BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY
Bloomsburg Pennsylvania

Anthropology Newsletter
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Department of Philosophy/Anthropology

Welcome back! The name has changed to Bloomsburg University, but the Anthropology Newsletter goes on and on. We intend to publish four times during the 83-84 year, providing information of interest about anthropology and our program to the university community. The Anthropology Newsletter is provided free of charge to anthropology majors, any interested student, and to department chairpersons and administrators. Anyone who wishes to be added to our mailing list should contact Dave Minderhout in 219 BCH (4334).

Changes in Personnel: Last April Gary Feinman resigned to take a position with the University of Wisconsin. We were authorized at that time to hire a replacement on a temporary one-year basis. In July, after a two-month search, we hired Dr. Bruce Byland for the temporary position.

Dr. Byland obtained his BA in anthropology from Rice University and his MA and Ph.D. from Penn State. He comes to us from Herbert Lehman College (CUNY), and he has taught previously at Yale and Suny-Albany. Like Gary Feinman, Bruce is an archaeologist with a strong interest in Mexico. His Ph.D. dissertation focused on the economic and political development in a Mixtec area of Oaxaca. Since completing his dissertation, he has been working on the relationship of the Mixtecs to the Aztec Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries. In addition to Mexico, Bruce is also interested in the archaeology of Eastern North America.

As before, we were looking for teaching excellence in a candidate, for someone who could generate enthusiasm in the classroom. We were greatly impressed with Bruce's classroom abilities. His background shows that he is more than able to deal with the new archaeology offerings in the department, including 46.210 and 46.300, and we believe that students will be glad they had some contact with him.

We hope to receive authorization from the University to hire a full-time tenure track archaeologist for the 84-85 year. If so, Bruce will be given every consideration for that position.

Prescheduling for Spring 1984: Prescheduling for spring 1984 begins for juniors and seniors on September 27 and continues throughout the month of October. The anthropology offerings for spring 1984 are as follows:

46.100 Principles of Physical Anthropology
46.200 Principles of Cultural Anthropology
46.300 Archaeological Method & Theory
46.350 Medical Anthropology
46.440 Language & Culture
46.480 Religion & Magic

46.300, Archaeological Method & Theory, is a new course being offered for the first time. This course focuses on the nature of archaeological remains and how they are interpreted. The principle objective of the course is to explain

how archaeological remains can be used to address such major questions as the importance of ancient trade, the rise of early bureaucracies, and the development of food production. While examples are drawn from different regions around the globe, considerable attention is given to the prehistoric and historic peoples of the Northeastern United States. 46.100 is good preparation for this course, which Bruce Byland will be teaching.

46.350, Medical Anthropology, has become one of our most successful courses. This course looks at concepts of sickness and health cross-culturally. Among the topics covered are nutrition and malnutrition, reproduction and childcare, the care of the elderly and attitudes towards death, and the cultural impact on disease patterns, each viewed cross-culturally from an anthropological perspective. The texts used are Human Sickness and Health by Corinne Shear Wood and Culture, Curers, and Contagion, edited by Norman Klein. The course is offered on Tuesday evenings by Dave Minderhout.

46.440, Language & Culture, takes a look at language in its various social settings. The course looks at the origins of language, child language acquisition, language variability (dialects & multilingualism), languages relationship to thought, non-verbal communication and language change. The emphasis will be on language as part of a larger social system; American English will be used for most examples. The texts are Peter Farb's Word Play and A Host of Tongues by Nancy Conklin and Margaret Lourie. The course is offered MWF at 2 by Dave Minderhout.

Southwest Tour 1983: Twenty-eight intrepid travelers spent three weeks in the American Southwest this past May and June as part of the 1983 Anthropology Tour. Mr. Reeder was the coordinator and leader of this expedition, one which he describes as the smoothest, most problem-free ever. Among the places visited were Carlsbad Caverns; Juarez, Mexico; White Sands; Santa Fe; Pecos Ruins; Fort Union; Taos Pueblo; Chaco Canyon; the Grand Canyon; Canyon Du Chelly; Monument Valley; and Mesa Verde. Mr. Reeder was disturbed by the ethnocentric behavior of many of the students on the tour, but in general, he feels that the positive aspects outweighed the negative. The comments in the assigned journals indicates that for most participants, the tour was the highlight of their BU careers.

Culture & Conservation: Tribal and peasant peoples are often described as being more conservation-oriented and environment conscious than people in modern industrialized societies. According to a recent Natural History article, part of the reason may be a belief in supernatural protectors of the environment who punish those who are not respectful of natural resources. In particular, Nigel Smith contends, folk beliefs in fearsome spirits has helped to conserve the resources of the Amazon jungle. For instance, he describes the mae de seringa, the "mother of rubber trees" who appears whenever rubber tappers are overzealous in draining the latex-rich sap from the trees. The mae de seringa is described as a short woman with long hair and gashes on her arms and legs in the herringbone pattern placed by tappers on the trunks of the trees. Tappers who cross her are known to have unfortunate accidents in the forests.

Another protective creature is the tapire-iauara or "tapir-nymph". This cow-sized creature has a jaguar head and broad, feline paws. Its huge ears droop down the sides of its head like those of Brahman cattle. The tapir-nymph lives in water, where it attackes fishermen in their boats, drowning them if possible.

Fishermen wisely avoid areas where tapir-nymphs are known to live. Other locales are "enchanted places" or lugares encantados. Typical examples are forest pools where people have drowned; in local beliefs, drowning victims cannot go to heaven. Instead they lure others to share their fate. Enchanted waters are characterized by unexpected noises: dogs barking or human voices or music. The cautious avoid enchanted places. Both examples in effect create "no hunting" or "no fishing" zones.

Smith points out that as Western education and secular values spread throughout Amazonia, people come to reject these old folk beliefs. As a result, unrestrained exploitation of the natural environment can occur. It is estimated that the Amazonian rain forest will disappear by the year 2000.

Folk beliefs do not invariably lead to conservation, however. In an article in 1978, Calvin Martin wrote about how Indians of eastern Canada decimated animal populations in the 18th and 19th centuries. Traditionally, Indian hunters felt a sense of spiritual kinship with major game animals, a relationship marked by genuine awe and fear of these powerful animals and their supernatural protectors or wardens. It was generally believed that humans and animals had entered into a contract with each other. The animals would allow a small number of their kind to be killed for human use, if in return the humans displayed proper respect for the lives they had taken. This contract could be broken if the humans were disrespectful or if they practiced overkill, taking more animal lives than were needed for humans' immediate needs.

After European contact, many Indians died from exposure to new diseases to which they had no immunities. Diseases such as smallpox and measles decimated Indian populations. Eastern Canadian Indians interpreted major illnesses as punishment for some sort of transgression, punishment meted out by offended animal spirits. Martin, an historian, believes that the Indians interpreted the new diseases as unwarranted punishment from the animal spirits--and thus, a violation of the contract. Thus, when whites wanted Indians to trap beaver for pelts, for instance, the Indians were only too happy to participate in a beaver slaughter. The Indians were, in fact, making war on these creatures that had maliciously broken the terms of the human-animal agreement. Therefore, the Indians of eastern Canada were conservationists only so long as nature cooperated.

Coming Events: The annual convention of the American Anthropological Association will be held in Chicago from November 16-20 -- the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology will meet in Newburgh, NY, from October 14-16 -- the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex will meet in Chicago from November 18-20--the African Studies Association will meet in Boston, Dec. 7-10.