

UConn ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT- NEWSLETTER

NOV 2025 ISSUE NO. 2



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UConn ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT – 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW NEWSLETTER



Letter from the Editors – The Equity & Inclusion Committee

Dear UConn Anthropology Community,

We are thrilled to share the Fall 2025 edition of the UConn Anthropology Newsletter with you. This Year in Review issue highlights the extraordinary research, teaching, community engagement, and achievements that have defined our department over the past year.

Our newsletter serves to strengthen our community's connection by showcasing the dynamic work of our faculty, students, postdocs, and collaborators from around the world. We aim to celebrate scholarship, acknowledge milestones, and provide opportunities that enhance our collective understanding of anthropology in all its rich diversity.

We sincerely apologize for the absence of a spring edition. This hiatus allowed us to gather more stories and accomplishments from 2025, and we are excited to present this thorough year-end summary. If any news or achievements have been unintentionally missed, please understand it was not deliberate. We appreciate every contribution and eagerly anticipate including your updates in the forthcoming Spring 2026 edition.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement, enthusiasm, and willingness to share your work. Here's to another year filled with collaboration, discovery, and community.

*Warm regards,
The Equity and Inclusion Committee
Department of Anthropology
University of Connecticut*

The latest on this month's issue:

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On the Shelf and Stage: Publications & Presentations

This year, faculty, students, and research affiliates from UConn Anthropology made remarkable contributions through publications, conference presentations, and outreach efforts, demonstrating their global impact in fields such as archaeology, medical anthropology, religion, identity, and community engagement. Their endeavors highlight a dedication to connecting human experiences across various times and cultures.

Alexia Smith co-authored “A High-Resolution Paleoenvironmental Record Based on Phytoliths from the Armenian Highlands: The Upper Paleolithic of Aghitu-3 Cave,” published in **Journal of Archaeological Science Reports** 64 (2025), alongside Johan Jarl and colleagues.

- “Excavation and Geophysical Survey at Kurd Qaburstan on the Erbil Plain, Field Season 2022” (Iraq, in press, 2025).
- “Managing Climate Change in the Fourth and Second Millennia BCE at Çadır Höyük,” featured in **From the Halys to the Euphrates and Tigris: In the Footsteps of Cultures and Civilizations** (Bilgin Kültür Sanat Publishing House, 2025).
- “Considerations of Gendered Plant Use in Antiquity” in **A Cultural History of Gender** (Bloomsbury Press, in press).
- Presented research on Byzantine plant use at the American Schools of Overseas Research (Boston, Nov 2025) and delivered the invited talk “Exploring the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Age of AI: Implications for Archaeology” at East China Normal University’s Summer Program (July 2025).

Alice Leplongeon was the lead author of “The Last Glacial Maximum in the Tropics: Human Responses to Global Change 30–10 ka,” published in **Journal of World Prehistory** (Sept 2025). This study investigates how early human populations adapted to significant climate changes in tropical regions, offering new insights into resilience during global environmental transitions.

Bruno Seraphin authored “‘But Who Were You in It?’ Wildtending and the Human,” published in **Hunter Gatherer Research** (2025), and the essay “How Ecofascism Creeps” in **American Quarterly** (2025). His research examines the intersection of ecological identity and political ideologies within environmental and cultural discourse, emphasizing the narrative’s role in shaping social belonging and resistance.

Christian Tryon contributed filmed commentary for the BBC documentary series **Human** and conducted oral history interviews in Washington, DC, for a significant project chronicling the evolution of modern paleoanthropology. His public scholarship connects research in deep human history with broader public engagement.



On the Shelf and Stage: Publications & Presentations Continued

Daniel Adler — Led and contributed to a series of interdisciplinary studies on Palaeolithic archaeology in Armenia and Georgia, conducted in collaboration with colleagues at UConn, Wesleyan University, and research partners in Armenia, Georgia, and the UK. Recent publications include:

- T.Z. Kovach et al. 2025. “Small Tools, Big Moves: Navigating the Upper Paleolithic Landscape of Armenia with New Data from Solak-1.” *Journal of Paleolithic Archaeology*.
- J.P. Gill et al. 2025. “The Shape of Technology to Come: An Examination of Evolutionary Relationships between Bifacial and Core Technologies at the Lower–Middle Palaeolithic Boundary Across Regions in Eurasia.” *Journal of Human Evolution* 205.
- dler et al. 2025. “Not by Chemistry Alone: Tephrostratigraphy, Correlation, and Context at Two Palaeolithic Sites in the Southern Caucasus and Armenian Highlands.” *Quaternary Science Reviews* 356.
- Wilkinson et al. 2025. “The Geoarchaeology, Chronology, and Environment of Lusakert-1, a Late Middle Palaeolithic Rockshelter (Kotayk, Armenia).” *Quaternary Humans and Environments* 3.

Dimitris Xygalatas co-authored “Route of Fire: Pre-Game Rituals and Emotional Synchrony,” published in **PNAS** (June 2025). This study illustrates how collective rituals can strengthen emotional bonds among Brazilian football fans. He also co-authored “Strengthening Social Networks Through a Collective Islamic Ritual,” which is forthcoming in **Psychology of Religion & Spirituality**, further delving into how shared practices enhance social connections and well-being.

Mary Bugbee presented “The Impacts of Private Equity in the U.S.: Micro and Macro Perspectives” at the Princeton Conference (November 2025). Her research critically analyzes the financialization of the healthcare sector and its effects on accessibility and equity in care.

Nate Acebo published “Questions Worth Asking: Reparations, Reconciliation, Restitution, and Reclamation” in **American Antiquity** (Spring 2025). Additionally, he co-authored the upcoming chapter “Transformative Indigenous Knowledge and Stories in Colonial California,” set to appear in **The End of Epistemology in Archaeology? Indigenous Knowledges, Ontologies and the Crisis of Traditional Philosophies of Knowledge in Archaeology** (University of Arizona Press, 2026), alongside Peter Nelson (UC Berkeley). His research advocates for archaeologists to address colonial legacies and embrace more equitable, community-centered approaches to heritage.

On the Shelf and Stage: Publications & Presentations Continued

Sarah Willen was the lead author of The Pandemic Journaling Project: A New Dataset of First-Person Accounts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, published in **PLOS One** (2025), co-authored with Katherine A. Mason, Heather M. Wurtz, and Sebastian Karcher. This publication introduces a global archive of personal reflections documenting pandemic experiences.

- Delivered the invited presentation “Picturing (and Remembering) a Pandemic” at the Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry, Maxwell School for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY; with K.A. Mason).
- The accompanying exhibition, *Picturing the Pandemic: Images from the Pandemic Journaling Project*, traveled to two new locations in 2025:
 - Homer Babbidge Library at UConn (March)
 - Maxwell School at Syracuse University (April–May).

Additional 2025 Publications:

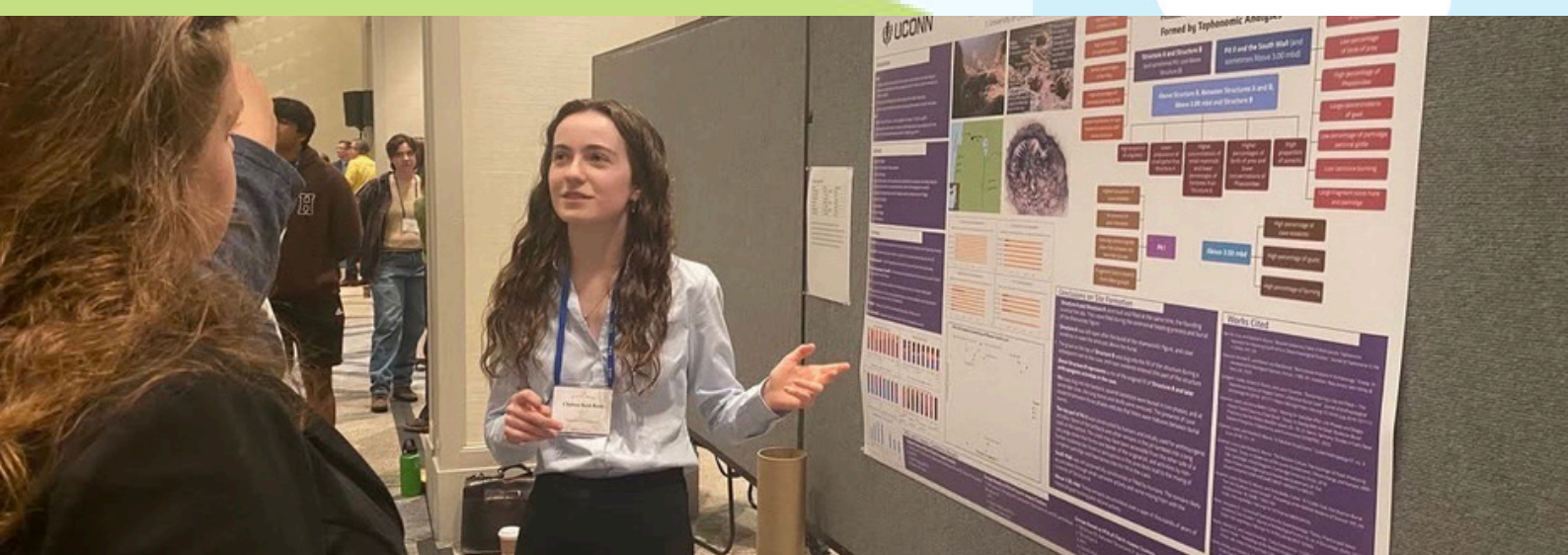
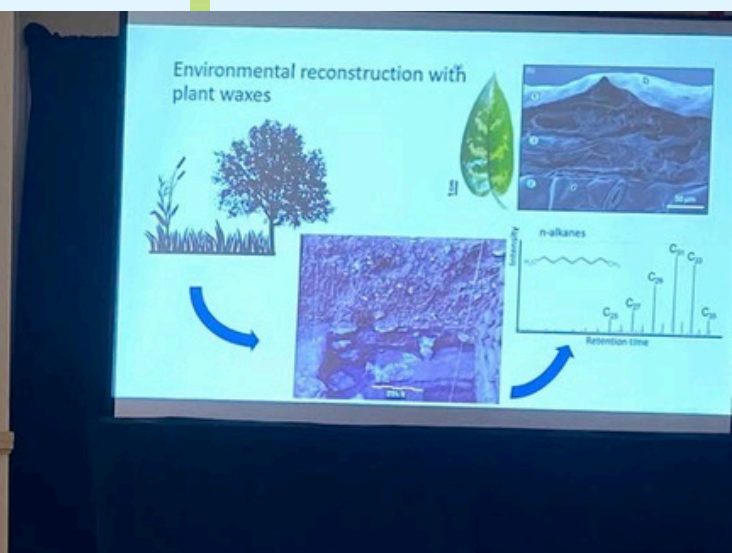
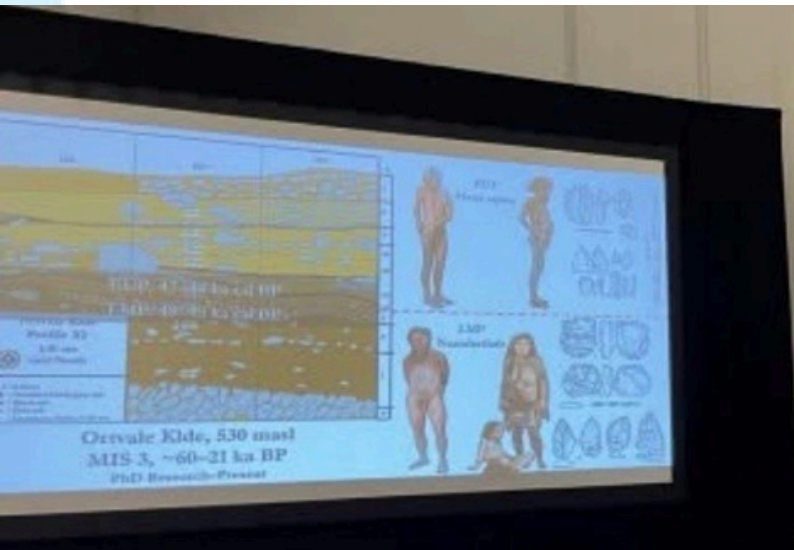
- “Equity and Human Rights in Freefall: Bad News about a ‘Good News’ Exhibition at CDC,” **Health Affairs Forefront** (Aug 2025).
- “Cyberspatial Agency: Experimenting with Gender Expression in Digital Worlds Amidst the Physical Isolation of the United States COVID-19 Pandemic,” **Feminist Anthropology** (2025, e70020), co-authored with H  l  ne Comer, Katherine A. Mason, and Heather M. Wurtz.

Gideon Hartman co-authored “Archaic Humans in the Middle Palaeolithic Levant Conducted Planned and Selective Intercepts of Aurochs, but Not Mass Hunting,” *Scientific Reports* (2025), and “An Isotopic Perspective on Equid Selection in Cult at Tell eṣ-Şâfi/Gath, Israel,” *PLOS One* (2025). He also co-authored studies presented at international conferences, including isotopic analyses of faunal assemblages from Jerusalem, Melka Kunture, Melka Wakena, and Gadeb (Ethiopian Highlands), as well as zooarchaeological work on Upper Paleolithic fauna from Sefunim Cave (Mt. Carmel, Israel). These contributions highlight ongoing collaborations exploring environmental and behavioral adaptations across prehistoric Levantine and East African contexts.

Sarah Williams co-authored “Biosocial Factors Shaping Perceptions of Disease Risk Among Sexual and Gender Minority People,” in *American Journal of Human Biology** (Aug 2025). This paper explores how structural inequality and lived experiences influence health risk perceptions. She presented “Stitching Together: Collaborative Fiber Arts as Method and Wellness” at the Society for Cultural Anthropology Meeting, highlighting creative interdisciplinary approaches to scholarship and healing. Additionally, she presented “Eugenic Idols: Birth Tourism and Specters of Ir/responsible Reproduction in Mexico” at the UConn Humanities Institute (Fall 2025).

Tiziana Matarazzo was the lead author of “A Quantitative Micromorphological Study of Cultivated Paleosols in Campi Flegrei Volcanic Ashes,” in **Journal of Environmental Archaeology** (Aug 2025). Her research combines soil science and archaeology to uncover ancient agricultural practices in the volcanic landscapes of southern Italy.

Elle Shoreman-Ouimet presented “On the Brink: Examining Preemptive Indicators of Disaster Vulnerability in Connecticut” at the CIRCA Planning for a Network of Resilience Hubs for Community Preparedness in Connecticut Workshop (April 2025). Also participated as a panelist at “Building Energy Resilience: UConn’s Research Impact” for the Northeast Renewable Energy Coalition (NREC) (June 2025) and at the Connecticut Symposium on Climate Change and Health at Yale University (Sept 2025).



In the News!

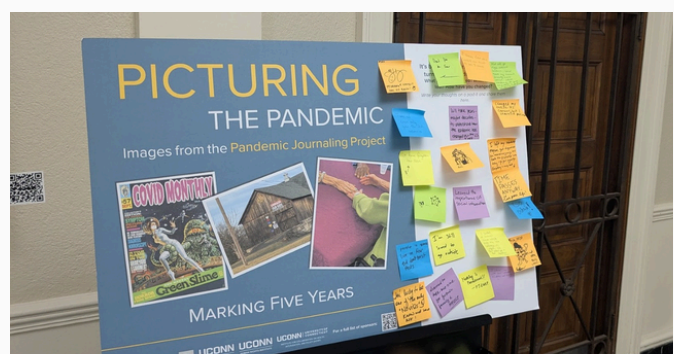


Celebrating Our Department's Media Presence

Members of our department have gained significant recognition in various media outlets and public discussions, sharing valuable anthropological insights with a broader audience. Through national research profiles, public essays, digital exhibits, and university highlights, these stories showcase how UConn anthropologists are shaping conversations around health, heritage, equity, and the human experience.

Notable Highlights

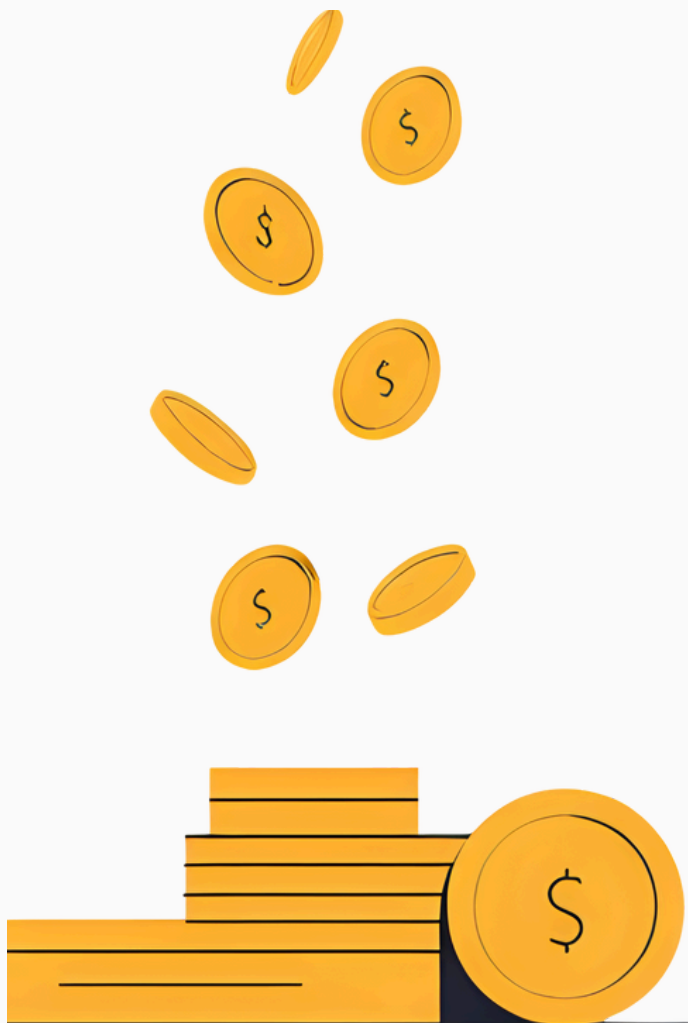
- Bryce Turner (Undergraduate) — Featured in **UConn Today** (August 2025) for his honors thesis research on maternity care deserts in rural Connecticut.
- Danielle Nadeau — Profiled by the National Institute of Social Sciences for her dissertation on algorithmic justice and human rights.
- Dimitris Xygalatas — Authored the essays “To Save Nature, Make It Sacred” (**Noema**, October 2025) and “Jane Goodall Changed How We See Ourselves” (**Psychology Today**, October 2025).
- Françoise Dussart — Curated **In-Tension**, an Instagram-based exhibit with Benton Museum students, merging anthropology and art.
- Mary Bugbee — Research cited in the U.S. Senate Budget Committee’s **Profits Over Patients** report (March 2025).
- Sarah Willen — Interviewed alongside Kathryn Libal and Sebastian Wogenstein for **Badische Zeitung** in the article “Gegenwehr gegen Trump an US-Unis – das Beispiel Connecticut” (“Resistance to Trump at US Universities – The Example of Connecticut,” June 20, 2025). Featured in **UConn Today** article “Pandemic Journaling Project Reminds Universities of Their Impact” (September 29, 2025). Appeared on the podcast **Researching Happy** (“Who Gets to Define Flourishing? And What Are the Stakes?” hosted by Matt Iasiello, July 23, 2025).
- Sarah Williams — Highlighted in **Diario de Yucatán** for her research on reproductive health and gender in Mexico.



In the Bank: Grants, Fellowships & Other Awards

Our community at UConn Anthropology is increasingly gaining substantial backing from both external sources and the university itself, emphasizing our dedication to innovative research and teaching. The grants, fellowships, and awards we receive highlight the creative, collaborative, and community-focused spirit that defines our department. This support plays a crucial role in advancing our efforts, allowing us to make significant progress in areas such as social justice, heritage preservation, and the exploration of human diversity in all its forms. Through these initiatives, we continue to cultivate a vibrant academic environment that enriches our community and makes a meaningful contribution to the broader field of anthropology.

- **Bruno Seraphin & Nate Acebo** were awarded the Mellon Foundation Community-Based Archives Grant for the UConn Tribal Education Initiative with the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (2025).
- **Bruno Seraphin** was awarded the Faculty Research Grant in American Studies, UConn.
- **Camilo Ruiz** was awarded the Co-PI, InCHIP Community-Engaged Health Research Seed Grant Reclaiming Wages, Rebuilding Dignity, supporting grassroots organizing among Latinx immigrant communities.
- **Catalina Alvarado-Cañuta** was awarded the Humanities Institute Fellowship (UConn HRI, 2025–26) for research on Mapuche art and healing.
- **César Abadía-Barrero** was awarded the Salzburg Global Fellow, Centering on Equity: Transforming the Health Science Knowledge System.
- **Danielle Nadeau** was awarded the Dissertation Grant, National Institute of Social Sciences; Gladstein Family Human Rights Institute Graduate Research Award.
- **Dimitris Xygalatas** was awarded the Templeton Religion Trust and CLAS Multidisciplinary Research Awards for projects examining religion and cooperation.
- **Jes Cerdeña** was awarded the NSF Grant Understanding the Lived Experience of Genetic Testing, investigating identity and kinship through genomic data.
- **Nate Acebo** was awarded the Society for American Archaeology / Amerind Museum Outstanding Session Award (University of Arizona Press volume forthcoming, 2026).
- **Sarah Willen & Joshua Mayer** were awarded the Provost Grants for Common Curriculum course development (Health, Culture & Power; Mental Health & Well-Being).



RESEARCH STAFF AND POSTDOCTORAL HIGHLIGHTS

A Remarkable Year for the Paleoanthropology Lab

Under the leadership of Christian Tryon, the Paleoanthropology Lab had an exceptionally successful year. At its height, the lab supported four postdoctoral fellows: Drs. Giuseppina Mutri, Matthias Blessing, Alice Leplongeon, and Maayan Shemer. This support came from a variety of funding sources, including:

- The European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Postdoctoral Fellowship Program
- Germany's DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
- The Fulbright and Rothschild Foundations
- The University of Connecticut

Dr. Mutri has since moved to the University of Florence for the European segment of her fellowship, Dr. Blessing has taken on a postdoctoral position at the University of Vienna, and Dr. Leplongeon has secured a permanent role with the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) in France.

Updates from the Archaeobotany Lab

The Archaeobotany Lab, led by Alexia Smith, welcomed back Dr. Lucas Proctor (Postdoctoral Fellow) and Claire Cathers (Research Specialist) in 2025. Furthermore, Dr. Johan Jarl successfully completed his PhD during the summer of 2025.



CELEBRATING OUR FACULTY'S LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Notable Roles and Contributions in the UConn Anthropology Department

Here are some of the key administrative and leadership positions held by our esteemed faculty, staff, and students within the UConn Anthropology department and beyond. These roles reflect their commitment to academic advancement, community involvement, and interdisciplinary collaborations, which are essential for their professional growth and the future impact of the department.

Faculty and Staff Highlights

Alexia Smith — Serves as the Faculty Director of the Global House Learning Community and also takes on the roles of departmental Honors Advisor and UConn Early College Experience Coordinator for Anthropology, working closely with high school educators through the ECE program.

Bruno Seraphin — Currently on leave as the 2025–2026 Mellon Foundation Native American Scholars Initiative Postdoctoral Fellow at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, PA.

Elle Shoreman-Ouimet — Recently appointed as Associate Director of the UConn Institute of Energy & Environment.

Bruno Seraphin, Nate Acebo, & Joshua Mayer — Recognized with the University of Connecticut Provost's Award for Excellence in Community Engaged Scholarship (2025).

Nate Acebo — Acts as the AAA Archaeology Division Nominations Chair (2025) and serves as a consultant and community liaison for the UConn Provost Office concerning NAGPRA.



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Our students have achieved a remarkable array of accomplishments, showcasing their dedication and expertise. From successfully completing exams and defending dissertations to earning prestigious grants and fellowships, our students are making significant contributions to their academic disciplines. They are involved in groundbreaking research, internships, and collaborative projects that span diverse topics such as archaeology, humanities, and health. Here's a detailed list of their recent achievements:

- Abigail Beckham — Completed their qualifying exams (Summer 2025).
- Ash McLeod — Successfully defended her dissertation (April 2025).
- Brady Kelsey — Completed their qualifying exams (September 2025).
- Bryce Turner — Awarded the IDEA Grant and the UCHI Undergraduate Humanities Fellowship (April 2025); received the 2026 Krimerman Community Engagement Grant for their maternal health research project in Willimantic.
- Claire Cathers — Started a Cultural Resource Management internship at Idaho National Laboratory (September 2025).
- Danielle Nadeau — Approved dissertation prospectus titled *Justice in the Loop* (August 2025).
- Elena Skosey-Lalonde — Earned her PhD in April 2025.
- Johan Jarl — Earned his PhD in April 2025.
- Sara Ailshire — Earned her PhD in May 2025.
- Megan Alexander — Successfully defended her dissertation, *Care at the Threshold: Exploring Death Doula Practices in the Contemporary United States* (2025).
- Jason Gill — Recent PhD graduate (2025) who is continuing research on Palaeolithic technologies throughout Eurasia, he also accepted a lectureship in the Archaeology Program at the University of Western Australia.
- Iris Querenet Onfroy de Breville, Peyton Carroll, and Samantha Archer — PhD candidates in the Paleoanthropology Lab, making significant strides in their dissertation research focusing on colorants at Paleolithic sites in France, social structure during the Ice Age in Sicily, and the anthropology and history of science, respectively.
- Kieran Williams — Undergraduate student developing an honors thesis on the paleoenvironments of southern Italy during the last Ice Age.



Dr. Alexia Smith and Claire Cathers



Happy Heritage Summer School of the Academia Europaea Tbilisi Hub, the Georgian National Museum, and Kutaisi International University (KIU). Heritage, Science, and Modern Technologies Summer School, August 1, 2025, held at the Vani Museum. Participants and guest speakers.

Courses and Program Offerings

Upcoming Courses for Spring 2026

The courses listed below showcase the department's advanced offerings for Spring 2026. These upper-level and graduate classes represent the rich diversity of anthropological inquiry at UConn, incorporating biocultural, archaeological, linguistic, and sociocultural perspectives.

Course Offerings Beyond General Education

The following courses are available in addition to the General Education requirements:

- The Caribbean (Prof. Shemer)
- Medical Ecology (Prof. Williams)
- Race, Culture, and Reproductive Health (Prof. Williams)
- Introduction to Global Health (Prof. Ruiz)
- Political and Legal Anthropology (Prof. Saha Roy)
- Anthropological Perspectives on Women (Prof. Dussart)
- Ecological Anthropology Seminar (Prof. Ouimet)
- Lithic Technology (Prof. Adler)
- Zooarchaeological Method and Theory (Prof. Munro)
- The Neanderthals (Prof. Adler)
- Human Behavioral Ecology (Prof. Sosis)
- Environmental Anthropology (Prof. Ouimet)
- Ethnographic Methods I (Prof. Willen)
- Cognitive Science of Religion (Prof. Xygalatas)
- History of Archaeological Theory (Prof. Munro)



Fieldwork in action: students map sites at the Taatamay Field School in San Diego, California.

Redesign of the NAIS Minor

The Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) minor has been revamped to incorporate a Critical Indigenous Studies framework, emphasizing Indigenous methodologies, sovereignty, and decolonial scholarship. Students who began the Anthropology minor under the previous curriculum will still have the opportunity to fulfill their degree requirements under that curriculum.

Research Activities

- Christian Tryon — Fieldwork in Sicily and Kenya (2025).
- Department / Office of State Archaeology Field School — Contact Period & Battlefield Archaeology at the John Hollister Site (Glastonbury, CT) & Battle of Ridgefield (June 2025), available next summer (2026).
- Hohle Fels Cave Field School (Germany) — Excavation of Aurignacian and Middle Paleolithic layers from May to August 2025.
- Iris Querenet Onfroy de Breville — Pilot study encompassing collections in southwest France (Summer 2025).
- Kroum Batchvarov — Underwater archaeology in the Black Sea (Bulgaria).
- Nate Acebo — Inaugural UConn-hosted Taatamay Indigenous Archaeology Field School (San Diego, July 2025), available next summer (2026).
- Peyton Carroll — Archaeological fieldwork in Sicily (Summer 2025).
- Sarah Williams — Wenner-Gren-funded ethnographic fieldwork in Yucatán & Quintana Roo (Summer 2025).
- Elle Shoreman-Ouimet and Abigail Beckham — NOAA and CIRCA funded ethnographic fieldwork in Coastal Connecticut (Summer 2025).

Upcoming Social Events and Department Activities

Upcoming Events

Anthropology Pedagogy Workshop Series (Fall)

- Schedule: Wednesdays from 12:15 to 1:15 PM
- Location: Colloquium Room (BEACH 404)

Black Square Jazz Ensemble Performance

- Date: November 14, 2025
- Time: 8 PM
- Venue: Willimantic River Room
- Details: This event is made possible by the UConn Provost's STEAM Grant and will feature jazz musician Earl MacDonald, poet V. Penelope Pelizzon, entomologist David Wagner, and anthropologist Elle Ouimet.

Graduate Student Brown Bag Series

- Duration: Ongoing through Fall 2025 and Spring 2026
- Focus: Showcasing presentations by graduate students

UConn Archaeology Lecture Series

- Schedule: Thursdays at 4 PM
- Highlights: Featuring guest speakers and the latest research in archaeology.

University of Connecticut ANTH Equity & Inclusion Committee Presents

FALL 20.1 - BROWN BAG SERIES

WHAT DOES ANTHROPOLOGY MEAN TO US?

SEPT 24, 2025
12:30 - 1:30 PM

LISTS

Reinhardt Shakil Abdullah Nellychris Omeona Matthew Conn

The ANTH Equity & Inclusion Committee invites graduate and undergraduate students to our first Brown Bag of Fall 2025!

Join us for an open dialogue as graduate students share the personal narratives and trajectories that sparked their interests in anthropology and why they chose the research they are pursuing today. Together, we'll explore the diverse ways anthropology continues to shape how we see the world and ourselves.

All are welcome!

COLLOQUIUM ROOM 404, CHARLES BEACH HALL, UCONN, STORRS CAMPUS



Earl MacDonald Presents:

BLACK SQUARE

Friday Nov. 14 7:30pm