

# Sociology & Anthropology

@  Muhlenberg College

Spring 2019

## Senior Symposium

Annual highlight for Seniors in CUE and Honors Students.

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New courses, highlights, and more...

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## Interview with an Anthropologist

Feature interview with Dr. Maura Finkelstein on her new book, *The Archive of Loss*, published by Duke University Press.

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## Letter from an Outgoing Chair

Dr. Janine Chi is stepping down after ten years as Chair of the Department.

To Students, Colleagues, Alumni, Friends and Supporters of the Soc/Ath Department:

I first stepped into the position of chairing this department in 2009. I was newly tenured, and honored to have been asked to lead this department. In those days, we were a four-faculty department and our offices were located in Ettinger Hall. Today, we are a seven-person department, and have relocated to our own department space on Leh Street. Thank you to everyone who has supported and believed in us – and the work that we do.

I would be remiss if I characterized this past decade as having been easy; this position is not for those who yearn to be adored or desire to be listened to. I learned to listen, abide, persuade, and adhere. And, to be clear, these are not skills that are necessarily taught nor celebrated in graduate school. Learning how to work with College bureaucracy, balance my teaching (and research) expectations with administrative responsibilities, managing student and faculty concerns (and complaints!), maintaining enrollments, and mentoring junior faculty are all part and parcel of being a Chair of a Department; never mind the numerous administrative forms and reports that are part of our responsibilities. I learned how to do all of this by doing; such is the case for most of our disciplines – learning by practice. Being the Chair of this department has taught me a few things; one of most important lessons is to “pick your battles.” Perhaps this is a lesson all of us could benefit from.

Ten years later in 2019, I remain honored to have served this department. I have overseen a variety of personnel transitions, including retirements, departures, and new hires. I am proud to say that we have remained strong and confident as a department, and continue to contribute to the College in unique and integral ways. (cont'd pg2)



### Dr. Ben Carter, new Chair of the Department

Newly tenured Associate Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Carter will serve as the Department's Chair, beginning in June 2019. Dr. Carter teaches courses on Archaeology & Prehistory, Archaeology of Food, Historical Ecology, and Field Archaeology.

His research focuses on the manufacture and use of shell beads and other pre-Columbian Ecuadorian artifacts. Dr. Carter and his students also conduct research on charcoal burners (a.k.a colliers) of the Blue Mountain in Lehigh Valley.

More than ever, I believe that our disciplines uphold the ideals of higher education by providing our students with the tools to critically confront prevailing current global realities and challenging socio-historical problems.

Unfortunately, there is no rest for the weary. I am conscious of the fact that just as there is a learning curve (however sharp) as a Department Chair, there is a similar learning curve to not be a Chair. I have to unlearn my instincts that I have honed from the past decade; I have to learn to trust others who have different, better, (and more effective) ideas to address concerns and problems. Just as I have had to “take on,” I have to learn how to “let go.” This does not mean that I will have less responsibility, but it means that I have to learn how to be more, if not as, effective – just not as a Chair.

Again, these are not lessons that the profession prepares us for. Nonetheless, I have faith in my department colleagues that they will generously let me learn these lessons, and support my new (welcomed) role.

There is a Chinese proverb: 长江后浪推前浪

It refers to the fact that there will always be new waves behind the old waves; that each “new” generation will surpass that of the previous generations, and that things will always evolve. I am proud to leave the department in the capable hands of my junior colleagues. They have the necessary vision, energy, and capacity to take the department to new heights. I look forward to being part of that endeavor.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Senior Symposium

Directed by Drs. Finkelstein and Sadeghi, this year’s annual senior symposium features two anthropology students who will present their independent honors theses projects, and sociology students who will present their CUE (culminating undergraduate experience) research in the form of group posters. These projects represent the culmination of students’ disciplinary training and mentorship in the department, and the symposium affords majors the opportunity to present their independent research to an audience of faculty, friends, and family.

### Anthropology Honors Presentations

*“Horsing Around: An Analysis of Care & Relationships at a Therapeutic Riding Facility”*  
**Samantha Brown**

My research seeks to understand the ways in which a therapeutic riding facility in Allentown, Pennsylvania effectively builds relationships between students, staff, volunteers, and horses. How do people build relationships with horses? What can we learn about care work in the context of therapeutic riding? To gather data, I completed six interviews and two and a half years of participant-observation by volunteering weekly onsite.

*“Local Legend: A Look at the Life of a Black Collier”*  
**Stu Hanford**

This paper analyzes the story of Joseph Johns, as it appears in local publications. He was an African-American ex-slave and collier who lived in northern Lebanon County, Pennsylvania from about the 1850s until 1906. Johns’ life has been relatively well reported on compared to many former slaves and nearly all colliers, but certain aspects stand out as unusual. Clear differences in his story over time combine with details that contradict what little information there is about other colliers. 12 local newspaper articles and a book published about Johns between 1906 and the present were collected. The documents were scanned with optical character recognition (OCR) and word frequencies were analyzed to quantitatively demonstrate thematic change over time. Further, the details of Johns’ story were compared with documentation of other colliers to highlight significant differences. Ultimately, the two analyses support the conclusion that Johns’ life probably differed from collier norms substantially, making him a unique and interesting example of a collier.

## Sociology Poster Presentations

### *“Students for Reproductive Justice and Sexual Health Resources at Muhlenberg College.”*

**Taylor Chase and Bridgette Opaczewski**

This project examines the role that student engagement plays in sexual health resources on campus. We use Students for Reproductive Justice (SRJ) as a case study to examine and understand the role that student organizing plays in providing more access to resources and services. By exploring SRJ’s activities, accomplishments, and challenges, we investigate how SRJ has advocated for more sexual health services, such as condom dispensers and Plan B, along with providing education for the student body. Utilizing in-depth interviews with prior SRJ presidents and Health Center staff, along with content analysis of existing campus resources and SRJ documents, we aim to show how SRJ has been able to identify the gaps in resources provided by Muhlenberg, and organize to provide missing information and bring new sexual health services to campus.

### *“Uncovering the Historical Narrative and Social Significance of the Muhlenberg College Bowling Alley.”*

**Evan Geissler and Diana Leguizamon**

This research aims to investigate the removal of the bowling alley at Muhlenberg College and will further examine whether Muhlenberg College is an anomaly in this sense or if the removal of the bowling alley is characteristic of social changes at liberal arts colleges across the U.S. Our research analyzes historical archives such as the *Muhlenberg Weekly* and interviews with individuals who were here concurrently with the bowling alley. We also analyze the historical narrative of bowling in the United States to help inform our analysis of the bowling alley at Muhlenberg College. We aim to understand whether or not the removal of the bowling alley is linked to changes in student demographics at Muhlenberg, specifically changes in social class, or if it is linked to an attempt by the college administration to change the image of Muhlenberg College with regards to social class. Preliminary analysis indicates that the removal of the bowling alley was not instigated by factors involving social class at Muhlenberg.

### *“Availability or Comfortability?: Black Student Experiences with Academic Resources at Muhlenberg.”*

**Shaynie Hayward and Jourdan Layne**

This research aims to examine the experiences of black students on a predominately white college campus, such as Muhlenberg College. Specifically, we want to explore their comfort in interacting with academic resources, such as the Writing Center. Our project utilizes three methods of inquiry: participant observation, archival research and content analysis, as well as interviews with students and faculty involved with the Writing Center. Our preliminary findings point toward the significant role that race and social class play in mediating experiences of social comfort and familiarity at the Writing Center. We hope that this research furthers discussions about the important role that race and class play in producing various sets of experiences for college students at Muhlenberg. This project can aid in highlighting the factors and conditions needed to create an environment where students of all backgrounds feel like they equally belong and are participating members of the larger student body and College.

### *“The Right to Restrooms: Bureaucracy, Student Engagement, and the History of Public Restrooms at Muhlenberg College.”*

**Kallen Ryden and Grace Wilkins**

This project looks at the change in discourse and policy surrounding restroom accessibility on campus, from the start of Muhlenberg to present day, with hypotheses of future progression. Focusing specifically on bureaucracy and student advocacy, we look at how the recent increase of all gender restrooms on campus might reflect group belonging, as well as symbolic boundaries within the Muhlenberg community.

# New Courses and Curricular Highlights

## Fall 2019

### *ATH 285: Queer Anthropology (Dr. Finkelstein)*

This course engages in a broad reading of contemporary ethnographies of non-normative genders and sexualities, broadly defined as “queer.” Our emphasis will be on understanding anthropology’s contribution to and relationship with gay and lesbian/queer studies and queer theory. In doing so, the class will ground itself in several critical “classic” texts in order to trace a rough genealogy of “queer anthropology” as a sub-discipline. From there, we will be reading, talking, and writing about current debates and developments in the field and what the future of a queer anthropology of gender and sexuality may hold.

### *ATH 186: Human Ecology (Dr. Carter & Dr. Heiman)*

Throughout history human societies have interacted with and depended upon ecosystems, extracting resources, modifying habitats to suit their needs and wants, and attempting to control ecological processes to benefit their livelihoods. These activities leave their mark on the landscape and on ecosystems, even changing the way ecosystems function. It is at this intersection of human society and ecology that this course will dwell, diving into historical and recent impacts on the environment, the ecological consequences of those interactions, and how societies adapt to changing environmental conditions. Emphasis will be placed on identifying similarities in human use and environmental impact in modern and historic times. We will also emphasize lessons that are transferable from historic to modern societies about adapting to changes in the availability of natural resources, environmental stress, and abrupt unexpected shifts in environmental stability. This team-taught course will use a local case study, multiple field trips, and community-engaged projects to explore historical and modern issues of human environmental degradation.

### *FYS 296: Transgender Peoples and Cultures Around the World (Dr. Miller)*

This new first-year seminar is designed to introduce students to the anthropological and historical study of transgender peoples and cultures while also helping them develop and strengthen their writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Students will discuss and write about a range of texts that explore transgender lives and cultures from around the globe, from the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, an intersex person from nineteenth-century France, to ethnographic studies of American drag queens in the 1960s and contemporary transgender communities in Brazil and India.

## Spring 2020

### *MILA “Public Health in Practice: Panamá” (Dr. Adams & Dr. Sutherland)*

This course challenges students to develop the intercultural competencies needed for public health work in the physical and social context of Latin America. Students will learn to: (1) identify public health issues of concern that are common in the U.S. and in Latin America, (2) define challenges and opportunities unique to the health care context in Latin America, (3) observe and evaluate concrete examples of how race, ethnicity, religion, geography, and socioeconomic conditions impact health in Panamá, (4) anticipate areas of need, opposition to, and support for vulnerable populations, and (5) work with local and international agencies to propose and initiate concrete solutions to specific problems.

## When did you first start researching on India? How did you first get started on the book?

I first came to Mumbai in 2006, having never been to the city before (although I had spent a substantial amount of time living and traveling in North India, beginning in 2000). Some long-time friends were living in Lower Parel and my visit to their flat was my first exposure to the mill lands. That sparked my interest in the mill land neighborhoods and sent me down the rabbit hole of what was happening in the center of the city and how the long-time residents/workers were being impacted by the development/redevelopment of their homes and workplaces. That was the dissertation spark.

As for the book, the core arguments took time. I knew there was a deeper story/argument that I hadn't quite located in the dissertation but it took years for me to figure out exactly what they were. I first drafted the book over the summer of 2016 with a blurry sense of purpose but I don't think I really figured out what I wanted to say about archives and ruination and layers of urban visibility and invisibility until the summer of 2017. There were many (many!) drafts as my ideas worked their way to the surface.

## Were there surprises in the data/observations and in your writing?

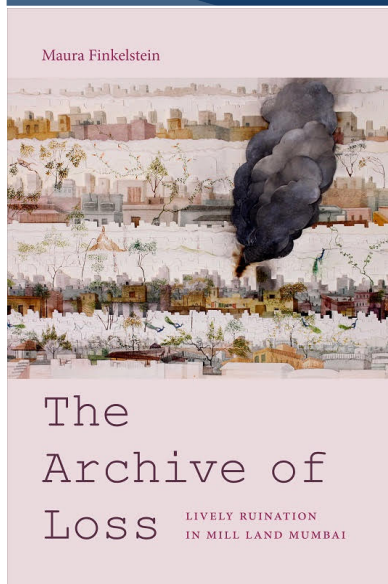
This project took ten years and some of the writing in the book is taken directly from my fieldnotes when I lived in Mumbai from 2008- 2010, some of the writing was brand new during my follow up field research in 2017. And so the book is a palimpsest of my voice over a decade. It was uncanny to encounter so many versions of myself within the same document. And this is also connected to the surprises of data and observations: I really believe, at its core, that this is a book about ethnographic methods.

My second chapter begins with me reading an excerpt from my field notes at different moments over an expanse of years. And every time I read what the woman I call "Manda" said to me I see different meanings in her words. And so I'm forced to ask "how do we know what we know? How do we know what we *think* we know?" I believe this is true about both observations/data and about writing - meaning changes, language changes. Interpretation shifts over time and place.

## What lessons are there for the U.S.?

I have been told (and now tell others) that good ethnography is both timeless and timely. I hope the book is both. I think there's something to be learned about how we are telling our story in the US right now.

## Interview with an Anthropologist.



“ how do we make that shifting perspective visible in the work we produce?”

*Dr. Finkelstein's book is available on Amazon!*

My book, while focused on Mumbai, is also generally grappling with uncertain futures in the context of rapid urban transformation; with how we can make otherwise invisible and "irrelevant" communities present and lively and visible. How we can learn how to see people we have been taught to "unsee." And that feels particularly relevant for us in the US right now.

## What about ethnography is exciting to you?

Sitting in the mill, day after day, watching the workers work.... the mill was loud, dark, hot. Often times it seemed as though nothing interesting was happening. Often the workers themselves were bored: turning the machines off, taking naps. Sitting by the windows to catch the breeze. Sipping tea and staring off into space. But I think that's where the beauty of ethnography lies. Not in anything that can easily be categorized as "exciting," but through the emergent rhythms of the ordinary - the way meaning is buried within the everyday. There is poetry in the mundane - the question is how we choose to pay attention to it. That, as it turns out, is what I find exciting. What I find beautiful.

# Faculty Annual Research Highlights



Highlighting the different individual and collaborative research projects that department members have with students and colleagues.

## Dr. Crystal Adams

Dr. Adams published two peer-reviewed articles in *Qualitative Health Research* and *Health, Risk & Society*. In addition, Dr. Adams also attended and presented her work at the Eastern Sociological Society's annual conference. She has also received a summer research grant on behalf of the Faculty Development and Scholarship Committee to continue her current work on doulas (mid-wives) and health care.

## Dr. Ben Carter

Dr. Ben Carter published an article entitled, "Identifying Landscape Modification using Open Data and Tools: The Charcoal Hearths of the Blue Mountain, Pennsylvania" in the journal, *Historical Archaeology* (<https://rdcu.be/btrGi>). He also presented the research that he and his students are conducting on the Blue Mountain at the Lynne/ Heidelberg Historical Society Annual Dinner to an audience of 85 attendees. Dr. Carter and his students have discovered more than 760 charcoal hearths (where the charcoal was made) and 13 colliers (the men who made the charcoal) huts on the mountain, where they lived for eight months out of the year.

## Dr. Janine Chi

Dr. Chi presented a paper on alternative study abroad experiences with co-author Dr. Ouellette (History) at the Association for American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) conference on Global Learning in Seattle this past fall. She and Dr. Ouellette received a summer research grant on behalf of the Faculty Development and Scholarship Committee to complete the manuscript for publication.

## Dr. Maura Finkelstein

Dr. Finkelstein published a peer-reviewed article, "Ghosts in the Gallery: The Vitality of Anachronism in a Mumbai Chawl" in *Anthropological Quarterly*, Summer 2018. She also attended and presented papers at the Madison South Asia Conference, the American Anthropological Association yearly meetings, and the Duke University Feminist Theory Workshop. She was invited to give talks at Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Finkelstein continues her work on a new research project at an urban farm and equine therapy facility that explores how individuals experiencing cognitive, physical and emotional challenges reimagine their futures outside the limits of diagnosis.

## Dr. Casey Miller

Dr. Miller was invited to Bryn Mawr College to talk about his research with grassroots queer men's AIDS activism in northwest China. He also participated in the 2018 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Jose, California, where he presented a paper entitled "We Are All Inside the Circle: Toward a Hybrid Chinese/Queer Theory" and co-organized a mentoring workshop for the Association for Queer Anthropology. Dr. Miller also presented a work in progress, "Love Doesn't Last a Lifetime: The Circularity and (Anti)Normativity of Queer Personhood, Time and Kinship in Postsocialist Northwest China" at the 2019 Muhlenberg Humanities Forum.

## Dr. Sahar Sadeghi

Dr. Sadeghi published a peer-reviewed article, "Racial Boundaries, Stigma, and the re-emergence of 'always being foreigners': Iranians and the refugee crisis in Germany" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* this past fall. She also presented her research at the American Sociological Association, Iranian Studies, and Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies. In addition, Dr. Sadeghi received a summer research grant on behalf of the Faculty Development and Scholarship Committee to complete her book project on the Iranian Diaspora in the United States and Germany.

# Chinese Table with Dr. Miller

In the fall of 2018, Dr. Miller launched the Chinese Table. As the newest addition to the College's language table offerings, Chinese Table works to create and support a Chinese language learning and speaking community at Muhlenberg by bringing together students (including students learning Chinese and international students who speak Chinese), staff and faculty for bi-weekly Chinese conversations and camaraderie.

Chinese Table recently celebrated its successful first year by throwing a hot pot party in the Sociology & Anthropology classroom, which was sponsored by Languages, Literatures & Cultures, Asian Studies and the Office of International Student Support. Here's to another year of Chinese Table in AY 2019-2020!



Contact Dr.  
Miller  
([caseymiller@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:caseymiller@muhlenberg.edu))  
if you are  
interested in  
participating in  
Chinese Table.

## Muhlenberg College

2400 W. Chew Street  
Allentown PA 18104

### [Recipient]

Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
Address Line 3  
Address Line 4