

Department of Anthropology

Dear Megan,

Greetings from the [Department of Anthropology](#)! I hope this finds you and yours well during these challenging times.

The Fall semester is well underway, and we are back to some sort of normalcy. Most classes are back to in-person learning again and laboratories are up and running thanks to vaccinations and masks. Today I am happy to share some of the latest news and accomplishments for the Department, our alumni, students, and faculty.

As always, please send us your updates so that we can include them on our forthcoming Alumni News page! Please also think about the opportunity to connect and to tell your story (see below)!

Stay safe and healthy,

Andreas Koenig, Professor and Chair

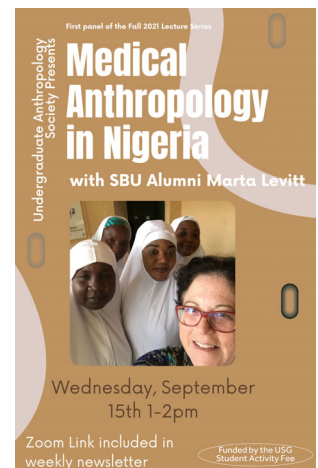


Alumni Spotlight

Marta Levitt '76

On September 15, we had the amazing opportunity to reconnect with alumna Dr. Marta Levitt '76, BA Anthropology. Marta is currently the Chief of Party for one of the largest USAID integrated health programs globally, working in Nigeria. This past spring, Marta contacted the Department to share her story, and soon after, the [Undergraduate Anthropology Society](#) scheduled a panel with her in their lecture series held both on Zoom and in-person. We heard the amazing story of a Medical Anthropologist with multiple degrees, and experience in many countries and continents! Marta's story began at Stony Brook with work as a research assistant (Prof. Weingard) in both our Department and at Brookhaven National Lab.

If you also would like to tell your story to the students, staff, faculty and other alumni in the Department, we would be happy to connect and provide a platform to do just that. We are eager to hear from you!



Alumni Spotlight: Meet Two of our Recent Graduates

Priya Aggarwal '21
Mehtar Bharatiya '21

Priya Aggarwal '21 and Mehar (Maya) Bharatiya '21, two of our May 2021 graduates, were featured on the College of Arts and Sciences website. Both have been standouts in their degree work and their research. Priya also received the Provost's Award for Academic Excellence and now attends medical school. Maya secured multiple offers for funded PhD work and started her advanced studies at Griffith University (Australia) under the supervision of IDPAS alumna Dr. Tanya M. Smith



[Learn more about Priya here >](#)

[Learn more about Maya here >](#)

Alumni Impact

Your generosity makes a difference! This year the Department selected six of our undergraduate students, honoring them for their [outstanding work](#) through our Excellence Funds:

Outstanding in Anthropology: **Pauline Affatato** and **Matthew Robertson**

Outstanding in Human Evolutionary Biology: **Priya Aggarwal** and **Mehar Bharatiya**

Outstanding Service to the Department of Anthropology: **Dana DeSando** and **Tayla Straub**

With the return of in-person conference and research opportunities we can also revive the support of undergraduate research efforts from our Travel and Excellence funds. Your continued support will allow our students to experience research in its many different forms.

Undergraduate Student Spotlight

Spring 2021

While the [main commencement in May '21](#) was celebrated at an in-person event, many departments, including [Anthropology](#), held virtual events. Noteworthy, we could celebrate the completion of four honors theses:



- **Pauline Affatato**: "Cytoarchitecture of the entorhinal cortex in strepsirrhines: a study based on research primarily conducted in rats, macaques, and humans." (Smaers Lab)
- **Mehar Bharatiya**: "The functional morphology of the zygomatic arch in primates." (Russo Lab)
- **Kennedy Thomas**: "Maximizing the efficacy of virtual dog-therapy sessions on promoting participant happiness: A study of human well-being during a global pandemic." (Markham Lab)
- **Matthew Robertson**: "The Indiana Jones Effect: Differences in how popular novels portray archaeology." (Shea Lab)

Undergraduate Student Spotlight

Nicholas Post

Nicholas Post, a candidate for the Anthropology BA with Honors, was recently featured in [SBU News](#) after becoming the [URECA Researcher of the Month](#). Nicholas is working under the supervision of Dr. Carrie Mongle and Dr. Frederick Grine.



Undergraduate Student Spotlight Fall 2021

During this fall's [SBU Weeks of Welcome](#), the Departments of Anthropology and Africana Studies, and the Undergraduate Anthropology Society organized a tie-dyeing event celebrating African textile arts and culture. Under the able supervision of Dr. Lisa Hildebrand (Anthropology) and Dr. Adryan Wallace (Africana Studies) new Seawolves were able to dye T-shirts – their own or those designed specifically for this event. The participation was unexpectedly high -- the 80 T-shirts we provided were gone within 30 minutes! We thank the many helpers as well as the Offices of New Student Programs and Marketing and Communications for their great support making this a fun and educational event!

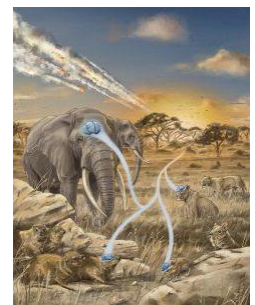


Also during the SBU Weeks of Welcome, Anthropology faculty member Dr. Christopher Percival hosted a game session of Codenames where students worked together to interpret clues provided by a team member. This social event provided a space for new Seawolves to meet each other, socialize, and work together as teams.



Faculty Spotlight Jeroen B. Smaers

Dr. Jeroen B. Smaers was first author of a paper re-evaluating the evolution of mammalian brain size. The study highlights complex and variable patterns of the evolution of relative brain size urging the re-evaluation of long-held beliefs about the close relationship between large relative brain size and intelligence.



[Read more about this story here >](#)

Faculty Spotlight Sonia Harmand

Dr. Sonia Harmand's 2015 discovery of the oldest stone tools has now become a "Milestone" in "The human story" published by *ScienceNews*.

[Read more about milestones in human evolution here >](#)

Faculty Spotlight: Meet our New Faculty Members Jason Lewis, Carrie S. Mongle

At the beginning of the year, [Dr. Jason Lewis](#) joined the Department as lecturer and soon took over the position as director of the Human Evolutionary Biology major. Jason's research focuses on the fossil record from the Plio-Pleistocene of East Africa, especially the Turkana Basin in Kenya, and also Southern France.



In the Fall semester, we were joined by our new Assistant Professor, [Carrie S. Mongle](#) '19, PhD, who is a joint hire with the Turkana Basin Institute. Carrie came to us from the American Museum of Natural History. In her research she aims to reconstruct the major trends and transitions that characterize hominin diversity and evolution.



Faculty and Staff Spotlight: Promotions

This fall, both [Dr. Amy Lu](#) and [Dr. Gabrielle A. Russo](#) were promoted to Associate Professor with continuing appointment (aka tenure).



Faculty Awards

Elisabeth Hildebrand, Elizabeth Sawchuk

Elisabeth (Lisa) Hildebrand and Co-PI Elizabeth (Ebeth) Sawchuk were recently awarded a grant from the [National Science Foundation](#) for their research on “Human and material mobilities among fisher-hunter-gatherers and pastoralists.”



Carrie S. Mongle

Carrie Mongle was recently awarded a grant from the Leakey Foundation for her research on “Re-evaluating human evolution: The role of postcranial data in reconstructing hominin evolutionary relationships”

Thank you for your support!

Resources for faculty and students support and strengthen the educational experience. The Department of Anthropology depends on our alumni and friends to expand field opportunities for our students and provide financial support for senior honors theses and summer research experiences.

Please consider investing in our faculty and students by [making a gift today](#) or speaking with [Hodan Hassan](#), Assistant Dean for Advancement at (631) 632-6178.



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