

# *Field Notes*

The newsletter of the Middlebury College Anthropology Department  
Summer 2022 Number 17  
Editor: Michael Sheridan



*Jumping for joy at the May 2022 Commencement (left to right): Prof. Fitzsimmons, Massimo Sassi, Katie van der Merwe, Suria Vanrajah, Anna Wood, Haegan O'Rourke, Bryan Chang, Audrey Hsi, Maya Gee*

## *A Note from the Chair...*

Another great year for our department—we reached fifty-nine majors this year (an all-time high) and for the first time, graduated as many majors as we once did when we were a combined (SOAN) department. In the archaeology laboratory, we were able to expand the teaching collections to include Arab, Byzantine, Canaanite, Cypriot, Egyptian, Hellenistic, and Roman materials (joining collections from the Maya area and North America).

Likewise, we reworked the department website and held our first in-person events since the pandemic started. This was perhaps the most ‘normal’ year I had as chair – but it was also the last of my three-year term (I am going on leave in 2022-2023, back in Fall 2023). Before I vanish for parts unknown: a warm welcome to our new chair, Marybeth Nevins, and best wishes all of you in the coming year!

**James Fitzsimmons**, Anthropology chair

## Faculty and Staff Updates

### Kristy Bright

It was another roller coaster year! For most of April, I taught online as my family struggled thorough Covid and cared for my dad who was in the hospital. Fortunately, my dad pulled through, and what followed in May, including two Middlebury graduations, multiple receptions and senior presentations, was nothing short of spectacular. I had the honor of advising eight brilliant people on their senior theses and independent projects: **Madeline Lyons, Grace Metzler, Zoe Lynds, Emma Bernstein, Katie van der Merwe, Haegan O'Rourke, Anna Wood, and Greta Sirek**. These people were a treat to work with and propelled my own thinking and writing on relationships of kinship, health, gender, and power. But they also fueled our development as a department.

I poured their collected energy into building our program in Medical Anthropology—planting seeds in student research, critical design, public policy, and more. Our hub for these activities is The Body Online ([www.bodyonline.org](http://www.bodyonline.org)) research lab, dedicated to critical studies of the body, health, and tech.



This year, **Emma Bernstein** and I focused on building hybrid outputs. In one project, Emma created a multimodal brochure with partners at a pre-K education center (see senior abstracts, below) with text and QR codes. Emma and **Zhanqui (Jessica) Hong** also worked with me to develop a new course in Design Anthropology. Next up, we're excited to work with folks like **Louise Kim, Sam Wexler, Patricia Hughes, and Roxanna Alvarado** as they work on ethnographically informed design solutions in areas like treatment communication in pediatric cancer, wellness and belonging among international students, trans+ health in Vermont,

and medication abortion in cross-cultural context, among other topics.

As a faculty fellow in Global Health and Medicine at RCGA, I'm collaborating with Pam Berenbaum on a slate of events to complement these topics in 2022-23, so stay tuned! In events this past year, I presented a couple of talks at the 4S meetings in Toronto, including a paper that will come out in a volume on health activism and sexual politics with Routledge next year. In November, **Emma Bernstein** and I attended the American Anthropological Association meetings in Baltimore and had the honor of taking part in an invited roundtable on multimodal anthropologies (e.g., ethnographic film, digital ethnography labs, photography, collaborative



methodologies). In June, I took part in a Mellon-funded Summer Public Humanities Institute, hosted by UNH's Center for the Humanities. UNH generously provided support for student participation, so I was able to nominate **Amun Chaudhary**, who was then selected to attend and collaborate with me in building a medical humanities initiative in whole student health. This July, we then launched the center with community partners in primary care and secondary education, with year one ('22-'23) dedicated to piloting a school-based health center.

I'm deeply grateful to Febe Armanios, Marion Wells, and the Axinn Center for supporting my work in the 2021-22 Humanities Faculty Research Seminar. With my colleagues in that group, I was able to craft the conceptual angles that we are now putting into our public partnership for school-based health. The recent decisions by the Supreme Court have only galvanized us. In the public health community, we are already seeing students pivot their energy and career planning to battle these decisions. This next year, I will be co-chairing the Health Professions Committee with Mary Lothrop, and we are excited for the conversations we'll have with grads about the future, and where their energy and skills can make the most difference – i.e., clinical social work, mental health, elder care, primary care, and school-based care.



## James Fitzsimmons



This year I resumed work on a third manuscript, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (University of Texas Press) and worked on hieroglyphic texts from Maya ceramics. For my leave year, I am hoping to finish the manuscript and resume fieldwork in Belize. I am also fortunate to have gotten a Marion and Jasper Whiting Fellowship for travel to the Puuc region of Yucatan, Mexico, where I will be studying northern lowland Maya architecture.

## Hemangini Gupta

Hemangini has a new job at the University of Edinburgh as Lecturer in Gender and Global Politics and Associate Director of GenderED, an interdisciplinary network for gender and sexuality studies. We wish her all the best! – Ed.

<https://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/hemangini-gupta>

## Rachael Joo

#citeblackwomen. This year, I have a writing group with three feminist anthropologists from Stanford. We are all struggling to finish our second books. Two of the women, Christen Smith and Erica



K. Williams are founding members of the #citeblackwomen collective. Cite Black women! The second book has been especially difficult for the four of us as we raise children, take care of elderly relatives, and struggle

through serious health issues. This writing group has become a space for us to talk about everything, including heartache, family, remittances, and racial

terror. I'm not sure when any of us will be done with this second book, but it is a haven that I feel that I now need.

I am working on a book on Korean golf, and it's coming together very slowly. As part of this project, I published an article with my collaborator Jose Medriano titled, "Imperial Run-Off: Korean Golf in the Clark Special Economic Zone in the Philippines," in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. The article details how Korean golf conveys the imperial postures of Korean developers and residents in this former U.S. military reservation.



I remain stunned and deeply saddened by the death of Diane M. Nelson, a bright star in the universe and a fierce advocate for indigenous rights in Guatemala. She embodied ethics and love in everything she did from teaching to mentorship to research to activism. She was an extraordinary anthropologist and a model human being.

<https://sites.google.com/view/diane-m-nelson/home>

## Marybeth Nevins

In a political climate where educational attainment has become the strongest predictor of party affiliation, it has become crucial to reach beyond the classroom to magnify the relevance of academic knowledge produced to the wider world. To this end I piloted a hybrid community-connected classroom in my spring course, ANTH 109 Language, Culture and Society. For our unit on "indigenous language communities and globalization," the focus was Maidu, a northern California community that I have worked with for the past decade. While the Vermont class met in person, we also projected a zoom feed where Maidu educators and community leaders joined in (along with covid-isolating Midd students). This was a successful pilot, and I continued to develop the community-connected

classroom model over the summer at UNH's Public Humanities Institute. Now, with support from Middlebury's Public Humanities Lab, the plan is to



connect my fall class, ANTH 125 Language Structure and Function, with a group of White Mountain Apache language teachers; and my spring class, ANTH 225 Indigeneity and Colonialism:

Native North America with the same group of Maidu educators and leaders. As with my Maidu work, I have been working with members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe over many years, actually a very long time – since 1994!

Other meaningful academy-community connections came from senior work students **Suria Vanrajah** and **Madeleine Joinnides**. Suria's senior work extended methods from ANTH 396 Linguistic Anthropology Method and Theory to the study of QAnon political mobilization via social media. I had the privilege of bringing together a new theoretical framework developed with my partner, Thomas Nevins, with Suria's already excellent ethnography. We jointly presented a paper on QAnon speech at the Spring meetings of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. Madeleine's work, on the other hand, puts the focus on printmakers as political agents at two Vermont institutions: Bread and



Puppet Theatre and New Haven Revolutionary Press. This summer I visited Bread and Puppet Theater in Glover, Vermont and understood so much more about local to global engagements from our little corner of the world as a result of having engaged with Madeleine's work. I encourage you to read both examples of senior work and to touch down, so fortified, in the social worlds of which they speak.

As for what I am working on, I have been invited to write a review article treating works in Linguistic Anthropology published in 2020-2021, and I am writing a preface for the reprint of my book about White Mountain Apache language politics. So if you pass me in the hallway, support my disciplined focus by asking if I am done yet! I am also writing grant applications in support of a prospective sabbatical year. Finally, I step into the role of department chair for the coming year, of which more anon...

### Ellen Oxfeld

During 2021 -22 I enjoyed several teaching and professional experiences. China is still not a place we can travel to due to pandemic restrictions, but I finally had a chance to work on some material that I had put aside for a while. In November, I participated in a small conference at University of



Rochester, "Spiritual Crisis and Moral Transformation in Contemporary China." It was wonderful to be back together with colleagues in the field. My paper was entitled "Moral Restoration or Moral Transformation? Rural Returns and Ritualized Commensality during the Lunar New Year." We will be revising and publishing our papers for a special issue of *Asian Anthropology*.

I also took on a number of professional responsibilities this year. I am serving a two-year term as President of the Society for East Asian Anthropology, which is a unit within the American Anthropological Association. It's been very



interesting to work with the colleagues on the board of our association. This new role has also given me some insight into the rather large and complicated workings of our professional organization (the AAA) and to be a part of meeting planning and other activities associated with the organization.

Teaching was wonderful this year once we were back in the classroom and I especially enjoyed teaching our anthropological theory class. It's always illuminating to reconnect with our anthropological ancestors (like Franz Boas and Mary Douglas, etc.), and also to dip into some of the more recent theoretical trends in the field. Our majors our inspiring and the class gave me an opportunity to get to know our talented group!

### Mari Price

My summer break begins in seven days, and I can't wait. I plan to spend time in my flower beds, gardening, kayaking, and biking. The best and most exciting news is that I am going to be a grandmother in September! 😊



### Michael Sheridan

I was on sabbatical this year, and my two big projects have been finishing a book and getting deep into house renovations. I wrote and edited in the mornings and did carpentry, plumbing, and electrics in the afternoons. After a while it felt like the same project of cutting right angles, making connections, and checking that the measurements were correct. The results are that the book is coming out with



Routledge in 2023. It's going to be called *Roots of Power: The Political Ecology of Boundary Plants*. I also have an article in press about how posthumanist approaches illuminate the cultural significance of rain as a sort of person in African societies. The second floor of my house has a bathroom with a tile surround, new window,

and sink with my handmade maple vanity. And a rehabbed bedroom that FINALLY isn't painted avocado and burgundy (= the color scheme when we bought the house), has new maple trim, and a bamboo floor. More painting, trim, and bamboo flooring in two other rooms, too. Next is bamboo in the upstairs hallway and a red oak staircase. This coming year I'm looking forward to presenting my work on rain in Africa at the AAA conference in Seattle and teaching my anthropology and climate change class as a First Year Seminar. If you have any bad jokes for me to use in class, please let me know!

### David Stoll

This June I was able to return to my favorite town in Guatemala for the first time in three years. There are many changes. Nebaj's leading empresarios and evangelical pastors are putting up ever-higher buildings, now to four stories, that emulate suburban Guatemala City. The multiplication of SUVs and motorcycles through the center of town has turned quiet streets, that used to be safe corridors for pedestrians, into traffic dodgeball. This sounds like more of the usual bad news about Guatemala, right? But wait! Economically, ever-higher remittances from the U.S., unstoppable either by covid or U.S. border enforcement, are pulling up wages. I am told that agricultural labor cannot be found in Nebaj for less than Q125 per day – about US\$16, or double what it used to be. I also am told that labor contractors are no longer taking crews of seasonal labor to the coffee, cotton, and sugar harvests on the coast – young men can earn higher wages doing construction. If Nebajenses do not go back to seasonal labor on plantations, this means the end of centuries of this kind of labor exploitation.



## Trinh Tran



The return to semi-normalcy in 2022 brought back the dynamism that I so missed in the classroom space. With restrictions on Covid partially lifted, I saw an uptick in student morale. The positive spillover effects into the classroom space (higher quality student work, more lively class discussions) reminded me that learning demands community. To help build this classroom community, I hosted several class events at my home. For example, students in Global Migration participated in the *bún riêu* challenge – a social media campaign launched by Pivot, a Vietnamese American progressive organization – in support of Afghan refugees. We donated funds and ate the iconic Vietnamese seafood noodle soup to raise awareness of the importance of nourishing meals for these newly displaced migrants.

My winter term class – School Lunches – also explored these ideas of community and displacement through food. We examined how the industrial food system has displaced local communities by feeding children mass-produced, processed foods. The class planned and made meals together to explore the challenges and benefits of relying on locally sourced producers.

Themes of displacement and the importance of place also drive my intellectual work on the relationship between schools and communities. Through a comparative study of two seemingly disparate geographies – Philadelphia, PA and Ripton, VT – I explore the role education policies play in reorganizing how students understand themselves and their communities. My project examines the embeddedness of children's lives in places by asking, whether and to what extent education policies, like school choice and closure, reconfigure the subjectivities of children and their relationship to their communities across both rural and urban spaces?

Presumably place neutral, broad reforms like school closures and school choice fail to address geography explicitly. In doing so, they ignore moral questions on spatial justice and the fact that privileges and injustices are distributed geographically. By decoupling schools and

communities, such reform policies risk erasing meaning and cultural systems attached to place. As indigenous scholars have argued, place, and more specifically land, erasure have played a critical role in maintaining systems of oppression and domination like racism and settler colonialism.



At the start of this summer, my husband and I visited the ancient indigenous city of Cahokia, right outside of St. Louis. We talk extensively about this and other urban centers in my Cities of Hope and Despair class. Visiting the site served as a visceral reminder that place erasure has a long, troubling history.

## *A Second Commencement in 2022!*



*2020 grads paying tribute to the Pointer Sisters' 1983 hit "Jump (For My Love)" (l-r): Prof. Fitzsimmons, Kereem Morgan, Mikayla Hyman, Lee Garcia Jiminez, Mollie Smith, Kate Hilscher, Spencer Feinstein*

## *Senior projects 2021-2022*

### **Emma Bernstein**

#### **Engaging Anthropology in Early Childhood Education**

In this applied research study, I explored styles of early childhood education at Bristol Family Center (BFC) in Bristol Vermont as part of the scoping phase of a new public program in whole student health at Mt Abe Union School District and Middlebury College. I used multimodal research including qualitative interviewing, document analysis, and digital media to describe the Reggio Emilia style of inclusive, child-led, nature-based, sensorial exploration and play.





second explores what these immigrants think of their children’s religious lives. The next part shows how the individualism of evangelical Christianity creates a highly competitive marketplace in which churches constantly work to attract and retain members. Finally, I describe how church members use humor to build connections and how this reflects broader French humor styles. I conclude by comparing how these evangelicals think of themselves as both French and not-French, as Protestant but superior to other Protestants, and how this boundary work relates to broader French understandings of community identity. (Supervised by Prof. Doran)

**Arlo Fleischer**  
**Success in New Landscapes of Social Movements: Building Resiliency and Re-envisioning Success through Culture**



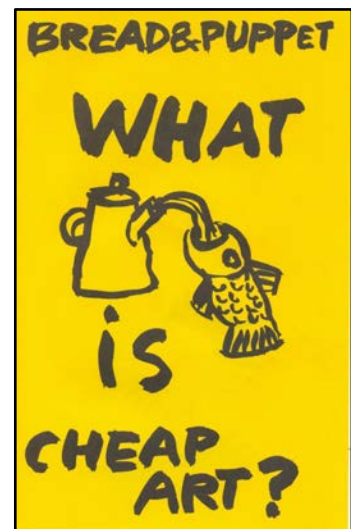
From the Arab Spring protests to the Black Lives Matter movement, contemporary social movements often take new forms as connective actions rather than collective action movements. They are ignited through social media and rapidly form in a leaderless and structureless fashion. Therefore, these movements struggle to maintain stability and long-term drives for change, calling into question the capacity for social movements to effect change. Drawing on evidence from a case study of Algeria’s recent Hirak movement, this thesis explores how success and stability are possible in connective action and examines what resiliency and change look like in these movements. I ask: (1) How are cultural successes most significant for movements to create change? (2) How does cultural success happen, and how do social movement cultures create cultural successes? (3) How does movement culture allow movement success by building more resilient movements? (4) How do movement culture and cultural successes extend beyond the movement moment? (5) How do

movement culture and cultural successes extend beyond movement space? Throughout my thesis, I demonstrate that cultural successes and social movement cultures can provide hope that social movements can and do create significant change in society. Based on my findings, I conclude my research by considering how social movements can better succeed. I argue that activists can build stronger movements by focusing more intentionally on a movement’s culture, for example, by considering cultural goals, outcomes, and strategies alongside other goals and strategies.

**Madeleine Joinnides**  
**Print and Power: The Role of Radical Printmakers As Sociopolitical Agents**

Printmakers in contemporary society exist in a strong but small niche in the United States. With the history of the press rooted in widespread communication and sociopolitical commentary, I examine the persistence of this practice and how it facilitates critical discourse. Two presses were examined for this purpose: Bread and Puppet Press in Glover, Vermont, and A Revolutionary Press in New Haven, Vermont. The anthropological approach of this project is multimodal, including participant observation, tactile participation, semi-structured interviews, and web-based research. By applying Benjamin’s theory of the “democracy of multiples” in mechanical reproduction, this essay positions the printmakers at Bread and Puppet and A Revolutionary Press as sociopolitical actants. I explore the tension in aligning printmakers with organic intellectuals following

Gramsci’s distinction between traditional versus organic intellectualism. These printmakers’ aim is shifting the current ideological hegemony by disseminating radical ideas by the democratic process of print multiples. (Supervised by Prof. Nevins)

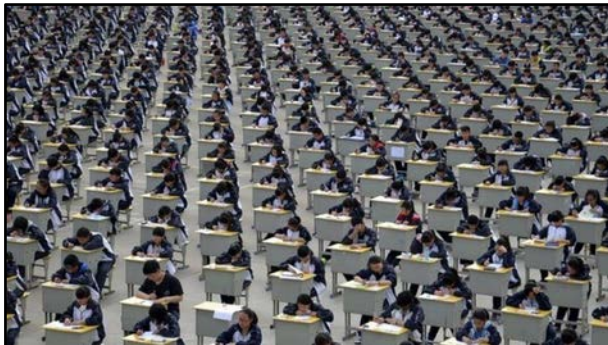




**Raphaella Kim**

### **Escaping Meritocracy: How Chinese and Korean Students Choose to Opt Out of their Home Examination Systems**

My senior thesis examines the intersections between meritocratic high-stakes examination systems, the resulting hyper-competitive and private education markets, and the ethos of contemporary filial piety and obligations to kin. College admissions in both South Korea and China use annual high-stakes examinations to admit students. In these countries with an all-encompassing culture of competitive pursuing education, high-stakes examinations are at the center stage of social scrutiny. Education has come to be viewed as the method, or even the gatekeeper, for success and social mobility in South Korea and China. Pursuit of even the slightest amount of advantage over one's peers led to the growth of the private education sector. While some students use supplemental education resources, like "shadow education," others opt out of the overwhelming stress of examination culture by studying abroad. I interviewed Korean and Chinese international students studying at Middlebury College to analyze the motivations behind their choices to study abroad (where the concept of "success" may be more feasible), and the degree to which their future goals align with or stray from traditional filial ideology. (Supervised by Prof. Oxfeld)



**Zoe Lynds**

### **"What's in a Date?" Dating and Courtship among Urban Japanese University Students**

This thesis examines the cultural meanings and practices of dating among university students in Tokyo. What are some of the key social forces shaping comfort or discomfort with current ideas of dating? How do people approach dating and

acknowledge their romantic interest in others? Has a history of arranged marriages or arranged dates shaped current practices in Japan? Research findings were gathered using qualitative and quantitative methods including extensive archival and secondary source research as well as an original survey in Japanese and English with 45 students in Tokyo. Scholarship on dating in Japan is limited. Studies tend to focus on dating practices that precede marriage and on marriage itself rather than dating experiences among teens, college students, or young adults. This thesis fills that gap and is organized in five chapters: rationale and background for study; literature review and secondary source analysis; the process of crafting and administering the survey; and respondents' survey responses and analyses of those. The conclusion outlines how the findings might be used to look at the future of dating in Japan, and what further directions for this line of research. (Supervised by Profs. White and Bright)

**Madeline Lyons**

### **A Place Where More than Bodies are Built: A Critical Feminist Anthropological Study of Fitness Culture at Middlebury**



I carried out this applied mixed-methods ethnographic study with my co-researcher Madison Lord '21. Our main objective was to examine the sociocultural dimensions and experiences of workout spaces at Middlebury and to understand the gym as not only a physical space, but a space of inclusive and exclusive social health. We used a mixed-method design consisting of a survey (N=272) of respondents across a spectrum of gender, ethnicity, class, and fitness orientations including non-athletes and varsity and non-varsity athletes. Our analyses drew on critical feminist and poststructuralist theories of body performance, normativity, and power by Debra Gimlin, Susan Bordo, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Foucault. One of our key findings was that 80% of respondents feel "strongly" that Middlebury does not have an inclusive workout culture and should build

programs supportive of diverse bodies. We aimed to apply our data in several public ways. First, we gave a public talk with invited members of the College administration and Athletic Center leadership to start a conversation about building more inclusive workout spaces. We founded the student-led organization Uplift to promote more inclusive options for fitness and wellness. Lastly, and importantly, we sparked conversations among hundreds of students about the inclusivity of health and wellness on campus. Middlebury cannot succeed at fulfilling its philosophy of graduating world citizens when its health services and communications remain exclusionary. Our anthropology study enabled us to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of diverse students in order to reimagine ways of doing health at Middlebury College and beyond.  
(Supervised by Prof. Bright)

**Grace Metzler**

**Foster Care in Addison County, Vermont: Disrupted Kinship, Structural Barriers, and Radical Future Possibility**

This thesis considers the formal foster care system in Addison County, VT, through ethnographic analyses of kinship, relation, temporality, and care. A focus on the particular terms and priorities identified in foster care policies, including those of permanency, family preservation, and child “welfare” or “safety,” reveals the complex and oftentimes fraught interests of various actors, including children themselves, foster parents, social workers, and local and state agencies. The paradoxical relationship between temporary foster



placement and the goal of developing long-term “permanency” for children reflects a number of existential and practical questions: who is family, and for how long? Taking up a sociocultural investigation of new arrangements of foster kinship and care in Vermont, this thesis proposes a hybridized model moving forward, one that might enable a more interconnected community-based vision of child welfare within the foster system and beyond, such that connections with potential family or kinship members needn’t be severed or fade into ambiguity over time, but rather endure as a supporting part of a child’s life into the possible future.

(Supervised by Prof. Bright)



**Haegan O’Rourke**  
**Strange Encounters of the Small Town Kind: Spirit Possession, Kinship and Memory in Rural Connecticut**

In this sociocultural and autoethnographic study, I engage with stories about an alleged demonic possession that occurred in Brookfield, the small, predominantly white town in rural Connecticut where my father grew up. This particular case has been sensationalized in films like *The Conjuring*, and possession more broadly has been popularly depicted as a strange, unhinged, and singularly religious phenomenon. In contrast, this project seeks to understand spirit possession as a complex assemblage of cultural norms, social change, and



racialized affect. In this small but potent story, I consider the multiple expressions of fear, familial memory, and normativity to examine the ways possession shapes the lives of my father, his sisters, and myself. How does spiritual fear get learned as a way of inhabiting the body? How does that anxiety get communicated across bodies and communities? While places like Brookfield are often situated as natural, unchanging safe havens, this event in the 1980s and its afterlives illuminate the deeply constitutive effects of whiteness and Christianity on normative codes of space and bodies. This project engages with and problematizes anthropology's long preoccupation with spiritualism and the occult, while shifting the lens away from typically othered subjects and racialized communities to consider entanglements of possession and exorcism in contemporary New England.

(Supervised by Prof. Bright)

**Massimo Sassi**

**Modalities of Meaning: The Production and Negotiation of Musical Significance in *Bella Ciao***



Originally sung by the *mondine* (female rice field workers) and the *partigiani* (Italian anti-fascist soldiers) respectively to protest the arduous labor of working in rice fields and Mussolini's fascist regime during World War II, *Bella Ciao* has had widespread prominence throughout the world. Consequently, the song has been written, rewritten, recorded, and remixed to fit a wide variety of social settings, including but not limited to, the worlds of the *mondine* and the *partigiani*, climate protests, football chants, balcony performances at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and social media. Over time, the original meaning of freedom for the *partigiani* and the *mondine* has gradually been restructured and renegotiated as *Bella Ciao*

continued to grow and change. In researching the dynamic progression of *Bella Ciao* from its origins to modern day interpretations and reception, I explore how the song has been inspired by, and consequently inspired, various modalities of meaning. Specifically, through exploring concepts of song origination, authorship, transmission, intention, and reception, I relate the social science of meaning to the ways that musical meaning is produced, reproduced, negotiated and renegotiated, and ultimately, varied, through the lens of *Bella Ciao*.

(Supervised by Prof. Kafumbe)

**Greta Sirek**

**A Paradox of Biopower: Investigating Strava as a Site of Self-Restriction & Self-Transformation**

Strava is a popular health tracking and social media app at Middlebury College. Some of my teammates on the Middlebury cross-country team are frequent users of the app; I, however, have always refrained from use. I aimed to investigate how Strava affects the experience of exercise, expecting Strava to transform the intimate and personal experience of exercise into a site of performance and pressure. I found Strava to function as a microcosm of Foucault's biopower paradox: a site of bodily optimization and discipline and, simultaneously, a site of self-transformation and reflection. In line with Foucault's biopower ideology, my interviewees reported a desire to represent and share a useful and productive body on Strava, reflecting capitalistic and neoliberal cultural ideals. This desire to present a "good" and "fit" body transformed the temporality and space of exercise from a site of somatic reflection to somatic comparison. However, Foucault's biopower



framework did not fully capture the Strava experience. Interviewees reported Strava's data visualization and documentation tools as an



intimate site of empowerment and self-reflection. I found Strava to function as a new-age diary, where interviewees found meaning via the documentation and sharing of their experiences. This piece thus investigates how Strava intersects and blurs the self, the other, and technology.

(Supervised by Prof. Bright)

### **Kathryn van der Merwe** **The Toll of a Pandemic: Interpellation, Biopolitics, and the Lived Experience of Moral Distress among Frontline Healthcare Workers during Covid-19**

In light of the global pandemic, healthcare workers in the US have been forced to take on a new burden of high stress, personal risk of sickness and death, and higher rates of adverse patient outcomes. This is a phenomenon which builds on the increasing rates of moral distress and burnout among healthcare providers as documented before the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020. My thesis draws on ethnographic interviews with seven nurses, residents, psychiatrists, social workers, and physicians in the emergency room (ER) and the intensive care unit (ICU) of urban health centers in Minnesota, Missouri, and New York. I focus specifically on their accounts of living and working under the pandemic, including their perceptions of the pandemic's toll on their mental health and public responses to their wellbeing as workers. I propose a critical cultural analysis of how institutional and societal expectations create a paradox that is



potentially destructive to the identities of healthcare workers. I conclude that the interpersonal relationships between medical institutions and staff, healthcare workers and the public, and different groups of healthcare

employees are a vital and underappreciated site for understanding workers' wellbeing and resilience under the pandemic and beyond. Along the way, I discuss how my methodology draws on

conventional interview and observational methods, promotes collaborative research methods, and offers pathways toward more equitable and supportive ICU and ER environments for healthcare workers.

### **Suria Vanrajah** **Maybe I'm Q? If I Was, this is Exactly How I Would Do It: A Communicative Analysis of QAnon Organizing Logic and Content Formation**

QAnon is an online-based extremist movement characterized by a conspiracy-driven belief system. A subset of the larger right-wing extremist landscape, QAnon's overarching message concerns global control and crimes against humanity committed by the deep state and a satanic cabal, and the need to root out and combat this evil. With a flexible structure and expansive reach across online and offline platforms, QAnon has succeeded in spreading its ideology and message, and garnered significant social and political support in the United States. This qualitative study examines QAnon's operation, maintenance, and growth as a process through which participants use the QAnon framework to render their world meaningful and to influence others.

(Supervised by Prof. Nevins)



### **Clara Wolcott** **Periurban Settlements, Urban Villages, and Illegal Gardens: An Analysis of Spaces Blurring the Narrative of China's Urban-Rural Divide**

The relationship between the city and countryside in China's long history is complicated by long periods

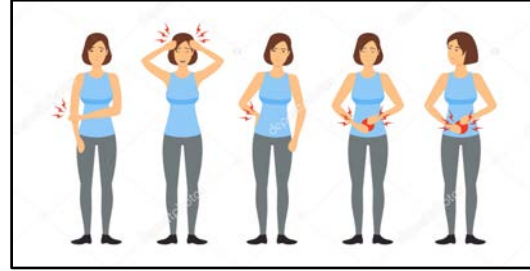
of time and patterns of migration. However, the speed of change in China over the past century means that the rural and urban relationship is oversimplified by governing bodies, media, and researchers into two distinct and separate aspects of society. This paper pushes against the common narrative of a strict binary between urban and rural spaces in China by exploring three case studies - peri urban settlements, urban villages in Shenzhen, and illegal gardening in Hangzhou housing developments - that depict three different kinds of liminal space that is neither rural nor urban. To start, the paper outlines different perceptions and relationships between cities and countryside historically to trace changes in how urban and rural spaces are perceived through China's history, before focusing on land reform of the 20th century and the impacts of the *hukou* identification system. My three case study analyses look at areas of urban and rural overlap in this context, interpreting them as in-between spaces that provide a gradient between the countryside and the city and give rural migrants an entry point to the urban environment. This paper takes these case studies and asks how the hukou system and inequitable access to land rights in rural areas shaped the ways that these in-between city spaces are viewed by city dwellers and government authorities.

(Supervised by Prof. Oxfeld)



**Anna Wood**  
**Hormone Projects: How Contraceptives Create Conflict and Confusion Among College Students with Uteruses**

Birth control is one of the most widely prescribed pharmaceuticals, and the most common “go to” solution for irregular and painful menstruation. But the long-term use of birth control can have adverse effects like cancer, endometriosis, blood clots, and heart disease. How does the ongoing



pathologization of menstruation, combined with the authorization of synthetic hormones as medical “treatment,” combine to normalize contraceptives as the answer to all “period problems?” How do gendered and neoliberal ideologies of health contribute to the marketing and consumption of hormones? In this ethnographic thesis, I move beyond the surface of sexual and menstrual health to examine the structural codes and violences entailed in hormonal contraceptives. Drawing on mixed method fieldwork including semi-structured interviews (N=10) and a survey of Middlebury College students (N=143), I explore how contraceptives shape ideas about “good health” and “successful bodies” under late capitalism. Hormones exceed the bodies they are absorbed into and the biomedical categories used to administer them. To make sense of these social processes, I draw on medical anthropology, anthropology of the body, and feminist science and technology (STS) studies to argue that hormones are salient, even necessary, to the production of contemporary Global North bodies. Although hormone medications promise ideals of freedom and control, they do so under biopowered regimes. Therefore, the sorts of relief, sexual autonomies, and “cleaner” intimacies championed by hormonal contraceptives hide the incompleteness of female agency. Ultimately, I argue that medicalized practices, beyond a logical care for menstrual disorders, contribute to the pernicious narrative that synthetic hormones can “solve” menstruation itself.

(Supervised by Prof. Bright)

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*Yet more photos of 2020 and 2022  
Anthro grads!*



*Tara Santi*



*Katie van der Merwe*



*Massimo Sassi*



*Bryan Chang*



*Sara Tobias*



*Mikayla Hyman*



*Kate Hilscher*



## *The Body Online at Middlebury College*

**The Body Online** is a collaborative, public anthropology research lab led by Professor Bright at Middlebury College and the University of Toronto. Latest news: Bright and her lab are leading a new public program for **full-spectrum child and adolescent healthcare** in central Vermont, together with colleagues Lindsay White NP and Kate LaMancuso MD, at Mountain Health Center in Bristol VT, and Wanda Bouvier, RN, at Mount Abraham Unified School District. With funding from the VT Department of Health, Bright and her team will launch the implementation evaluation in three phases: a pilot mobile unit for full spectrum, inclusive healthcare (acute and chronic); digitization of student health records; and nurse leadership and workforce development. Bright and her lab have also received funding from the Mellon Foundation and UNH Center for the Humanities to develop a digital ethnography installation and workshop series called *Relational Futures* in fall '22-spring '23. This program will serve as a **medical humanities** corollary to the school-based health center. In other news from 2021-22, The Body Online continued to build its focus on cancer treatment relationships and end of life care. New lab members **Sam Wexler** and Dartmouth student Christian Beck launched a new project on digital storytelling in pediatric oncology. Jessica Bytautus (PhD candidate, UofT) and medicine resident Anneliese Mills (UofT School of Medicine) continued collaborations with Prof Bright on medically assisted death, legacy, and end of life care. This past year, the lab also supported research and writing by undergrads at Middlebury in anthropology, neuroscience, MBBC, GSFS, and political science including **Emma Bernstein, Anna Wood, Katie van der Merwe, Kaya Aagaard, Greta Sirek, Amun Chaudhary**, and Jaya Singh (UofT). In 2021, lab member **Emma Bernstein** presented at the 119th American Anthropological Association meetings in Baltimore MD (photo), as part of an Invited Roundtable on “Multimodal Ethnography as Method for Staying True to Political Engagements and Critical Epistemologies,” co-organized by Maurice Magaña and Ivan Sandoval Cervantes. In June 2022, lab member **Amun Chaudhary** joined Prof Bright for the week-long Public Humanities

Summer Institute in Portsmouth, NH, where they developed the seed for a public medical humanities program (described above). Please check out the lab’s website at [www.bodyonline.org](http://www.bodyonline.org) to read more about lab research opportunities and works in progress!



### *Anthro Students in the News*

**Katie Barton** was selected as a 2022-23 Kellogg Fellow by Middlebury College for her ethnographic research project “Identity without Place: Diasporic Hindus in Burlington, Vermont.” She began fieldwork this summer and will continue thesis research in academic year 2022-23. Congratulations Katie!

**Amun Chaudhary** was selected to participate in the University of New Hampshire's 2022 Mellon funded Public Humanities Institute, convened in Portsmouth NH this past June. Amun participated in the Institute in two



capacities: first as an undergraduate scholar preparing to carry out her anthropology thesis research on transnational and decolonial expressions of *kathak* dance in Dubai, and second as Prof Bright’s research assistant on a new public humanities partnership in relational health and medicine at public schools in Vermont. Congratulations Amun!

**Sophia Fatima** received the Ward Prize for her spring 2021 term paper for ANTH 211, “How Government-Forced Conversions to Islam and Christianity Affected the Mentawai People of West Sumatra.” The paper has been published as a chapter in the Middlebury College Writing Center’s book *Ward Prize Celebration of First-Year Writers: 2020-2021*. Read Sophia’s chapter at <https://pressbooks.middcreate.net/wardprizewriters/chapter/how-government-forced-conversions-to-islam-and-christianity-affected-the-mentawai-people-of-west-sumatra-sophia-fatima/>



**Melanie Leider** was selected as a Lesley T. Ketzler ’49 Scholar for the 2021-22 academic year, in recognition of their rigorous grant-funded ethnographic research project, “Yaghan vs. Andean Mythology: A Look into Indigenous Latin-American Feminist Political Ecology,” conducted in Ecuador in fall 2021 and Argentina in spring 2022. The Lesley T. Ketzler ’49 Fund for Integrating Research with Study Abroad supports Middlebury students who integrate their independent research abroad into their overall undergraduate experience. Congratulations Mel!

## Faculty Publications, 2021-2022

### Kristi Bright

2022 “What a patient sees in the mirror: Validation of the Truncal Anterior Asymmetry Scoliosis Questionnaire” with Baron S. Lonner, Courtney S. Toombs, Suken A. Shah, Tracey Bastrom, Phedra Penn, Carrie Scharf Stern, Marjolaine Roy-Beaudry, Marie Beausejour, Geraldine Neiss, Andrea Castillo, and Stefan Parent, *JPO: Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics* 10.1097. doi: 10.1097/JPO.0000000000000433



### Fitzsimmons, James L.

2022 “House societies and the Classic Maya: an epigraphic view,” in *From House Societies to States: Early Political Organization, from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Juan Carlos Moreno Garcia, ed., pp. 180-194. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

### David Stoll

2021 Book review essay, Charles Piot with Kodjo Nicolas Batema’s *The Fixer: Visa Lottery Chronicles*; Ben Judah’s *This is London: Life and Death in the World City*; and Ana P Gutierrez Garza’s *Care for Sale: An Ethnography of Latin American Domestic and Sex Workers in London*. *Society* 58(4):348-353.

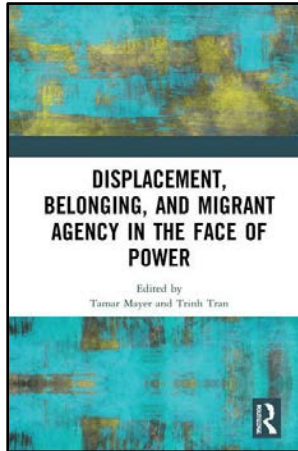




2022 “Remittances as Rents in a Guatemalan Town: Debt, Asylum, the U.S. Job Market, and Vulnerability to Human Trafficking,” *Latin American Perspectives* 49(6), December.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0094582X211061880>

### Trinh Tran



2022 *Displacement, Belonging, and Migrant Agency in the Face of Power*, co-edited with Tamar Mayer. London: Routledge.

2022 “Displacement, belonging, and migrant agency in the face of power: challenging paradigms in migration studies,” in *Displacement, Belonging, and Migrant Agency in the Face of Power*, T. Mayer and T. Tran,

eds. London: Routledge.

**Audrey Hsi '22** is heading to Stanford for a PhD program in Biological Anthropology. She plans to specialize in faunal analysis and zooarchaeology.

**Dan Krugman '21** received an honorable mention for the President's Prize from the Society for Humanistic Anthropology for his 2021 senior thesis on a refugee camp in northern Uganda.



**Claire Martens '21** was just accepted to University College Dublin's MSc graduate program in experimental archaeology and material culture!

**Jenna Reichenbach '14** got married in June here in Vermont, and will soon start a MA program in Physical Therapy. Congratulations Jenna!



### Alumni News



*Mollie Blount Smith '20 speaking at Middlebury's 2020 and 2020.5 Commencement*

### Future Issues

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

**Got Anthropology?** Make sure to follow us **@MiddAnthro** to keep up on all our events and opp's! We post stories and reels about departmental news, campus events, student research, student orgs, study abroad, jobs, internships, grad programs in the US and abroad, funding opportunities, and much more. Please also send us **\*your\*** Midd and post-Midd updates so we can share with our community! Simply DM your update and a photo or two to **@MiddAnthro**. You can also email news and photos to [kbright@middlebury.edu](mailto:kbright@middlebury.edu). Thanks for following!

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