



ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD – PETERSHEIM ACADEMIC EXPOSITION 2026

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026
9:30 - 10:45 AM
MUSCARELLE HALL 206

ALL ARE WELCOME TO THE ANTHROPOLOGY MEET AND GREET BREAKFAST AT 9-9:30 AM MUSCARELLE HALL 206 BEFORE THE PRESENTATIONS!

<https://events.shu.edu/event/48817-anthropology-at-petersheim-2026>

DEMOGRAPHY AND DEBATES DURING THE 1790S YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMICS IN NEW YORK CITY

By Leo Chu, BS Biology-MD and BA Anthropology

During the 1790s, New York City was struck by its first two severe epidemics of yellow fever. While these epidemics have often been examined broadly in the development of American epidemiology and public health practice, the social and cultural environment in which the disease emerged shares notable similarities to modern experiences with emerging epidemics and public skepticism around established science and healthcare practice. As the city confronted two successive epidemics of a poorly understood disease, debates about its origin, treatment, and prevention shaped public policy. Held predominantly among the powerful and influential, these debates influenced the spread of yellow fever along socioeconomic lines. Drawing from the archival texts of several physicians, government officials, and other residents present during the epidemics of 1795 and 1798, this presentation explores how competing interpretations of a new disease shaped New York City's public health and sanitation efforts. While city and health leaders continued to debate and implement health treatment and prevention measures, change often failed to protect the city's most vulnerable populations. Furthermore, this presentation's exploration of epidemic governance in 1790 will reveal a modern parallel in the COVID-19 vaccine debate and provide insight to inform modern discussions around health policy, practice, and equity in the modern day.

BANANAS AT THE BAR AND BUMPS IN THE BATHROOM: PARTYING LIKE BERLINERS

By Max Kastner, BA Social Behavioral Sciences and BA Modern Languages

This paper showcases the author's journey to get a taste of what it means to truly party like a Berliner. It breaks down a night in Berlin's infamous club scene, depicting the trials, tribulations, and successes they encountered. It also utilizes anthropologists Robert Lowie and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's classic work on the American Indian Navajo and Crow cultures to explore the role of social scripts in Berlin nightlife. Furthermore, it utilizes those conclusions to commentate on how these social scripts fit into, in a structural functionalist sense, the bigger picture of Berlin as a cultural hub for progressive minds. The paper concludes by drawing on José Esteban Muñoz's theoretical work on Queer Utopia as a means to understand full acceptance of self and others in the context of Berlin nightlife.

ECHOES ACROSS BORDERS: MIGRATION AND CULTURAL MEMORY IN CENTRAL AND EAST AFRICAN HARPS

By Lauren Darby, BA Political Science and Minors in History and Diplomacy

This paper explores how geography, and migration can change the way that we interact with different cultural items and perceive their meaning. This is done through an ethnographic comparison of two harps: The Ennanga from Uganda and The Domu from The Democratic Republic of Congo. Reflecting on a personal visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where I found the Domu, as well as my own background as a Ugandan-American, this study examines cultural materials in lived and foundational contexts. Although the Domu and the Ennanga share a similar geographical location, likely because of the Bantu Migration, it is because of migration that their identities have evolved significantly, diverging in the process. The Domu, a harp that was once associated with Mangbetu status in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has become a cultural artifact because of colonial disruption in the spread of its identity. In contrast, the Ennanga remains an active instrument in Bugandan society, continuing a legacy of storytelling and cultural expression. By examining the differences in the symbolism, contemporary usage, as well as their forms, this paper argues that geography plays a pivotal role in the continuation of a cultural legacy. In closing, it displays how these objects can link us to the past, especially for those of the diaspora who want to gain a deeper connection to their home.

THE EPIC OF MANAS: HOW THE KYRGYZ LIVE

By Arun Kumar, BA English and BA Sociology

My research topic is the Epic of Manas and how it is used to construct national identity as well as a sense of cultural connection among the Kyrgyz people. The Epic of Manas is one of the longest epic poems in the world. It is from Central Asia, and I chose to write about it for the course Peoples and Cultures of Eurasia. Stories are constructed out of daily lives. Cultures pass down aspects of themselves, replicated through narratives that reflect the routines and shared history of people. Human beings have made narratives and passed them down for times immemorial. In Central Asia, the Epic of Manas reflects the lives and aspirations of the Kyrgyz people. In this paper, my aim was to show how the Epic of Manas is used by the Kyrgyz to construct an identity as well as how the epic's themes connect with the Kyrgyz people through oral storytellers, the manaschis. I learned about the plot and structure of the Epic, how it has evolved to fit historical narratives and how the Epic intersects with the daily life of the Kyrgyz. I also researched the 'keepers' of the Epic, the manaschi, and how cultural ideas are communicated through the poem. My presentation aims to demonstrate from an anthropological perspective the ways founding stories can impact cultural self-perceptions and the shaping of national identity.