

Field Notes

A newsletter of the Middlebury College Anthropology Department

Fall 2026 Number 21

Editor: Michael Sheridan



A soggy Commencement, May 2026 (left to right): Cate Richardson, Sam Eshetu, Sebastian Murray, Alyana Santillana, Ellen Oxfeld, Daniel Cruz, Fulya Pinar, Changchang Ma, James Fitzsimmons, Carter Monks, Ellie Nevins, Evan Yurko, Zach Utz, Dylan Palmer, Mike Sheridan

A Note from the Chair...

This was a busy (but great) year for our department. We started this academic year with thirty-nine majors, but by the beginning of May there were fifty-eight. We added a Design Anthropology Minor and created a joint major with the History of Art and Architecture Department as well, for which we already have major declarations. The first floor of Munroe Hall saw some additions and renovations too, including two more bulletin boards showcasing student work (one made by a student out of maple!), four wood-and-glass display cases installed in the

hallway, and a beautiful new glass cabinet for the Archaeology Lab. I think that the boards and cases in the halls really make the first floor feel more like the home of the Anthropology Department, rather than just a space where our offices happen to be. Two of the display cases highlight some recent, wonderful publications by our faculty (nice, shiny book covers in there!), another presents student publications and our annual, student-run anthropology magazine (*Anthro Action*, see p. 13), and the fourth has (occasionally zany) pictures of our graduating seniors.

Our department also underwent a (periodically required) external review this year for which everyone pitched in. I'd like to give a special thanks to our Student Advisory Council members and the others who met with the committee directly; as they told me directly, the committee was really impressed with our students and our department. Likewise, we hosted many departmental events this year, from AnthroCafes to department dinners



(there were 70+ people at our fall dinner in the Humanities House!) to speakers – including one by our own Ellen Oxfeld, who retired in July. We are very grateful to Ellen for all that she has done for us over the years and wish her a joyful (and adventurous) new chapter!

James Fitzsimmons,
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 fall 2025, I taught a new course called *Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices*. In J-Term 2026 I taught a section of the *Conflict Transformation Skills* course and in spring 2026 a course on *Storytelling for Change*. As Executive Director, I work with colleagues, students, and partners to build programs and initiatives focused on productive approaches to conflict and change across contexts.

As Middlebury Social Impact Corps Faculty Director, I have been collaborating with Dana Anderson (Innovation Hub Associate Director) to facilitate two compelling projects with the Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the nuwave Equity Corporation (and other VT-based partners). Some of the workshops I have facilitated have been for MiddCore, Middlebury School of the Environment, and student club leaders.

I have published several book chapters this past year, on language and social change, language

socialization methods and social justice, and linguistic anthropology and social justice: producing knowledge for action. I also presented at the American Anthropological Association, American Association of Applied Linguistics, and Campus Compact conferences. I have also been enjoying my time as Secretary/Treasurer for the Society of Linguistic Anthropology. Looking forward to the year ahead!

Kristy Bright

This year found me on the road for many hours at a stretch, driving the wide ribbons of Canadian highway and bumpy forest roads of Aotearoa. Sabbatical offered the chance to focus on collaborative research and writing with colleagues at the University of Toronto and University of Auckland, developing manuscripts that consider meanings of legacy in end-of-life care and student success in university settings. One of the year's greatest pleasures was teaching a newly reimagined



version of *The Traveling Tonic: Itineraries of Medicine and the Body* (Anth 0340). Seminar participants

Kyan Chau

'28, Carolina Espinosa '26, Will Griffin '27.5, Talitha Hicks '27, PawThoKa Mae '27, Carter Monks '26.5, Heba Qalandari '28, Johnson Schwede '27, Chloe Silverman '26.5, Piia Torgeson, Daisy Vasquez de Leon '27, and Emma Wilson '27 (above) carried out research work that became an important foundation for our longer-term, emerging partnership Te Whanaunga o Te Kuaka/ The Kuaka Collective. Funded by the



Kathryn W. Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation, and named for the kuaka, a bird known for its remarkable 11,000 kilometer migration from Alaska to Aotearoa, the Kuaka Collective connects students, faculty, and communities across Aotearoa and North America through shared learning and Indigenous knowledge. Recently, we've had opportunities to share work at meetings in Albuquerque, Aotearoa, and Quebec. This coming fall, we welcome a delegation of Māori and Pasifika artists and educators to Middlebury for a week of programming in late September. For more info and program dates, stay tuned via @middanthro or @bodyonlinelab.

James Fitzsimmons

I was chair of the department this year; I also got quite a bit of writing done and appeared on a couple of invited podcasts (a first for me). For those of you who have taken my *Death and the Body* class, this next part is going to be a little strange: I was recently invited to write a textbook based on that course! This prompted a couple of research trips to southeastern Mexico and to Senegal in West Africa this summer, where I took photos and visited places that will appear in the book. Oddly enough, I got the contract from Bloomsbury while I was preparing this blurb for the newsletter this afternoon, so I guess I will be signing it once I finish my section today!

Caitlin Harder

The 2025-26 academic year was packed with new learning experiences both at work and home. In the office, I supported four departments/programs and



helped coordinate speaker series, symposia, an external review, recruiting, and more. At home, my partner and I became the proud (and harried!) parents of a kitten named Campanula Rotundifolia, adoptive sister to our first cat, Dame Scofield. I found a way to garden even in the darkest months by trying my hand at winter sowing: the process of cultivating plants outdoors in milk jugs, which enable perennial seeds to undergo cold stratification



from January through March, and then function as mini greenhouses when spring comes. We also planted fourteen varieties of fruit tree on our property this year, including pawpaw, serviceberry, honeyberry, plum, pear, American persimmon, and hardy fig. As the saying goes, the best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago; the next best time is now!

With summer break approaching, I am preparing to reclaim my art studio from Campanula and continue work on the installation project I began last year, exploring themes around labor, climate change, and cycles of creation and destruction in the rural New England landscape. And finally, one more learning experience is about to begin, as I was just elected to the Board of Directors at the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, with my service beginning in late June.

Alexis Mychajliw

I started my Fall 2025 by still being on sabbatical, though many of my research plans were unfortunately delayed by the government shutdown. I did make it out to Trinidad & Tobago to complete my National Geographic research focused on asphalt seeps and luckily was able to eat many doubles.

Once the Smithsonian re-opened, I spent a week working in the Anthropology collections to scan faunal



material from archaeological sites in Oregon. This summer I am traveling less while my dog, Kit, heals from major leg surgery. But my favorite research day so far has been getting to sample bone powder from a Giant Beaver skull. It will soon make its way onto BiHall's FTIR machine. I will also return to Trinidad in August to develop a game entitled *The Legend of Glyptodont* with my colleague from the organization Cosplay for Science. My greatest win of 2025-2026 was writing and receiving a National Science Foundation grant that will fund my field work on islands in the Gulf of Maine for the next 5 years! Another highlight was adopting five naked rats from a rescue on Long Island.



This is Sea Pig, a naked rat who was rescued from a house with over 600 (pet) rats. We tried and failed to put him in a shark costume to stay warm.

Ellie Nevins

It's been a stacked year. I was on sabbatical for the Fall, working with a student research assistant, **Nicea Armstrong '27**, working on the relation between indigenous labor mobility in post-gold rush California and what journalists dubbed the "Ghost Dances" of the 1870-1890s. We presented a poster entitled "Nobody Called them 'Ghost Dances': Rails, Trails Indigenous Mobility, and Prophetic



Movements of the 1870's" in New Orleans at the national meetings of the American Anthropological Association. If you want to check out the poster, it is on the display in the first-floor hallway of Munroe.

For J-term I taught a small, three-student Anthropology-Linguistics section of *Data Across the Disciplines* dedicated to rethinking indigenous language text collections (see <https://www.middlebury.edu/midddata/news/2026-data-science-across-disciplines>). We became a team, with all three students: **Ziqi Yu '27**, **Catherine Dyer '28** and **Gareth Yang '26**, continuing as research assistants through the Spring



2026 semester. This summer, with support from midd.data, anthropology majors **Ziqi Yu** and **Helen Carle '29** have been working as research assistants building out the project website: <https://experiments.middcreate.net/text-rethink/>, with a big assist from DLNQ's **Tom Woodward**. We have two team trips coming up: A Maidu language community-engagement visit to California in August and in September a trip to Berlin to present our work to a "Language Documentation and Archiving" conference.

Newsworthy bits from Spring semester teaching include the launch of my new course *Renewing Endangered Languages*. Half the students were heritage speakers of languages and dialects that they worked on in the class, including Hawaiian, Zotung, Basque and several regional Spanish dialects. All of the students developed viable project designs in support of an endangered language and shared that with the group. We invited indigenous language teachers, community organizers, graduate students, professors and administrators to visit the class in

person or by zoom – making this the most outward-facing class I have taught so far. The most memorable presentation was organized by a student: **Hāweoula Maka'imoku '29**. She brought her mother, **Kananinohea Maka'imoku**, who directs the Hawaiian Language College at University of Hawaii at Hilo, and grandmother, **Keiki Kawaia'e'a**, a university administrator and whose life's work has been to develop a network of



Hawaiian language immersion programs. They packed the RAJ seminar room; and it inspired us all to hear three generations of Hawaiian women show what is possible for community-developed language programs and how it is done!

I also enjoyed taking my first-year seminar through the earliest years of Middlebury College through the 19th-century students **Edwin James** (class of 1816) and **Henry Schoolcraft**, who went on to join expeditions West where they became early experts in Algonquian languages and cultures. We made visits to the Henry Sheldon Museum Archive and Middlebury College Special Collections).

I close on a personal note. I am proud of the fact that **Fulya Pinar**'s cat, **İncir**, has taken a liking to me – so I figure I can't be all bad!

Ellen Oxfeld

This was my last year teaching in the incomparable Anthropology Department, as I retired at the end of



the school year. I came to Middlebury in Fall 1985 and believe me, Middlebury has changed a lot since then. When I came, there were only 2.5 anthropologists and there was no separate Department of Anthropology. So, we have made a lot of progress! I feel so sad to leave our wonderful colleagues and our incredible students, who made my last semester of teaching inspiring and memorable. I plan in the year ahead to get back to research and writing that I had put on hold for the last few years, to travel back to my village in China and to continue my local universal health care activism in Vermont. In addition to my teaching this year, I published an article in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Food Studies* entitled "Food, Memory and Nostalgia in Reform Era China." I also gave a paper on changing roles of elders in rural China at the American Anthropological Association



annual meeting in November, and gave a presentation for the Rifelj Faculty Lecture Series in April on changing concepts of time in rural China. I hope to probe all these areas more deeply in the coming year.

I will truly miss our department, but I'm not leaving Middlebury either. So, I will always be happy to meet with our students as an informal advisor. Feel free to reach out!

Fulya Pinar

It's been a full year! In the classroom, I taught *Migration and Social Justice* (Anth 274) and *Ethnographic Research* (Anth 302) for the first time. *Migration and Social Justice*, supported by a Mellon Migration Grant administered by the Axinn Center for the Humanities, set a multimodal tone from the start: I invited local comic artist **Dan Nott**



on to produce a range of creative and public-facing work alongside their ethnographic research. On the side, I've been taking professional development courses in soundscape production and visual anthropology, based on which I'm hoping to bring some hands-on workshops into *Ethnographic Research* (Anth 302) next Fall. I also added multiple new series of “**Incir** the Cat” stickers to my roster, already a student favorite!



tourism in rural Morocco, an IGS thesis on first-generation Latine students' experiences of belonging at Middlebury College, and an Anthropology thesis on transportation access and structural vulnerability among migrant farmworkers in Addison County.

On the research front, my article on feminist legal accompaniment in Turkish courtrooms supporting survivors of gender-based violence has been accepted at *Feminist Anthropology* (yay!) and a second piece on the evidentiary labor that migrants perform to be recognized as patients within Turkey's healthcare system is under what I'm hoping is its final revise-and-resubmit (prayers welcome). A co-authored piece with our alum Turner Britz '25, drawing on his senior thesis on AI use in Vermont high schools has also been published (see p. 16). Public-facing work this year included an essay on migrant deportations in *MERIP*; a poem and cover illustrations for *Otherwise Magazine*; a poem in an anthology on unhoused experiences whose proceeds will support a women's shelter in North Carolina; and a poem in *The Passionfruit Review* that received a jury commendation.

and **Andy Kolovos** from Vermont Folklife Center, who co-edited *The Most Costly Journey*, and students went

I also advised three student projects: a J-term study on Amazigh indigenous identity and cultural heritage

I now also serve as Associate Editor at *Review of Middle East Studies* and am co-editing a volume on everyday life in the Middle East, to which I'm contributing a piece about how refugee rights activists in Istanbul's peripheral districts are combining municipal law with traditional networks of “fellow-townspeople solidarity” to claim rights for asylum seekers.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue advising a Mellon Migration Grant-supported student project on a refugee exchange program between Algeria and Spain, to keep advancing my urban anthropology and cultural heritage research with my research assistants, and to push my book manuscript on how displaced communities navigate livelihoods in Istanbul toward a university press submission. Fingers and toes crossed!

Michael Sheridan

That was a busy year. I had a total of 135 students, about 50% more than the college-wide average, and a bundle of administrative responsibilities. I'm pretty fried. Which is why it's good that I'm on sabbatical for 2026-27. That means lots of catching up on reading, gardening, bathroom renovation, and travel. It should also mean getting several back-burner projects back up to speed (but not yet – I've got weeding to do first...). One of the projects for this year is a grant-supported trip to Scotland. The idea is to visit the Outer Hebrides, islands where the vast majority of the land is in community land trusts. My idea is to build a new class on the *Anthropology of Space and Place*, and one of its units would be about community-organized land ownership and the potential of the land trust model for resettling climate refugee communities later this century. The other news from home is that we've got two new cats, a mama (Lottie, right) and her kitten (Kadori, left).



David Stoll

For 2026-2027 I am on Associate status, which means no courses or weekly office hours during the fall. However, don't hesitate to send me an email if I can help you with something. In January I will teach Anth 1035 *Refugees or Labor Migrants? The Anthropology of South-North Migration*. In the spring I will teach Anth 103 *Diversity and Human Nature* and Anth 241 *Warfare and Polarization*.

Dan Suarez



It's been a big year: Having our baby daughter (Sylvia, b. May 28, 2025, see Field Notes 20, 7 for a photo) was definitely a peak experience, and seeing my first book published just a few months later was also immensely rewarding. *Biologists Unite: The Rise and Fall of Ecosystem Services* is

available (for free!) as an open-access digital text from MIT Press (<https://direct.mit.edu/books/oa-monograph/6079/Biologists-Unite-The-Rise-and-Fall-of-Ecosystem>). It's been gratifying to observe growing interest in the book, including this podcast interview with *Sustainability*

Now: <https://ksqd.org/sustainability-now-sunday-march-1st-biologists-unite-the-rise-and-fall-of-ecosystem-services-with-professor-daniel-suarez-middlebury-college/#gsc.tab=0>

and this feature interview with *New Scientist*: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2513274-putting-a-price-tag-on-nature-failed-can-radical-tactics-save-it/>

or <https://www.proquest.com/docview/3307979302/fulltextPDF/55D6A695AAF14AAFPQ/2?accountid=12447&sourcetype=Magazines>.

Anthropology Senior Projects and Independent Studies, 2025-2026

Isbeth Bustos

Sobrepasando las Barreras: An Ethnographic Study on First-Generation Latine Students' Sense of Belonging at Middlebury College

Higher education in the United States is widely understood as a pathway to upward mobility, yet for first-generation Latine students at predominantly

white institutions (PWIs), college entry often introduces new barriers rather than resolving existing ones. These students must navigate unfamiliar academic systems without the institutional knowledge many peers bring, while adjusting to environments that rarely reflect their cultural or social experiences. This study investigates how first-generation Latine students at Middlebury College — a PWI in rural Vermont — organize community meals as a practice of social life and belonging. Drawing on ethnographic methods and semi-structured interviews, it argues that belonging is not an automatic outcome of access but requires ongoing negotiation between institutional expectations and cultural identity. In this process, students draw on friendship networks, family values, and adaptive strategies to persist within spaces that frequently marginalize them. [Supervised by Prof. Pinar]



Lily Manon Charkey

Finding Forest's Gold: Chanterelle Foraging and the Global Production of the Local

This thesis examines wild chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) foraging as a historically produced practice, tracing how foreign occupation, land access regimes, commodity markets, and cultural exchange have shaped the conditions under which people gather, value, and understand wild mushrooms. Through multi-sited qualitative fieldwork conducted in northern Estonia and northern Morocco in 2025, combining semi-structured interviews, archival research, and reflexive field observation, this study argues that what appears as timeless local tradition is in each



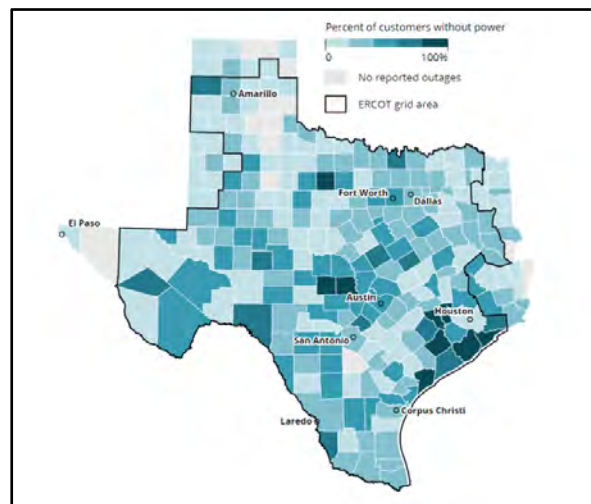
case the outcome of layered historical processes that reach into something as seemingly intimate as the act of walking into a forest to find food. In Estonia, chanterelle foraging, now widely understood as a quintessential

expression of national identity, was largely absent from Estonian peasant practice until the late nineteenth century because it was suppressed by Baltic German manorial restrictions on forest access and by the mycophobic cultural orientation of the dominant landowning class. Its adoption was driven substantially by contact with Russian and Slavic communities, deliberately promoted through pedagogical press campaigns that framed a borrowed practice as Estonian national improvement, and subsequently intensified under Soviet occupation before being absorbed into post-independence national identity so completely that its foreign origins are no longer visible even to expert observers. Today the practice is bifurcated: commercial harvesting for European commodity markets is performed predominantly by migrant labor, while foraging organized around inherited family territory and secret spots functions as a marker of Estonian cultural identity. In Morocco, chanterelle foraging in the cedar forests of the Middle Atlas and the fir forests of the Rif has been shaped by a different but structurally related set of external interventions: French colonial forestry administration that classified forests as state domains and severed communities from their foraging grounds, a post-independence state that largely inherited the colonial regulatory framework, and international conservation law that has imposed new access restrictions on the communities with the deepest historical relationships to the protected landscapes. Climate change has compounded these pressures by disrupting the rainfall patterns on which chanterelle fruiting depends. The ecological knowledge of where and when to find mushrooms is held predominantly by women and transmitted through embodied intergenerational practice,

knowledge that is simultaneously the least visible and the most essential link in a commodity chain that ultimately supplies European luxury markets. Taken together, the two cases demonstrate that non-timber forest products are an overlooked site through which the influence of imperialism, commodity markets, and conservation governance on everyday local practice can be traced. The chanterelle, uncultivable and therefore dependent on the persistence of both intact forests and the people who know them, makes these structural forces unusually visible. The local is never simply local. The traditional is never simply traditional. [Supervised by Profs. Fuentes-George and Sheridan]

Zoe Gregg

Sense of Place Playing a Pivotal Role in Energy Decisions: A Case Study of Energy Failure, Resilience, and Renewables during Texas's Winter Storm Uri Blackout and Spain's Iberian Peninsula Blackout



In 2021, Texas experienced a mass blackout due to extreme winter weather, a lack of regulation, and improperly weatherized energy technology. Similarly due to voltage control issues and improper regulation, a blackout on the Iberian Peninsula occurred in 2025. Both events exposed energy insecurity and highlighted the role that sense of place and cultural identity have in energy decision making, especially regarding renewable energy. Texas's lack of regulation stems from the intrinsic desire for independence and a long history of supporting lucrative fossil fuel production. Spain's place in the European Union ensures the prosperity

of renewables, however, outdated regulations made by private companies left the grid at risk. Creative regulation and a sort of narrative framing that appeals to cultural identity is needed to ensure the future security of cleaner energy in both places.

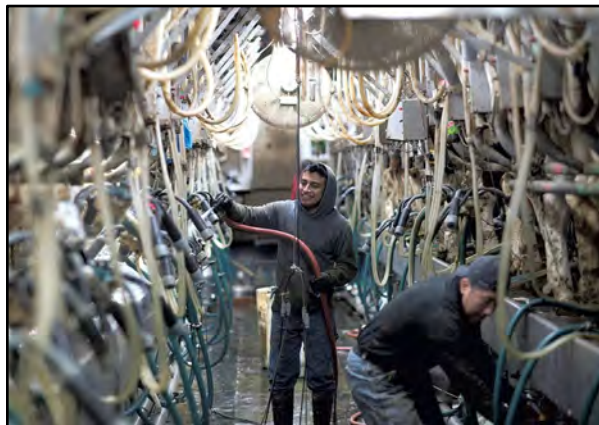
[Supervised by Profs. Fuentes-George and Sheridan]

Tania Hernandez Moreno

The Drive to Work: Transportation in Migrant Farmworking Communities of Addison County, Vermont

This project investigates mobility, immobility, and transportation dependence among Latin American migrant farmworkers in rural Addison County, Vermont. Employer-provided housing and limited public transit shape daily lives and social relationships. This research is based on three semi-structured, Spanish-language interviews conducted with migrant farmworkers recruited through the Open Door Clinic during the fall of 2025. Participants described daily challenges, including the emotional toll of relying on *rateros* (paid drivers), financial and social barriers to car ownership, resistance to forming close relationships with employers, and a shift from transportation solidarity and reciprocity to economic gain. These detailed accounts illustrate how susceptibility, paternalism, and moral economies pervade their lives. This study contributes to scholarship on migrant labor, immobility, and structural vulnerability by showing how transportation serves as a physical and social barrier, offering new insight into how migrant farmworkers navigate paternalism, manage their *coraje* (rage), and seek transnational aspirations in rural Vermont.

[Supervised by Prof. Pinar]



Madeleine Shaw Hunt

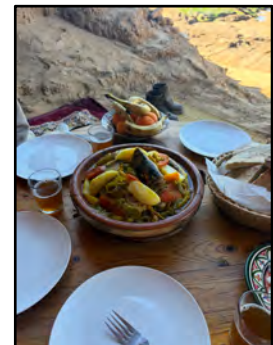
Translating Amazigh Difference: Language, Authenticity, and Tourism in Rural Morocco

This paper examines how Amazigh culture is translated for tourists in rural Morocco, drawing on participant observation across seven cultural day tours, eight interviews with



tourism workers, and a five-day homestay near Essaouira. I argue that tourism workers strike a careful balance between politicizing and depoliticizing Amazigh ethnic difference: they invoke Amazigh indigeneity to signal authenticity and ethical tourism while simultaneously softening its political dimensions to fit within acceptable national narratives of Moroccan diversity. This process operates through three main moves: i) temporalizing (framing Amazigh culture as ancient and traditional); ii) spatializing (linking it to rural, underdeveloped environments); and iii) gendering (associating it with female labor and symbolism), that appeal to tourist expectations while reducing living Amazigh identity to a static archetype. Linguistic difference functions as the primary register through which ethnic distinction is acknowledged and contained: guides regularly contrast Darija (Moroccan Arabic) and Tamazight (the Amazigh language) while minimizing broader structures of discrimination. The result is a form of cultural representation that increases global visibility and economic opportunity for Amazigh communities while depoliticizing their rights claims and reinforcing Orientalist associations among indigeneity, rurality, and authenticity.

[Supervised by Prof. Pinar]



Changchang Ma
Contingency and Contradictions of Narratives: Tangerines, Spirituality, and Development in Songxi Community, Sichuan, China

In recent years, a trend of urban-to-rural migration emerged in China, with increasingly more young people confronting a spiritual vacuum in the modernist capitalistic life in urban centers, and turning towards a rural, healthier lifestyle as a refuge. This orientation toward a better life often coincides with the rising popularity of New Age spiritual pursuits. The reverse migration of young urbanites encounters the state policy for Sustainable Rural Revitalization, which has fostered the formation of numerous eco-village projects around the nation. Songxi Community, my case study, is now regarded by the government as an exemplary model of rural development, although initially the Community had little interest in governmental collaboration. Nevertheless, to maintain their existence, Songxi residents continuously translate their spirituality into an organic tangerine business and into quantifiable metrics that render the community legible to the state. Songxi Community consequently lies at an intersection of spirituality, organic horticulture, and rural development, where competing and overlapping narratives of their work facilitate collaboration and cause friction. I argue that Songxi is successful particularly because of its flexibility in strategic storytelling, the ability to continuously re-narrate the complex and intertwined social realities on the ground in ways that negotiate legitimacy and resources across systems of state institutions, tourism, and internal organization. The presence of many narratives about Songxi Community are what they actively curate as an “anti-conflict machine” that intends to harmonize on-the-ground contradictions. Therefore,



what sustains Songxi today is neither a singular force of governmental support, spiritual grounding, or effective business model; it is the coexistence of many contradictory interests that creates a balanced contingency in which the Songxi Community operates today.

[Supervised by Prof. Sheridan]

Alyana Santillana
“Dr. Jefferson Speaks Her Mind”: Mildred Fay Jefferson as a Maverick within the Right to Life Movement of the 1970s

This thesis analyzes how Mildred Fay Jefferson, the first Black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School, was situated in the pro-life



movement of the late 20th century. Jefferson rose to prominence in 1975 after her presence in the infamous trial of *Commonwealth vs. Edelin*. Since then, she was recognized nationally as a staunch advocate for overturning *Roe vs. Wade*. The pro-life movement itself saw a drastic change in politics as it went from a liberal Catholic platform to being a Conservative signature. During this shift, we see Jefferson aligning herself with their new ideology. This thesis discusses how race, gender, medicine, and religion were at the crux of Jefferson’s career as an activist. It also examines how Jefferson was situated in relation to other Black activists at this time.

[Supervised by Profs. Armanios and Fitzsimmons]

Will Scheffel
Sudbury Shares: The functioning of Community-Oriented Agricultural Organizations

This thesis is the culmination of an ethnographic analysis of a local food-sharing and community organization located in Sudbury, Vermont, called Sudbury Shares. The organization creates a central space for gathering and redistributing excess produce grown by town residents to their fellow residents. Participation is wide-ranging, both in terms of those who donate and those who take



produce. Since its first year in 2022, the program has also grown to become an important gathering site in town, where residents have the opportunity to cross paths with and interact with other residents. This thesis seeks to understand how this program works and is experienced in order to begin developing a toolbox for similar programs in other areas. Drawing on previous research, most notably by David Graeber and David Sutton, this project explores how Sudbury Shares has produced community and how it motivates residents to give away their excess. Much of its success, this thesis finds, is due to the hyperlocality and community-responsiveness of the program and its emphasis on solidarity as a motivation, rather than charity. To put the theories and ideas drawn from previous research into conversation with this local organization, this thesis draws on a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with participants and coordinators of Sudbury Shares. While there are certainly lessons that can be learned from this study of Sudbury Shares, ultimately, this thesis is not sufficient to understand how to support and build rural community organizations or food-sharing groups. Sudbury Shares has experienced significant success, and this thesis discusses some of the questions it raises about what the future of food systems looks like and how gift economies can fit within a broader capitalist economy. But more research is required to build a versatile and adaptable toolkit for supporting rural community-based and food-based organizations.

Changchang Ma '26 wins the Culture, Practice, and Power award for 2026

Changchang's insightful senior work (p. 10), relentless commitment to community-building, and academic excellence won her the Anthro Department's senior award for 2026. Congratulations Changchang! The department is



still raising the funds necessary for this award to be endowed, and we're about halfway to that goal. Once there's at least \$10,000 in the fund, it will get listed in the Commencement program and the College will provide certificates (not saying that Changchang's certificate isn't great, but it was very much DIY). If you're interested in contributing to the Culture, Practice, and Power Award, please contact incoming Anthro Department Chair Kristy Bright (kbright@middlebury.edu)!



New Jterm classes for 2027 in Anthro!

New Course: *What Voice Carries*, Prof. Skylar Kaat

FN: Tell us about yourself, please!

My name is **Skylar Tiange Kaat** (they/them), and I'm a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at Columbia University. I just wrapped up my dissertation fieldwork in a small city in Inner Mongolia, China, and I'm currently based in Brooklyn NY spending most of my time writing and playing the accordion (an instrument I picked up during fieldwork). I'm an ex-professional



snowboarder and a Middlebury language school alum so I'm genuinely thrilled to be back at Middlebury this winter, and hopefully will see some snow.

FN: How did you get the idea for this class?

When I first started my fieldwork in Inner

Mongolia, I would sit in the park and listen to elders sing traditional Mongolian grassland folksongs. I learned later that these elders didn't speak a word of Mongolian themselves, and had little idea what the songs were actually about. But somehow, everyone there was moved anyway. Those moments stuck with me ever since, and it's the seed of the class I'm teaching this winter term.

FN: What does the title of the class mean?

We often treat voice as the vehicle for words. But what if the *texture* (its grain, its crack, its confidence or hesitation) is doing just as much work as anything it says? Think about what that reality TV franchise searching for "The Voice" actually means. Think about how we talk about someone "finding their voice," like it's a physical object they had to build. This class is about all of that. We'll pull from linguistic anthropology, ethnomusicology, and studies on voicing devices (like radio and instruments) to ask: What actually makes a voice recognizable as *someone's*? What labor goes into learning to voice oneself? And what it really takes to have a voice, and what it takes to be heard. I look forward to teaching this class, during perhaps the quietest time of year in Vermont, to read, listen, and think together about what voice carries.

New Course: Artificial Intelligence, Culture and Design, Prof. Bochu Ding '21

FN: What is this course about?

This course will examine AI from interwoven technical, cultural, and speculative lenses. Students will build a working understanding of how AI systems function, from training data to architectures, while investigating how these

technologies are entangled with social and cultural life. We will examine AI's relationship with labor, privacy, and bias via real-world case studies. Students will learn design methods, such as the double diamond framework and futures thinking and work towards a prototype that envisions what a more trustworthy, fair, and human-centered AI might look like.

FN: What do you mean by "a prototype"?

A prototype helps others understand the "looks like" or "works like" of a student's big idea. This could be a set of interfaces designed in Figma, an interactive demo built in Lovable/v0, a physical prototype using cardboard, or a short video of an ad for your idea. If you haven't heard of those tools, don't worry – we'll cover how they work.

FN: Do students need a technical or coding background to take this course?

No. This course will help them build intuition about AI systems from the ground up.

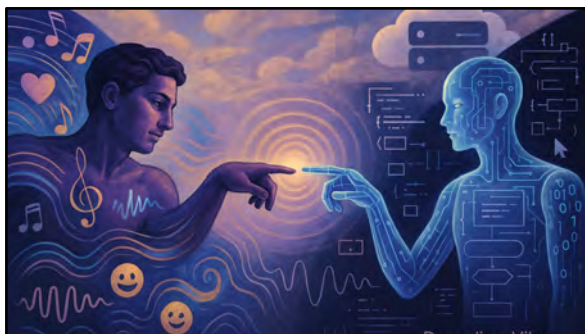
FN: What are examples of the reading material that you'll cover?

Readings will range from accessible journalism to academic articles. We'll cover how design decisions led to the infamous nuclear meltdown at the Three Mile Island plant, how a model used to help judges decide on bail and sentencing is systematically biased against Black convicts, and what it means for AI systems to be "black box."

FN: What tangible skills will students develop?

Students will be able to explain technical AI concepts (e.g. embeddings) to others in plain





language, use design frameworks (e.g. double diamond) and prototyping tools (Figma, v0) confidently, and develop a point of view on how AI intersects with socio-cultural issues.

FN: Cool, I'm in! What's your background?

I'm a technologist and Responsible AI researcher who has built agentic systems at NASA, published on AI bias and alignment, and advised institutions representing billions in philanthropic funding on technology strategy. I received my Master of Engineering degree from Duke University, and I currently support firms in building mission-driven technology via my product studio, assembly (<https://assembly.consulting/>).

Yet more photos of 2026 Anthro grads!



Left to right: Tania Hernandez Moreno, Changchang Ma, Sam Eshetu, Sebastian Murray



Left to right: Fulya Pinar, Sebastian Murray, Changchang Ma, Carter Monks, Tania Hernandez Moreno, James Fitzsimmons, Mike Sheridan



Anthro Action Magazine

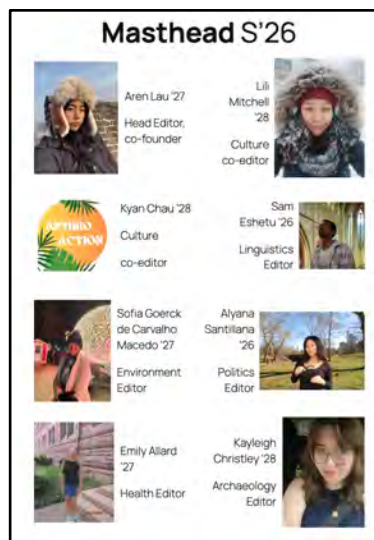
Middlebury's own anthropology magazine!

Anthro Action!

The second edition of Middlebury's anthropological student journal arrived in May under the stalwart editorship of **Aren Lau '27**. New articles include descriptions of what funerary vigils are like in Mexico when state violence and organized crime mean that there's no body, the struggles of migrant workers in Vermont dairy barns, accounts of work in the Burlington Public Defenders Office, explanations of what it means to "decolonize the face," and analysis of how student excavations at a Maya archaeological site help reconstruct ancient trade routes. It's all good stuff, and you should check it out!

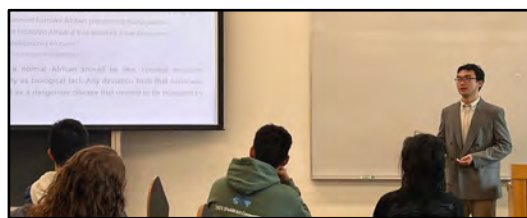
Congratulations also to **Emily Allard '27**, **Kyan Chau '28**, **Kayleigh Christley '28**, **Sam Eshetu '26**, **Sofia Goerck de Carvalho Macedo '27**, **Lili Mitchell '28**, and **Alyana Santillana '26**!

<https://anthroaction.middcreate.net/>

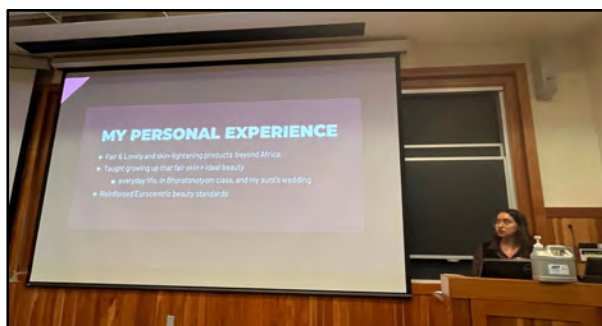


Anthro at the 2026 Spring Student Symposium!

The Anthro Department dominated the Spring Student Symposium on April 17, 2026, with 14 presentations! We punch way above our weight; this was more than any other department.



Sam Zhang '29 presenting on colonial medicine in Tanzania



Aparajita Banik '27 discussing how to 'decolonize the face'



Caelyn Macky '27 dancing her way through her ethnography of line dancing in Middlebury



Changchang Ma '26 explaining life in a Chinese eco-village

Got MiddAnthro?

Follow us on

<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

Archaeology in the Midd Community

In early April Liana Fitzgerald '27 gave a lecture on Maya archaeology for the Middlebury Rotary Club. It was an unusual venue for an academic presentation – Rosie's Restaurant on Route 7, just south of Middlebury town. Liana explained Classic Maya history and how the ceramics and obsidian she found at the Baking Pot site in Belize illuminate economic history. Along the way she gave the Rotarians a taste of what it's like to crouch in an archaeological trench in the tropics while carefully revealing and mapping artifacts.



The Body Online at Middlebury College

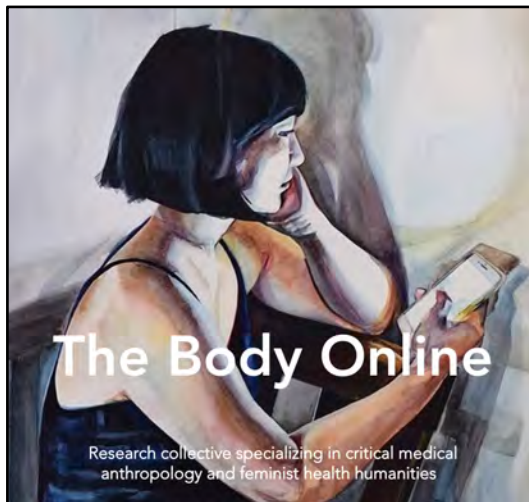
This year, The Body Online* is back in Aotearoa working on a new cross-national Indigenous knowledge exchange with Māori and Pasifika artists and educators. **Kyan Chau '28** (right, with Matua George conducting hongiri 'shared breath') was on board for 3 months of summer fieldwork with Professor Bright including data collection, lit review, curriculum design, and taking a deep dive into Māori language learning. In March,





Emma Wilson '27 (left) journeyed with **Prof. Bright** to Albuquerque to present *Ethnographic Labs and Community Futures* at the Society for Applied Anthropology conference. **Emma Hoover '26.5** is co-coordinating a week of programming on Māori and Pasifika knowledge and sovereignty to be hosted at Middlebury in September. Kyan Chau recently received support from Axinn Center for the Humanities Mellon Migration Grant for his fieldwork study “Healing After Genocide: Migration, Intergenerational Trauma, and Culturally Responsive Care in Cambodian Communities.” For more on this story and other lab updates, please follow along @BodyOnlineLab.

*The Body Online is an ethnographic research lab dedicated to critical studies of health, media, activism, and the body. Led by Professor Bright, the lab offers grant-supported opportunities for undergraduate and graduate research training and publication in ethnographic, multimodal, and health systems research, and public outputs including ethnographic design, architecture, curricula, communication, and policy guidance.



Faculty Publications, 2025-2026

Netta Avineri

2026 “Linguistic anthropology and social justice: Producing knowledge for action,” with Robin Conley Riner, in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, 2e, Nancy Bonvillian and Immaculada

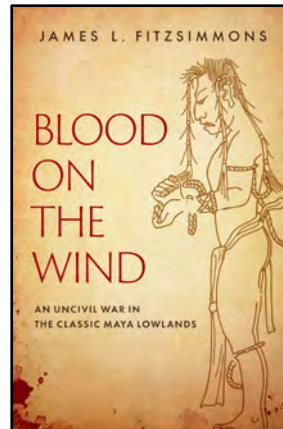
García-Sánchez, eds., pp. 377-394. New York: Routledge.

2026 “Language and social change,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Applied Linguistics and Language Education*, A. Fuad Selvi, ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

2026 “Language socialization methods and social justice,” with Immaculada García-Sánchez, in *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Educational Justice*, Maisha Winn and Lawrence Winn, series eds., Research Methods Volume, Danny C. Martinez and Elizabeth Montano, eds. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.

James Fitzsimmons

2026 *Blood on the Wind: An Uncivil War in the Classic Maya Lowlands*. New York: Oxford University Press.



This book explores why the ancient Maya did not forge an empire, despite a serious attempt in the sixth and seventh centuries CE. A family known as the Snakes creates a League of kings and tries to get various Maya city-states to work towards common goals, setting the foundation for a larger union that ultimately fails. The book chronicles a dramatic period of warfare, political intrigue, and

cultural development, marked by the construction of impressive temples, palaces, and public spaces. Despite their achievements, internal conflict, greed, and family rivalries caused the demise of the League and the collapse of the imperial experiment. Finally, the book highlights how this failure leaves the Maya divided, with each kingdom pursuing its own political and economic path, before ultimately succumbing to a broad political collapse in the ninth century. [from the OUP website – Ed.]

Alexis Mychajliw

2026 “Temperature, taphonomy, or technique? Contrasting hypotheses of ancient DNA recovery from Quaternary asphaltic fossil deposits,” with R. Singleton, K. Rayfield, et al. *Quaternary Science Reviews* 389: 110106.

2026 “Interactions between intrinsic and extrinsic factors shape island bat survival and extirpation in a global extinction hotspot,” with K. Rayfield, S. Cooke, et al. *Evolutionary Journal of the Linnean Society* 5(1): kzag014.

2026 “Integrating environmental archives into conservation: Using historical data to evaluate species suitability for reintroduction,” with S. Turvey, JJ Crees, et al. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 293(2066): 20252589.

2026 “SNAPSHOT USA 2024: Year 6 of the coordinated national camera trap survey of the United States,” with H. Shamon, R. Kays, et al. *Global Ecology & Biogeography*, 35(4): e70229

2026 “Extinct family *Nesophontidae* and extinct species of the *Solenodontidae*,” with L. Viñola-Lopez, J. Orihuela, et al., in *Handbook of the Mammals of Middle and South America: Eulipotyphla*, L. Guevara and M.A. León-Tapia, eds. Berlin: Springer Nature.



Fun fact: Solenodons are venomous mammals

2025 “When taxonomy cries wolf: Ancient DNA research must embrace taxonomy to define biodiversity loss,” with S. Turvey, *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 146(1): blaf091.

2025 “Identifying the Big Questions in paleontology: A community-driven project to motivate new insights about the history of life on Earth,” with J. Smith, et al. *Paleobiology*, 51(3): 408-431.

Ellen Oxfeld

2026 “Food, memory, and nostalgia in Reform Era China,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Food Studies*, Darra Goldstein, ed. New York: Oxford Academic.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780197762530.013.190>.

Fulya Pinar

2026 “AI in rural classrooms: Digital discretion, teacher agency, and student engagement in Vermont high schools,” with **Turner Britz ’25**, *Learning, Media and Technology*, 1–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2026.2698577>

2026 “Habitats,” *The Passionfruit Review*,

<https://passionfruitreview.com/habitats-by-fulya-pinar/>.

2026 “The Line Starts Here, but It Moves,” *Otherwise Magazine*, “Contours” issue, <https://www.otherwisemag.com/contours>.

2026 “Standing beside: Feminist accompaniment amid learned mistrust of legal process in Turkey,” *Feminist Anthropology* e70059.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.70059>.

2026 “Staying in the scene: Situated assessment and the labor of learning to see,” *Fieldsights*, Society for Cultural Anthropology,
<https://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/staying-in-the-scene-situated-assessment-and-the-labor-of-learning-to-see>.

2026 “Unavailable upon Request,” in *Unhoused: Yearning for Home*, Lisa Tomey-Zonneveld, Candice Daquin, and Jia-Li Yang, eds. Raleigh, NC: Prolific Pulse Press.



2026 “Mobility as dependence: Politics of getting around for migrant farmworkers in rural Vermont,” with **Tania Hernandez Moreno ’26**, *Allegra Lab*, <https://allegralaboratory.net/mobility-as-dependence-politics-of-getting-around-for-migrant-farmworkers-in-rural-vermont/>.

Alumni News

Amun Chaudhary ’24 is starting a Master’s in Social Anthro at Oxford!

Bochu Ding ’21 is coming back to Midd to teach a Jterm class in 2027 (see p. 12)!

Dan Krugman ’21 is now a PhD candidate at Brown, and has just started fieldwork in Nairobi on decolonizing healthcare with a super prestigious grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

Jenna Reichenbach ’14 says, “I’m officially a licensed Doctor of Physical Therapy, practicing at a PT-owned clinic one mile from my home. I have a really supportive team there and I’m lucky to have developed friendships and mentoring relationships with many PTs over the past few years. My partner Henry and I went on our long delayed honeymoon to New Zealand in December 2025:



three weeks across both the North and South Islands that exceeded all expectations! While there, we did

one of the “Great Walks” over the course of 3 days and had someone in the group that reminded me of Sheridan! We unexpectedly adopted a puppy (named Reign, after the women’s soccer team) from the animal shelter one week before departing...the foster offered to hold onto her while we were out of town, and she’s been at home with us for a little over a week now. She’s almost 6 months old and we’re all acclimating! As I type this, she’s happily eating the tail off a stuffed toy.”



Love, Reign O'er Me

Naomi Shafer '11.5 is running a circus school (see <https://406cirque.com/>) in Bozeman, Montana. She writes that her “senior thesis was on *Performing Grief* - and that continues to be a theme in my life. For 7 years I ran Clowns Without Borders – performing in conflict zones and refugee camps. It was a process of learning about the hardships a community had survived AND what they found funny (farts and making fun of the person in power seem to be universal). As a clown, I was granted access to both sides of a conflict – doing a show for Syrian refugees one day, children of ISIS fighters the next. taught me to build a web of questions and research. Being in conflict zones taught me to be present. I measured the success of my performances by the audience turning away from me and towards each other. The most successful performances



ended with an elder singing a song from home, a child coming forward to do a somersault, or even parents-and-children playing peek-a-boo. The highest praise I ever received was,

“the performance gives us a shared experience other than displacement.””

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 and pets. Send us stuff!

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



Left, Fulya and Ellie toasting Ellen Oxfeld's retirement; right, Fulya, David, and special guest David Eaton, who taught in the SOAN Department in the early 2000s



Ellen's retirement party was catered by the amazing Ethiopian/Eritrean chef Alganesh Michael. Check out her menu at <https://atasteofabyssinia.com/> - she's really fantastic!

Image Credits

Page 1 – We were so very drenched! Photo by Mike

Page 2 – Ellen Oxfeld at her retirement party photo from Kristy; Anth 340 students with forest guide Mo Bisonette from Kristy; bar-tailed godwit from <https://datazone.birdlife.org/articles/the-bar-tailed-godwit-undertakes-one-of-the-avian-worlds-most-extraordinary-migratory-journeys>

Page 3 – Feline version of harebell and gardening tips from Caitlin; Trinidadian doubles from <https://www.redonline.co.uk/food/recipes/a46135374/doubles/> (a seriously delicious recipe!)

Page 4 – Sea Pig photo from Alexis; Cea explaining a poster at AAA by Ellie; Rethinking crew from Ellie

Page 5 – Hawaiian language presentation in RAJ and Sheldon Museum archives visit from Ellie; Ellen delivering a Rifelj series lecture from Fulya

Page 6 – Dan Nott presentation from Fulya; Incir stickers from a place of critical inquiry and love; Lottie and Kadori photo from Mike

Page 7 – Dan’s book cover from <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262553384/biologists-unite/>; Somos First Gen from <https://www.facebook.com/somosfirstgen/>

Page 8 – Chantarelles in an Estonian market from Lily; Texas power outage map from <https://sustainability.utdallas.edu/news/2021/20210212a/>

Page 9 – Migrant workers in a Vermont dairy barn from <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/food-drink/migrant-workers-hold-up-vermonts-dairy-industry-and-are-fighting-for-better-working-conditions-38342040/>; Amazigh cultural tourism from <https://primemoroccotours.com/the-amazigh-people-of-morocco/>; Amazigh cultural tourism lunch from Maddie Hunt

Page 10 – Songxi eco-village photo from Changchang; Mildred Fay Jefferson photo from <https://nrlc.org/nrlnewstoday/2024/02/nrlc-honors-dr-mildred-fay-jefferson-the-first-african-american-woman-to-graduate-from-harvard-medical-school-and-nrlc-president-from-1975-1978/>

Page 11 – Sudbury Shares from <https://neshobecurrent.org/t/sudbury>; Changchang getting the departmental award photos by Mike

Page 12 – Profs. Kaat and Ding photos from themselves

Page 13 – Anthro and AI from <https://ethosapp.com/blog/integrating-ai-in-ethnographic-research/>; Anthro grads photos by Mike; Anthro Action logo from <https://anthroaction.middcreate.net/>; Anthro Action list of the usual suspects from <https://anthroaction.middcreate.net/>; Sam photo by Mike

Page 14 – Aparajita, Caelyn, and Changchang photos by Mike; Baking Pot obsidian from <https://anthroaction.middcreate.net/blog/2026/05/28/economic-activity-at-baking-pot-during-the-terminal-classic-period/>; Liana’s lecture photo by Mike; hongyi photo by Kristy

Page 15 – Emma and Kristy in Albuquerque by Kristy; The Body Online from <https://www.bodyonline.org/>; *Blood on the Wind* cover from <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/blood-on-the-wind-9780190869847>

Page 16 – Solenodon from <https://www.wired.com/2016/02/absurd-creature-of-the-week-the-mystery-of-solenodon-the-mammal-that-bites-like-a-snake/>; *Unhoused* book cover from <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/252152214-unhoused>; Volcano trekking from Jenna

Page 17 – Reign from Jenna; Naomi in a refugee camp from <https://www.nmhschool.org/about-us/news/nmh-news/post-details/~board/news-and-events-board/post/bringing-joy-to-places-in-crisis>; Fulya and Ellie toasting Ellen by Kristy, Fulya, David, and David Eaton and photo of Ellen and Alganesh Michael by Kristy; excellent Ethiopian/Eritrean food from <https://atasteofabyssinia.com/>