

PROGRAMS:

ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY

- Forensic Anthropology
- Cherokee Studies
- Women Studies

News from the Department Head

Hello

It's my pleasure as head of the department to write a quick note to you on behalf of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Our department has grown since last year, both in the number of students and faculty. We are delighted to be able to introduce to you two new faculty members this semester, Drs. Mary Byrnes and Heather Talley. They have provided short bios about themselves in this newsletter. There are ten other tenure/tenure track professors and four part-time faculty who also teach each semester in our department. In addition to our regular faculty, we have three other faculty who enhance our curriculum by offering classes periodically. We offer BA and BS degrees and a minor in each discipline, a concentration in Forensic Anthropology, and also minors in Women's Studies and Cherokee Studies. We have active laboratories to support faculty and student projects in archaeology, forensic anthropology, ethnography, and language revitalization. Over 100 students have declared Anthropology as their major and about 70 students are actively working toward a degree in Sociology.

As you will read, we provide lots of opportunities for students to work on research projects with our faculty and encourage them to participate in study abroad and off-campus internships. Two students are in Ireland this semester and one is doing an internship in Washington, D.C. (See the submission by one of our students who studied abroad this summer.) Our faculty are working toward changes in our curriculum to ensure that students participate in some type of experiential, hands-on learning before they graduate. We want our students to learn what Anthropologists and Sociologists do in the real world outside a traditional classroom and give them opportunities to put their knowledge and skills to work in our communities and around the world.

We are excited about what lies ahead and, along with other departments in College of Arts and Sciences, we are also looking back and recognizing distinguished alumni. Each year we will recognize one alum who exemplifies the values that our disciplines promote. This year the first alum to receive this award is Mr. Rob Tiger, of Hayesville, NC, class of 1973. He is being recognized for his distinguished record of volunteerism, community organizing, and promotion of the cultural heritage and artistic and natural resources of western North Carolina.

We hope you will enjoy learning more about your department through this newsletter and we hope you will let us know what you have been doing since your graduation from WCU. We would love to add a section on alumni news to our next issue, so let us hear from you!

Jane M. Eastman

Notes from the field.....

Reconstructing a Cherokee Winter House

Archaeology students have been volunteering their time to help the CCRA/ Nelson Heritage Park community group reconstruct an 18th-century Cherokee *osi*, or winter house, on the grounds of the Clay County Historical and Arts Council Museum. This house will be part of an outdoor interpretive area featuring a typical Cherokee homestead and a mural wall with information about Cherokee culture, history and language. The archaeology students in this summer's field school course spent a day helping to prepare and raise wall posts for the house, and some students have volunteered other days this summer to weave river cane between the posts and to add a clay mixture to the outside and inside of the walls to create a tra-

ditional wattle-and-daub house. Anthropology majors Cristen Cameron (and her Mom), Holly Williamson, and Alex Taylor have volunteered and had a great time working with our friends in Clay County on this unique project. We plan to help them with the other structures in the homestead as soon as the *osi* is finished, so there should be several opportunities to help over the next several months. If you are interested in helping with future work days, please contact Dr. Jane Eastman

(jeastman@email.wcu.edu or 828-227-3835).



Heather Nichols - Anthropology Major

This summer I did a four week internship with PortAnta at the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, National Museum of Archaeology, in Lisbon, Portugal with a small group of people interested in anthropology. The internship focused solely on the laboratory aspect of archaeology, and was looking at skeletal remains dating back to the Final Neolithic/Chalcolithic rock cut tombs of Carenque. I actually was able to go a week early and work on some skeletal remains dating back to the Roman habitation of Portugal too. The work consisted of cleaning, identification of skeletal material, cataloging and record keeping. We also were able to go on a few fieldtrips, including the University of Coimbra which has a collection of over 500 known human remains. It was great working over there, and I would love to go back and do it again, so I seriously suggest trying to get an internship with PortAnta because not only is it fun but you really learn the bones and anthropology.



Stecoah Project

After working last year with a group of students on a study of the needs of Cashiers as perceived by the residents that was funded by the Community Fund of Cashiers, Dr. Anthony Hickey is working with Morgan Childers, an undergraduate major, on a study of Second home development in Stecoah (Graham County, NC). The Cashiers study revealed a loss of community due to the overwhelming impact of second homes (the community grows by over 5 times in the summer). This summer was spent interviewing residents of Stecoah to determine their attitudes and perceptions of the changes that are occurring along with the increasing number of second homes that are being built in this small rural community. This is part of a larger project dealing with rural sprawl and community

Christopher Holden—Sociology Major Yellow Bike Project Summary

The Yellow Bike Project is a student-led initiative on the campus of Western Carolina University. This project is the brainchild of now Alumni Stephen Benson. Benson dedicated a great deal of this past spring semester organizing the project and gathering the bikes to have them ready for the release at the beginning of this fall semester. Zach Heaton and Christopher Holden, co-presidents of the WCU Cycling Club, along with the rest of the WCU Cycling club are taking over the project now to ensure that Benson's efforts were not in vain. The Yellow Bike Project was started to provide students, faculty, staff, and visitors with a healthy and free mode of on-campus transportation. The Yellow Bikes are completely free to use, they remain unlocked at all times, and operate on a first-come-first-serve basis. If a Yellow Bike is outside of the building you are leaving, it is yours to take and ride to your destination. Once you reach your destination, the bike is to be left outside on the bicycle rack for use by someone else, or by yourself again on your return trip. Currently, there are six Yellow Bikes on campus that are being frequently used from day-to-day. These bikes are distributed all throughout campus, making them somewhat of a scarce commodity, but the WCU Cycling Club anticipates the release of up to ten more bicycles within the next week. A majority of the bikes have been donated by the campus police, these were bikes that came out of the police impound on campus. Students, professors and residents in the surrounding community have personally donated the remainder of the Yellow Bikes to the project. The Yellow Bike Project has been well received on Western's campus and there is a great deal of excitement surrounding the bikes.

Summer Synthesis at the F.O.R.E.S.T.

By Dr. Cheryl Johnston

For the past five summers a field course in human remains recovery (ANTH 486) has been offered by the forensic anthropology faculty at Western Carolina University. Every year the course is a bit different and this year was no exception. Students used archaeological techniques to recover buried remains (pig skeletons) and learned to process their “scenes” as a crime scene would be processed. They followed this up with a report detailing the recovery process and lab analysis of the remains and the students’ interpretation of the remains and their context. The recovery exercise and report are very similar to the work a professional forensic anthropologist does and the format in which it is reported. Students also observed the late stages of human decomposition at the Forensic Osteology Research Station (F.O.R.E.S.T.) and recovered the remains of the facility’s first donor. This recovery was done in a systematic fashion using archaeological techniques and the students learned the special circumstances and limitations they face recovering human remains as part of a medico-legal investigation. Dr. Ken Cradock, an entomologist from Eastern New Mexico University, spent a week with the class providing opportunity to learn about forensic entomology and to collect entomological specimens from decomposing remains. Cadaver dog trainers visited the class in the field and demonstrated the importance of the work they (and their dogs) do in locating remains in collaboration with forensic anthropologists.

Several of the students submitted comments on their experience in Anthropology 486 during the second summer term of 2009. Below are some excerpts from their comments:

“This class has definitely been one of the most interesting classes I’ve ever taken in my life. It’s so great to actually get to do hands-on stuff.” *Brittany Banks, Forensic Science major, Chemistry Concentration*

“The Field Recovery of Human Remains course gives students a firsthand look at handling decomposition, bone, the process of recovery (in an anthropological context as well as archaeological context), and lab analysis. As an anthropology student, I feel as if this course sets me one step higher to fully understanding the career of forensic anthropology.” *Kendra Carroll, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

“Setting the grids, recording the measurements, and exhuming bones are only a few aspects of this course. There are so many lessons that I have learned from this class, and I will take these with me into my future career in forensic anthropology. I am very thankful that I had the chance to take this class and I would recommend it to any student who is interested in this field.” *Casey Dacus, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

“My favorite part of participating in this course was not sitting in the classroom every day, but going out into the field and getting dirty. This allows you to engage in the entire process of what you would face in an actual investigation, all while having the comfort of your professor there to answer the million questions you throw at them. Along with working in the field, you also learn the art of processing your evidence in the lab. May it be bones, soil and insect samples, or rusty nails I learned that everything plays a role in recreating the crime scene so it is important to carefully analyze each piece of evidence.” *Alex Hunt, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

"From the first day until now, I do not feel that this class has been any less interesting than I anticipated. Dr. Johnston, an Anthropology professor here at Western Carolina University, thoroughly allows the course to be a true learning experience. Each day groups excavate plotted areas, by their own trial and error, in hopes of finding some form of remains. Each group is allowed to evaluate their crime scene in the ways that they see fit; no two sites are processed in the same way or time frame." *Amanda Marshall, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

"I plan on continuing to work in the field of recovering human remains, whether ancient in a forensic context, so this class is great since it is giving me a heads up of what I'll be doing later on in life. On the plus side the class itself is great and I'm learning a lot of stuff that I would never have considered to be important while recovering human remains." *Heather Nichols, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

The class so far has been worth missing the freedom of summer, I know the information will be part of what makes me a professional." *Stephanie Peters, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

"I took this class during Summer Session II of 2009 and I had a phenomenal time. During the class I was able to apply what I had learned in classes like; Intro to Forensic Anthropology, Human Osteology, and Advanced Topics of Human Osteology. After taking these classes I now have the confidence in skill to travel to St. Kitts and Nevis to work on a archaeological dig." *Joshua Reichenbach, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

"I consider it a rare honor and privilege to take a class that only a few schools in the nation offer. After taking many classes pertaining to forensic Anthropology it is nice to see how to apply what I've learned and be reminded how much more I have to learn. There is only so much you can get from a class room and this class offers the practical application that is paramount to anyone going into the field of Forensic Anthropology... if they desire to be successful. Being a former active duty Infantry Marine and served in Iraq I've had a few experiences with death and I appreciate the care and respect that Dr. Johnston demands of her students (us) while approaching the task of recovering human remains." *Erik Watkins, Anthropology major, Forensic Anthropology Concentration*

Summer Synthesis at the F.O.R.E.S.T.~Summer School 2009 Pictures



Yellow Creek Archaeological Survey

The archaeological field school course for 2009 involved ten students and one dedicated volunteer in exploring the archaeological significance of a piece of property on Yellow Creek in Graham County owned by the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT). This project was funded by a grant to the LTLT from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. Through our systematic shovel testing and excavation of test units and a step-trench, we determined that a potentially significant site probably dating to the Middle Archaic period (6000-3000 BC) is present. The land surface during the Middle Archaic period has been buried by a series of flood deposits, which means that artifacts and subsurface features left by people camping at the site at the time are preserved there. We found many stone tools (like hide scrapers, small wedges, spear points, serrated knives, and drills) and lots of debris from making tools. Holly Williamson and Rudy Edwards also discovered a large pestle, probably used to crack open nutshells like hickory and walnuts that were so important to Archaic people's diets. A small fragment of a spear point was found in one shovel test and it may date to the late Paleo-Indian period, prior to 8,000 BC. Though no one will miss the wasps, sweat bees, or briars (or the rattlesnake), we did a good job exploring the site and will help the LTLT be good stewards of their land and its cultural heritage. I'd like to thank everyone for the hard work and good spirits. The field school students were Cristen Cameron, Rudy Edwards, Kerri Hunter, Courtney Page, Stephanie Peters, Erik Watkins, Jer-Mayne White, Holly Williams, and Alison Wisely. Alex Taylor, a 2009 graduate of WCU, was the project assistant and Ruth Blair was our volunteer extraordinaire. (photo: Alex Taylor with stone artifact from a shovel test and 2008 field school t-shirt, Rudy & Holly with the pestle, and Jer-Mayne sifting.)



Getting To Know Our Faculty

Dr. Cheryl Johnston

In October 2008 I traveled to Chillicothe, Ohio to pick up the skeletal remains of a group of people who lived almost two thousand years ago. I am a forensic anthropologist in my fifth year at Western Carolina University and have examined thousands of sets of human remains, prehistoric and modern, in the 20 years since I became interested in the things our skeletons can reveal about us. The focus of a skeletal analysis may be to determine who a person was and how they died as part of a medico legal investigation or to glean information about past life ways. In either scenario, there is a lot that can be learned from the human skeleton.

Before joining the faculty at Western Carolina University, I spent nine years as a physical anthropologist at the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) in Columbus, Ohio. My duties included collecting data on the large collection of human remains curated by OHS. Most of the people whose bones I examined lived centuries or millennia ago, but occasionally, when modern skeletal remains were discovered, my expertise would be requested by a detective or the county coroner. I lead a sort of dual life, taking the knowledge of the human skeleton I accumulated by studying prehistoric remains into the forensic arena in order to reconstruct what I could about a relatively recently deceased person who died under unknown or suspicious circumstances. I also found that things I learned while working on a recently deceased person's skeleton helped me to understand some of the observations I made when I studied a prehistoric skeleton and vice versa.

It wasn't long before I discovered culturally modified human remains in the prehistoric collections at OHS and realized that I had a unique perspective from which to study them. Culturally modified human remains are human skeletal remains that have been worked or intentionally arranged. In other words, they are the result of someone using human bone as a raw material for an artifact or creating a display using human bone. They are often referred to as "trophy skulls," and include skulls, crania, and jaws that have been drilled, ground, incised or shaped in a variety of ways and often, but not always, deposited with interred skeletons or cremations seemingly as a sort of a funerary object. I wondered what I could learn about the people who created these human artifacts and the people from whom they were made by looking at them from the perspective of a forensic anthropologist.

The remains I brought to Western Carolina University last October are from a site called Mound City, now owned by the Federal Government and managed as Hopewell Culture National Historical Park by the National Park Service. I was recently invited to carry out extensive analyses of human remains in the park's collections as a Southern Appalachian Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (SA-CESU) project. The remains are those of people who lived approximately 2000 years ago and are called the Hopewell by archaeologists. You may be familiar with them as the "Moundbuilders."

Ultimately, the goal of a bioarchaeological study such as the one I am conducting for Hopewell Culture National Historical Park is to discover something about the breadth and nature of past human variation with the hope that we will learn something about ourselves. Not only is the project focused on Hopewell human remains, which I began studying at OHS fifteen years ago, but the collection from Hopewell Culture National Historical Park includes culturally modified human remains that I haven't had the opportunity to study in depth before. Two WCU Anthropology students, Kjersten Holden and Patrick Brady, are also working on the project.



Welcome New Faculty!!

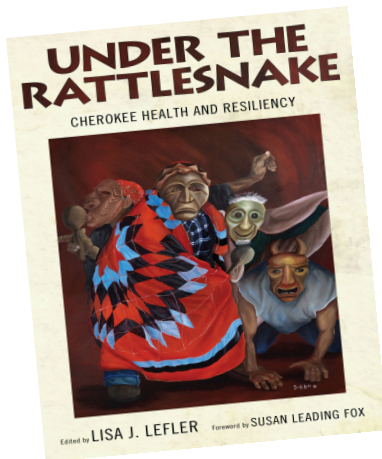
Mary Byrnes

I am overjoyed to join the WCU community. I earned a Masters of Urban Planning (2003) and PhD (2009) while a National Institute of Aging (NIA) predoctoral fellow from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. My research interests focus on aging inequalities and sociology of place. For example, my dissertation explored the ways older adults who occupy oppressed social locations across the lifespan (e.g. poor) move to and create new homes in age-segregated places like HUD 202s (public housing for older adults). I also have a strong interest in new and unique methodologies and my dissertation was awarded an innovative research award from The Midwest Sociological Society for the use of photography, interview, and observation in my data collection process. Some of my earlier work can be found in the *Journal of Applied Sociology* and with Heather Dillaway in *Health Care for Women International* and *The Journal of Applied Gerontology*. Previous to pursuing educational goals, I worked as an artist in both Detroit and Chicago. I always look for avenues to foster creativity in both the classroom and my own research interests. In addition to getting to know students, faculty, and administration at WCU I look forward to working with and getting to know older adults and the aging community in Western North Carolina.

Heather Talley

I am a fiercely loyal South Louisianan, who first lived in WNC as an undergraduate at UNCA. In 2008, I received a PhD in sociology with an emphasis in Women's and Gender Studies from Vanderbilt University. My teaching and research interests center on gender and sexuality, medicine, and the body. My writings on topics as wide ranging as philanthropy, disability, and romance have been published in a range of edited volumes and academic journals. I am an editorial collective member of the journal *Feminist Teacher*. Currently, I am converting my dissertation, a sociological analysis of the significance of the human face, into a book manuscript. For the last 5 years, I have employed the sociological imagination in the service of feminist activism through Act like a Grrrl, a Nashville based organization I helped build which invites girls to share and transform their personal experiences through writing and the arts. My hope is to continue integrating teaching, scholarly research and community activism. I'm incredibly excited to be back in the mountains and thrilled to be joining the Anthropology and sociology Department at WCU.

New Publications by our faculty:



For the Cherokee, health is more than the absence of disease; it includes a fully confident sense of a smooth life, peaceful existence, unhurried pace, and easy flow of time. The natural state of the world is to be neutral, balanced, with a similarly gently flowing pattern. States of imbalance, tension, or agitation are indicative of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual illness and whether caused intentionally through omission or commission, or by outside actions or influences, the result affects and endangers Cherokee.

Taking a true anthropological four-field approach, Lefler and her colleagues provide a balanced portrait of Cherokee health issues. Topics covered include: an understanding of the personal and spiritual impact of skeletal research among Cherokee; the adverse reactions to be expected in well-meaning attempts to practice bioarchaeology; health, diet, and the relationship between diet and disease; linguistic analysis of Cherokee language in historical and contemporary contexts describing the relationship of the people to the cosmos; culturally appropriate holistic approaches to disease prevention and intervention methodologies; and the importance of the sacred feminine and the use of myth and symbolism within this matrilineal culture. All aspects—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—figure into the Cherokee concept of good health. By providing insight into the Cherokee perspective on health, wellness, and the end of the life cycle, and by incorporating appropriate protocol and language, this work reveals the necessity of a diversity of approaches in working with all indigenous populations.

This volume represents a collaboration between anthropologists and enrolled Tribal members to present perspectives on issues related to health past and present. Also any proceeds from this volume will be contributed to the EBCI Diabetes Clinic in Cherokee, NC.

Culture, Conflict, and Crisis: Cherokee British Relations 1756-1765

Anne Rogers and Barbara Duncan are co-editors of a book titled “Culture, Conflict and Crisis: Cherokee British Relations 1756-1765.” The volume discusses various aspects of the Cherokee world at the time of a visit by Henry Timberlake, an ensign in the British Army at that time.

Rogers and Duncan also have

papers included in this volume. Rogers’ is titled “Archaeology at Town Sites Visited by the Montgomery and Grant Expeditions”, and Duncan’s is “The Cherokee War Dance: From Timberlake to the Twenty-First Century”.

One of our anthropology graduates, James “Bo”

Taylor, provided the paper titled “DeBrahm’s List of Cherokee Words”. Tom Belt, language coordinator for the Cherokee Studies Program, provided one on “Timberlake’s Journal: A Cherokee Perspective”.

Upcoming Events:

Kenya Trip in 2010

Drs. Nyaga Mwaniki and Anthony Hickey are planning to take a group of students to Kenya in May:

The trip will be to southern Kenya and will be coordinated by a local NGO. We will be village based and focus on sustainable agriculture. The trip will include a visit to a wildlife park and will end at the beach (Indian Ocean) in Mombassa. We plan to be in Kenya for two weeks and because it will be part of a course, financial aid should be available. We anticipate the total to be less than \$4000.

Annual Gender Conference is in March 2010, presentation submissions are due no later than Jan. 15, 2010.

The theme this year explores the life, work and contributions of Josefina Niggli during the centennial of Niggli's birth. Josefina Niggli was a prolific Mexican-American author and screenwriter. Her work spanned from 1928 to 1964 and included not only plays, poetry and novels but also textbooks on screenplay writing and radio writing. If you are a scholar of Niggli's life work, heritage or the Latino culture, we invite you to make a submission to the conference. Presentation submissions do not necessarily need to relate to this theme for the conference.

If you have any news (with or without photographs) to share, please send it to our department email: anso@email.wcu.edu

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