

Welcome Back to BU and the Anthropology Newsletter! This publication is issued four times each academic year to anyone interested in anthropology and anthropological issues. If you would be interested in being added to our mailing list, please contact Dave Minderhout in 219 BCH at 4334.

Course Offerings for Spring 1985: The anthropologists will be offering the following courses for the spring semester:

46.101	Introduction to Anthropology
46.200	Principles of Cultural Anthropology
46.220	Principles of Physical Anthropology
46.350	Medical Anthropology
46.380	Culture Change & Culture Contact
46.440	Language & Culture

Those of you who are familiar with anthropology offerings will notice some changes in our curriculum. The new introductory course will be offered for the first time this spring by Bob Reeder, while the number on the physical anthropology course has been changed from 46.100 to 46.220. We have found that students have often been confused by our 46.100/46.200 sequence, often assuming that 46.100 was the introductory course and 46.200 a higher level course. Actually our intent has always been to view these two courses as equivalent in degree of difficulty, each being an entry course into a different subdiscipline of the field. To clear up the confusion, we will now offer a truly introductory course, one which surveys all the subdisciplines of anthropology. At the same time, we will offer a battery of 200-level courses, each of which will deal in greater depth with a particular subdiscipline. At present we have three 200-level courses: 46.200, 46.210 (World Prehistory), and 46.220.

46.380 will be taught by our new archaeologist, Elise Brenner. This course used to be 46.481, Culture Dynamics. A culture change course should be a major part of an anthropology curriculum, not only because world cultures are changing so rapidly, but also because of the very nature of human adaptability in the face of environmental pressures. Archaeologists are keenly aware of culture change since much of their work involves the documentation and analysis of change at a particular site over long periods of time. The course will both look at general mechanisms of culture change, as well as major periods of change in human history, such as the invention of agriculture. A student taking this course should, as a consequence, get a much clearer picture of their place in a dynamic world.

46.350, Medical Anthropology, deals with a variety of topics having to do with human sickness and health, including human influences on disease spread, nutrition and malnutrition world-wide, the place of the healer in traditional and modern society, cross-cultural attitudes toward pregnancy and child-birth, the role of the elderly in society, and death and dying cross-culturally. The course will be offered Tuesday nights by Dave Minderhout.

46.440, Language & Culture, is offered by Dave Minderhout. The course looks at a variety of topics which interest anthropologists about language such as the origins of language, child language acquisition, language variation (dialects and bilingualism) and the problems created by language variation in American education and elsewhere, language and thought, non-oral communications, and language play.

Meet Elise Brenner: A six month long nationwide search culminated last March with the hiring of Dr. Elise Brenner as the third anthropologist in our program. Elise replaces Gary Feinman, who resigned in April 1983 to take a position elsewhere, and Bruce Byland, who was here as a one-year replacement in '83-84. Elise has a BA in anthropology from Boston University and an MA and Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts. She is an archaeologist with special interests in archaeological method and theory and the prehistory and ethnohistory of the Northeastern US. However, she is also interested in exchange systems, ethnicity, symbolic uses of material culture, and political organization and change.

Elise has a number of projects in hand to try and (finally) get the archaeology program rolling. When the psychology department moves into the new Human Services Building, the archaeology lab will be moved out of the attic of the Boyer Building into Old Science. Then Elise can anticipate many fun-filled hours sorting out and classifying old finds. She also hopes to get a summer field program off the ground as soon as possible, beginning with a systematic survey of the Fishing Creek tributary in Columbia County. At present she is actively involved in her courses, while also preparing proposals for courses and research funds.

Elise can be found in BCH 219 (phone--4334). Stop by and meet her!

Southwest Tour in 1985: The anthropology faculty again intends to offer its Southwest Tour in the summer of 1985. As before, this will be an early summer tour of archaeological and historical sights in the Southwest, as well as a visit to the spectacular natural wonders of the area (e.g., the Grand Canyon) and to the life of the contemporary Southwest. The group travels in both private and university vehicles, camping out along the way. Tentative plans are progressing to make this a combined tour with a geologist, thus making this a 6 credit tour, instead of the 3 credits given previously. Watch this space for more details or contact Bob Reeder for more information.

A Minor in Anthropology: Final approval is drawing near for an 18 credit minor in anthropology. The minor will be made up of 3 required courses and 3 electives chosen within one of three "tracks." The complete proposal looks like this:

I. REQUIRED COURSES: A core program of 3 courses for 9 credits is required of each student who chooses a minor in anthropology. These 3 courses are:

- 46.200--Principles of Cultural Anthropology
- 46.210--World Prehistory
- 46.220--Principles of Physical Anthropology

II. ELECTIVE COURSES: 3 elective courses must be chosen to complete a minor in anthropology. Electives are to be chosen within one of three areas of anthropology: Physical Anthropology, Archaeology, and Cultural Anthropology. The courses which fall within each of these areas are listed on the following page. Students may choose other anthropology courses to fulfill the requirements for a minor with the approval of the anthropology faculty.

Elective Courses--continued

- A. Physical Anthropology (Choose 3 courses)
1. Required (2 courses)
    - 46.300 Archaeological Method and Theory or 46.301--Field Archaeology
    - 46.405 Primates
  2. Elective (1 course)
    - 46.350 Medical Anthropology
    - 50.102 General Biology II or 50.454--Ethnology
    - 50.133 Human Genetics
    - 50.102 Historical Geology
- B. Archaeology (Choose 3 courses)
- 46.300 Archaeological Method and Theory
  - 46.301 Field Archaeology
  - 46.310 Archaeology of Selected Areas
  - 46.340 North American Indians
  - 46.380 Culture Change and Culture Contact
- C. Cultural Anthropology (Choose 3 courses)
- 46.300 Archaeological Method and Theory
  - 46.350 Medical Anthropology
  - 46.390 Socialization of the Child
  - 46.410 Primitive Arts
  - 46.440 Language and Culture
  - 46.480 Religion and Magic

Allergies and Human Evolution: The editor of this newsletter is a hay fever sufferer, like millions of other Americans, and since August and September are peak periods for ragweed pollen, it is not surprising that an article in the September Natural History had special appeal. The article reported on a study conducted by two M.D.s and an anthropologist among the Waorani Indians of Ecuador. This group has remained relatively isolated from outside contact and so provided a natural laboratory for a study of infectious disease among tribal peoples. Overall the findings were pretty much what other researchers had discovered among other similar populations: the Waorani maintain an excellent state of health, marred only by minor infections and parasite infestations. The only unusual discovery among this group was their poor state of dental health, attributable to high sugar content in their diet; most tribal peoples studies in the last century have manifested excellent dental health, with very few cavities or teeth missing. The researchers also tested for allergic reactions among the Waorani, and found them to be essentially free of allergies as well.

Blood tests confirmed also that the Waorani had a high level of the antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE). This is perplexing because IgE is associated with asthma and hay fever; indeed, for some time the only known effect of IgE on the body was to produce allergic reactions. The symptoms of hay fever are produced by the attachment of IgE molecules, in the presence of an allergy-producing substance (such as ragweed pollen), to tissue cells known as mast cells, with the subsequent release of histamine by the mast cells. Histamine causes increased leakage in blood vessel walls, allowing fluid to escape into the extravascular spaces and culminating in symptoms we call allergy. Antihistamines block the effects of histamine.

Allergies--continued

Why, then, should the Waorani, who have no allergies, have IgE in their bodies? More recently, researchers have found that IgE is also associated with certain parasitic infections, such as hookworm and trichinosis. The chain of events is tricky. Apparently the IgE directed against the infecting parasite becomes attached to mast cells in the vicinity of the intestines, releasing histamine, which increases blood vessel leakage and allows the escape of a parasite-specific antibody into the intestine to fight the parasite.

Therefore allergies, like hay fever, could be a vestige of an ancient immunological response to worm infestations, which judging by contemporary tribal peoples were probably very common. That is, in the presence of worm infestations, IgE might be an antibody of great worth, but remove the parasites, and the allergic reactions are free to emerge. Thus, civilization marches on!

Faculty office hours: (all in BCH 219, phone--4334)

Elise Brenner	10:30-12:00 MW, 9:30-10:30 TTh, and by appointment
Dave Minderhout	1:00 MTWThF, and by appointment
Bob Reeder	11:00 MTWF, 5:30-6:30 PM W.