura Ng, not to mention several others who were term appointments or who were at Grinnell for a few years and then took jobs at other schools. I owe an enormous debt to all of them for their wonderful collegueship.

My work has involved several commitments apart from anthropology. Most important of these was co-founding the college's interdisciplinary Center for Prairie Studies in 1999. I have been fortunate to serve as Center director for 22 of the years since, although this took me away from some of my departmental teaching duties. For me, Prairie Studies has mostly been an extrapolation of my anthropological interests. Amana is a prairie community, obviously. My interests in human-environment interactions, which date back to my undergraduate years, translated nicely into two new anthropology courses, Culture & Agriculture and Nature & Culture on the American Prairie. Two extensions of Prairie Studies that I initiated were the college garden, now in its 24th year, which provides produce to Dining Services and Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA), and the online Prairie Studies journal, Rootstalk: A Prairie Journal of Culture, Science, and the Arts.

I have been involved in several community organizations through service on their boards: the Mayflower Community Foundation, Poweshiek CARES (an anti-CAFO group), and the Iowa Kitchen, operated as a non-profit that provides free meals out of the kitchen of Kamal Hammouda's Relish Restaurant. I am working with the Grinnell Historical Museum on planning exhibits for the new museum set to open in Spring 2025. Also, Chris Bair and I lead purely for fun spoon carving sessions every Friday afternoon next to the college garden. Drop in if you're in town.

This is my fifth and final year on senior faculty status, a voluntary program that the college offers as an off-ramp to emeritus status. It involves working half-time on some combination of teaching, service, and scholarship for half pay. This fall, I am teaching the Anthropology of Religion, fifty years to the semester after first offering it in 1974. The students are engaged, curious, intelligent, and diligent. I even have a senior citizen auditor (who happens to have a PhD in history). To bring everything full circle, she was a teacher in my high school when I was a student there, though we did not know one another at the time.

At the end of June, I will bid farewell to most of this, but not all of it, and plan to continue to be active in other ways. I extend a heartfelt thank you to all of my former students and colleagues who made the last fifty years such an amazing experience.

Parting Thoughts from Professor Katya Gibel Mevorach

December 2024



My last time in the classroom was a year ago and in the interim heated debates about classroom politics have accelerated on and off campuses nationwide. How and what is taught, as well as the relationship between pedagogy that emphasizes activism versus efforts to bracket dogma, percolate between the public and political arenas. Most concerns relate to politicized classrooms where content is polemic and functions as censorship rather than as prompts for identifying nuance, refining analysis, contextualizing, historicizing and ultimately understanding how we come to know what we know.

Many arguments pivot around a cliché of “*social justice*” that resonates differently on campus (echo chambers) and in the public arena (messy differences). These concerns are not abstract but rather require attention to deliberately rethinking the relationship of diverse lived experiences which serve as departure points for research and interpretation. Diverse, in this context, are the diverse lived experience of the individual – not merely the over-worked term “*diversity*” or the plural impact of different individual experiences.

Anthropology is a particularly inclusive *field* of study –a poor metaphor - which has defied disciplinary boundaries from its beginning – the study of humankind (literally, though, study of “*mankind*”). From the 1980s (arguably sparked by Clifford Geertz’ 1973 *The Interpretation of Cultures*), the interpretive aspect of cultural anthropology aligned with literary criticism to underline the lesson that it is never too late to question the meaning and parameters of metaphors such as “culture” and a “field.” This meant asking who are the people, the ideas, the processes which are the focus of teaching, studying, researching. For my part, I have always thought instructors – simplistically defined and differentiated as those who teach and those who profess – should acknowledge to students the limits of their

expertise and knowledge. Herein lies the importance of highlighting that the prerequisite to studying is candid recognition that representations and theories are inherently fluid and change with hindsight and new information.

As a professor, my intellectual and personal perspectives were informed at an early age by my immigrant parents – mother, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Austria and father, an immigrant from Jamaica - and later by cutting edge scholars with whom I studied at Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Duke University in North Carolina – snobbishly labeled *Harvard of the South*. My studies in Cultural Anthropology fused philosophy and history and registered an affinity with cultural studies. This mélange urged forward a key principle: always question the premise and presuppositions embedded in what we – student or scholar – read. This is the principle I have tried to convey in all the courses which I drafted and taught during my 28 years at Grinnell – indeed every semester I insisted – that one must question everything especially when ideas, theories and statements become clichés whose origins are forgotten – fossilized as truth, presented as fact.

I hope alumni of my courses have absorbed the commonsense yet overlooked principle introduced by philosopher Sandra Harding “maximizing objectivity.” As a method of inquiry, attention to interrogation of self and sources helps reminds us that we can never see or cover everything and therefore the best scholars have the humility to acknowledge the incompleteness of their research and then move forward without compromising intellectual integrity. This is what is meant by transparency – the best texts stimulate rather than shut down debate. No one has a monopoly on truth and the world in which we now live mirrors a social and political diversity in scope that can no longer be contained by social science categories and stale binaries. Educating students requires – indeed mandates – recognizing that some of the research motivated by over-emphasizing “identity,” aka identity politics, during the past two decades is flawed. *Not* because the work they built on was flawed *but rather* because refreshing cutting edge theories from the 1980s and 1990s on identity, culture, representation, and power were increasingly misinterpreted in the 2000s while the inclination to welcome and confront

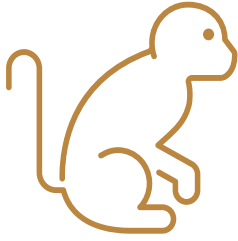


contradiction and complexity dissipated and politicization of scholarship invited a censorship of ideas.

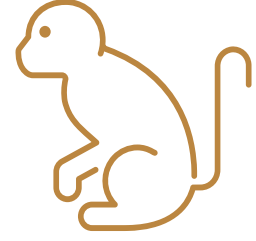
I hope my legacy serves as an inspiration for thinking critically and critical thinking – and that the arduous assignment of weekly intellectual journals - a record of reading and reactions to assigned course material - along with my careful selection of texts which emphasized complexity and intentionally pushed back against ideology and propaganda, has left an impression on alumni. Hopefully, my engagement with campus discussions, including those marked by contention, served to reinforce and confirm the significance of inquiry and interrogation into that which is not obvious precisely with the confidence that this leads to better research, wiser insights and cautious interpretation. And hopefully my emphasis on differentiating in speech and writing “I think” from “I believe” reinforces attention to the premises and presuppositions behind any argument because this pursuit inevitably supports a courageous stance in refusing simplistic arguments.

Who was Professor Katya Gibel Mevorach (hired as Gibel Azoulay), invited as a “Minority Scholar in Residence” in Spring 1996 and concluded her time as the first Black Full Professor at the end of Fall semester 2023? What were her achievements during almost 3 decades at Grinnell College? Most campus details are easily accessible in the *Scarlet & Black* archives and, the rest can be found on the resume link on my faculty home page and the Internet where some of my talks can be found.

I wish you the best,... Professor Katya



Vicki Bentley-Condit Born to run!



Vicki Bentley-Condit at the Vermont City Marathon.

In the spring of 2024, Professor Vicki Bentley-Condit taught her last two courses at Grinnell after nearly thirty years of teaching, advising, and research. Vicki served as the department's biological anthropologist, with a focus in primatology. She did fieldwork with yellow baboons in Kenya and captive baboons and macaques in Texas, focusing on mother-infant relationships and baboon nutrition. Her publications ranged from animal tool use to baboon nutrition to marathon running. Her courses included Mothers and Infants, Born to Run?, and Comparative Primate Skeletal Anatomy, among others.

While Vicki has retired from Grinnell College, she has kept busy at with her passion: running the world.

Vicki began running marathons in 2003. She has since completed 140 marathons (26.2 miles or greater). She became only the 24th female to complete the 50<4, which entails running a marathon in all 50 states plus DC in under 4hrs. She has also qualified for the Boston Marathon in each of the states & DC. She has completed the six international majors (Boston, Tokyo, Berlin, NYC, Chicago, London). The Sydney marathon will officially become the 7th international major in 2025, but Vicki received a personal invitation to compete in 2024 and record the time as her seventh major. On December 9, she reported having completed her 140th race and final race of the 2024 season, the Freight Train 50K (actually 51K) where she was awarded the 1st Grand Master Female.



Vicki Bentley-Condit at the 2024 Sydney Marathon with other members of the elite 50<4 Club.



Reception to Honor Retiring Anthropology Faculty



The Anthropology Department is hosting a celebration and reception for our retiring faculty at this year's alumni reunion! We invite alumni to join us to honor our devoted professors and congratulate them on their years of achievements!

Sat. May 31 | 10am – 12:30pm | HSSC A1231 (multi-purpose room)



Retiring professors Jon Andelson '70, Vicki Bentley-Condit, Katya Gibel Mevorach, Kathy Kamp, John Whittaker



At the publication of this newsletter, Jon, Kathy, and John planned to attend the reception. Katya was uncertain, and Vicki is unavailable.

If you would like to leave a message or share how the retiring professors have made an impact on your life, please click the following links:

Jon Andelson: <https://www.newlywords.com/jon-andelson>

Vicki Bentley-Condit: <https://www.newlywords.com/vicki-bentley-condit>

Katya Gibel Mevorach: <https://www.newlywords.com/katya-gibel-mevorach>

Kathryn Kamp: <https://www.newlywords.com/kathryn-kamp>

John Whittaker: <https://www.newlywords.com/john-whittaker>

Anyone wishing to donate to honor our retiring faculty may consider the *Anthropology Faculty Emeritus Fund*. Funds are used to support student research experiences.

Summer Research Reports

Last spring the department funded three students through the Paul Simmons '79 and Michele Clark International Research and Learning Fund, and the Emeritus Professors' Student Research Fund to complete research leading to their fall senior theses.

Eleanor Hedges Duroy '25, Summer Research in Bretagne, France

This summer I utilized Anthropology research funds to interview people in Bretagne, France for my Senior Thesis. I interviewed people mainly throughout the month of June in three different cities in France. I did a mix of cold-calling and setting up interviews through email and contacts that I had in those communities. For the older cohort (62+), I went to their houses and interviewed them in the comfort of their home and also interviewed them outside my grandmother's house under a small gloriette (gazebo). Interviewing the older cohort as such was fascinating, not only for my research, but it also permitted to gain some understanding of French social norms and basic courtesy. It often included a *gouté* (usually sweet snack) and a drink. In contrast, most of the interviews with young people took place at their places of work or on college campuses.



For the young people, I had more trouble contacting people in the community (the community was on the older end), so I ended up deciding to drive to the nearby college campus in Rennes (a beautiful city) and asking students if they would be willing to participate in an interview. The first campus I went to was a science campus and I encountered several students who were sitting outside enjoying the weather and approached them. All the students in the science faculty were willing to participate in the interviews and



be recorded. One participant even brought her friend over to answer the questions. The students that I interviewed were all interested in my process and the reasons that I was conducting research in France. I was extremely nervous to go up and talk to people (especially given that French is not my first language), but after overcoming my fear and going for it, I realized that it was not as difficult as I thought it would be. Being able to go to the college campuses also

permitted me to observe a bit how the French university system works. I not only successfully interviewed people, but I also learned to be confident, how to navigate cross-cultural barriers, and learned how to be a better social scientist. Having the funds to conduct research this summer, especially in another country, reaffirmed that I love to do research and permitted me to gain cultural skills that will be applicable to the next steps of my life, as I plan on pursuing graduate studies in France.

George Matthes '25, Summer Research in Wyoming

This summer, I used funds from the Anthropology Department to finance my research with Dr. Laura Ng. We did historical archaeology research in Wyoming, focusing on Chinatowns in two cities, Evanston and Rock Springs, WY, to examine the racialization of migrant Chinese populations through the landscape and built environment.

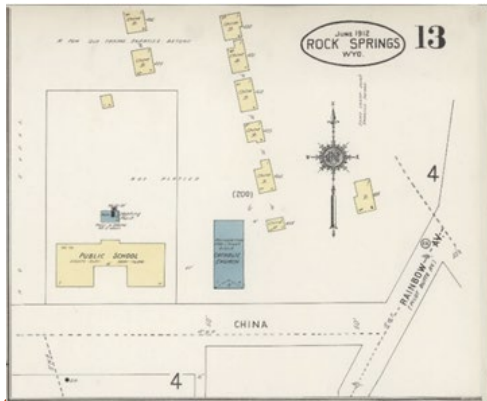
Our first week of excavation/data collection was in Evanston, where we excavated the site of the former Chinatown that had previous archaeological work done there for over 30 years. The site had been used for multiple purposes, and the area we excavated may have contained multiple buildings, if not one large complex. We know from old images of the Chinatown that the area was very densely populated and that Chinese migrants historically would often live in the buildings they ran their businesses in if they were business owners. This information is relevant given the wide range of artifacts we found at this site. Oral history around the exact spot we were digging at, as well as the word of the previous archaeologist who excavated there, Dr. Dudley Gardner of Western Wyoming College, that the specific area of excavation was in part of what was a laundromat.



Ceramics and a glass bottle in situ. From Evanston Excavation Unit

While we did find plenty of clothing articles – which suggested that idea to be the case– we also saw a large concentration of ceramics, as well as animal bones. This suggests that someone was likely also living in the excavated area and either butchering or disposing of animals there. Along with our excavations at Evanston, I used historical maps and modern digital maps to find the old property of a man named Lock Chong Choong, a historically notable Chinese resident of Evanston whose residence's location had been previously unknown. Throughout our week digging in Evanston, we recorded and documented our data and thought about that data's context within the larger urban landscape of Evanston. Through historical and archaeological data, we have a better idea of just how dense the Chinese community of

Evanston was; segregated from Evanston's white community and made to live right next to the train station and tracks.



A Sanborn fire map of the area of the two Rock Springs excavations. The location labeled "PUBLIC SCHOOL" is where the first excavation was made. The second excavation was made in the area of the two Chinese houses marked directly north of the school at the top of the map.

The latter two weeks of our research were spent in Rock Springs, where we did two separate excavations at the same site. Both were in a large grassy yard immediately west of a large catholic church, which stands on what was formerly Rock Springs' Chinatown. Both of the excavations we made had no prior excavation in their respective locations. The first excavation was at the southernmost end of the yard and stood on the location of a former schoolhouse. Unlike our other digs for this research project, the primary goal of this dig did not have as much to do with artifacts. The site where we excavated is where there is planned to be a monument installed to remember the Chinese community in Rock Springs and the atrocities they faced in the 1885 Rock Springs massacre, in which much of the Chinese population of Rock Springs were killed, and all of them displaced. The site of this planned monument,

where we were excavating, was having such excavation done both to prepare the ground for the construction and also to find potential artifacts before they may be displaced or made permanently unreachable after the construction of the monument. In our excavation here, we did not find many artifacts, but we did find lots of sand, brought in from somewhere else, filling in the ground. We also found a large concrete building base, which may have been a part of the former schoolhouse.

The second location we excavated at the Rock Springs site was in an area where maps from the relevant time period being researched displayed Chinese-owned houses. We quickly found a large amount of artifacts in the area, and by the end of the final week, had dug 1 meter below ground and struck a charred wooden building foundation, which we believe could have possibly been a house burned down in the 1885 massacre. Among the material data we uncovered, there was a variety of wood, metals, coal, ceramics, and glass. After finishing our excavation in Rock Springs this field season, we concluded that more excavation should be done in this area at the next opportunity.

The focus of my work under Dr. Ng in analyzing race and landscape through methods of historical archaeology is so that we can better understand the lives of Wyoming Chinese communities and the marginalization they faced, especially in an environment where they did not have the agency to make their own voices heard. Through examining material culture and landscape, we seek to better understand their history and lifeways,

seeing how they lived and interacted with the world around them with archaeological data that fills in the holes that historical documents cannot.

Hamilton Peacock '25, Summer Research in Churchill, Manitoba



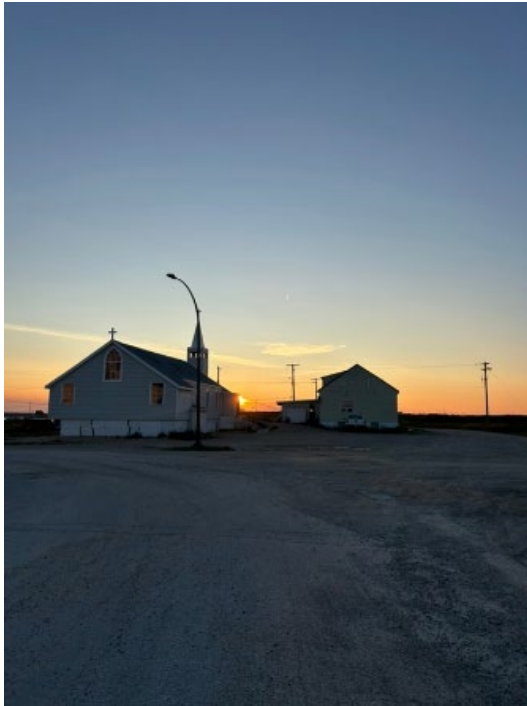
On Sunday August 11th, 2024, I stood in Winnipeg, Manitoba's Union Station with a small suitcase and a backpack. An older couple walking their dog cut walked through, using the old, mostly empty station as a shortcut between the city's downtown and the quieter streets along the Red River. Seeing my suitcase, the man paused. "Going to Churchill?" he asked. I responded in the affirmative. "You're going to love it," he said. A year ago, I began formulating the outlines of a senior thesis on the economic and discursive imaginations of the Arctic. The region today lives at the margins of US/Canadian imaginations, yet at the heart of current and future questions of global trade, climate change, and international relations. But the internal socioeconomic conditions remain at the periphery. Churchill, Manitoba became the

natural focus of these factors, given its military past, its prominence in the world of Arctic tourism (increasingly an economic model for the region), and its diverse population. I thus travelled to Churchill under the backing of this department with one overriding question: is the growing shift towards tourism in the Arctic a culturally and economically sustainable model for the future? What does (or should) the future look like? In chasing answers, two weeks on the ground proved immensely insightful.

To arrive in Churchill, one must either shell out \$1,000-\$2,000 for a flight from Winnipeg, or plant yourself on a VIA Rail train for a good long while. I opted for the latter. The Winnipeg-Churchill line lasts—if all runs on schedule, which it rarely does—one day and 22 hours. After arriving in Winnipeg on Saturday night (Aug. 10), I left the capital city of Manitoba the following day at noon by train. Two days later, our train pulled into the small station in Churchill, half an hour ahead of schedule, for an arrival at 8:30am on Tuesday. I repeated this routine in reverse 11 days later, departing at 7:30pm on Saturday the 24th and, after significant delays, rolling into Winnipeg well past 9pm. During those combined 100+ hours on the rail line touted by locals and public officials alike as the "lifeline" of northern Manitoba, I spoke often with travelers and train attendants. Some of my conversations were brief, as I leaned across a seat in the lounge car to chat for a moment with a couple of tourists, and some were longer, including conversations with train

attendants on regional movement, rural decay, and government investment. I took fieldnotes on all such interactions, as well as on the experience of the trains, the actions of the tourists and locals onboard them, and on the towns which we passed through. As the central mode of transportation for everything from tourists to groceries to construction materials to locals going town-to-town, this rail network proved integral in understanding the current constraints and dynamics within the region.

The 11 days between my arrival in and departure from Churchill proved equally educational. Across guided tours, local events, and conversations with a dozen seasonal and full-time residents, as well as an interview with a representative from the municipal government, I came to recognize ways in which the discourse on the tourism and manual economies diverged and came together. These conversations included six business owners five tour guides, and an array of others, from



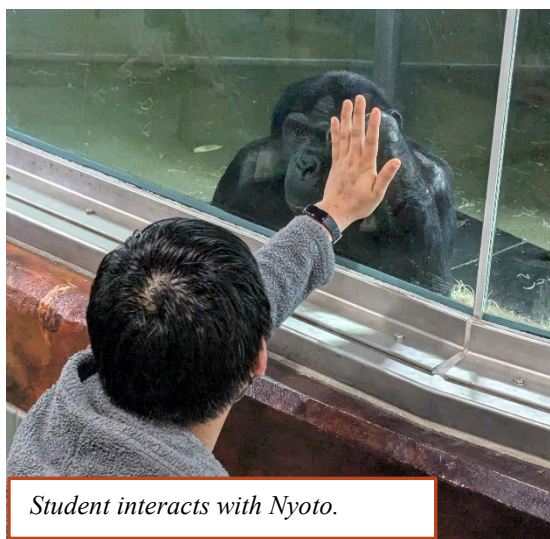
manual laborers to 20-something seasonal hospitality workers. Outside of time set aside for asking questions of essentially every warm body I could convince to bear with my inquiries (no bear pun intended), I took careful notes on the infrastructure of the town—which, in a remote environment where space, energy, and public gathering sites are at a premium, signified more struggle and federal policy than the average municipal architecture. From the sprawling Town Complex along the Hudson Bay (housing the school, the hospital, the municipal government, a pool, an ice rink, a library, and a pop-up candy store, among other things) to the old Port of Churchill—once (and perhaps still, depending on who you listen to) the central industry of the town—looming over the town from the northwest.

With the data I collected during this field experience, I will complete a senior thesis this semester (Fall 2024) synthesizing the diverging perspectives and experiences I recorded with the existing literature and data on the region. While I may not be able to resolve the overwhelming Northern question (“what’s next?”), I hope to shed light on the internal competition for the economic and cultural future of a region at, depending on your map, the margins or the heart of the future.

Class Activities and Student Funding

Class activities are funded by the James M. Garst '79 Memorial Endowed Fund together with generous annual donations from our alumni. Thank you!

Merel van Bockel (right), an exchange student from the Netherlands, received funding to travel to Pella, Iowa to visit the town and to attend the Tulip Queen Coronation event for class research for Landscapes of Social Inequality taught by Professor Ng. Their project involves a visit to Pella, Iowa, where they attended the Tulip Time Royal Court event on November 9th and explored the historic village. They also attended a clog-painting workshop during the Kerstmarkt on December 7th.



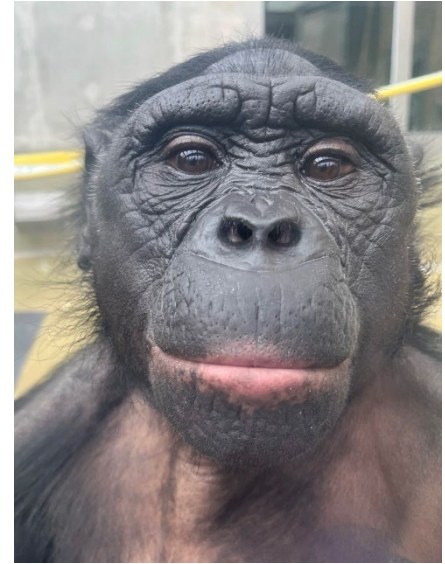
Student interacts with Nyoto.

Anthropological Inquiries Ape Initiative Visit

Prof. Monty Roper's Anthropological Inquiries class visited bonobos, the closest living relative to humans, at the Ape Initiative in Des Moines. They learned about bonobo conservation efforts and how the Initiative works to ensure that research with the seven resident bonobos is done ethically. Bonobos can choose to participate or not in all research. In addition to gaining insights into their behavior and cognition, research provides insights into human origins.



Students learn about the Ape Initiative's work.



Students met three of the bonobos. After, many commented how impacted they were by the humanity of the bonobos.

Landscapes of Social Inequality Class Visits Meskwaki Settlement



Prof. Laura Ng's class visited the Meskwaki Cultural Center & Museum with Meskwaki Historic Preservation Director Johnathan Buffalo. They discussed the Meskwaki cultural landscapes, which range from the Eastern U.S. to Iowa, and what place-making means to the tribe. Before our field trip, Prof. Jon Andelson provided important historical context on the Meskwaki tribe. (The photo on the right is a display titled "Meskwaki in the Iowa River Valley.")

Faculty Updates & News

Lily Demars



Professor Lily Demars gave birth to a healthy baby boy on November 13. His name is Garrett Lee, and he weighed 8lbs, 6 oz and was 21.5 inches long.

Laura Ng

Professor Laura Ng took a group of students (Yurie O. and George M.) to Wyoming this summer to excavate a 1890s Chinatown in Evanston and Rock Springs. The focus of the excavation was to find artifacts and to uncover the structures of buildings that may have existed there. Some of the artifacts included bowls, nails, and bones. The goal of this project is to bring awareness to the existence and importance of China Towns in the Western United States.

Along with students, Professor Ng has helped to set up and host the Hostile Terrain Exhibit. The Hostile Terrain Exhibit seeks to bring light to the human rights issues that are faced by migrants at the Southern Border. An interactive exhibit, this project relied on volunteers (students and faculty) to fill out toe tags with the information of those who died attempting to cross the border and were ultimately displayed in the Grinnell College Museum of Art.

Professor Ng was selected as one of Grinnell's Harris Faculty Fellows for 2025-26. The fellowship provides a full year leave to focus on research. The following comes from the college's official announcement. Ng's project "The Archaeology of Labor, Race, and Transnationalism in Rural Wyoming Chinatowns," will delve into the history of the Chinatowns of Evanston and Rock Springs, Wyoming. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these were Wyoming's two largest Chinese communities, housing many migrants who came from China's Pearl River Delta to work for the Union Pacific Railroad

Company. Both communities were connected to the 1885 Chinese Massacre, in which 28 Chinese coal miners were murdered by a white mob. Ng's project will assess racial violence in the region, Chinese responses to racism, and the transnational experiences of Chinese laborers through oral histories with the descendants of these communities, analysis of historical immigration records, and comparison of archaeological data from Evanston and Rock Springs with several villages in the Pearl River Delta. Her work will support the nomination of Evanston and Rock Springs as National Historic Landmarks.

Brigittine French

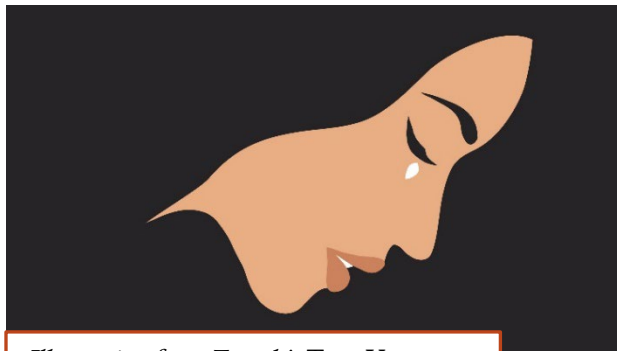


Illustration from French's TeenVogue article

Professor Brigittine French recently published a piece in TeenVogue titled “We Can't Prevent Gender-Based Violence Until We Can Accurately Name It.” In this short article, French argues that we must collectively give names to different forms of gender-based violence in order to raise awareness and prevent future occurrences from happening. This is primarily shown through the naming of “Femicide,” a problematically common phenomenon French described as “the crime of murdering a woman because of her gender” (2024). This article not only displays French's understanding of public anthropology, but also acts as an intervention within the public sphere to shift our tactics, advocating for a more efficient way to understand gender-based violence.

Professor French has also received a research grant from the 2024-2025 Fulbright Alumni Project Fund to conduct work on civil rights in Northern Ireland. This grant is supporting French's proposal to host a 5-day workshop examining how the U.S. civil rights movement is understood in Northern Ireland. Likewise, she is interested in how these insights can transcend national boundaries to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within both U.S. and Irish universities. This workshop will take place at Dublin City University, Belfast, and Derry/Londonderry. Each day proposes new opportunities, ranging from discussing research, meeting and interviewing local leaders, and solidifying the next steps in this pivotal project.

Emily de Wet

Professor Emily de Wet has recently organized a panel at the upcoming American Anthropological Association's (AAA) annual meeting on Eating Animals. She is also currently working on a piece of co-authored scholarship using the framing of multispecies justice to argue for a more intersectional approach to cross-disciplinary conversations around multiple scales of harm in our food systems. Her next project is aiming to explore people's relationships to eating meat in the U.S.

Owen Kohl

Professor Owen Kohl spent the summer presenting at multiple conferences in Europe. He also joined a project based in Ljubljana, Slovenia at the University of Ljubljana and at the University of Rijeka, Croatia as an external researcher. The goal of the research group, MEMPOP, is to document and understand the role that murals, music, film, and television play in the post Yugoslavia world. They also hosted several workshops in Ljubljana. Professor Kohl also conducted research in Croatia, Georgia, Slovenia, Germany, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Part of this research was curriculum development for his Intro to Anthropology classes at Grinnell College.

Monty Roper

Professor Roper's two-year USDA-funded Rural Placemaking project, Build a Better Grinnell 2030, officially wrapped up in September with a community-wide presentation and project work session. The project involved two community-wide surveys (one to identify perceptions of community strengths and concerns, and one to prioritize concerns down to seven key issues), over seventy key stakeholder interviews, and 69 focus groups and listening sessions.

It built on a principle of community engagement and participation. This involved both active participation of the community as well as a high degree of transparency with regular updates. Representatives of over 20 organizations served as members of a steering committee, over 30 individuals from the community were hired to help collect data over three core phases of the project, dozens of Grinnell College students participated through work in Roper's courses or as research assistants.



Community members work in groups to discuss research findings and outline action plans.

Over the course of the project, Roper has held over 35 public presentations to the community to provide research updates and encourage participation.

The core final products of the research process (in addition to the Phase I and Phase II data that was shared with the community and published on the website) that are intended to support an ongoing action planning stage include seven prioritized issues reports and a final project summary report. Each issue report is 30-50 pages in length and provides a detailed account of the data gathered through all phases of the research relevant to the prioritized issue. The summary report is a 20-page glossy print booklet that provides an overview of the project, its methods, and a summary of the findings from each of the three phases. All publications and data are available at the website, www.buildabettergrinnell.org.

Departmental Events

Hostile Terrain Exhibition

Written by Da Hye, Fall 2024 graduate



The Hostile Terrain 94 exhibition, by the Undocumented Migration Project associated with Jason de Leon, was coordinated and carried out between the Department of Anthropology together with SOL. Dr. Ng, Prof Escandell, Jorge Salinas, and others helped lead this project, with tons of other volunteers and likely hundreds of hours of work combined dedicated to manually fill each toe tag for the close to 4,000

migrants who perished while crossing the border and pinning them on the exhibition wall map. Personally, it was revealing to see the range of people who perished on the way, of all ages and causes of death, as well as the sheer number of unidentified bodies that no longer held any identifiable information. We were encouraged to leave personal messages behind toe tags if we wanted. It was a learning process to coordinate all the work involved, but it was an enjoyable time working with all the volunteers.

Starting from September 12 up till November 7, which is when the last tag was placed, multiple hours each week were dedicated to this project (usually on Thursdays, when these 'work parties' were hosted) with a number of dedicated volunteers as well as other events to bring in new people including volunteers from the Mayflower, anthropology lunch sessions and classes, and more. This project culminated with a panel talk with Immigrant Allies of Marshalltown, with select speakers giving their own personal or family experiences, some of it tying directly to the 2006 ICE raid in Marshalltown. The panel talk was my favorite part of this whole project because the speakers' experiences



were harrowing but also so insightful, with a dinner afterwards. A showing of the movie *Border South* was also shown as part of this project. Dr. Ng did an excellent job documenting the whole process in this fully participatory project, which can be found at <https://ht94.sites.grinnell.edu/>. The project was also featured in the S&B.

Anthropology Departmental & SEPC Events

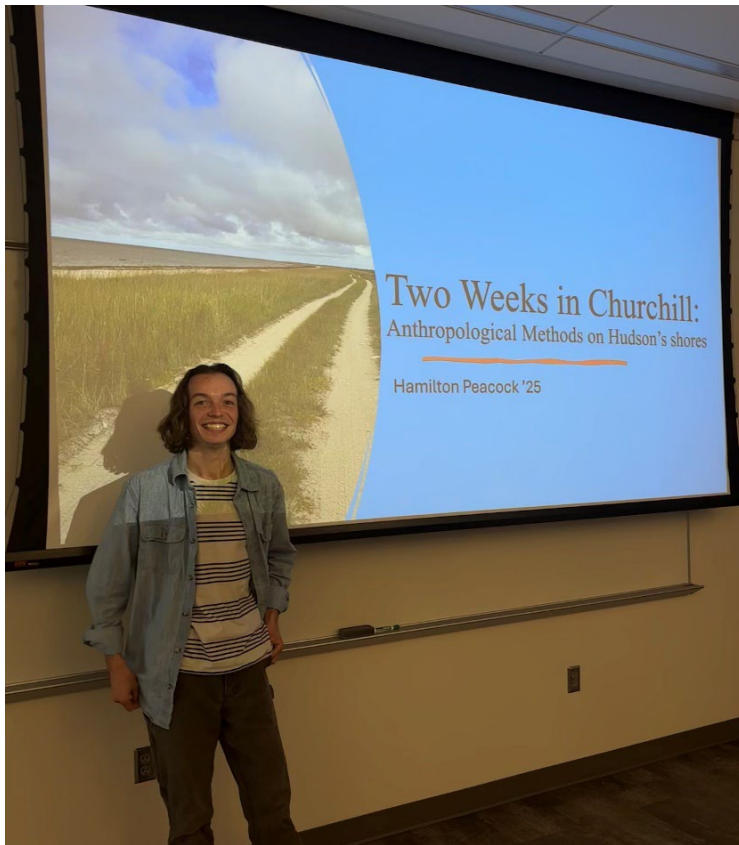


Left: The Anthropology department hosted a welcome event for potential majors. SEPC members and other majors talked about their experiences and why one should pursue Anthropology.

The Anthropology Department hosted a student summer research presentation for those who received funding to conduct research during the break. All three students also presented their final theses at the end of the semester.

Right: Eleanor Hedges Duroy '25





Research Presentations Cont.

Left: Hamilton Peacock '25

Below: George Matthes '25





Senior Thesis Presenters

Above: Delaney Owens '25

Below: Em Huss-Lederman
Fall '25



Professor Whittaker hosted a Flintknapping event, in which students had a chance to see how stone tools were made!

Flintknapping Demonstration HSSC 1332 – Tues Oct 1, 4pm

Learn about tool making and use during the Paleolithic period
(~2.5 million years ago to 11,000 years ago)

- How did early humans, neanderthals, and human ancestors make stone tools?
- What might these tools have been used for?
- What does such tool making say about intelligence and social behavior?

Join the Department of Anthropology
for a flintknapping demonstration and informal discussion
with Prof. John Whittaker

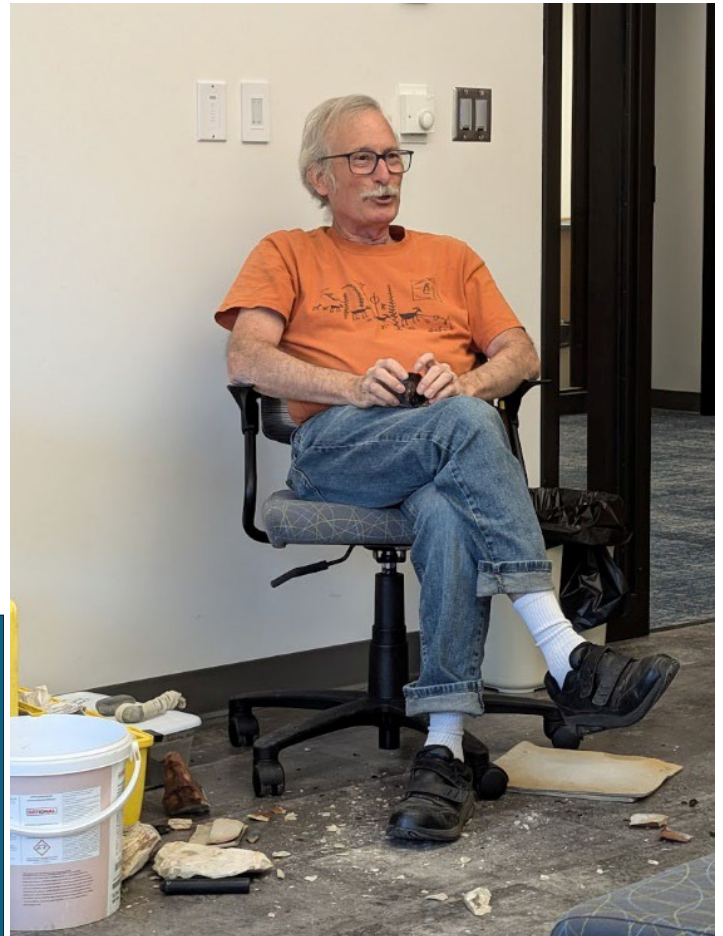


Photo from Neanderthal Museum
North Rhine-Westphalia Germany

FLINTKNAPPING MAKING & UNDERSTANDING STONE TOOLS



JOHN C. WHITTAKER



Alumni Updates

Harvey Wilhem, class of 24, recently got a job with the Iowa City Housing Authority and is working there as a program assistant.

Dani Long, class of 2000 has worked as an archaeologist and is now a museum technician in curation at Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Dolores, Colorado. She is currently offering an internship opportunity for the position of an Archaeological Collections Intern through the National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE).

Alice E. Rogoff, class of 71 writes with an update, “As an Editor of the Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, I have not become an anthropologist, but our issues have featured writers who are Native (Blackfoot), African American, Filipino, Ukrainian and Mayan.” *

*You are an anthropologist! Anthropologists contribute to the world in so many diverse ways!

Donors (April – December 2024)

- ❖ Allison Brummel Bell and Mike Bell
- ❖ Toby R. Cain (Anthropology Emeritus Professors' Research Fund)
- ❖ Timothy A. Connor and Anne Connor
- ❖ Cassandra S. Ewert-Lamutt (In honor of Rachel M. Asrelsky '89)
- ❖ William Green (Anthropology Emeritus Professors' Research Fund)
- ❖ Christina Peters Huber (Anthropology Emeritus Professors' Research Fund)
- ❖ Harriet Phinney and Adam Berger
- ❖ Sallee Garst Haerr (The James M. Garst '79 Memorial Endowed Fund for Anthropology)
- ❖ Susan Hyatt (In honor of Doug Caulkins)
- ❖ Nathaniel C. Lange
- ❖ Dr. Curtis L. Scribner (In honor of Ralph Luebben)
- ❖ Paul Simmons and Michele Clark (Paul Simmons '79 and Michele Clark International Research and Learning Fund)
- ❖ Lara E. Szent-Gyorgyi (Recurring Gift in honor of Rachel M. Asrelsky '89)
- ❖ Julia D. Wulfschle (In honor of Rachel M. Asrelsky '89)

Many thanks to our donors for making so many opportunities possible for anthropology students!

Closing

Congratulations to Fall 2024 Graduates!

Em Huss-Lederman

Da Hye Oh

Grayson Woodhouse

Alyson Won



Many thanks to Anthropology Department Assistants Eleanor Hedges Duroy '25 and Aubrie Connell '26 for their work on the Newsletter!