

MILLSAPS COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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In this issue:

Moreton Lecture Series in the Sciences updates

Recent Millsaps grad wins Fulbright, spends time in Albania

Millsaps professor to present at SfAA conference

W.M. Keck grant funds new lab

Millsaps offers unique language class in Swahili

E-mail corrections to newsletter editor Ben McNair at mcnairj@millsaps.edu.

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We're building a **bigger, better alumni community**. E-mail your updates to mcnairj@millsaps.edu. Include your name, graduation year and everything what you've been up to and you'll be included in the next edition of the newsletter. Become a part of the alumni network (www.millsapssoan.ning.com) and connect directly with your former classmates.

Moreton series brings mummies to life at Millsaps

Early February held the last installment of Millsaps College's Moreton Lecture Series in the Sciences, Dr. Angélique Corthals of State University of New York at Stony Brook presented her lecture entitled, "Forensic Anthropology: Gone, But Not Departed." She focused on her involvement in an ongoing project in which she excavated and investigated Hatshepsut and other royal mummies in Egypt. The project was featured both on the Discovery Channel and in an IMAX documentary in 2007. Many consider her a leading expert on mummies and deciphering degraded DNA.

Hatshepsut, who ruled in the 15th century BCE, is thought to have been the greatest female ruler in Egypt.



Dr. Angélique Corthals

In her lecture, Corthals explained how the discovery of Egyptian mummies has helped forensic anthropologists, archaeologists, and Egyptologists discover previously unknown influences such as disease, landscape, and climate change on ancient Egyptian culture.

Dr. Angélique Corthals is a forensic anthropologist, using historical, medical, anthropological, forensic and genetic approaches to reveal information about ancient biological remains. She is able to combine disciplines to gain a well-rounded understanding of ancient civilizations in the wake of environmental change, specifically in climate fluctuations.

Her main focus involves infectious disease in the past, present, and future. In her research, Corthals uses DNA-based ecological and epidemiological models to recreate the environmental risks of infectious disease.

Since 2000, Corthals has been involved with projects ranging from fresh water fish sampling to analyzing social and geographical factors contributing to the malaria epidemic. She has worked with the American Museum of Natural History on numerous occasions and has had a hand in the production several large exhibits, including a 2006 exhibit featuring "Copperman," a 7th-century Chilean mummy.

Check out Dr. Angélique Corthals at www.aspcorthals.net.

Chocolate expert sweetens history



Dr. W. Jeffrey Hurst

The next installment in the acclaimed Moreton Lecture Series at Millsaps College, scheduled for Thursday, April 16 at 7 p.m., will feature Dr. W. Jeffrey Hurst of Hershey Co. in Hershey, PA. Hurst specializes in analytical chemistry, food science and spectroscopy, all amounting to a set of skills that are helping him reconstruct the history of chocolate.

In a recent archaeological excavation at a site dated to 1,000 years ago a number of ceramic jars were found among remains at Pueblo Bonito in the Chaco Canyon region of New Mexico. This is evidence that chocolate appeared north of Mexico earlier than originally thought, and infers trade between Chaco Canyon residents and cacao growers in Central America.

The discovery came as Hurst tested residue
Chocolate continued, page 2

Chocolate continued from page 1

found in shards of ceramic jars found in Chaco Canyon. The experiment found that the chemical theobromine was present, indicating the presence of chocolate. It is likely that people living in Chaco Canyon used the jars to drink a symbolic chocolate beverage.

Chocolate was used in Central America as early as 1,500 BCE and was often an essential part of rituals and weddings. In some cases it was even used as currency among the Aztec. Though chocolate was common below the current Mexican-American border, trade between Central American growers and Chaco Canyon dwellers would have spanned over 1,000 miles. Thus, it is imaginable that cacao was a rarely-experienced delight.

Today we consider chocolate a treat. With many varieties, differing in sweetness, it is not so much used as a part of

modern-day ritual as it is a reward. However, several thousand years ago the substance would have been bitter, with no sweetener added. Sometimes ancient chocolate artisans would even mix in hot peppers.

Hurst's work with food sciences, chocolate and the Hershey Corporation is proof that archaeology extends into many unexpected areas of the world. Beyond digging for artifacts, much of archaeology utilizes the laboratory sciences to uncover the past. Millsaps' new W. M. Keck laboratory facility will allow students to more thoroughly explore history.

The lecture will be held on Thursday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Gertrude C. Ford Academic Complex, room 215. It is part of the Moreton Lecture Series in the Sciences. Instituted in 1986, the Moreton Lecture Series brings nationally reputed experts to Millsaps College. The lecture is free and is open to the public.

Millsaps grad makes home in Albania

Wondering what our most recent grads are up to? Most are in graduate or professional programs. Chelsi West, an anthropology major and 2008 honors graduate of Millsaps College, is putting off doctoral programs in anthropology to do some research on her own time. West received a Fulbright grant to spend ten months in Tirana, Albania studying cultural identity, music, oral history, and the Albanian people. She grew up in Jackson, Mississippi and admits that it's the first time that she has ever truly lived away from home.

She first became interested in Albania when she conducted six weeks of field work with a team of students from Millsaps College led by Dr. Michael Galaty, Associate Professor of Anthropology. Inspired by this experience, West chose to delve deeper into Albanian culture while completing her senior honors thesis, focusing specifically on hip-hop and translation of culture.

West took off in late September, arriving in Tirana safe and sound. Though becoming accustomed to the time dif-

ference was a challenge, West quickly found herself immersed in a culture very different from her own. Many people asked her why she would ever want to study in a place like Albania, and at the university she attends in Tirana,

street they sometimes catch her off guard with conversation. "Albanians, to say the least, are a lot more forward than Americans," writes West in her online blog. That's the way she keeps track of her adventures, and it also allows her friends in the United States to know what she's up to.

Language has been another challenge for West as she adjusts to life abroad. She knew some Albanian when she received her grant but still takes a class every morning from 9 until noon. The Albanian alphabet has 36 letters and words are made up of combinations that Americans might consider bizarre. In fact, Albanian is ranked as one of the hardest languages to learn. Despite its difficulties, one of her favorite words is Gëzuar, which means, "Cheers!" Beyond the grammar, West is learning that "language has to do with more than just trying to speak the words correctly, it also involves seeing the world as Albanians do."

Chelsi West



Chelsi West received a Fulbright to study in Albania.

students cannot imagine why foreigners would want to come in when it is a common dream to get out.

When she encounters people on the

After over four months living in Tirana, however, West still receives unwanted stares. Strangers come up to her in the streets to ask her if she

Adventure continued on page 4

Millsaps' Murchison presents paper at Society for Applied Anthropology



Contributed photo

Julian Murchison

ary exploration of the ways in which humans relate to one another. It allows researchers to share their findings with their colleagues through publications and annual conferences. It also provides a way to suggest curriculum in education programs for applied anthropologists, as well as an outlet for SfAA members to express their personal interests.

The SfAA was formed over fifty years ago and works to define the role of "anthropologist" as a satisfying, rewarding and professional role in many aspects of the public domain, whether consultant, activist or university professor. The label "applied" signifies that the focus of anthropological study is to build an understanding of cultural behaviors based on comparison.

Murchison will present his paper entitled "'The Anthropologist's NGO?': Examining the Practice and Theory of Collaborative Work" during the conference. Along with several other speakers, he will discuss his exploration of ideas focused on Collaboration, Community and Ethics, specifically in his involvement with Songea-Mississippi (SOMI), a non-governmental organization that he co-directs in Tanzania. He is also a founder of the organization, which recognizes the need for an official entity dedicated to education and culture.

SOMI is located in the southern region of Tanzania in the municipality of Songea. The aim of the organization is to create and maintain a first-class center for culture and education that will foster intercultural connections and exchanges between southern Tanzania and the southern United States, mainly Mississippi.

The Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Conference schedule is tightly packed – over 100 speakers will present recent work. However, only 17 presentations were selected to be recorded and made into podcasts. Individuals interested in attending the conference were asked to choose presentations to be recorded on the basis of "hot" topics, famous speakers and wide range of interest. Murchison's work created an excited buzz among those planning to attend the SfAA conference and was selected as one of the few to be recorded and posted and recorded as a podcast. The recordings will be available for listening and download in early April at the SfAA website, www.sfaapodcasts.net.

The Society for Applied Anthropology will convene for its 69th annual meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico from March 17-21, 2009. The theme for the convention is "Global Challenge, Local Action: Ethical Engagements, Partnerships, and Practice." About 1,600 people from across the United States are expected to attend. Millsaps College's own Dr. Julian Murchison, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, will take part in the conference, presenting a paper that will be recorded and published online in the form of a podcast.

The Society for Applied Anthropology was created to promote interdisciplin-

Discovering the past just got a little easier...

After receiving a \$400,000 grant from the W.M. Keck Foundation in 2007, the College will soon launch a new research program and will unveil the W.M. Keck Center for Instrumental and BioChemical Comparative Archaeology. It's not quite a time machine, but it will provide a state-of-the-art way to explore complex archaeological questions using bioanalytical and biochemical techniques. In addition, the research conducted at the Center will be interdisciplinary, involving students and faculty from the Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, and Geology departments. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, college faculty hope to find answers far greater than the results of individual research.

The W.M. Keck Foundation is one of the leading philanthropic organizations, and awards annual grants in Undergraduate Research, Science & Engineering, and Medical Research. Its vision is to give organizations and educational institutions the resources to make a positive difference in the lives of others through cutting-edge research and unique laboratories.

The W.M. Keck Center will expand the capabilities of laboratories currently used, and add yet another dimension to research done by faculty and students involved in Millsaps College's field sites in Mexico and in Albania.

Millsaps College works in conjunction with several other colleges and universities to provide a creative "living laboratory" experience at Kaxil Kiuc, a biocultural reserve located in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Students who participate are granted the opportunity to do first-hand archaeological research, and upon completion of the W.M. Keck Center, they will be able to delve deeper into their findings. Dr. George Bey, Associate Professor of Anthropology, is a director of the reserve. For more information, visit www.kiuc.org.

Another opportunity for field research lies in Albania. The regional studies project is conducted in Shala Valley, located in northern Albania. Research is focused on archaeology, ethnography, ethno-history, and geo-science. The goals of researchers include producing a record of cultural resources and to contribute to discussions regarding cultural isolation. The site is directed by Dr. Michael Galaty, Associate Professor of Anthropology. For more information, visit www.millsaps.edu/svp.

The lab will be installed in three stages and is expected to be fully operational by 2011.

Swahili class offers new language experience for students

Taking a foreign language class in college is a nearly universal requirement to graduate. While most students take French or Spanish, some schools offer options outside of these usual realms. Three Millsaps College students are learning Swahili this semester through a course called "Survival Swahili," a crash course in how to get by in the East African nation of Tanzania.

Millsaps College requires students earning a Bachelor of Arts degree to have reached a proficient, intermediate level in a foreign language before graduating. A one-semester course, "Survival Swahili" does not count towards lan-

guage proficiency. But this doesn't stop students from pursuing their interests in East African studies.

"Swahili is not all that different from other languages I've taken," says Erin Jordan, a sophomore who is traveling to Tanzania this summer. "The verbs change at the beginning instead of having a different ending, and sometimes words start off with two combinations in a row, an N and a G together. All in all, though, the vowels sound the same as in Spanish."

Taught by Dr. Julian Murchison, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, students learn greetings,

farewells, and introductions in addition to grammar. "Greetings are very important – you HAVE to know how to do them," says Paz Naccari, a freshman studying in Tanzania this summer. One of Naccari's favorite phrases is tutaonana baadaye, meaning, "See you later!"

Four students will travel to Tanzania this summer as part of a hands-on introduction to Tanzanian culture, ethnography, and language immer-

sion led by Murchison. The trip will last three and a half weeks, and students anticipate experiencing all the country has to offer, from the capital city of Dar es Salaam to rural communities, music, food, and culture. "I'm really anxious to go. I can't wait," expresses Naccari, counting down the days until she boards her ocean-hopping plane bound for the African continent.

Swahili is the official language of Tanzania, a coastal East African nation. Swahili is a mixture of the traditional Bantu languages of the area and Arabic. Tanzanian ports served as integral trade gates that allowed the passage of Middle Eastern goods to the West, and of Western goods to the East. Swahili met Bantu and Arabic halfway, becoming a commonly-spoken and easily understood tongue by both groups.

After Tanzania was colonized by European powers, Swahili was declared the official national language to unite over 120 ethnic groups present in the country. When the country gained independence, Tanzanian citizens continued speaking Swahili. Though colonial presence has left the area, much of the influence left behind has been incorporated into Tanzanian culture.

Tanzanians are immensely proud of their culture and are greatly appreciative of visitors who speak Swahili, and are willing to share and teach others about their way of life. The four students traveling this summer hope to get the most out of their trip by taking "Survival Swahili," appreciating fully the generosity of their hosts and teachers.



Ben McNair

Freshman Paz Naccari sometimes thinks in Swahili.

Adventure continued from page 2

is related to Barack Obama and girls whisper about her behind their notebooks in the classroom. She knew that it would take time for her to get used to another country, and that it would take time for Albanians to get used to her, but she is realizing that her foreignness is something that may never truly go away.

West says that the motivation behind her studies lies in the similarities she sees between Albania and her home, and

between Albanians and herself. "I like the history, the story of the land and of the people," she says. "Albania, like Mississippi, has been plagued by labels and certain assumptions that people hold true." In the long run, she recognizes, "it's not just me trying to learn about Albanians, but also many Albanians are trying to learn about me, too."

Gëzuar, Chelsi, and good luck in your studies!

To keep up with Chelsi's adventure, visit <http://chelsialbaniaadventure.blogspot.com/>.