

Field Notes

A newsletter of the Middlebury College Anthropology Department
Summer 2021 Number 16
Editor: Michael Sheridan



May 2021 grads (left to right): Courtney Tillman, Bochu Ding, Claire Martens, Dan Krugman, Madeleine Joinnides, Grace Metzler, Kayla Lichtman, and Micaela Gaynor

A Note from the Chair...

As you all know, this has been a difficult year. Life is almost normal in Vermont; even so, signs of the pandemic are everywhere (at least, wherever willful ignorance is not). We are fortunate that the College weathered – and is weathering – the pandemic better than many of its peers: there were very few positive coronavirus cases throughout the year. Likewise, many terrible things were happening throughout higher education this past year, but we managed to escape the worst of it.

Surprisingly, 2021 was a banner year for our department. We started this academic year with

seventeen majors, but by the beginning of May there were fifty-two. Likewise, we returned to a newly renovated Munroe. Climate controlled and insulated, with an elevator and proper HEPA filters, it *feels* nothing like the scorching (fourth floor) yet damp (first floor) building some of you may remember – even though it *looks* the same. Owing to pandemic restrictions, we could not bring speakers to campus or host other events like we normally do for our undergraduates, but we adapted. Perhaps the most noteworthy gathering of the year was the so-called ‘Cocoa Event’: we mailed department mugs and packets of powered cocoa (surprise!) to all of our majors in January and held a

virtual event where we drank, played (gloriously nerdy) games, and talked. It was a good way to connect with everyone, no matter where they were in the United States or abroad; we hope to host something similar in the future, albeit in person. Perhaps the coming year will be kinder to us than the last one was; but if it is not, we will adapt – and thrive.

James Fitzsimmons, ANTH chair

Faculty and Staff Updates

Kristy Bright

I had a busy year! In the fall, I with launched two new community collaborative studies with colleagues: one with Open Door Clinic (ODC) on oral health experiences among Latinx immigrant farmworkers in Vermont; and a second statewide study with Mountain Health Center (MHC) and the Vermont School Nurses Association on adolescent health and well-being during COVID-19. **Kayla Lichtman '21** carried out thesis research as part of the first study; we recently submitted our findings to the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. In the second study, **Emma Bernstein '21.5** and **Amun Chaudhary '23.5** are collaborating on interview data collection and analysis and, along with me and my collaborator Kate LaMancuso at MHC, are taking part in meetings with state and federal partners including the Department of Maternal and Child Health and Sen. Bernie Sanders. Meanwhile, across the border, I recently published findings on medical assistance in dying and its impact on health care in Canada. In another cross-institutional study, I recently submitted results from my study on global access to novel therapeutics for lethal cancers to the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. Last fall, I completed an ethnographic book manuscript, *Unani Futures: Trajectories of a Heritage Medicine in India and the World*, which was workshopped in the Rohatyn Center's 2021 junior faculty manuscript spotlight event. During J-term, I had the huge pleasure of working with **Courtney Tillman '21**, **Claire Martens '21**, **Madison Lord '21**, and **Maddie Lyons '22** on three health/justice research projects including a new initiative by Lord and Lyons called **Uplift** (<https://www.instagram.com/upliftmidd/?hl=en>). In fall and spring, I was thrilled to work with students and Craig Maravich on **Beyond the Page** (<https://www.instagram.com/beyondthepage.midd/>),

about experimental pedagogy and research



Some mug shots of the usual suspects, 1/21/21

methods. I brought some of those concepts into a new spring seminar *The Traveling Tonic*, focusing on decolonial approaches to biomedicine and medical anthropology. The course benefitted from its small size, and students produced incredible written and artistic projects some of which have been, or will be soon, published on <https://www.bodyonline.org/>, including works by **Natalie Meyer '21**, **Claire Martens '21**, **Courtney Tillman '21**, **Emma Bernstein '21.5**, **Katie van der Merwe '22**, **Anna Wood '22**, **Kaja Aagaard '22**, **Haegan O'Rourke '22**, **Maddie Lyons '22**,

Amun Chaudhary '23.5, and Sophia Wittig '24.

Overall, we made it through the year, thanks to everyone’s patience, community spirit, and ability to see each technical disaster as a possible meme. Community television, here we come!

James Fitzsimmons

This year I finished my latest manuscript, *Blood on the Wind* (tentative title), and submitted it to Oxford University Press. This was a book for a popular audience on why the southern Maya lowlands never coalesced into an empire. I also published an article for an edited volume (on burned ‘spirit food’ remains), reviewed a colleague at Brandeis for promotion to full professor, and tinkered with other



book and article projects. Predictably, the pandemic caused another difficult personal and professional year.

Hemangini Gupta

This was a strange year for anthropologists; for some of us it meant being stranded far from fieldsites, for others it meant being isolated from both research sites *and* home, since they are the same place. Yet it was also an opportunity to consider how to collaborate, conference, and create virtually. I took part in the biennial conference of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, aptly called “Distribute,” and we participated in two days of streaming ethnographic films, multimodal ethnography, and virtual networking in an online conference with local place-based “nodes” around the world in May 2020. Some weeks later I joined a roundtable at the Center for Imaginative Ethnography at Simon Frazier University where we shared work through video, audio, and other forms of sensorial ethnography, asking how we might “know” otherwise and how multimodal anthropology might disrupt the linear, text-based narratives that have so long dominated our field. A special issue from anthropologists reflecting on “Sensate Memories” is now under production in a new journal, *Multimodality and Society*, so look out for that and check out the CIE, a transnational, independent research and creation network here: <https://imaginative-ethnography.com/>

Rachael Joo

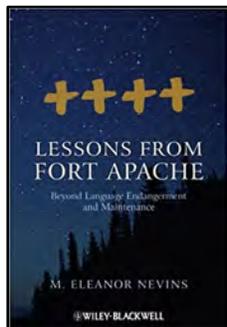
My anthropologist friend Lisa Uperesa explained that being on sabbatical in Aotearoa New Zealand during COVID was like landing on a lifeboat while the rest of the world was sinking. Due to a convergence of lucky factors, I spent a year unconcerned about catching COVID. Aotearoa protected its citizens by closing its borders and was led by Jacinda Ardern whose mantra was “Be Kind.” Instead of the malignant and never-ending U.S. election season, there was a Labour/Green/Maori coalition landslide. My ethnographic research on Korean golf took me to different golf courses around the country. I wrote a bit of my golf book (not enough), completed an article on Korean golf in the Philippines for publication, and I began some memoir writing that navigates race, migration, and farming. But I have to admit that I was a bit distracted in this “Playground of the Pacific” during a year largely free of foreign tourists. My picture below features the Steampunk Museum in Oamaru, a space that presages our *Mad Max: Fury Road* future.



Marybeth Nevins

2020-2021 was a tough year for so many of us! I have not been “productive” in the sense of

publications and grants but managed to keep body and soul together and my feet on the ground. I have new appreciation for the Trail Around Middlebury. Being able to cycle, walk or run through the pandemic kept me from going nuts and/or driving



everyone around me nuts. My bit of professional good news is that the University of Nebraska Press has offered to rescue my book, *Lessons From Fort Apache: Beyond Language Endangerment and Maintenance*, from the impossible \$100+ price tag assigned to it by my prior publisher, Wiley Blackwell.

This means that by this time next year, a new version with an updated author's preface (working on this now!) will appear within the UNP Native American Studies lineup – and this time at an affordable paperback price. I hope this will finally make the book accessible for classroom and community use. In teaching news, our newly minted ANTH/LNGT 125 *Language Structure and Function* was a joy to teach, albeit remotely. And, I am both exhausted and gratified by the project-based, community-engaged work of our ANTH/LNGT 395 *Language and Environmental Communication* class. We partnered with the Vermont Natural Resource Council to study conflicting discourses about policies designed to transition the state from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. We sampled and analyzed eleven media outlets in the state, creating a shared database that future classes will expand upon. All in all, a better year than the previous year.

Ellen Oxfeld



I spent most of this year as a virtual teacher and scholar, and after starting as a Luddite, I really enjoyed it! I'm not advocating life on Zoom forever, but it did turn out to be a very handy way to stay in touch with students and colleagues further

afield. The new format led to some interesting innovations, so I had the chance to team teach (virtually) a new and experimental winter term class

entitled *Race, Capitalism, Decolonization* with four other colleagues (**Hemangini Gupta**, Marcos Rohena-Madrazo, Jenn Ortgren and Yumna Siddiqi). The opportunity to share ideas coming from our different disciplinary backgrounds and research interests (anthropology, religious studies, literary studies and Luso-Hispanic studies) was very stimulating intellectually and also a good way to learn different teaching styles and approaches from each other – all virtually! Having spent most of the year focused on teaching, I am looking forward to getting back to some long-delayed writing this summer. I will be participating in a workshop this Fall at University of Rochester (also delayed due to the pandemic) entitled “Spiritual Crisis and Moral Transformation in Contemporary China.” I hope to present some of my research on the ways rural village identities, relationships and culture are reestablished, despite the labor migration of most working age village members to urban areas, during return visits and rituals of commensality that occur throughout rural China during the Lunar New Year.

William Poulin-Deltour



I'm on sabbatical in Marseille, France for the year and enjoying Mediterranean life! Happy to be on leave after 4 years of chairing French and Francophone Studies, I am putting together a manuscript on how France uses reference to US in debating its own future.

Mari Price

I am excited to say that I am back on campus working from my newly renovated office in Munroe! Working from home for the past year and a half was fine but reconnecting with my friends and colleagues in person is wonderful. I am so happy to be here!

Michael Sheridan

Is it just me or are we all living in dog years during COVID at a 1 real: 7 experienced ratio? In Fall 2020 I taught a new seminar on the *Anthropology of Development*. The ‘secret sauce’ of that class was that every Wednesday we did a student-led Zoom Q&A with an alum or colleague who works in some

aspect of the development field (**Emily Bensen '14, Meron Benti '19, Lila Buckley '04, Prof. Svea Closser, Andrea Hamre '05, Jasmin Johnson '05, Tara Seibold '16, and Lizzy Stears '17.5**). This was important for the students because this allowed us to go far beyond what we were reading and writing about. Consistently we got into important questions that juniors and seniors face, like “how do you figure out what to do as a career?” and “what’s the ethical way to work in an institution that isn’t all good or all bad but is complex and mixed? and “how do we deal with the contradiction between anthropology’s commitment to listening to culturally distinct people and development’s practice of telling people what to do for their own good?” These discussions moved the students from learning about the topic to imagining themselves doing things they didn’t know they could. I wasn’t teaching Winter Term in January 2021, so I hunkered down in this office where I’ve been trapped for 18 months and wrote a chapter on African rainmaking for a book on the cultural side of climate change in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, in June I started by long-delayed sabbatical and got cranking on the book project that I’ve been updating you about here in the newsletter for far too long. I’ve finished drafting the Tanzania, Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, and St. Vincent chapters, and as of this writing I’m editing them so that they cross-reference each other more. Then it’s a short intro and conclusion and off it goes!

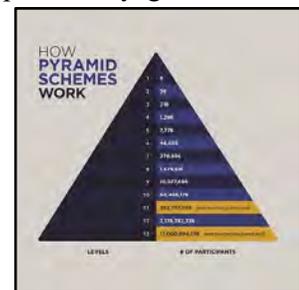


David Stoll

Of my five courses this last year, three were in-person. That we all had to wear masks did not produce as many acoustic fumbles as I expected. One course was the *Anthropology of Global Corporations*. This is a new offering suggested by Prof. Tim Nguyen (left) of the Business and Enterprise Program, with whom I co-taught it. The majority of students already had worked for corporations and I learned



a lot from them. If you’re interested in the topic, the two most thought-provoking books were Marina Welker’s *Enacting the Corporation* and Gerald Davis’ *The Vanishing American Corporation*. Also highly recommended – Robert Foster’s article “The Corporation in Anthropology” (which is hard to find but I can send on request) and Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar’s documentary *American Factory* (available on Netflix). What a corporation represents, and how it operates, depends entirely on the context: thus medieval European corporations predated capitalism and operated very differently from our current assumptions. Even contemporary corporations are not necessarily capitalist, e.g., the Mondragon Corporation in Spain. This raises the interesting possibility that, given enough political will and changing circumstances, corporations do not necessarily have to maximize profit at the expense of community. For my winter-term seminar *Refugees or Labor Migrants? The Anthropology of South-North Migration*, I’ve reorganized around journalists who focus on the stories of particular immigrants and their social networks. Two books we read were *The Far-Away Brothers*, by Midd alum Lauren Markham '06 about teenage asylum applicants from El Salvador, and Lauren Hilger’s *Patriot Number One*, on a Chinese political dissident coming to terms with U.S. society in Queens. For the next version, in January 2023, I may add Aaron Bobrow-Strain’s equally readable *The Death and Life of Aida Hernandez*, on a Mexican asylum applicant in Arizona. None of these authors are anthropologists, but each provides the kind of ethnographic depth that is missing from immigration-debate meme wars. For my first-year seminar on *Pyramid Schemes, Bubbles and Crashes* I’ve discovered city planner Alan Mallach’s *The Divided City*. For anyone who loves urban life and is confused by the simultaneous revival and decay, prosperity and poverty of cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia, Mallach explains why gentrification of urban cores is not alleviating the debt traps of so many residential neighborhoods. His analysis also shows how the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism drive the desperate hopes of pyramid schemes.



Trinh Tran

The two blurry years of 2020 and 2021 has taught me to find joy and curiosity in the local. Because of pandemic travel restrictions, my husband and I took more road trips to explore the surrounding area. We were motivated by a friend who advised us to treat Vermont towns like neighborhoods in a city. Who knew you could find delicious Texas BBQ in Enosburg Falls?! The global continues to drive my current work. I am the co-editor of the forthcoming book *Power and Agency in Migration: Voices from Displacement and Belonging* (Routledge 2022). On the teaching front, I just wrapped up a successful first run of my new course *Global Education*. My future teaching and research plans will shift back to the local. This coming winter term I will teach a new course called *School Lunches*, which will examine the history, politics, and consequences of school lunch policies within the Addison Central School District (ACSD). I am also launching research project that will use Ripton Elementary School and its efforts to leave ACSD as a case study for understanding the link between schools and rural communities.



Linda White

First, thank you to **Michael Sheridan** and the Anthropology Department for inviting me to include some “fieldnotes” here. I’m a cultural anthropologist working on issues of gender, race, family in Japan. My appointment at Middlebury is in the Japanese Studies department but I teach numerous courses that are cross listed with anthropology. I also work closely with IGS and GSFS. Gender and feminism are central concerns in my research. I have been working remotely on a long-term, cross-institution, service-learning project in a small village in rural, mountainous, Nagano Prefecture in western Japan with students and colleagues at the School in Japan, and several other universities in Asia, the Center for

Community Engagement, and the Institute in Monterey. Students from Middlebury and the Institute have been translating historical documents about the internment and forced labor of Koreans and Chinese caught in the village during WWII. We are also gathering oral histories from some of the elder community members who are determined to educate others and learn from this horrific historical period. The work in this community started six years ago but temporarily moved to online translation in 2020. We hope to return in person in 2022. For the last few years, I have been working with a group of scholars of the family in East Asia, including Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan. After holding an intensive workshop and collaborating on our papers, our inter-linked articles will be published as a special issue of the journal *positions: asia critique*, this fall. I’m also working with my wonderful research assistant, Akari Tsurumaki ’23, a GSFS/Theater double major on mapping the Tokyo municipal government’s role in promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity by studying and mapping human rights’/DEI events, resources, and presentations across the 23 district offices in Tokyo. This project builds on my work with Akari last summer gathering materials on the BLM movement in Tokyo. On the teaching front I am gathering more interview and sociological information for my *Race and Ethnicity in Japan* class which I will teach again in spring 2022 and I am developing a new project-based FYSE called *Architectures of Intimacy* to examine the interplay of space and family life in rapidly changing contemporary Japan. I have missed all the in-person aspects of being at Middlebury and look forward to getting back into the classroom and back to Japan in the coming year.



Anthropology senior projects 2020-2021

Luke Bazemore

Livelihood Transformations in the Upper Kali Gandaki River Basin of Nepal and their Impact on Climate Vulnerability

This project investigates the internal dynamics and external pressures shaping livelihood systems in communities above 1000 masl in the Kali Gandaki River Basin in the Nepali Himalayas. Using two distinct temporal periods for analysis, before and after 1970, this work seeks to uncover how political, economic, and cultural transformations have

influenced livelihood systems in the study area. In turn, this paper analyzes trends toward new regimes



of livelihood specialization and discusses how they impact household and community vulnerability to climate-driven hydrological change. Data were collected primarily through literature review in combination with the author's personal notes and communications from time spent in the study area in March of 2020. By employing a scalar and temporal analysis of power structures, this work uses a political ecology lens to map the influence of global economic factors like tourism and labor migration in restructuring local livelihoods. Ultimately, this study finds that diversification of income through remittances and engagement with a burgeoning service economy simultaneously increase well-being but introduce greater volatility in household income and, concurrently, increased climate vulnerability. [Supervised by Prof. Sheridan]

Bochu Ding

Monumental Grief: Trump Voters and the Shattered Monuments of American Exceptionalism

Political analysts, pundits and pollsters alike were left shocked after Donald Trump emerged victorious in the 2016 presidential election, a race that many had considered a walkaway for Hillary

Clinton. In its wake, theories seeking to explain what had occurred proliferated in public discourse. Some framed Trump voters as racist, misogynistic, and xenophobic; others pointed to the structural changes to the economy that left many white, working-class voters disenfranchised. In this essay, I argue that these narratives are incomplete – and that there are affective and symbolic dimensions to this political mobilization that have been largely left out of political and academic discourse; what is consequential in explaining Trump's unexpected victory may not necessarily be material consequences (such as stagnant wages), but instead how individuals interpret and internalize those outcomes. To explore these affective and symbolic underpinnings, I propose a framework that situates discursive, affective, and cognitive theories in relation to one another. Within this contextualization, discourse is a looking glass, one that offers a deeper understanding of the cultural schemas – inexpressible cognitive frameworks that shape interpretations of reality and tether experiences to visceral emotions and greater symbolic meanings – shared by Trump voters. Drawing from interviews with nine Trump voters across the nation, I find that recurring narratives crystallized around the concept of American exceptionalism. However, as individuals observed evidence of decline that subverts this interpretation of American exceptionalism, a new narrative – a chosen trauma – is internalized, evoking visceral sentiments of frustration, anxiety, and anger. This



project makes a case for understanding politics as symbolic and affective – and a re-imagining of the contemporary American political arena as a space of public mourning; a memorial for not just the death, but deaths of American exceptionalism. For some, this decadence represents the end of “the city on a hill” – and the trepidation of what follows; for others, it represents the fall of an empire built upon

oppression and hope for a new era. [Supervised by Prof. Oxfeld]

Daniel Krugman

Beyond Refuge: Visions of Violence, Migration, and Abolition from Mirieyi Settlement

The protracted refugee settlements of East Africa have become spaces of intense social, political, and economic change. This thesis explores these dynamics in one of these spaces called Mirieyi, located in the northwest corner of Uganda. Through the stories, life experiences, and everyday practices of the South Sudanese people called “refugees” who live in Mirieyi, the dynamics that drive this cosmopolitanism are located as phenomena that are not simply produced by existence inside the structures of “refuge.” Rather, it sees the institutions and agency of people called “refugees” as *beyond* the methods and rationales for managing forced migrants. I begin by repositioning “refuge” as part of the inherent structural violence of the global ordering of nation-states and Western supremacy. The second section outlines how the violence of neoliberal management has created resource scarcity in Mirieyi. The third part examines the indigenous institutions and relationships that the forced migrants have created for themselves. They survive structural violence not only as an everyday act of resistance, but also by enacting a process of social change that is gradually transforming social



A symbol on a dirt path laid by refugees to guide Ugandan hosts into the bush for local brew

solidarity and cultural meanings beyond the relationships and ideas demanded by the national and global institutions of refuge. I conclude by calling for the abolition of refuge and a redefinition of the protracted refugee crisis in East Africa. [Supervised by Prof. Sheridan]

Micaela Gaynor

Primatology: A Feminist Science?

Primatology, or the branch of zoology that focuses on primates, is often considered to be a “feminist science” due to the positive media attention and public awareness of famous female primatologists succeeding in this field, including Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas. While the impact of these female role models is notable, there are many other factors to consider when reviewing the salience of primatology being regarded as an “equal opportunity” science. Public perception does not denote the actual representation of women in the field, and representation itself does not signify equality. This essay considers how primatology compares to its related disciplines, why primatology may be attractive to women, how it has progressed as a “feminist science” over time, and what more needs to be done to support women researchers. [Supervised by Prof. Fitzsimmons]



Fossey, Goodall, and Galdikas

Kayla Lichtman

The Dentist Will See You Now: How Dental Care Providers Bridge the Migrant Healthcare Gap in Vermont

Within the field of sociocultural anthropology, there has been very little focus on practices of oral/dental health worldwide, and even less on Latinx migrant oral/dental health in the U.S. Moreover, the ethnographic picture of dental health providers is practically non-existent. This thesis addresses this gap by focusing on the perspectives of seven dental care providers and coordinators associated with a free health clinic in rural Vermont that serves Latinx migrant farmworkers. There are roughly 1200

migrant farmworkers in Vermont, many of whom have had limited prior experience with dental health care or dentistry. This study focuses on the unique relationship between providers and workers to highlight three sociocultural features of care: prevailing barriers in the delivery of dental care; the significance of oral health education and promotion in the clinical setting; and the role of cultural competence education in migrant health care. Barriers to care, including transportation and movement, timing and coordination, and language barriers, are examined using the conceptual framework of structural vulnerability and critiques of discourse around Latinx migrant hypervisibility in the U.S. According to study participants, dental health education is ideally oriented around individualized interactions with patients and grounded in respect and equality, rather than hierarchy. Providers also report a commitment to culturally competent care that is rooted in respect for cultural difference. Through an analysis of providers' perceptions of the meanings, practices, and ethics associated with migrant dental care, the thesis concludes with a set of recommendations for building and galvanizing better dental care systems for Latinx migrants in the U.S. [Supervised by Prof. Bright]



Claire Martens
Undisciplined Archaeology: Proposal for Experiential Learning in Warner Greenhouse

The contemporary fields of archaeology and anthropology are reckoning with ways to engage undergraduate students with hands-on practice, such as with excavated artifacts, ethnographically-informed maps, novels, plants, and more to simulate the broad range of data used for anthropological interpretation. Using materials donated to the

college, digital archive databases, and tangible examples of Vermont's local material culture housed in the Warner Greenhouse can broaden the interdisciplinary uses of anthropological resources for a variety of courses in geography, history, geology, and environmental science. Middlebury College and its position as an academic fortress on settled Western Abenaki land can also leverage its liberal arts structure to produce anti-colonial lessons for students. Working beyond the college's Land Acknowledgement Committee (which is tasked with similar missions for reconciling Middlebury's existence on settled land), spaces for interdisciplinary collaboration and community partnerships can aid in those efforts. A renovated Warner Greenhouse could teach hands-on archaeology, but allow it to evert into a multitude of existing courses at Middlebury College that could use the historical record without binding archaeology data in traditional anthropological theories. [Supervised by Prof. Fitzsimmons]



Courtney Tillman
Beyond #ChinaRacism: How COVID-19 Exposed Histories of Marginalization and Health Inequalities in 'Little Africa'

This thesis examines incidents of discrimination against African migrants in Guangzhou, China during the COVID-19 pandemic, uncovering the ways in which the recent mistreatment of Africans reveals historical structures of inequality and marginalization within Chinese society. This thesis problematizes African identity through depicting migrants in Guangzhou as a diverse, heterogenous group, and articulates how Chinese perceptions of black identity complicate Africans' ability to establish belonging in China. Using sociological and anthropological theories of identity, discrimination, migrant health, and pandemics, this thesis examines the intersection between racial

prejudice and health inequalities, demonstrating how those with marginalized identities face barriers to health care. Employing frameworks of social exclusion in healthcare, African migrants' health prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 is examined through an analysis of barriers they encounter when seeking health care. Lastly, this thesis demonstrates how African migrants' use of Twitter during the pandemic served as a means to exert digital agency at a time when their autonomy was being threatened by the Chinese government. Expanding upon Bonilla and Rosa's use of hashtag ethnography, which presents Twitter as a site for digital activism, this thesis moves beyond that framework to demonstrate how Twitter functioned as a site for digital agency for African migrants during the pandemic. [Supervised by Prof. Bright]

Yet more photos of 2021 Anthro grads!



***Top, left-right: Bochu Ding, Madeleine Joinnides, Dan Krugman, Kayla Lichtman, Claire Martens, Grace Metzler, Micaela Gaynor
Bottom: Nyreke Peters (left); Andres Velazques (right)***

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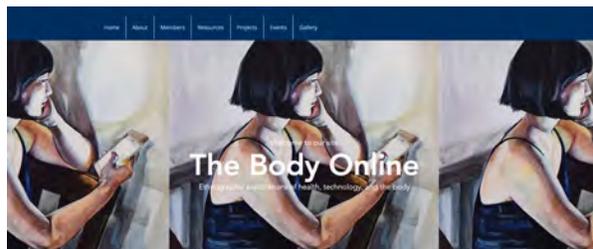


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The Body Online at Middlebury College

In fall 2020, the **Body Online Lab** launched its public site, featuring research by **Claire Martens '21, Kayla Lichtman '21, Courtney Tillman '21, Emma Bernstein '21.5, Katie van der Merwe '22, Anna Wood '22, Kaja Aagard '22, Grace Kellogg '22, and Amun Chaudhury '23.5**. In addition to student blogs and lab updates, the site hosts a repository of tools for digital and design anthropology. Last year, TBO members examined topics ranging from pandemic “distractibaking” and telemedicine, to feminist activism on TikTok and Instagram, BLM organizing in Brazil, and the politics of sexwork online. Led by faculty member **Kristin Bright**, the Body Online Lab supports student research in digital representations and mediations of health,



medicine, technology, and the body. Thanks to the efforts of **Emma Bernstein '21.5, Kayla Lichtman '21, Anna Wood '22, and Amun Chaudhury '23.5** the lab is developing new content

on multimodal ethnography, visual and sonic anthropology, and digital activism. Check out their latest updates at bodyonline.org!



The ersatz 'reception' for seniors on May 22, 2021

Hannah Laga Abram '23 wins the 2020 Ward Prize

by Maggie Reynolds

Hannah Laga Abram '23 won the Ward Prize for the 2019-2020 Academic Year. The award recognizes first-year students who demonstrate exceptional skill in writing. Laga Abram, whose work was nominated by three professors, also received a \$500 cash prize. Established by his family in 1978, the prize is named for Paul Ward '25, a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist and diplomatic reporter. A committee of three faculty judges from different academic disciplines decide on one winning submission, two runners-up and three to five honorable mentions. About 50 students are nominated each year for the prize, drawing from work in both fall and spring classes.

Laga Abram said she was surprised to hear she had won the award. "I've been in love with words for as



The 2020 Ward Prize reception, Hannah in lower left

long as I can remember, so it's delightful to feel seen and heard in that way and be at a school that treasures the magic of language," she said. "I'm flabbergasted, honored and grateful to all of my professors, the judges and others who make the Ward Prize possible."

Laga Abram's winning work was titled "The Ecology of Folklore: A Relational Examination of Storytelling Traditions in Ireland and Iceland," which she wrote for her ANTH 211 *Environmental Anthropology* class. "Stories have so much power in

reminding us that the earth — and ourselves as a part of it — are alive, wildly beautiful, and made of mystery," Laga Abram said.



Marshalling the Forces

by **William Alexander '65, Ph.D**

When I graduated from Midd in 1965, I went to work for a big corporation in NYC. One day the man in the next office, who was retiring, came into my office in tears. His grandkids had asked him what he did with his life, and all he could think of was to point to the filing cabinet, and say "I filled that." I cast around for more meaningful ways to spend my life, and thought fondly of the anthro courses I had taken at Middlebury. I sent a note to Margaret Mead, and she called me. For the next couple of years I volunteered for her on weekends, helping her with her projects. Then to grad school — part time, as I had to keep working. Seven years. When it came time to pick a topic for my dissertation research, I chose the impact of the Kwajalein Missile Range on the people of the Marshall Islands, which at the time was part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The U.S. was trustee. An easy choice, as my employer was a major contractor on the missile system, and had personnel



out there. Wendy (my wife, who I had met at Midd!) and I traveled there.

We lived for most of a year on Ebeye, a 64 acre island with 7,000 Marshallese living there, which gave us the view of the culture as it had been affected by the U.S. and the missile range. We also



Rising sea levels threaten Ebeye

spent a while on tiny Lae Atoll, with 200 people in 15 households. We lived in a thatched hut. There was no electricity, no plumbing, no cars, virtually no communication with the outside except for the rust bucket ship which came on no schedule 3 or 4 times a year to collect copra. This served as a reasonable facsimile of Marshallese culture before the U.S., to give us an idea of what had changed. During our stay there, I became very ill, and was treated by a healer/shaman, with the diagnosis that a dead queen was trying to kill me (I later found a similar account from the 19th century, recorded by Sir James Frazer). I did not get better, and was saved by a ship which put in, unscheduled, on Christmas Eve to fix an engine. This little ship took 8 days to get us to Ebeye, crossing the dateline twice on New Year's Day, and visiting Bikini Atoll along the way. It took three months to get rid of the illness, with no diagnosis coming from U.S. doctors.

Ebeye is the bedroom community for the Marshallese natives who work on the Missile Range. Among the changes I found and documented were: multiple suicides among the teens (The males hanged themselves while the females drank Clorox); alcohol abuse, with more than a half

million cans of beer consumed on the island in a year (about 71 beers per capita); the rise of the nuclear family as opposed to the traditional extended family; the rise of prostitution among young women (the youngest I interviewed was 11 years old); and the rise of multiple religious organizations on Ebeye, as opposed to one on most outer islands, creating division within families. On top of this I found evidence that, in violation of applicable U.S laws, a major army contractor was clearly discriminating against the Marshallese workers. When I had the opportunity to testify before a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives on this last point, I struggled. My thesis was that the wage economy was destroying the

traditional culture. Thus if I testified and got the natives higher wages, I would be contributing



to the demise of the culture. On the other hand... they were being cheated. Anthropology tends to bring out the fact that right and wrong are not always easily parsed. Life is not simple. I ended up testifying, after my notes to safe houses. The U.S. Army was there, recording my testimony.

Since then, I have testified about how the U.S. has failed to live up to its promise, "to promote to the utmost, the wellbeing of the inhabitants" before the U.N. Decolonization Committee, and appeared five times before the U.N. Trusteeship Council, sometimes on behalf of the International League for Human Rights, sometimes for a coalition of the United Church of Christ and the Society of Jesus.

At one point, as the college where I was teaching was failing, I became the Regional Training Manager for FEMA Region II. There I was responsible for the disaster training of all emergency workers in NY, NJ, PR and the USVI. This was in the early 90's. What could possibly happen? I managed to get back to academia after 2 years, 2 months and 23 days, actually having accomplished a fair amount!



This essay is loaded with buttons, any one of which, if pushed, will result in a story. In my career, I have been a training manager, a professor, a dean, and an academic vice president.

I am retired now, but feel that I have done a number of worthwhile things with my life. In my teaching, a major focus in my courses has always been “What makes you think so?” Best question ever.

Faculty Publications, 2020-2021

Bright, Kristin

2021 “Medical assistance in dying and the meaning of care: Perspectives of nurses, pharmacists, and social workers,” with Annaliese Mills, Rachel Wortzman, Sally Bean, and Debbie Selby, *Health*, Epub

<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1363459321996774>

Fitzsimmons, James

2021 “Termination and regeneration: the use of ash in ancient Mesoamerica,” in *Agent of Change: The Deposition and Manipulation of Ash in the Past*, edited by Barbara Roth and E. Charles Adams, pp. 213-228. New York: Berghahn Press.

Hemangini Gupta

2021 “What do we talk about when we talk about heat?” *City and Society* 33(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12381>

2020 “Nostalgia as affective landscape: Negotiating displacement in the ‘World City,’” with Kaveri Medappa, *Antipode: Journal of Radical Geography* 52(6):1688-1709.

2020 “Postcolonial assembly protocols for unnamed automation projects,” *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 6(2):1-14.

Ellen Oxfeld

2020 Invited commentary on the article “Ethics of the heart: Moral breakdown and the aporia of Chinese volunteers” by Ning and Palmer, *Current Anthropology* 61(4):408-9.

David Stoll

2020 “How the migration industry fuels the extortion industry,” review of Jeremy Slack et al., *In the Shadow of the Wall*, and Antony Fontes, *Mortal Doubt: Transnational Gangs and Social Order in Guatemala City*, *The American Interest*, <https://www.the-american->

[interest.com/2020/02/19/dangerous-border-how-the-migration-industry-fuels-the-extortion-industry/](https://www.the-american-interest.com/2020/02/19/dangerous-border-how-the-migration-industry-fuels-the-extortion-industry/)

2020 Review of Ralph Sprenkels, *After Insurgency: Revolution and Electoral Politics in El Salvador*, *Latin American Politics and Society* 62(1):155-58.

Alumni News

Carolyn Barnwell ‘07 welcomed Juniper May Barnwell Jensen (Anthro/ENVIS major, class of 2042) on April 28, 2021. They are now just down the road in Woodstock VT.



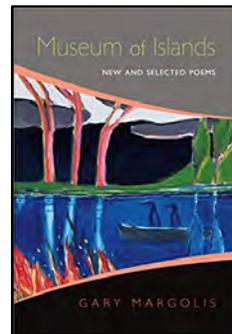
Katie Corrigan ‘19 is starting a master’s program in education at University of Illinois-Chicago and is on track to being a middle school science and education teacher. Welcome to the why-am-I-grading-homework-on-weekends-club!

Dan Krugman ‘21 is starting at master’s program in Public Health at Johns Hopkins, working with former Midd prof **Svea Closser**.

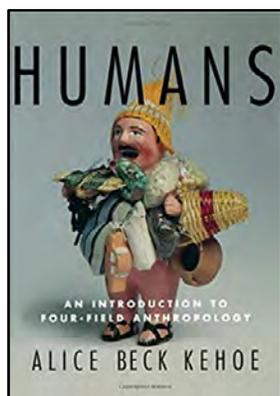
Hannah Grace Levin ‘18.5 is starting a Master's in Urban Planning at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design.

Gary Margolis ‘67

Friends, I was a Sociology-Anthropology major in the early days. The most rigorous course I had at Middlebury was *Social Organization*, taught by Professor Norman Schwartz. I didn’t know then I would return to Middlebury to become the first Director of College Mental Health Services. My eighth book of poems, *Museum of Islands: New and Selected Poems* is recently published. And I have written a memoir, *Seeing the Songs: A Poet’s Journey in Ecuador*, about a trip I took with some other Midd grads into the high Andes and rain forest, into the heart of myth, song and shamanic healing in Ecuador.



Anj Petto '72 reports - I managed to retire fully in 2018, sort of. In that year I completed my certificate in blended and on-line learning just in time for the pandemic. So, I spent most of 2020 and 2021 teaching online courses in human anatomy & physiology to candidates for a master's program in nursing, and served as a coach for instructors transitioning into all on-line formats for teaching at our campus's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. My co-author Terry Bott and I revised our interactive textbook, *Human Structure and Function*, which anchors an on-line course that general education students take to meet their natural sciences requirements. It's really a stealth



introduction to biological anthropology, but we aren't telling anyone. I also got to teach the course again last spring for the first time in several years.

Another textbook project got picked up as well. Alice Kehoe asked me to join her revision of the textbook *Humans*, a 4-field anthropology text for introductory students in

community colleges. Routledge has accepted the manuscript for a 2022 publication date. We are revising away! Together with my teaching assistant and former physical therapy graduate students, we published our work on unusual anatomic variants in the journal *Diagnostics* last fall. We often discovered unique variations in the cadavers in our lab, but this paper was about how to use those as more than anatomic curiosities and to develop strategies for enhancing student success in anatomy (link for the morbidly curious: <https://doi.org/10.3390/diagnostics10080508>).

Starting in August 2021, I will also be re-animating a defunct graduate course in biomedical writing at Quinnipiac University. The new course will be one of the few that QU will teach entirely on-line (which is good, because the commute from Wisconsin to Connecticut is a killer!).

Lizzy Reed '15 got her Master's degree in education leadership and is now starting a new position as Dean of the



Middle School at Vail Mountain School in Colorado.

Jenna Reichenbach '14 has been living in Seattle the past 4 years, taking advantage of the access to the outdoors as often as possible with a newfound



love of snowshoeing and Nordic skiing. She has spent the last two years working as a professional baker and can't wait to come back to Vermont to get married next summer!

Julie Tschirhart '11 moved from Grand Rapids back to the Metro Detroit area last year and is working for the planning department of a local government. Things slowed down during March-May but seem to be picking back up. We're working remotely for the most part and doing all of our public meetings online - interesting to say the least. It was the statewide planning conference last week and that was online as well, certainly a different feel! Helpful content though in terms of adapting to these times. One of the silver linings I'm appreciating is the removal of barriers to utilize public space for the benefit of non-drivers. Amazing how a pandemic will allow people to realize they can use parking spaces for other things! It would be nice if that perspective could continue past the current circumstances.

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 rites of passage. Send us stuff!

**Department of Anthropology
Munroe Hall, Middlebury College
Middlebury VT 05753**

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

Image Credits

Page 1 – Zoom graduation photo by Michael Sheridan
Page 2 – Mug shots by Michael Sheridan
Page 3 – Suggested cover art for James' new book from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmBteaDTjXM&ab_channel=jarr
Page 4 – Cover image of *Lessons from Fort Apache* from <https://www.amazon.com/Lessons-Fort-Apache-Endangerment-Maintenance/dp/1118424239>. Editorial note – the version of this image from Wiley Blackwell absolutely refuses to be printed to this

PDF. Hmmp. Luddite cartoon unironically from <https://funnytimes.com/tag/luddite/>; Poulin-Deltour self-portrait by lui-même

Page 5 – Secret Sauce from <https://www.amazon.com/Secret-Sauce-Messages-Persuasive-Punch/dp/0814438067/>; Tim Nguyen from <http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/es/faculty/affiliates/node/553545>; Pyramid schemes from <https://www.investor.gov/protect-your-investments/fraud/types-fraud/pyramid-schemes>

Page 6 – School lunch from <https://www.wtsp.com/article/news/local/pascocounty/pasco-county-school-lunch-free/67-9c7a14af-c8f8-43e6-a911-6748f0c4a72a>; BLM in Toyko from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/14/national/black-lives-matter-spreads-tokyo-2000-people-march-protest-racism/>

Page 7 – Kali Gandaki image from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kali_Gandaki_Gorge; Trump supporters from <https://www.advocate.com/politics/2018/10/18/poll-trump-voters-believe-men-face-more-bias-lgbtq-people>

Page 8 – Beer pathway image from Dan Krugman’s thesis; Primatology’s founders from <https://twtext.com/article/1253401135702040581>

Page 9 – dental care for migrant farmworker from https://www.moultrieobserver.com/news/local_news/college-students-faculty-reach-out-to-help-with-farm-worker-health-care/article_f1212556-ab3a-11e9-a0c5-d3215c9f51ab.html; Africans in Guangzhou from <https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/26/asia/africans-leaving-guangzhou-china/index.html>

Page 10 – grad photos by James Fitzsimmons and Trinh Tran; ‘Finsta’ Midd Anthro page from <https://www.instagram.com/middanthro/>; The Body Online from <https://www.bodyonline.org/>

Page 11 – screen capture (command-shift-4) by Michael Sheridan; Ward Prize screen cap by Michael Sheridan, text by Maggie Reynolds copied from <https://middleburycampus.com/53502/news/hannah-laga-abram-23-wins-this-years-ward-prize/>; Folkloric Iceland map from <https://guidetoiceland.is/history-culture/folklore-in-iceland>; Lae Atoll from space from <http://artemjew.ru/en/2015/01/20/lae-atoll/>

Page 12 – Ebeye sea level rising from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html>; Marshall Islands kids from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/526358275181521921/>

Page 13 – push button from <https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/cartoon-hand-push-the-button-vector-481871>; Juniper photo from Carolyn Barnwell; Margolis book cover image from <https://www.amazon.com/Museum-Islands-New-Selected-Poems/dp/0872333132>

Page 14 – Kehoe first edition book cover from <https://www.amazon.com/Humans-Introduction-Alice-Beck-Kehoe/dp/0415919851>; Lizzy Reed head shot from <https://www.vms.edu/welcome/faculty-and-staff/>; Jenna Reichenbach in the woods from Jenna