Greetings Majors, Minors, Friends, and Alums! I hope your fall is going well.

The Anthropology department is pleased to welcome three new members. Magdalene (Maggie) White joins us as our new Administrative Assistant. Maggie earned her MA in anthropology from SUNY Albany and has worked in schools in the Schenectady area. Please drop in to say hello if you are on campus!

Robert Samet joins us as assistant professor. Prof. Samet’s dissertation, based on more than thirty months of ethnographic research alongside crime journalists in Caracas Venezuela, explores how reporters, editors, and newspaper owners use stories of urban violence to mobilize populist movements for greater social, political, and economic equality. Prof. Samet teaches a broad range of courses about Latin America, the mass media, urban anthropology, and legal anthropology. In winter term he will be teaching a new course, ANT 237 Gangs and Youth Violence and in spring term he will introduce another new course Anthropology of the Mass Media.

In Winter and spring term, Prof. Michelle Osborn, who worked on local level politics in squatter settlements in Nairobi Kenya, will be joining us and will teach courses on medical anthropology, contemporary Africa, and globalization.

Over the summer, the anthropologists were dispersed all over the world. I was in Fiji wrapping up my research on Pentecostal churches. Linda Cool was in Europe working with the European Union on a research project. Jeff Witsoe continued his research in India.

On a sadder note, Kelsey Golitz (2010), an ID major in Anthropology and Economics, passed away in August after a four year battle with cancer. Kelsey’s parents and friends are planning a celebration of her life in May 2015 Reunion weekend, at the 5th year reunion of the 2010 class.

Wishing you all a happy fall! Karen
We would like to welcome Dr. Robert Samet to the Union College Anthropology Department! Dr. Samet specializes in media, urban violence, and the politics of security in Latin America. A legal and political anthropologist, he has been conducting fieldwork in Venezuela since 2006. His first research project was alongside crime journalists in Caracas. It is the subject of a book manuscript in progress Who’s Afraid of Caracas?: Spectacle and Security in Venezuela. Currently, he is beginning a pair of new research projects. The first is on security as it relates to transnational immigration in and out of Venezuela. The second looks at the political economy of energy and electricity shortages in Venezuela, which is one of the world’s leading oil producing countries. His research interests also include social movements, democracy, sovereignty, colonialism, science studies and critical race studies.

We would also like to welcome Dr. Michelle Osborn, who will be joining us in the winter and spring semesters! Dr. Osborn has done extensive field work in Kenya, and her doctoral thesis, ‘Authority in a Nairobi Slum: Chiefs and Bureaucracy in Kibera’ examines local-level urban politics, focusing on the position of chief and how that authority has shifted due to changes in Kenyan rule. Dr. Osborn is currently in the process of publishing three other articles, which stem from her research, and is developing a new research project that will examine the role of chiefs within the new Kenyan constitution, which passed in 2010. Dr. Osborn specializes in political, urban, and medical anthropology in East Africa, and in the winter term she will teach Introduction to Anthropology and Medical Anthropology.

Bloods, Crips, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). The 18th Street Gang (M-18). Latin Kings. The names have become synonymous with senseless violence. Both feared and fetishized, the street gang became a focal point of urban politics in the United States in the late 20th century. Beginning with the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, young, poor minorities have found themselves at the center of a socio-economic crisis that has been accompanied by the rise of zero-tolerance policing. For purposes of this class, the youth gang phenomenon will serve as a window onto the experience of racial, ethnic and economic marginalization under late capitalism. We will explore the context that gives rise to gang violence through a combination of anthropological and historical approaches. By the end of the term, students will be familiar with the macro-social factors that shape both gangs and the political of urban violence in the United States.
George Gmelch and Anthropology major Heather Mendiola spent the summer doing field research in Newfoundland. Heather lived with a family on the northern tip of the Avalon Peninsula, in the fishing village of Old Perlican. There she transcribed interviews with Newfoundlanders working off shore on oil rigs and tankers, while also conducting participant observation in her community. George’s research is part of a large multinational team effort looking at new labor migration, particularly men and women who work long distances from home, and are absent from their communities much of the year. George will be returning to Newfoundland again next summer for more research, and Heather is hoping to go back for fieldwork for her senior thesis.

Joining the anthropology and religious studies departments is Maggie White, the new administrative assistant. Maggie recently graduated with her master’s in anthropology from SUNY Albany, where she researched Maya religious ceremonies among the Kaqchikel Maya of Guatemala. She’s very excited to be joining the staff at Union, and looks forward to meeting and working with everyone!

Also joining us this fall is a new adjunct professor, Caroline Antonelli. Caroline is a Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology at the University at Albany, SUNY. This fall, she will be teaching Economic Anthropology at Union College. Her own dissertation research focuses on agrarian economies. This research uses archaeological and ethnobotanical methods to investigate the long-term impact of human-environment interactions among the Maya in the Yucatan Peninsula. In addition to teaching a course this fall, she will also begin working with Dr. Gillikin in the Union Geography Department analyzing agricultural soil samples in the new Union College Stable Isotope Mass Spectrometry Lab.

New Book by Sharon and George Gmelch

Irish Travellers: The Unsettled Life has just been published by Indiana University Press. Sharon Gmelch and George Gmelch first conducted research with Irish Travellers, a nomadic group outwardly similar to Roma or gypsies, in the early 1970s when they lived among them in a horse-drawn wagon. In 2011 they returned to Ireland to seek out families they had known taking with them hundreds of photographs showing their former way of life. Many of these images are included in book, together with recent photographs, compelling personal narratives, and the anthropologists’ observations which reveal just how much ‘Travellers’ lives have changed and what it means to be a Traveller in Ireland today now that nomadism is gone.
Jessica (Henry) Blodgett married fellow Union alum Nathan Blodgett in 2005. They have two children - Emma age 3 and Jackson age 2. They live in Philadelphia where Jessica received her MBA at Temple University in 2004. Since 2006, she has worked at the Wistar Institute - our nation's first basic biomedical research institution, established in 1894. At Wistar she has moved up the ranks and currently is the Director of Research Development and Pre-Award Administration. In this role she oversees administration of the institute's grants and contracts that fund critical medical research studies aimed at finding cures for cancer and other infectious diseases.

From Jeff Hyde:
After I graduated in 2009, I worked for a few years in online advertising sales. Recently, I helped co-found a video production company, and now I work as an Interactive Producer at a web development agency in Boston.

I attended my 5 year reunion this past spring.

From Shalini Singaravelu:
I have been living in London for almost a year now and am completing my master’s in Global Mental Health through a joint program with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and King’s College Institute of Psychiatry. The course has been such a pleasure to be a part of, especially since it lies at the intersection of anthropology, public health research, international development, and mental health. I’ve been especially lucky this summer as well to have been able to conduct qualitative research for my dissertation in South Africa with my previous Minerva Fellowship placement. I hope to continue working on mental health intervention research and onto a PhD in the near future, but in the meantime will be sheltering myself from all the London rains.

My name is Christopher Berk, class of 2004. I recently finished my PhD in sociocultural anthropology from the University of Michigan. My dissertation, "Long Way, Long Time: Learning and Living Aboriginal Culture in Tasmania," was based on close to two years of research in Tasmania, Australia. I first went to Tasmania as part of an ethnographic field school at Union led by George and Sharon Gmelch. This Fall I am teaching a course on Green Indigeneity for the Department of American Culture at the University of Michigan.