

The Participant Observer

Department of Anthropology
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY 14627

Including:

Morgan Lecture
page 1

Alumni in our
Midst
page 3

Alumni Award
page 4

U.A.C. Corner
page 5

Faculty Updates
page 6

Current Events
page 7

From the Editor's
Desk
page 8

MORGAN LECTURES 2001: MEDIA AND THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF NATIONS

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod is one of the most respected contemporary anthropologists and a leading ethnographer of the Middle East, women and modernity. A magna cum laude graduate of Carleton College, she received her Ph.D. from Harvard University. Dr. Abu-Lughod is currently Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies at Columbia University.

The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures were established in 1963 by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Rochester to honor a founder of American anthropology and a major benefactor of the University.

This year, the Morgan Lecture series features Professor Lila Abu-Lughod, whose early research of the Bedouin people of Egypt's Western Desert led to the publication of Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society. Her more recent work has focused on a study of Egyptian television, namely serials, and their use as a method of constructing national identity. The lecture she gave on Thursday, October 24, 2001, was titled, "The Ambivalence of National Identity: Asserting the Local in the Face of the Global."

Professor Abu-Lughod's lectures examined the cultural politics of popular television. Focusing particularly on poor, urban women, she explored the relationship between serials and local debates about national identity, gender, class and modernity. Professor Abu-Lughod pointed out that anthropologists now need to

take mass and micro-media forms into consideration when contemplating cultures and change. Producers of these serials introduce characters that are nostalgic cultural archetypes who represent "community dignity," while addressing how such

(continued pg. 2)

A cartoon from a handout given at the Panel Discussion on Thursday. It was drawn in 1993 when the Minister of Information, Safwat Al-Sharraf, proposed new policy to "confront terrorism with media." The man speaking states, "Those terrorists have really overdone it. But they're not up to Safwat Al-Sharraf. He could hit 'em with two serials that'd knock 'em flat!"



MORGAN LECTURES ARTICLE CONTINUED...

characters would respond to the debates and issues within the national and political realms. Here, cultural identity and national identity have become linked. However, upon examining how the serials were interpreted, Professor Abu-Lughod encountered a great deal of ambivalence surrounding the characters and what they represent. It is tricky, she cautions, to characterize broad classes using archetypes. She believes that the perceived frantic need to establish identity is closely linked to a weakening of the strong sense of nation in Egypt.

On Thursday, October 25, 2001, Professor Abu-Lughod participated in a panel discussion with Professor Thomas Gibson of the Anthropology Department and Professor Emil Homerin of the Religion and Classics Department. The discussion was entitled "In the Name of Community: The Management of Religion and the Magic of Stars." Abu-Lughod first discussed the management of religious fanaticism through popular serials, and each of the panel members engaged her material through their particular perspectives. A question and answer session followed.

Professor Abu-Lughod also was part of a work-in-progress panel discussion that occurred on Friday, October 26th, and included Professor Lisa Cartwright from English Department and the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Women's Studies, Professor Ayala Emmett from the Anthropology Department, and Mohammed Bamyeh a visitor in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures. The discussion, entitled "Women and Development Realism in Egyptian Television," focused on gender, nationalism and modernity.

This year's Morgan Lectures were a great success and we thank Professor Abu-Lughod for being our guest and graciously sharing her research with us.



Professor Lila Abu-Lughod

Presentation and Slide Show by Professor Bruce Knauff

On November 16th, the Anthropology Department was pleased to welcome Professor Bruce Knauff, who is a Samuel C. Dobbs Professor of Anthropology at Emory University. The title of his lecture was "Exchanging the Past: A Rainforest World Before and After," and he focused on one Papua New Guinea community's experience of twenty years of rapid cultural change. This presentation is part of the new interdepartmental initiative in global studies and was co-sponsored by the Department of History.

Professor Knauff studied the remote Papua New Guinea community first from 1980-1982, and then again during 1998. During the early period, he noticed that the spiritual medium was very important to the native people. Sorcery was prevalent and spirituality was a governing concept. However, when he returned in 1998, the community had changed considerably. Christianity was prevalent. The people within the community had exchanged their "evil" souls for their "good" Christian ones and now God was cleansing the world of sorcery and evil. Evil had become synonymous with the community's traditions, and, therefore, the past traditions were being rejected. "Modernization" brought increasing impoverishment and imparted a sense to the community that it needed to change, expressed as the idea that it must "exchange" the traditional for the modern. He included wonderful slides that illustrated his points as he expounded his argument.

Professor Knauff's studies in Papua New Guinea only provide evidence of how important and telling longitudinal studies of communities can be in illustrating the effects of globalization and change on traditional cultures.

ALUMNI IN OUR MIDST...

This month we were graced by the presence of two of our alumni to speak with undergraduates. Late in October, Joe Lanning came to give a presentation on his experiences in Africa and, a few weeks later, Maureen Ittig came to an informal lunch with anthropology students to discuss her experiences after completing her undergraduate work. We appreciate the time both of them spent sharing with us. If you are in the Rochester area and would like to speak with undergraduates about your work or experiences, please contact Ellen Ray at er003j@mail.rochester.edu or the Anthropology Department at anthro@mail.rochester.edu.

Joe Lanning ('00), a recent University of Rochester Alumni, returned to campus during his short break from the Peace Corps where he serves in a remote town in Malawi, Africa, to speak to students and faculty about his work experience. Lanning, an Anthropology major and Women's Study minor, is now a health volunteer in the areas of HIV/AIDS education, sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and child survival. In addition, he also founded the World Education Fund for Women, which promotes educating women about the issues of sexual and general health.

The presentation by Lanning included an in-depth slide show of the village where he resides. He mentioned that AIDS is one of the leading causes of death there, with an average of two deaths a week.

Attending the funerals, he said, did interfere with some of his meetings with village officials, which was frustrating. However, frustration is an emotion that any member of the Peace Corps becomes quite accustomed to dealing with.

Lanning believes that his studies in Anthropology helped prepare him to deal with culture shock. He also called upon his anthropological knowledge when building relationships with the people in the village and exploring how they want their communities to improve.

Now back in Malawi educating people on HIV/AIDS prevention and agriculture, Lanning will probably be difficult to contact for questions about the Peace Corps. However, feel free to check out the website: www.peacecorps.gov

Submitted by Allison Dorsey

Maureen Ittig ('98), now a graduate student, was in the Rochester area for a conference and offered to come to the Anthropology Department to speak to undergraduates about her experience after she graduated from the University of Rochester. The Undergraduate Council saw this as a great opportunity for students to ask questions about the transition from the undergraduate years to the years following graduation.

Over an informal lunch of pizza, Maureen gave a rundown of the last few years of her life—the trials, tribulations and high points—and then engaged the undergraduates in a discussion on their expectations about life after graduating from the U of R. Her openness and experience really made the time enjoyable for the undergrads that attended, and it also gave faculty a great opportunity to reminisce with her.

Check out the Anthropology Department at
<http://www.rochester.edu/college/ANT>

**First Alumni Award Bestowed Upon
Tessa Farmer and Kate Navarra**

Last year was the first time that the Department gave an Alumni Award for outstanding contribution to the life of the Department. The honor of receiving the award was bestowed on Tessa Farmer and Kate Navarra.

Tessa and Kate contributed a great deal to the Anthropology Department during their years at the University of Rochester. They co-edited *The Participant Observer* and produced, in a timely fashion, a high quality newsletter. During their term, the newsletter highlighted students and faculty research and various activities, awards, and current news of and for our alumni. It was not unusual to hear colleagues praise the *Participant Observer*. It is unusual that undergraduates produce a newsletter of such high quality, and, in most departments, graduate students or faculty members are responsible for its publication. The *Participant Observer* is a proud exception, and the credit goes to its former co-editors.

Last spring, Kate and Tessa co-chaired the 2001 Margaret Mead Conference "Change the World." This undergraduate national conference brought together students from a number of colleges and universities to present their original research. In addition, the conference created a forum for undergraduates and community leaders to talk about issues that were currently at the heart of public life in America. It was an excellent conference by any measure. The credit goes to Tessa and Kate for their dedication, hard work, and professionalism. The conference shined the light on anthropological research on campus, in the local community, and in other participating institutions.

Last, but not least, Tessa and Kate were our ambassadors on campus. They promoted interest in, and knowledge of anthropology, and of the importance of ethnographic research to public life, both home and abroad. By awarding Tessa and Kate the first Alumni Award, we acknowledged their contributions to enhance and enrich the Anthropology Department. We generously thank them for their dedication.

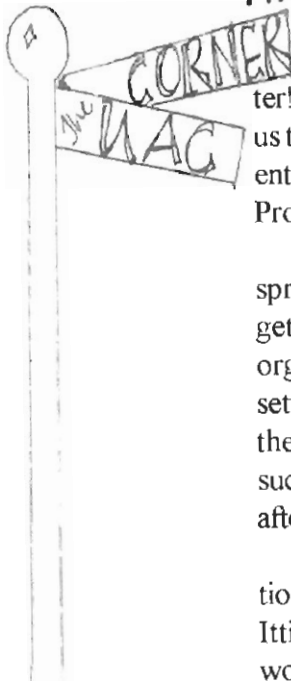
Alumni Update:

- ◆ **Karen A. Porter (Ph.D. '97)** is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the Comparative Sociology Department at the University of Puget Sound, a national liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest. She teaches courses on cultural anthropology, social and cultural change, qualitative research methods, anthropological theory, and her area of ethnographic expertise, Africa (especially East Africa). She is affiliated with the Women's Studies Program and the Environmental Studies program on campus, and is concluding a three year term in elected office as the General Editor of the *Anthropology of Work Review*. Karen was recently invited to join the Institute of Development Anthropology at SUNY-Binghamton as a research consultant for an upcoming USAID project on women and legal reform in Africa.

Attention Alumni!

What are you up to? Do you have a new job? Have you traveled to exoctic places? Tell the U of R Anthropology undergraduates, alumni and staff what you are up to. Other alumni have responded and have inquired about friends and former classmates. E-mail us at anthro@mail.rochester.edu

The Undergraduate Anthropology Council Corner



The U.A.C. is fully functional after a bout with some red tape this fall semester! We submitted our finalized constitution at the end of this semester. This will allow us to become a recognized Students' Association (SA) organization and will hopefully entitle us receive funding through the SA as well. We are up to 8 official members. Professor Emmett and Professor Foster are serving as our faculty advisors.

The first U.A.C. event was held on Friday, November 2nd. The approach of spring registration provided the perfect opportunity to get students and faculty together to talk about upcoming classes and research opportunities. We decided to organize a student-faculty social to allow students to engage their professors in a setting slightly less formal than the classroom. Almost all the refreshments, including the punch, were homemade by members of the U.A.C. We consider the event a success and extend our appreciation to the faculty that took the time to spend their afternoon with us.

Our second event was a lunch with alumna Maureen Ittig, whose visit is mentioned earlier in this edition. Again, we would also like to extend our thanks to Ms. Ittig for taking the time to talk to us about her experiences after her undergraduate work was completed.

Overall, in spite of some of the technicalities of getting the ball rolling, we believe we've had a fruitful semester and we look forward to next semester's continued endeavors to shed light on anthropology's importance to all fields of study and the campus community as a whole.

2001-2002 Executive Board
President- Ellen Ray
Business Manager- Allison Dorsey
Secretary- Lisa Garrigan

Goals for the Upcoming Semester:

- Back to school showing of the *Joy Luck Club*
- The Careers in Anthropology Fair featuring as many possible career choices as possible (if you think you may be in town and would want to set up a table about your field in anthropology, e-mail Ellen Ray at er003j@mail.rochester.edu).
- A U.A.C. field trip for members

Interested in the U.A.C.? Contact Ellen Ray at the address located above.

Faculty updates

On November 14, 2001, **Professor Signithia Fordham** participated in a panel discussion on Racial Profiling, its uses and effects. Other participants included Professors Andres Nader, Joanne Bernardi, and Raul Hernandez-Rodriguez. This panel discussion probed whether, given concerns with security in the United States and the new acceptance of profiling as a technique to identify terrorists or potential terrorists, it is a good time to consider profiling from a historical perspective. The panelists discussed whether the technique of profiling is a successful means to an end or an ineffective act of racism. Panelists contemplated the profiling of Jews in the Third Reich, Japanese during WWII, and the profiling of Latinos and African-Americans in the present.

Professor Fordham was also featured in The Frederick Douglass Institute's Work in Progress Seminar Series on November 14th. The series is a multi-disciplinary seminar on topics touching upon Africa and its Diaspora. The seminars offer an engaging environment for graduate students and faculty working in the broad area of African and African American Studies to present and discuss their ongoing research. Professor Fordham presented a paper "PASSIN' FOR BLACK: Performing Kinship, Race and Identity in the Imagined Black Community."

**AMERICAN
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION
MEETINGS...**

**This year, faculty that attended the AAA Meetings in
Washington, DC on
November 28-December 2, 2001 included:**

•Robert J. Foster • Nancy Forand • Signithia Fordham • Richard Freeman•

During his studies at the University of Illinois, **Professor Richard Freeman** worked with the Latina/o student association and produced a video that examines how they adopted the label "Latina/o", opposing the administration's label of "Hispanic." Their rejection of the label "Hispanic" was a political statement. The issues surrounding this culture clash are explored in the 33 minute video Professor Freeman produced while at the University of Illinois. It is also a vehicle for the Latina/o students to voice their frustrations with their treatment by the larger university community. The students expressed they felt tension when trying to discuss these issues with the Anglo-student population. The video Professor Freeman produced allowed the Latina/o students to express themselves free of tension. The video was viewed in conjunction with the Spanish And Latin Students' Association (SALSA) on Wednesday October 17th.

Professor Freeman was also more recently asked to speak at the Drama House's Fireside Chat Series. On December 5th he presented on "The Culture of Politics in Buenos Aires, Argentina," which was the focus of his dissertation from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Guatemalan Ecologist Presents on the Connection Between Human Rights and the Environment

On October 8, 2001, Rufino Zapeta, an ecologist from Guatemala, visited the University of Rochester to discuss the human rights connection to environmental issues in Guatemala today. Mr. Zapeta spoke in his native Spanish, and his talk was translated. He used two specific examples to illustrate the environmental issues the country is facing today. Thirty years ago, the Guatemalan government promoted colonization of the Peten region. The farmers who settled the region felt a strong connection between the community and the earth. The problem developed recently when Petroleum companies entered the Peten region—their interests directly conflicted with the interests of the communities living in there. Mr. Zapeta is working to empower the inhabitants of the region to go before the government to speak up for their land rights. It is important for the continuation of their traditions that these people gain the skills necessary to combat the oppression facing them from the petroleum companies and the government itself.

A second problem affecting the environment in Guatemala concerns shrimp farming. In Guatemala, by national law all lakes, rivers, oceans and shores belong to the public. These commodities enable members of the public to earn a living and to enjoy recreational activities. Over the last two years, the shrimp farming industry has emerged along the shores of Guatemala. The shrimp farming companies have cut down the Mangrove forest along the Guatemalan shores. Mr. Zapeta and other environmentalists in Guatemala want to recover the Guatemalan Mangrove forests along the shore region. The fishing community in Guatemala organized themselves and have approached the authorities. In two separate instances this year fishermen have died standing up for their way of life and the preservation of a national resource. For these fishermen, the problem lies in the fact that Guatemalan law is not taken seriously.

These problems are not unique to Guatemala. Unstable governments in Latin America, Africa, and Thailand all resist organization of their citizens for governmental change. The people of Guatemala are threatened by outside commercial industry in ways that threaten the preservation of their culture and livelihood. The ecologist stressed awareness of the problematic governmental conditions in which the people of Guatemala and others around the world find themselves. Only through awareness and action will their environment and human rights be preserved.

Submitted by Lisa Garrigan

The Navajo Code Talkers Come to the U of R



In celebration of Native American Heritage the University of Rochester invited the “Desert Warriors of the Pacific: The Native Code Talkers of WWII” to speak to the University community. In 1942, the Navajo Indians went to war for their country. The Navajo Code Talkers developed the only code for military use that was never broken during World War II. Without their involvement in the war, Americans would possibly have lost many pivotal battles in the Pacific.

On Thursday, November 8, 2001, the Navajo Code Talkers gave a presentation for the University community that featured Dr. Samuel Billison. On Friday, November 9th, the Code Talkers spent an hour in the Anthropology Department, conversing with students and faculty. This event was co-sponsored by the Department of Anthropology.

From the Editor's Desk

The first semester of classes has come to a close and I cannot believe how rapidly it has flown by. The Anthropology Department was busy this semester, which added to the frenzied feeling that has characterized the last two months. The recent opportunities for the Anthropology Department to be active on campus have, from a student's perspective, offered a wide variety of supplemental activities, which I hope many anthropology students utilized, to enrich their classroom experiences.

This was also the time of the year when we had high school seniors surveying the U of R campus and learning about the programs and departments offered here. I was able to sit with Professor Foster

Questions or comments on any articles or upcoming events?

Please feel free to contact us!

Ellen Ray:
er003j@mail.rochester.edu

Anthropology Dept.
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at one of the pre-freshman orientation fairs and I was encouraged by the number of high school seniors who knew what anthropology was and were interested!

As always, I would love to receive updates from alumni, articles you think should be included in the next edition, or new research you're doing. Again, if you are ever in town and would like to set up a time to talk to the anthropology students please either contact myself or the Department with the necessary information.

I hope that everyone has a wonderful holiday season full of appreciation for those we love, knowing how precious our time together really is in the wake of September 11th. Happy Holidays!



Mark Your Calendar

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| * January 16, 2002
Classes begin | * April 8-12, 2002
Early Registration for Fall 2002 classes |
| * March 9-17, 2002
Spring Recess! Have fun! | * May 19, 2002
Commencement |
| * April 5, 2002
Anthropology Spring Conference | |

Happy Holidays!