

Field Notes

A newsletter of the Middlebury College Anthropology Department

Fall 2025 Number 20

Editor: Michael Sheridan



May 2025 graduation! Chelsea Roldan, Hanna Medwar, Brigid Armbrust, Marybeth Nevins

A Note from the Chair...

Despite external social and political turbulence, 2024-2025 was a year of positive change for our Anthropology Department. We expanded our curricular and research reach with a surge of new offerings by a new faculty colleague, **Fulya Pinar**. We honed our organizational practice with a huge assist from a new coordinator, **Caitlin Harder**. In a year that was marked by external challenges, we built from the inside out, with dense community-building

programming. The result was a blossoming of student-initiated publications, writings, and resources.

Our most significant news for the future of the department has been the arrival of our new faculty colleague, Fulya Pinar. Dr. Pinar brings a wealth of expertise in ethnographic methods, in legal and political anthropology, and in design anthropology. She brings a powerful new approach to the social predicaments and civic creativity of migrants and refugees. Her classes engage local and regional organizations, where she has already made a big impression

mentoring our students and honing their ability to navigate the sensitive social terrain. She brought political refugee community leaders into her classrooms and brought her students into educational- and service-providing institutions. She fostered a student-composed exhibit at the Henry Sheldon Museum. She mentored award-winning senior work. [see below, p. 10 – Ed.] We are very lucky to have Dr. Pinar as a new addition to our department!



We have also been fortunate in our new department coordinator, Caitlin Harder. She brings a depth of experience in events programming, visual design, and strong organizational skills. As we try new kinds of events, it's been so helpful to have her on

our team and part of our community.

This year the entire department decided to direct our resources to fostering community among Anthropology and affiliated faculty and students. We gathered and ate together in large and small ways. We held weekly Anthro-Lunches in Atwater Dining Hall. We held Anthrocafés in Davis Family Library. We celebrated the end of each semester with stress-busting Anthropology dinners in the Humanities House on Franklin Street.

It is no accident, I think, that our students, with so many opportunities to meet and talk, launched two significant new student initiatives. The larger of these was the launch of Middlebury's first-ever student-led Anthropology magazine, entitled *AnthroAction*. See page 11 for more!

Another enterprising Anthropology student, **Jenny Fede '26.5**, working with our own **Mike Sheridan** and **Alex Lyford** from MATH/STAT, created a searchable senior work database. With the tool she has created, students and



alums can search abstracts from the full history of anthropology senior work since 2001.

https://jenefede.shinyapps.io/Anthro_App/

Take a look, and search it by keyword! This will be a source of inspiration and help for students contemplating their own senior work. And, because a portion of senior work every year is local, the accumulated record provides a unique window on the Vermont social world, environment, history and institutions.

In J-term 2025 three early career anthropologists (including Midd alums **Amanda Kaminsky '13** and **Harriet Napier '13**) taught Jterm Anthropology classes. The department (spear-headed by Mike Sheridan) hosted a series of talks

featuring these instructors. Each talk was convivial and supportive, and served as a mock job-talk for those on the job market. Our undergraduates benefitted by seeing anthropologists just starting out from graduate school, and as faculty we all learned from their fresh and updated knowledge. Who knew that capuchin monkeys sometimes inflate frogs like balloons, seemingly just for fun?

In sum, while 2024-2025 was in many respects a challenging year in its wider political and societal dimensions; the Anthropology Department held steady, building a stable, nourishing and supportive intellectual community with robust engagements in the surrounding town and state. I think this was the right response and we see that our students reciprocated with their own strong initiatives to create resources for one another, to build their abilities and project their voices.

Marybeth Nevins, 2024-2025 Anthro chair

Faculty and Staff Updates

Netta Avineri

I am the Executive Director of the Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation and Professor of Intercultural Communication. In spring 2025 I taught a new course called "Storytelling for Change" and in the fall will teach a course on Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices. I participated in DLINQ's Digital Teaching and Learning Fellowship, focusing on a project to facilitate students' visual mapping of conflicts around the world. Over the past year I have been working collaboratively with colleagues on various initiatives. In partnership with The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights and Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, two graduate research assistants and I completed a survey of Pajaro CA, through which community members shared their experiences of a 2023 flood. You can see our report at <https://www.chirla.org/pajaroreport/>. As the Middlebury Social Impact Corps Faculty Director, I have



MSIC 2025 Cohort (Dylan O'Connor '27, Nathan Stellmach '26, Neshae Johnson '26 (MIIS), Jessica Rodriguez '25.5 (MIIS), Leticia Crosby '27.5, Alyana Santillana '26); Monterey County Civil Rights Office Staff (Juan Rodriguez, Daniel Gonzalez, Natalie Alfaro Frazier, Naudia Velarde); Netta Avineri (Faculty Director; far left)

been collaborating with **Dana Anderson** (Innovation Hub Associate Director) to facilitate MIIS and Middlebury College students' engagement with the Monterey County Civil Rights Office on a project highlighting "local government as a force for good." I presented at the Planet Forward Summit in April 2025 and facilitated workshops for the summer Middlebury School of the Environment. I have

also been enjoying my time as Secretary/Treasurer for the Society of Linguistic Anthropology. I am excited to teach a Conflict Transformation course at the College in J-Term 2026. Looking forward to the year ahead!

Kristy Bright



Erica Di Ruggiero (Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto) relaxes for dinner with students and colleagues after her talk on strategies for global health humanities

In 2024-25, I received funding to launch a new research program “Seeding the Medical Humanities at Middlebury and Beyond: Fostering Collaborations in Community and Relational Health.” With support from

the New England Humanities Consortium, the UNH Center for the Humanities/Mellon, and the Provost’s Academic

Council, I partnered with **Jacquelyne Luce** (Mount Holyoke) and **Sarah Willen** (University of Connecticut) in the first part of the project to bring together a growing community of students and colleagues across 20 campuses in the northeast, under the umbrella *Feminist Health Futures: Enacting Collaborative Pedagogies in the Health Humanities*.

Through a series of virtual roundtables and an in-person retreat in summer 2024, we explored the imaginative labor and infrastructure behind collectives like the Black Feminist Reproductive Justice, Equity and Health Activism Lab (Amherst College), SisterSong (Smith College), Pandemic Journaling Project (Brown University and University of Connecticut), Feminist Technoscience Governance Collaboratory (Mount Holyoke College), Reproductive Justice Minigolf (Middlebury), and Body Online (Middlebury). Energized by what we learned in this first branch of the project, I was able to secure funding to build a second branch led by project fellows **Roxanna Alvarado ’25**, **Elio Farley ’24.5**, **Hanna Medwar ’25**, **Emily Stone ’25**, **Samara Gordan-Wexler ’23.5**, **Jessica Bytautas** (U Toronto), and **Jaya Singh** (U Toronto). With the shared goal of transforming not only how we learn but also how we imagine health justice across campuses and communities, we engaged with partners in Canada (Nov-Dec 2024), Denmark (Dec-Jan 2025), and Aotearoa/New Zealand (Feb-July 2025) on three critical topics: relational structures of peer-led pedagogies for sexual health and antiviolence on university campuses (led by Alvarado, Farley, and Singh in Canada and Vermont); barriers and facilitators to primary-to-specialty cancer treatment in Denmark and Vermont (led by Medwar and Stone in Denmark and Vermont); and therapeutic placemaking and legacy in end-of-life care (led by Bytautas and Gordan-Wexler in Canada and Aotearoa). Across so many chances for learning and connection – from nonstop belly laughs on the metro in Copenhagen to serious



Mercia Rapihana and Kristy Bright discuss Rongoā Māori (Māori medicine) during one of Kristy’s presentations at the University of Auckland

discussions about colonial medical violence in Canada, Denmark and New Zealand, we were challenged to think critically, historically, and personally about regimes of science, government, and health. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work with these wonderful people in 2024-25 and in years to come as we continue to expand these research opportunities for other students at Middlebury. As I wind down this year (currently on sabbatical) and prepare to return to teaching in February, I look forward to sharing out more on our channels. Please give us a follow at www.bodyonline.org or @bodyonlinelab for updates, and if you’d like to learn more about how to get involved, please dm or email me directly.

James Fitzsimmons

Over the course of this academic year, I edited a book manuscript for Oxford University Press (*Blood on the Wind*; release date December 2025) and continued work on another for the University of Texas Press; I also published pieces for *The Conversation* on ancient Maya attitudes towards mirrors and hurricanes. Likewise, I did some epigraphic work in northern Yucatan, Mexico, and spent time in Central Anatolia, Türkiye, shoring up materials for my classes at the archaeological sites of Çatalhöyük (above) and Hattuşa.



Caitlin Harder

It has been a treat working with the Anthropology Department this past year, hearing fascinating anecdotes from the faculty when they stop into my office between classes (along with a steady supply of Mike Sheridan's dad jokes which brightened even the darkest February day)! Aside from learning the ropes at my new job as an academic coordinator for four different departments and programs, this past year has been spent renovating my first home (a 200-year-old barn) with my partner, and restoring the surrounding forest and meadowland with mostly native plants. This summer, my seemingly endless battle with invasive flora and fauna transformed into a new installation art project centering on the grotesque – and weirdly fascinating – invasive jumping worm. The project, which is still in its early stages, will explore concepts around traditional “women's work,” climate change, and cycles of destruction and rebirth through video and ephemeral sculpture.



Damascus Kafumbe

I had a very productive academic leave year centered on completing and publishing my second book, *Interpreting Court Song in Uganda: Musical Meaning, Power Relations, and Political Life* (see p. X). Through collaborative research with Ugandan musicians and cultural experts, this work demonstrates how lyric interpretation creates dynamic, multivalent meanings that illuminate contemporary political life across cultural boundaries. My scholarship was recognized with the Florida State University Warren D. Allen Citation for Excellence in Scholarship, and I was

honored to deliver the inaugural Betty Bowe Castor Lecture at Rowan University. I presented research on African music and dance performance in American liberal arts curricula at two major international conferences, where I also chaired sessions on diverse topics: the 48th International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance World Conference in Wellington, New Zealand, and the International Symposium on the Musical Arts of Africa at Tufts University. Building on this work, I recently developed an arts and peacebuilding global course (MUSC 1007: Arts for Peace, M-LISADA Uganda) that I will offer in Winter 2026. Through this process, I established partnerships with an NGO that empowers at-risk Ugandan youth through musical arts. This initiative will enable Middlebury students to collaborate directly with Ugandan communities in co-developing arts-based conflict transformation models. Throughout the year, I continued my editorial service as Book Review Editor of *Traditions of Music and Dance* (Cambridge University Press) and Editor of the Eastman/Rochester Studies in Ethnomusicology Series (University of Rochester Press).

Alexis Michajliw

I am very excited to be on my first sabbatical! I am on a calendar year sabbatical from January-December 2025 and have used the time to catch up on field and lab work that is otherwise hard to complete while also teaching courses. I started my sabbatical with a one month fellowship in Japan, supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. I was able to use my new skills in Japanese (thanks to auditing JAPN 101!) and visited colleagues at Hokkaido University to learn about shrew captive breeding programs. I also took the bullet train from Tsukuba to Akita to locate a



tar pit (asphaltic fossil deposit) reported in the early 1900s – we successfully found it and even rediscovered some museum specimens of mammoths from the site that we hope to radiocarbon date. Then I visited my field site in Trinidad – another tar pit – and helped teach a course about Trinidad's “Ice Age” fossils. I hope to return there later this year to complete some excavations as part of my National



Geographic grant. Other fun trips within the US include a week of field work on a new Nature Conservancy preserve in Tehachapi, California with Middlebury students, returning to the La Brea Tar Pits, and some outreach at San Diego Comic Con through the Cosplay for Science initiative. I am looking forward to teaching my first First Year Seminar – on the intersections of horror fiction and paleontology – when I return to teaching in Spring 2026.

Marybeth Nevins

What did I do in 2024-2025? I will treat classes first and then research and writing... I built new multi-modal components into my “Language Structure and Function” class. We approached phonetics through all the regular channels: the architecture of the vocal apparatus and how voicing, placement, nasality, manner, tension, tone are represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet. But this year we also “got there” through singing with the help of Midd alum **Ronnie Romero ‘20**. For the “comparative languages of the world” portion of the class, we met at the Knoll and I shared with them the first lesson given me by my White Mountain Apache language and culture teacher, **Eva Lupe**. She said that if I wanted to understand Apache I would first need to learn to make bread. We made fry-bread over an open fire and ate it with a Vermont maple sugar twist, all at the Knoll on a beautiful October day.



I retooled Linguistic Anthropology Method and Theory to make it oriented toward sophomores prior to study abroad. Students interviewed their families and elicited oral histories. We then expanded these narratives with archival research. Linguistic anthropology has a long history of scholarship in folklore, verbal art, verbal play, and vernacular “everyday” speech. After a year of frustration, I realized that my project on “conflicting environmental discourses in Vermont” was best approached through the concerns of folklore and claims to local grassroots folk authenticity. I presented this ongoing work to the new “Folklore and Environment” section of the American Folklore Society.

I continued work on indigenous legacies of the California Gold Rush with a talk in the Carol Rifelj Lecture Series. I examined the 19th-century mining claims of “hobos, tramps and bums” kept in the Harvard Business School archives. The performative aspects of these documents illuminate the nationwide facets of what was transpiring on and in the ground in the Golden State.

Finally, I worked on my book and website project about early 20th-century North American ethnolinguistic text collections. My goal is to create a resource and set of tools that encourage indigenous community members, students and scholars to recognize the indigenous political voices that had been ignored. I presented this project at the Society for Linguistic Anthropology meetings in Chicago.

This year was different from most at Middlebury. I attended more lunches and dinners with the department than ever before, and I attended more scholarly conferences and meetings than I ever had. At those meetings I was profoundly affected by visiting with people who had been important to my early career and who I hadn’t seen since the Covid epidemic. Between scholarly society meetings and community-building in the Middlebury Anthropology department, 2024-2025 has made me a believer in the importance of up-close, in-person, small-scale meetings that foster our sense of connection to one another and our common work.

Ellen Oxfeld



Ellen with four generations of the family she has been staying with in China since the mid-1990s

I was on sabbatical this year and had a chance to revive my research in China as well as dig deeply into my professional connections and obligations in my field (the anthropology of East Asia). I returned to the village in China I have been

visiting for over 30 years in the winter and, as might be expected, found some huge societal and technological transformations (fast trains anyone?), but also so many interesting deep continuities and resilience in the face of such rapid change. Many people have migrated to cities now, but the Lunar New Year and returning to one's native place are so important! I was able to participate and witness these rituals of return, as well as to understand some of the emerging difficulties, especially with families spread out geographically and thus encountering new challenges in mutual care for both elders and children (a subject I will be presenting a paper on in our November American Anthropological Association meetings in New Orleans). I also stayed involved with the board of the Society for East Asian Anthropology and journeyed to Seoul over the summer where we had a wonderful conference that drew on the participation of East Asian anthropologists of East Asia. It was exciting to hear presentations from so many anthropologists from all over East Asia who normally cannot journey to North America. Many of them are the next generation in our field and it was wonderful to be able to connect with such a transnational group. Aside from that, I just completed a paper on food and memory in contemporary China which will be published in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Food Studies*, and am serving on a panel for Society for East Asian Anthropology to award the best graduate student paper for this past year – very interesting to see what the next generation is working on!

Fulya Pinar



This year I've been busy (and happily so). I'm co-editing the fourth volume of *Everyday Life in the Middle East*, working with a stellar group of authors whose chapters make everyday practices feel anything but ordinary. I published "Deportation as Punishment" with the *Middle East Research and Information Project* and hosted a podcast conversation on the *dabke* dance in Syria. I devote at least a week to music and dance in my Anthropologies of the Middle East course, and I can't wait to weave in even more *dabke*!

I also had the joy of advising a sharp, creative senior whose thesis on AI use in Vermont high schools received our department's senior thesis award (a highlight of my year, yay!) and teaching my first senior seminar, *The Enterprising Self*, on how self-improvement, self-branding, and platform algorithms reshape subjectivities and social relations.

As a fellow in the Axinn Center's *Migrant Justice in Vermont and Beyond* project, I worked with community partners and the Sheldon Museum to curate a student

research exhibit on migrant communities in New England, hosting guests that included a Tibetan musician. This support will extend to my Migration and Social Justice course this coming spring. An Ada Howe Kent grant supported workshops on op-ed writing, comic/graphic novel storytelling, and participatory digital storytelling – formats I'm eager to integrate into my courses. Finally, CCE support will help launch student projects on AI bias in Middle East-related media. So, next up: more teaching, more editing, more writing (then workshoping it with brilliant and merciful colleagues), and continued wrestling with whatever fresh technological dilemmas land in the classroom.

Michael Sheridan

2024-25 was a hard year for me. It started pretty normally, with me doing Anth 103 and 232 in the fall. I participated in a faculty migration studies group (focusing on climate change migration) and I was a DLINQ faculty fellow (experimented with an online assignment for Anth 103). My 2023 book (*Roots of Power*, Routledge) came out with a paperback edition. I worked with **Maggie Winters '24.5** and **Ruby Neustadt '25** on their senior projects. I organized a series of events with our Jterm 2025 guest instructors **Amanda Kaminsky '13**, **Harriet Napier '13**, and **Alexa Duchesneau**. I worked on planning the Student Spring Symposium for April 2025. Then the sky fell. My dad was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died in March. I organized two funerals; one 'regular' funeral (visiting hours at a funeral home, Catholic mass, family potluck at my aunt's house), and one very special-needs funeral with my deaf/blind brother and deaf sister. The extended family did a



DIY burial service in ASL at which we all told stories about Dad. In June I took a bit of Dad's ashes to Tullyallen, Ireland, where the apical ancestor of the Sheridan clan (= the one who migrated to Boston in the 1850s) was born in 1812. I put Dad under a yew tree in the Tullyallen church cemetery and got some closure. Throughout all of this I got tremendous support from Anthro Dept colleagues and students. Thank you and 🙌

David Stoll

For 2025-2026 I am on Associate status, which means I'm away during the fall semester. However, don't hesitate to email me if I can help in some way. What I'm thinking about these days:

1) *How the Ixil Mayas of Nebaj, Guatemala are faring in what has become their most important industry, exporting themselves into the U.S. labor market.* Over the last 25 years, the shifting border enforcement policies of the Bush, Obama, Trump #1 and Biden administrations have had surprisingly little affect on the movement of tens of thousands of Ixils to the U.S. Now that Trump #2 has shut down amnesty applications at the border and escalated deportation raids on migrant communities, how much difference is the crackdown making for Nebajenses? My guess is, quite a bit, but I won't know until I visit Nebaj soon.

2) *Neo-indigenism - the claiming of indigenous ancestry by people who, upon close examination, turn out to be engaging in wishful thinking.* Every reader of *Fieldnotes* is aware of the ongoing debate about whether the Vermont state legislature should have recognized four groups of Vermonters as Abenakis despite their lack of ancestral evidence. The cultural history of neo-indigenism is that many American institutions have encouraged Americans, in all our ethno-racial diversity, to honor American Indians as our cultural ancestors. Is there a line between admiring an Other and redefining oneself in terms of that Other? In academia many of us think it is perfectly okay for a man to redefine himself as a woman, and a woman to redefine herself as a man, but, anthropologists have backed away from the idea that our discipline has the right to define who qualifies to be a Cherokee or Ticuna. Tribal governments in the U.S. and Canada are now claiming the right to decide who has the right to identify themselves as a Cherokee or Abenaki.



3) *Identity-first argumentation in the American Anthropological Association.* Anyone who hangs around anthropology becomes aware that our discipline, if it can be called that, consists of a long history of collisions between sometimes wildly divergent agendas and paradigms. One of the shared assumptions of the last century has been our staunch opposition to racism and colonialism. Recently, however, the AAA's elected leadership has decided that normative whiteness continues to suffocate anthropology, therefore we must undergo a racial reckoning to decolonize ourselves. Not everyone is pleased by this conclusion and how it is affecting AAA decision-making. In my view, the AAA has imposed a new paradigm that I call neo-racial anthropology. It assumes that the racial identity of an anthropologist is more important than the quality of their evidence. By prioritizing certain kinds of insider perspectives, in particular "marginalized voices," neo-racial anthropology also undermines the give-and-take between

outsider and insider perspectives that has made anthropology such a crucial source of insight for a wide range of social scientists dealing with non-Western and non-elite epistemologies. Anyone who thinks I'm wrong – I would love to hear from you!

Dan Suarez



Dan has great news this year – this is **Sylvia Suarez** (b. May 28, 2025) watching a pack of orcas swim. And Dan's book *Biologists Unite* is just about to come out from MIT Press! Congratulations x2, Dan!

Anthropology Senior Projects and Independent Studies, 2024-2025

Roxanna Alvarado

From "Sexy Bingo" to "Spicy Bingo": A Transnational Comparison of Student-Led Sexual Health Education and Activism in Canada and the United States

Universities serve as key sites for sexual health education and promotion, influencing young adults' healthcare seeking and well-being both over the short term and potentially for a lifetime. Sexual health education design and delivery also vary significantly depending on national and institutional settings. This research project focused on sexual health education programming on three campuses in Canada and the United States, drawing on four months of ethnographic research with peer advocates, educators, and scholars. On



Roxanna presenting at the 2025 Student Spring Symposium

one hand, public universities face steep structural challenges, including funding limitations and difficulties in engaging commuter students. Across public and private institutions, peer educators highlight how student self-advocacy and lived experiences shape program effectiveness, reinforcing the importance of culturally responsive, student-centered approaches. These findings underscore the need for more ethnographically informed programs that prioritize pleasure, agency, and intersectionality, and that use humanities methodologies such as intercultural storytelling, participatory learning, and the critical revision of dominant scripts. At the same time, my findings highlight the need for tailored initiatives that address political and geographic barriers in sexual health education, and that lean into more resource-sharing and cross-border collaboration.

[Supervised by Prof. Bright]

Turner Britz

Balancing Innovation and Integrity: The Impact of LLM-Based AI on Secondary Education in Addison County, VT



This thesis explores the role of Large Language Model-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies within rural secondary schools in Addison County, Vermont. Based on survey data and semi-structured interviews, this study analyzes how AI is perceived, utilized, and negotiated by both students and teachers. The findings reveal a diverse range of AI use, with specific patterns of adoption. Teachers engage with AI primarily for instructional support, yet their approaches vary. Some leverage it to streamline content creation while maintaining pedagogical authority; others use it to fill knowledge gaps; some abstain due to concerns about losing control over their teaching practices. Students' AI use similarly spans a spectrum, ranging from academic dishonesty, to grade prediction, to more constructive applications like seeking feedback on their work. Drawing on frameworks of labor analysis, educational habitus, and Actor-Network Theory, this project illustrates how students and teachers navigate the tension between harnessing AI's potential and maintaining control over its unpredictable influence. Ultimately, this study neither advocates for nor condemns AI in educational spaces but emphasizes the need

for a critical understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations. I argue that users must remain aware of AI's lack of consciousness and consistency, and I caution users that overreliance could ultimately undermine their own agency and intellectual achievement. This research calls for structural interventions to equip educators and students with the knowledge necessary to use AI effectively and ethically in secondary education. [Supervised by Prof. Pinar]

James Laudenslager

The Aryan Myth

In this paper, I argue that the Nazis' ability to craft and manipulate pre-existing notions of 'Aryan' or 'Indo-Germanic' superiority developed long before the 20th century, during the Enlightenment era. This is what set them apart from other political factions in inter-war Germany and allowed them to garner support within Germany and abroad. I argue that it was the Nazi's ability to draw upon and manipulate the Aryan myth – not just as a racial doctrine, but as a political tool – that allowed them to transcend class, ideology, and even national borders. My argument consists of three case studies: a predominantly agricultural and Protestant community known as 'Pomerania,' a 1934 survey of Hitler voters, and foreign volunteers who came to Germany to fight with the Waffen SS. I examine how the Nazis strategically constructed and weaponized the Aryan myth to unify disparate social groups, justify exclusionary policies, and legitimize their expansionist ambitions. [Supervised by Prof. Fitzsimmons]

Hanna Medwar

Primary Health in Comparative Transnational Perspective: A Critical Ethnographic Study of Danish and American Healthcare Systems

In global healthcare systems science, there has been significant research on barriers to primary care and how those are structurally, culturally, and nationally unique. At the same time, there are aspects of primary care that are shared across national borders. Increasing demands on public healthcare worldwide are stretching primary settings to accommodate the care of more advanced and chronic conditions, such as mental health, neurological conditions, cancer and other disease screening, palliative care, substance use and addiction, and sexual and reproductive healthcare. Drawing on ethnographic research with healthcare providers, educators, and scholars in Denmark and the US, this thesis explores themes of temporality, therapeutic landscapes, and structural dissonance in provider relationships and practices of care. Specifically, I focus on primary care settings in Addison County, Vermont and Copenhagen, Denmark to observe changing political and organizational aspects of care. This work is concerned with healthcare systems comparison, as it also goes beyond structural differences to explore diverse lived experiences of primary care. Alongside this analysis, I aim to understand how practitioners grapple with tensions between "clinical" and "holistic" approaches to placemaking and care. This type of ethnographic research seeks to also contribute to a broader understanding of medical humanities scholarship, creating new spaces for

academic exchange at Middlebury and beyond. [Supervised by Prof. Bright]

Ruby Neustadt

**The Town's College and the College's Town:
Institutional Landholdings and their Impact on
College-Community Relationships in Middlebury
Vermont**

This project focuses on Middlebury, Vermont and asks how Middlebury College's landholdings shape its relationship with the town's residents. Drawing on political ecology, anthropological theory, and environmental studies, I argue that institutional land use in small college towns reflects and reinforces broader dynamics of power, class, and access. Through ethnographic research – including interviews, community mapping sessions, and historical analysis – I explore how college land can act as both a benefit and a barrier for the relationship between an educational institution and its surrounding community. While certain land uses foster collaboration and public benefit, others expose tensions rooted in exclusion, bureaucratic opacity, and socioeconomic inequality. By treating land as a politically charged and relational space, this study reveals the need for more transparent, reciprocal, and justice-oriented approaches to institutional land stewardship in higher education, or what I call “town-gown land justice.” [Supervised by Prof. Sheridan]



Emily Stone

**Access to Oncology Diagnostics and Therapeutics
in a Transnational Perspective: A Comparative
Ethnographic Study in Denmark and the United
States**

This project examines how cancer care is delivered in Denmark and the United States, focusing on different interpretations of “fast-track” healthcare and the role of social trust. Through participant observation in healthcare settings, 20 interviews with healthcare professionals, and extensive document analysis, I explore how cultural values and political structures shape cancer treatment approaches. The research reveals that while Denmark's “fast-track” system guarantees rapid access to cancer diagnostics and treatment through standardized “cancer packages,” the US focuses on expediting drug development and regulatory approval. These differences reflect deeper cultural values: Denmark prioritizes universal access and collective well-

being, while the US emphasizes innovation and individual choice. The study found that Denmark's success in delivering efficient cancer care despite minimal patient-provider relationship building in hospitals is supported by high levels of social trust and relational care in the primary care setting. In contrast, market-driven approaches in American oncology settings create a greater need for patient-centered care and stronger primary-to-specialty provider relationships. The findings suggest that cancer healthcare outcomes are deeply influenced by societal trust and political and economic factors. While Denmark's model demonstrates how universal healthcare can be efficiently delivered, implementing similar reforms in the US would require addressing fundamental political and economic inequalities. This research contributes to our understanding of how healthcare systems reflect and reinforce broader societal values and structures. [Supervised by Prof. Bright]

Maggie Winters

**The Stories We Tell about Justice: Crime Dramas,
Domestic Violence, and the Divide between Fiction
and Reality**

This thesis examines the discrepancies between the portrayal of domestic violence in television crime dramas and the realities experienced by survivors, perpetrators, and legal professionals. Drawing on in-depth one-on-one interviews, case studies, and academic research, it explores how media narratives simplify the complexities of domestic violence, shaping public perceptions, legal outcomes, and societal attitudes. The first chapter analyzes the depiction of victims, perpetrators, and legal processes in television crime dramas to reveal patterns of oversimplification and stereotyping. Chapter 2 delves into the real-world experiences of domestic violence using interviews with Addison County lawyers and activists to demonstrate how systemic barriers, economic challenges, and the procedural rigidity of the justice system shape legal outcomes. The third chapter highlights the implications of these discrepancies, including their influence on juror biases, survivor self-perceptions, and broader societal attitudes toward justice. This thesis concludes by advocating for more accurate and nuanced media portrayals, recognizing their potential to educate, raise awareness, and foster greater understanding of domestic violence. [Supervised by Prof. Sheridan]



Yet more photos of 2025 Anthro grads!



The happy fact that Anthropology starts with 'A' means that ANTH majors get front-row seating!



A rose by any other name: Ruby Neustadt, Chealsea Roldan, Brigid Armbrust, and Turner Britz

The Culture, Power, and Practice Award in Anthropology

by Fulya Pinar

Turner Britz's thesis, *Balancing Innovation and Integrity: The Impact of LLM-Based AI on Secondary Education in*

Addison County, VT, brings anthropological insight to one of the most urgent questions in contemporary education: what happens when Artificial Intelligence (AI) enters the classroom?

Drawing on interviews and surveys with teachers and students across two Vermont high schools, Turner Britz shows that AI is neither savior nor threat but something more complex: a technology negotiated through everyday judgment, care, and constraint. His analysis moves beyond simple debates about the cheating vs. innovation binary to show how educators use AI to save time yet defend their professional autonomy, and how students experiment with AI to balance curiosity, efficiency, and integrity. The result is a richly grounded study that reframes AI as a contemporary social relationship shaped by local ethics and institutional pressures. Turner's work exemplifies what makes anthropology vital today: empirical rigor joined with moral imagination, a combination that this award, and its new alumni-supported prize, proudly recognizes. [see also p. 8 for the abstract of Turner's project – Ed.]



New Recognition and Resources for Anthro Students

By Michael Sheridan

2024-2025 was a big year for building new institutions within the Anthro Department. Like other departments, for many years we have given a senior award for academic excellence and community engagement (the Culture, Power, and Practice Award in Anthropology, above). But it was unfunded, which meant that our students received a homemade certificate and a handshake instead of a check. No longer. With the help of dozens of generous alums, we have raised several thousand dollars and are now able to recognize outstanding seniors with a cash award just like other departments. Thank you, thank you, thank you! The next step is building up the fund enough to really establish our award. The College rule is that only senior awards with an endowment of at least \$10,000 are listed in the Commencement program – so the only folks who know about the Anthro award are those at our graduating senior reception, those who read our website in detail, and you, dear reader. We'd like everyone at Commencement to know about our students, and this means that we are hoping to get to that \$10K mark before the 2026 Commencement program goes to press in May.

The second big financial announcement is about student research opportunities. We strongly encourage students to do summer courses at the archaeological or ethnographic fieldschools run by other colleges and universities (see page 11) because these are great ways to get hands-on experience. And because the whole world is anthropology's lab, we want students to be able to do fieldwork projects (which then become senior theses, etc.) without needing to stay in

Addison County. We want students with a dream of doing fieldwork far far away to get there and discover what fascinates them. With the help of our Anthro community (again, thank you, thank you, thank you!), we have established the Anthropological Fieldwork Fund to help defray the costs of these summer courses and field projects. It's just getting started, and we hope to grow it enough so that more Anthro majors and minors who want to do fieldschool or do a fieldwork project but can't get enough support from the regular College-wide student resources, can still dream big and GO.

Both of these student-focused funds only exist because of community and especially alumni support. If you're interested in pitching in, yes please! Email James Fitzsimmons at jfitzsim@middlebury.edu, and he will pass your info along to the folks in Advancement. And THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!!

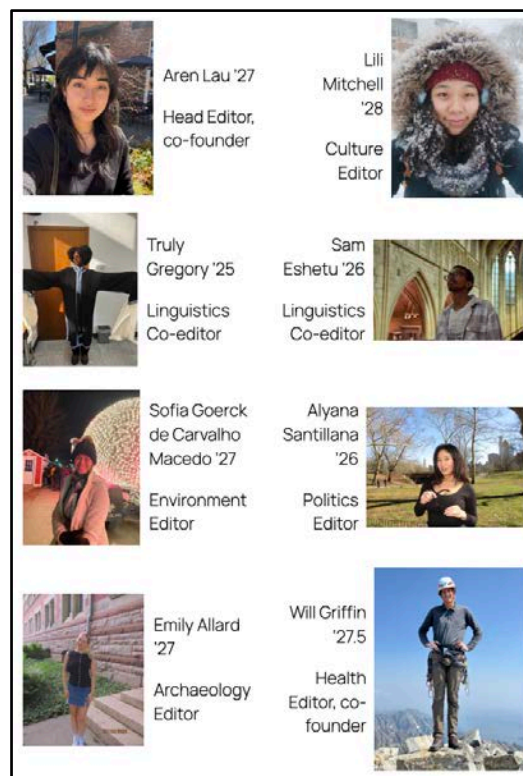


The 18th annual Anth 211 Enviro Anthro poster session

Anthro Action Magazine Launched!

By Michael Sheridan

Middlebury has a new magazine! In the fall of 2024, **Aren Lau '27** wanted to know why the Anthro Dept didn't have an in-house magazine to publish student work and experiences. As I was told long ago when I asked then-Chair **Ted Sasson** why we didn't have a newsletter, "no good idea goes unpunished!" Aren recruited section editors and set about building something big from the ground up. The magazine has become a brand-new hub of community-building in the Anthro Dept. The seven section editors are **Lili Mitchell '28** (Sociocultural), **Truly Gregory '25** (Linguistic), **Sam Eshetu '26** (Linguistic), **Sofia Goerck Carvalho Macedo '27** (Environmental), **Alyana Santillana '26** (Political), **Emily Allard '27** (Archaeology) and **Will Griffin '26.5** (Medical). More than 25 student writers submitted their work! Editorial work and Aren's mastery of the Middcreate platform were completed over the summer of 2025. The magazine launched in the Fall of 2025: <https://anthroaction.middcreate.net>. While we are super excited for the second issue, we ask appreciative alums to send coffee, tea, and energy drinks to the editors in order to help the second issue move forward!



Archaeological Field Schools!

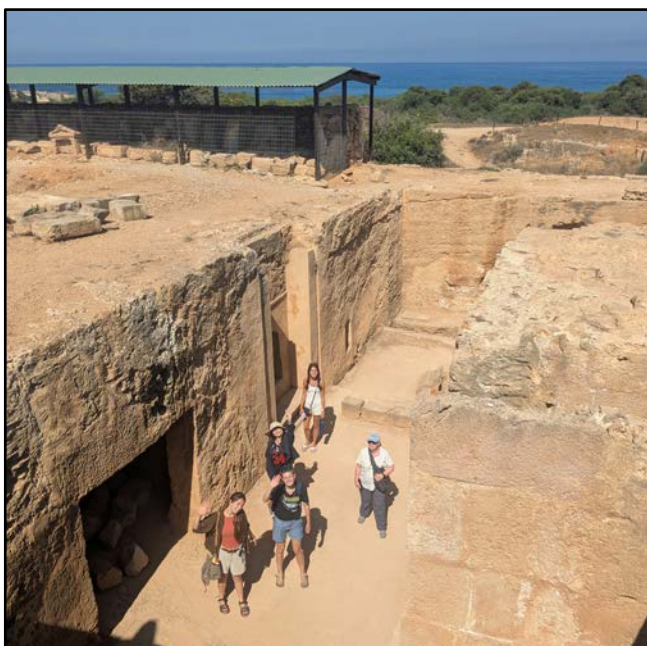
Makounta-Voules Archaeological Project, Cyprus

By Caelyn Macky '27

We've begun our final week of excavations here in Cyprus and I wish I could say I wake up every day with the sky slowly lighting outside my window. But I haven't. I've woken up, gotten dressed, been driven by our driver Doros, walked up the hill to our site, and dug in Trench 42 for an hour before the sun even starts to peak over the Troodos Mountains and casts its light over the tombs we're excavating. Once the sun heats up our hillside, the cicadas start - and they don't stop. At this point, it's all white noise, the scraping of trowels on bedrock, the rhythmic scooping of dirt into buckets, the groans of those carrying those buckets, and the rattle of the sifter at the bottom of the hill that picks through the rocks and dirt for sherds and bones. After breakfast the sound of our many Bluetooth speakers, all playing different music from different trenches, joins the ensemble.



Our group of twenty-two students spends seven hours in the field every day, with at least an hour of post-excavation pottery washing and then dinner together. We've learned archaeological field methods, *tabaka tabaka* (layer by layer), taking elevations using surveyor tools and the Total Station, keeping field notebooks and bagging and tagging artifacts. Our supervisors guide us through every step, giving us responsibilities, but also showing patience whenever we bring back a flat rock thinking it's a sherd. We've learned from ceramics, lithics, zooarch and bioarch experts, and gotten hands-on experience distinguishing artifacts. After five days in the trenches, our Friday field trips are a welcome change. We visit historical places, UNESCO-listed heritage sites, archaeological projects, and of course, Cypriot beaches. We've visited the Tombs of the Kings, the ancient city of Nea Paphos, early Bronze Age sites, and the medieval Kolossi Castle. We've learned the history of the island, beginning from the first signs of human occupation in 8500 BCE, through the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Hellenistic and Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman and British periods, and up until the 20th-century Cyprus conflict. The highlight was a trip through the forested Troodos Mountains to see mouflon (a wild sheep native to Cyprus) and Byzantine painted churches en route to a few days in the divided capital, Nicosia. It was so impactful for us to see gun-toting soldiers on a barricade, to go through the UN buffer zone to the Turkish-occupied side of the island, and to hear the call to prayer throughout the city. Goods are now sold in both euros and liras, and Turkish towels are advertised in every shop. Back on the Greek side for our last night in the city, I was sitting on a wicker chair listening to four street musicians playing traditional Cypriot music. Getting high-fives and waves from them as we left was an experience I'll never forget. But going back to Polis, where we live, was eye-opening – it had become home. I miss the locals I was used to seeing everyday – at the mini-mart, gelato shop, café,



bars and the restaurant we ate at every night – I'd become more immersed than I thought I would.

I crouch in my trench, cleaning up the meter-and-a-half-high baulk, and I peek my head over. To the north I can see the Mediterranean Sea, bright blue and inviting, and I know I'll walk the 15 minutes down to the beach to swim in the afternoon. I look across the ridge and my friends are all at work, sifting, dusting, digging, butts up in the air, or crouched in a tomb with only the tops of their heads visible. I'm realizing how much I'll miss these people, after getting used to being around them almost 24/7. I'm one of the few who don't go to NC State, and even though I've been on an island in the Mediterranean for just a month, I really wish Raleigh, North Carolina was my next destination!

Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project

By Liana Fitzgerald '27



You better Belize it.

A phrase that at first glance is a gimmicky promotional slogan for tourism in Belize – but for me would come to mean something more meaningful than I can easily explain. While in Belize I worked with the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) to excavate ancient Maya ruins. I had the privilege of working on the site of Baking Pot and dug in a 2 x 3 meter excavation unit almost 6 feet down. I loved every minute of our strict schedule. Waking up every day at 6 am to eat breakfast by 6:30 then leave by 8 am to work in the blazing Belizean heat for the next 8 hours, to then go back and eat, sleep, and repeat, is no light task but I found the work I was doing extremely rewarding personally, academically, and spiritually. Even though we weren't finding anything groundbreaking (although part of me hoped we would), finding the little bits of pottery sherds, charcoal, and worked chert reminded me that it's the little things that count the most. I absorbed every moment we spent digging, cramming into the van, and even hiking through the thick jungle while looking down to avoid snakes and fire ant hills. By the first five days, I already dreaded getting back on the plane to go home.

I have fallen in love with Belize. Everything about the country is amazing. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was finally able to fit somewhere. I was in an environment where most people look like me yet speak English (I'm a Guatemalan person who often receives lots of judgment for not speaking Spanish). The Belizean food (some of the best

chicken I have ever had) and the beautiful town of San Ignacio were just the cherry on top of a sundae of joy. I went caving into the Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM) Cave for a truly spiritual experience. I walked, swam, and crawled two miles into the cave to encounter the ‘crystal maiden’, a Maya skeleton covered with limestone. I remember crying and thinking “this is it.” Everything I had only read about in archaeology classes was right in front of me. A real person who lived and a Maya person who is connected to me. I am doing archaeology to preserve my culture from destruction. Maya archeologists of Maya descent are virtually unheard of. Doing this fieldwork was not only for me, but to honor my ancestors before me. I feel so spiritually fulfilled that it’s hard to put it into words. For this first time ever, I feel that I can confidently say that I am Maya. For me “You better Belize” became real. It was truly a life-changing phrase.



Emma Wilson '27 on a sunny day in Ireland

Got MiddAnthro?

<https://www.instagram.com/middanthro/>

Follow us @MiddAnthro to keep up on all things anthropological at Midd! Send us your alumni and student news, travels, career, and grad school updates so we can post those to our community. Send your photos and captions to kbright@middlebury.edu

Photos from Study Abroad

[this is a new feature; students, send us photos! – Ed.]



Anna Mazur '27 (right) and friend in Croatia



The ghost of SOAN materialized at a Halloween week Anthrocafé in October 2024



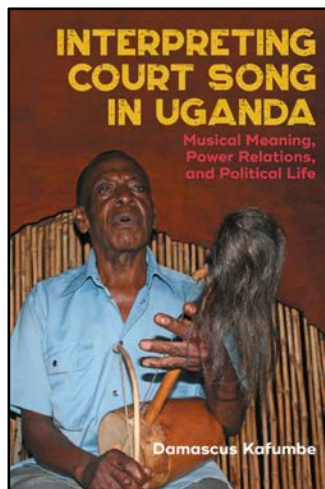
In Caitlin's ecological restoration garden



Faculty Publications, 2024-2025

James Fitzsimmons

2024 “Centuries ago, the Maya storm god Huracán taught that when we damage nature, we damage ourselves,” *The Conversation*; <https://theconversation.com/centuries-ago-the-maya-storm-god-huracan-taught-that-when-we-damage-nature-we-damage-ourselves-238180>.



Damascus Kafumbe

2025 *Interpreting Court Song in Uganda: Musical Meaning, Power Relations, and Political Life*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press and Boydell and Brewer.

Alexis Michajliw

2025 “SNAPSHOT USA 2019–2023: The first five years of data from a coordinated camera trap survey of the United States,” with Brigit Rooney, Roland Kaysm, et al. *Global Ecology and Biogeography* 34 (1): e13941.

2025 “‘Biological controls will best your beasts!’: Visitor learning at outreach events in novel informal learning spaces,” with Lisa Lundgren, Zahra Jahani, et al. *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference of the Learning Sciences-ICLS 2025*, pp. 2792-2794.

2025 “A 19th century stormwrecked black-capped petrel from Vermont offers insight into historical vagrancy processes,” with **Oliver Patrick ‘24**, **Max Chalfin-Jacobs ‘25**, **Arthur Lyu ‘24**, et al. *Ecology and Evolution* 15(2): e70846.

2025 “Hispaniolan *Solenodon solenodon paradoxus* Brandt, 1833,” with Abigail Gazzard and Rosalind Kennerley, in *Mammals of Middle and South America: Eulipotyphla*, Lázaro Guevara, Miguel Ángel León-Tapia, eds., pp. 1-14. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.

2025 “Triangulating habitat suitability for the locally extirpated California grizzly bear,” with Alex McInturff, Peter Alagona, et al. *Biological Conservation* 303: 110989.

2025 “Using the past to tell more persuasive conservation stories,” with J. Q. Goben, **Olivia Olson ‘21.5**, et al. *Conservation Biology* 39(5): e70057.

2025 “Muskrat Island: Behavioral shifts of an insular muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) population in the Gulf of Maine,” with **Max Zeltsar ‘24.5**, John Dennis, et al. *Ecology and Evolution* 15(6): e71502.

2024 “Poke pop-up museum: A cosplay for science community outreach project centered on organismal

biology,” with **Greg Pask** and Gabriel-Philip Santos. *Integrative and Comparative Biology* 64: S391-S392.

Fulya Pinar

2025 “Deportation as punishment and the everyday war on migrants from Turkey to the United States,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, <https://www.merip.org/2025/06/deportation-as-punishment-2/>

Michael Sheridan

2024 *Roots of Power: The Political Ecology of Boundary Plants*. London: Routledge. Paperback edition.

David Stoll

2024 “Why immigrants need U.S. border enforcement,” *Quillette*, November 24, 2024. <https://quillette.com/2024/11/26/immigrants-also-need-us-border-enforcement-us-mexico-border-control-trump-latinos/>

Alumni News



Emily Coles Rochac Argueta ‘09 writes, “I’m a trauma PA in the south coast of Massachusetts. It’s a predominantly Portuguese population here (I practically speak Portuguese at this point), and we have the largest Quiche Mayan population per capita outside of Guatemala... and I’m one of the only Spanish speaking providers in the entire hospital. #jobsecurity. Chloe

is in 2nd grade and I’m often in a rock gym for her climbing class. She’s a riot – full of personality and spunk. Keeps me on my toes. And our little one Lily is a typical second child. She’s two years old and everything is about climbing. We have two kitties: Skylight and Seymour (= names of two Adirondack mountains).”

Kayla Lichtman ‘21 is at Columbia SIPA for grad school, and has been studying urban policy, technology policy, and human rights law. She recently led a cohort of Migration Working Group students to volunteer at a local migrant resource fair and plans immigration related events for the student body.



Future Issues

As always, please send us more newsletter material at msherida@middlebury.edu! We love to hear from you. And as you may have noticed over the years, we really like photos of your rites of passage. Send us stuff!

Department of Anthropology
Munroe Hall, Middlebury College
Middlebury VT 05753

<http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/anthropology>

Image Credits

Page 1 – Commencement 2025 photo from Marybeth Nevins

Page 2 – Caitlin and Marybeth photo from Marybeth Nevins; Jenny Fede showing off her work from Kristy Bright; the usual suspects from MSIC from Netta Avineri

Page 3 – Di Ruggiero dinner at Tindia from Kristy Bright; Mercia Rapihana and Kristy Bright photo from Kristy; James Fitzsimmons at one of the most famous archaeological sites in the world from James

Page 4 – Caitlin’s smoothie recipe from Caitlin; safety tip for navigating LA photo from Alexis

Page 5 – As her students often say, Alexis ROCKS! Frybread at the Knoll from Marybeth Nevins. Family portrait from Ellen Oxfeld

Page 6 – Diasporic Dishes event photo from Fulya Pinar; ASL funeral from Mike Sheridan

Page 7 – Indigeneity in the mirror from <https://looselipsmag.com/top-stories/the-formation-and-destruction-of-indigenous-identity/>; cetacean watching with Sylvia from Dan Suarez; Roxanna knocking it out of the park photo from Kristy Bright

Page 8 – AI cartoon from <https://www.ngssphenomena.com/ai-education>

Page 9 – Midd campus ca. 1935 from Ruby’s thesis; Law and Order logo somewhat ironically from <https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/the-law-order-reboot-could-not-come-at-a-worse-time-for-criminal-law-reform>

Page 10 – Senior grads in the front row from the Addison Independent; red roses at the Anthro Dept Senior Reception from Kristy Bright; Fulya and Turner from Kristy Bright

Page 11 – Anthro 211 poster session overview from Marybeth Nevins; AnthroAction masthead from <https://anthroaction.middcreate.net>; Caelyn in Cyprus from Caelyn

Page 12 – Caelyn’s fieldschool group in the trenches from Caelyn; Liana’s pit (keep those walls straight!) from Liana

Page 13 – “Point!” Liana finds a nice lithic photo from Liana; novel interpretation of the Grateful Dead’s “Terrapin Station” from Anna; Irish eyes-a-smiling from Emma; Dylan narrowly escapes the ghost of SOAN past from Kristy Bright; Monarchs of the Glen by Caitlin

Page 14 – Damascus’ book cover from University of Rochester Press; Emily goes umbrella shopping photo from Emily; Kayla’s excellent dentition from Kayla