



STUDENT ANTHROPOLOGY RESEARCH FORUM

2025

Celebrating 25 years!

Friday, April 25th, 1:00-3:00pm

Department of Anthropology

Introduction

University of Notre Dame
Department of Anthropology
Student Anthropology Research Forum

As a department, our commitment to collaborative learning and immersive engagement results in the annual production of innovative research projects by undergraduate and graduate students in the classroom, the laboratory, and the field. These theses, posters and multi-media presentations highlight the original research and innovative work of our undergraduate and graduate students. The forum emphasizes the diverse and integrative academic environment at the University of Notre Dame

We are pleased that you have joined us to celebrate our students' achievements in creating and disseminating anthropological research. Thank you for joining us for this event!

Faculty Hosts: Dr. Eric Haanstad &

Dr. Meredith Chesson

Research Presentations

Undergraduate Presentations 278 Corbett Hall (Tutor Room)

Introduction Eric Haanstad.....1:00 PM
Gráinne Malone1:05 PM
Chiara Lorico-Rappa1:10 PM
Elanor E. Sullivan.....1:15 PM
Sophia Buonavolonta1:20 PM
Aidan Rezner1:25 PM
Jake Harris.....1:30 PM
Mehwish Rehman.....1:35 PM
Alyssa Miulli.....*
Charlotte Cardarella.....*
Maggie Winter.....*
Mattie Kohl.....*

* Attending Society for American Archaeology Meetings in Denver, CO

Poster Presentations.....1:40-2:00 PM

2nd Floor Corbett Hall

Aislinn Fernandes and Skylar Jones

Lauren Bell

Kayla Bucci

Research Presentations

Graduate Presentations 278 Corbett Hall (Tutor Room)

Introduction Dr. Meredith Chesson.....2:00 PM
Graduate Presentations.....2:05-3:00 PM

How Can We Better Practice What We Preach:

University of Notre Dame

Gráinne Malone

**Anthropology Honors, Peace Studies minor,
Civil and Human Rights minor and Glynn Honors**

This paper is an introspection of the dichotic relationship Notre Dame has with its faith (CST) and its finances (investments). This paper applies anthropological frameworks to investigate Notre Dame's commitment to the Catholic faith and the history of Notre Dame's investment practices in specific regards to investing in private prisons and weapons manufacturing companies. Finally, this paper offers a strategic set of steps on how Notre Dame can begin a divestment process from the things that do not align with our CST. This paper offers its readers an opportunity to deeply reflect on what we preach and what we practice at the University of Notre Dame.

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Eric Haanstad

*What Influences Motivation in Learning and
Choosing an Educational Path*

Chiara Lorico-Rappa

**Anthropology Honors, Psychology, Sociology minor,
Glynn Honors Program**

I am looking at how adults got to where they are in their educational journey. I am interested in how they made those decisions and ultimately what influenced and drove them to that path. Through interviews, I have found that it is highly up to chance and just your life experiences in your environment that affect where you go with your future. I hope that my research will help shed light on what students, teachers, parents, and academic advisors should focus on when it comes to helping students choose an educational path.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Susan Blum

*Coffee Culture and the City: A Comparative Study of
Dublin and Los Angeles*

Elanor E. Sullivan

Anthropology Honors, Chinese

Drawing on interviews conducted with baristas and café customers in Dublin and Los Angeles as well as personal experiences, this study explores how coffee and cafés are caught up in webs of meaning across these two major cities. Despite their different histories, geographies, and demographics, this study finds that, in both cities, coffee's meaning and usage are characterized by oscillation between a series of binaries, which include speeding up and slowing down, globalization and localization, inclusion and exclusion, and the personal and the social. Analysis of the relationships between and within these binaries and comparison with other major cities reveal how coffee culture relates to larger negotiations of personal and communal identity and meaning in both Dublin and Los Angeles.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Eric Haanstad

**Funding: Department of Anthropology and the
Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies;**

*Solidarity Through Speech: An Examination of the
Role of Language Ideologies on the Formation of
Chilean Identity*

Sophia Buonavolonta

Anthropology Honors, English, and Spanish (supp.)

This paper explores the language ideologies, or the common sense ideas people have about language, that Chileans hold about their unique variant of Spanish. It is a widespread idea amongst Chileans that Chilean Spanish is “bad” or “improper.” At the same time, Chileans are proud of their variant, as it is unique and a sign of solidarity between those that speak it. I use semiotics and interview data I collected while abroad in Santiago to analyze the role that ideology has on the construction of a Chilean identity.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Christopher Ball

*Personhood Maintenance: Age, Values, and Aesthetics
at Life's Threshold*

Aidan Rezner

Neuroscience and Behavior

Compassionate Care in Medicine

This thesis investigates the role perceptions of 'personhood' play in affecting the application of compassionate care in hospice environments, focusing on both respite and obtunded patients. Through participant observation, field notes, and in-depth interviews with hospice care staff from different positional holdings, the study uses anthropological methods of ethnography to investigate caregivers' perspectives concerning the point at which a patient "loses" their personhood. Expanding on the framework, it then aims to understand how those perspectives shape emotional investment, care practices, and ethical considerations in the hospice setting by examining the sociological and neurobiological basis for reciprocity in all relationships, but especially in end-of-life caregiving where normative interactions of reciprocity are often not possible.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Aidan Seale-Feldman

*States of Crisis: Possibilities of Work and Care in the
American Mental Health Crisis*

Jake Harris

Anthropology Honors

Health, Humanities, and Society minor

In recent years, perceptions of an "American mental health crisis" have grown significantly. This crisis, though affects Americans not as a collective whole but through the particularized and individual experience of being in crisis. In what ways, then, can crisis be experienced? How does crisis shift between personal experience and collective event? Through six months of ethnographic fieldwork in a mental health crisis center in a small Mid-western city, I trace the emergence of the "American mental health crisis" through the relations and interactions between clients and staff in the crisis center. By creating a space in which staff are able to provide clients with a kind of recognition and care, I argue that the crisis center enables possibilities of recovery otherwise unavailable to clients. The opening of the center reveals the tensions, ambiguities, and uncertainties of crisis care and the idiosyncratic forms through which crisis is experienced.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Aidan Seale-Feldman

Funding: ISLA

Emotional Experiences of Nurses During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Impacts on Care

Mehwish Rehman

Anthropology, Spanish (supp.)

Health, Humanities, and Society minor

This project analyzes the emotional experiences of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic and their impacts on care using semi-structured interviews. The most prevalent emotions felt by nurses include fear, sadness, frustration, and feelings of resilience. This research highlights the need for more substantial emotional support for nurses. It also emphasizes the need to assess and address the current strains on the nursing workforce, such as nurse-patient ratios and nurse pay, that has been brought to light by previous research.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Vania Smith-Oka

Cases and Conversations of Jasper, Indiana: The Role of Heritage and Living Memory in Midwestern Identity Formation

Alyssa Miulli

History, Anthropology, Glynn Family Honors Program

This paper explores the relationship between European immigration and its lasting effects on the cultural makeup of the American Midwest. Despite historical narratives of erasure and decline, the town of Jasper, Indiana serves as a contemporary testament to the role of cultural heritage in placemaking. The unique balance of rural isolation, economic opportunity, and generational investment created a successful framework for Jasper to thrive in the modern age.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Emiliano Aguilar, Department of History

Funding: Glynn Family Honors Program

Beneath the Shell: Climate Reconstruction of the Little Ice Age at Middle Grant Creek and Collier Lodge

Charlotte Cardarella

Anthropology Honors and Arabic

The Little Ice Age is defined as a time between the 15th and 19th centuries in which global temperatures were lower than the modern global average. The impact this period had on the Midwest's climate can be analyzed through stable oxygen and carbon isotope ratios from freshwater mussel shells such as *Actinonaias ligamentina*. These reconstructions are beneficial to finding temperature and precipitation records within a specific geographical location. This project uses evidence from shell isotope proxies to reconstruct climates from Middle Grant Creek and Collier Lodge in order to explore the seasonality of shell harvesting with regard to climate change.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Mark Schurr

Funding: UROP Conference Presentation Grant

The Coyote Village Pottery Project, Mesa Verde National Park

Maggie Winter

Anthropology Honors, Data Science minor

This elemental composition analysis builds on the Coyote Village Pottery Project (CVPP), which aims to address the lack of documentation of the extensive pottery assemblage from Coyote Village (5MV820), a 35-room pueblo within the Far View community. Five sherds each of the Kiatuthlanna, Red Mesa, Dogoszhi, and Sosi styles were selected from both Kiva D and Room #23 (n=40). Their elemental compositions were determined through micro-XRF analysis. Differences within the paints and slips were processed using Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) clustering, identifying four compositional groups within the paint samples and two within the slip samples, along with several outliers. The resulting clusters' characteristics contribute to the growing understanding of Coyote Village, reveal insights into social and economic patterns, and underscore the importance of specifying design types in Southwestern ceramic analysis.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Donna Glowacki and Dr. Edward Stech (Department of Physics & Astronomy)

Funding: UROP Conference Presentation Grant

*Dead Sea Tea Party: An Analysis of Variation in
Early Bronze Age IV Mortuary Practices at
Bab adh-Dhra`, Jordan*

Mattie Kohl

Anthropology Honors, Theology

This project explores mortuary practices in the Early Bronze Age IV (EB IV; 2400-2000 BCE) cemetery at Bab adh-Dhra`, Jordan. This cemetery offers researchers an opportunity to compare EB IV mortuary practices with the remains from an associated village settlement to assess the nature of socioeconomic differentiation within a post-urban community. EB IV tombs were examined to exemplify variation in how EB IV people treated their dead, including primary and secondary mortuary practices and the inclusion of different grave goods. The range of practices indicates participation in rituals designed to preserve a sense of community and personhood.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Meredith Chesson

Funding: UROP Conference Presentation Grant

Poster Presentations

2nd Floor Corbett Hall 1:40-2:00 PM

Power, Mobility, and Memory: Examining the Impact of Social Background on the Birthing Process

Aislinn Fernandes and Skylar Jones

Science Pre-professional Studies, Compassionate Care in
Medicine; Gender Studies and Pre-Health

For women from disadvantaged social and educational backgrounds, power dynamics and poor communication significantly shape their birthing experiences. These factors limit their ability to make informed choices about how and where they want to give birth, and they also influence how they might remember the experience. As a result, what should be a joyful and empowering moment often becomes a painful and disempowering one, leaving a lasting negative impact on collective memory. This poster focuses on ethnographic data that details the ways in which social backgrounds affect birthing experiences and therefore mobility and memory in Mexico and South America, contributing to research that already shows that doctors and other health professionals, often influenced by biases related to social status, exert control over women's bodies during labor and delivery.

Faculty Mentor: Dr Vania Smith-Oka

Funding: College of Science, ISLA

Pre-med students' cortisol profiles, stress, and social support dynamics while preparing for the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)

Lauren Bell

Neuroscience and Behavior; Anthropology minor

The Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) is a significant academic challenge for pre-medical students, often contributing to heightened stress and anxiety. This study examines the relationship between stress, social support, and physiological stress responses in pre-med students preparing for the MCAT. Using a longitudinal design, we measured salivary cortisol profiles, perceived stress, anxiety, and social support at two-time points: one month before and two days before the exam. Results indicate that students with higher anxiety exhibit flatter diurnal cortisol slopes, suggesting dysregulated stress responses. In addition, greater social support correlates with steeper cortisol slopes, implying a protective effect against chronic stress. These findings underscore the importance of social support in mitigating stress and promoting resilience among students facing high-stakes academic pressures. Understanding these dynamics can inform strategies to enhance student well-being in rigorous academic environments.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Lee Gettler

Funding: ISLA materials grant and COS travel grant

An Analysis Medical Supplies Needs of Mexican Physicians During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kayla Bucci

Science Preprofessional, Anthropology minor,

Health, Humanities, and Society minor

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on all members of society, especially doctors and other healthcare workers. The pandemic has caused increased stress as a result of heavier workload, the severity of the emergency, and lack of sufficient support and supplies. This poster is based on a survey of doctors at public and private hospitals in Puebla, Mexico carried out in 2020 that investigated their stress levels within the pandemic along with a free list survey about medical supplies needed for Covid patients vs non-Covid patients. This project focuses on the analysis of the supplies free lists.

Faculty Mentor: Dr Vania Smith-Oka

DEPARTMENT OF
ANTHROPOLOGY

Thank you
for joining us!