Investigating Taste in Nicaragua

Do hunters care about the taste of the meat they harvest? That question motivated Assistant Professor Jeremy Koster and graduate student Maria Venegas to visit the Nicaraguan rain forest this summer, where Mayangna and Miskito Indians continue to rely on hunted game to meet their nutritional needs. Funding for the research came in part from the Tall Foundation and the University Research Council. Ecological anthropologists have traditionally deprecated taste as an explanatory variable, primarily because it could be considered irrelevant for nutritionally-balanced tribal societies to forgo a chance to eat a large quantity of meat. During his dissertation research, however, Koster observed that hunters would regularly bypass opportunities to pursue more edible monkeys, preferring to spend time hunting less delicious monkeys. When asked, the hunters explained that the less-edible monkeys were not particularly appetizing. Koster spent most of his time during the trip obtaining observations and a diet of hunting expeditions.

Working in the community, Venegas used cognitive anthropological methods to explore the cultural domain of terrestrial wildlife. With the help of a local interpreter, Venegas first used familiar drawings of wildlife to conduct pile sorts. Informants were asked to divide the species into piles based on unfamiliarity, and then they were asked what the species in a pile has in common. Venegas was rarely astonished at this stage. The next step was to directly ask informants to rank the species from the best-tasting to the least appealing. A statistical consensus analysis indicates that there is a strong consensus on the rankings, which suggests that informants have similar opinions on animal rank. As expected, the average rank of monkeys increased. The next step in this investigation is to replicate the study in other communities.

New Research at Shawnee Lookout

The Department of Anthropology held a annual Summer Archaeological Field School at the Shawnee Lookout Project located at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers in extreme western Hamilton County. Under the direction of Assistant Professor Kenneth B. Tankersley and graduate assistant Marianne Buitenhuis, students were given an overview of earthworks known as the Court Family Earthworks.

In May 2009, Anthropology graduate student Brian Venegas acquired a generous grant from the Court Family Foundation to support the archaeological field school. The research goals of the summer field school were to conduct a new Cincinnati Center for Field Studies (CCFS) at the South Shaker Farm in Miami Whitewater Park, a new joint venture between the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati and Hamilton County Parks. The new Cincinnati Center for Field Studies (CCFS) will provide students with hands-on, learn-by-doing, public programming on the archaeology of the Ohio River valley. Like the summer field school, CCFS will provide students with hands-on, learn-by- doing, public programming on the archaeology of the Ohio River valley. Like the summer field school, CCFS will provide students with hands-on, learn-by-doing, public programming on the archaeology of the Ohio River valley. Like the summer field school, CCFS will provide students with hands-on, learn-by-doing, public programming on the archaeology of the Ohio River valley. Like the summer field school, CCFS will provide students with hands-on, learn-by-doing, public programming on the archaeology of the Ohio River valley.
Student News

Annete Persinger

Ohio Valley archaeology.

In fact, we anticipate funding dollars ourselves manage to cultivate opportunities in all anthropological circles, and is currently enjoying the juxtaposition of UC’s great resources with the friendly atmosphere of UC’s exceptional student body.

Sarah Jackson

Jackson is delighted to welcome her students and families gathered at Shawnee Lookout Park in April to examine ancient Guatemalan life in the Cartaca region of Central Mexico, 1500-2000. "This inaugural issue is oriented toward the New World, exploring the construction of difference in Classic Maya contexts, examining both the material record and texts (hieroglyphic epigraphic, and ethnohistoric), and focusing on the construction of difference in Classic Maya contexts, examining both the material record and texts (hieroglyphic epigraphic, and ethnohistoric), and focusing on the role of religion. Students and faculty will explore factors affecting decision making in this community to reach from Cambodian to Andean Case Studies.

In the fall, students will continue with projects exploring human beliefs and practices evolution, and will explore factors affecting decision making in this community to reach from Cambodian to Andean Case Studies.

Meet Our New Faculty Members

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Sarah Jackson

Sarah Jackson has joined the Department of Anthropology as a visiting professor.

Barry Isaac

John Foster retired at the end of the 2009 academic year after 40 years of service to the department and university, including 26 years as a graduate director.

Joe Tsevat’s research project is focused on conducting and completing face-to-face interviews with local clergy and over 50 persons with HIV/AIDS and HIV-infected family members. Students and faculty are invited to participate in this federally-funded research project aimed at helping to identify potential candidates for inclusion in the study.

Grant applications are on the horizon for the 2010-2011 academic year. Foster and his students are preparing a proposal for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). During the first year of the study, students Amanda Huber and Varun Bhoraskar will explore the meaning of religious organizations in the inter-American context. They will employ a semistructured data entry form for the national census.

Professor Foster Retires

Annete Persinger

Annete Perpsinger teaches prehistory and cultural anthropology. She is currently chair of the Department of Anthropology and is interested in the role of religion. Students and faculty are invited to participate in this federally-funded research project aimed at helping to identify potential candidates for inclusion in the study.

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