Greetings Majors, Minors, Friends, and Alums! I hope you are excited for the start of the new academic year and the fall trimester!

The Anthropology department is pleased to announce that Administrative Assistant Leahanna Pelish has now worked with us for a full year. Leah earned her MA in Philosophy from SUNY Albany and graduated from Union College in 2007, majoring in Philosophy and Political Science. Please always feel free to drop in to say hello if you are on campus; she loves chatting with the students about their school work, extracurricular activities, and more!

This term, we welcome a new visiting professor, Dr. Aaron Kappeler. The new course he will be offering this winter term is described in the Faculty News Section on Page 2. We also welcome back Professor Jeff Witsoe! Professor Robert Samet will be missed this year; he is on sabbatical.

Please enjoy the short blurbs each faculty member has provided keeping you up to date on some of their research projects and adventures.

Also, enjoy a few updates from Alumni and always feel free to let us know how you are doing by emailing AA Leah at pelishl@union.edu

Happy Fall 2017!

~Professor Karen Brison, Chair of the Department of Anthropology
We would like to welcome Dr. Aaron Kappeler to the Union College Anthropology Department! Aaron Kappeler earned his B.A. at the University of Arizona and his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. He is a socio-cultural anthropologist specializing in agrarian political economy, rural development, and the politics of natural resources in Latin America. He has carried out extensive fieldwork in Venezuela and has published in journals such as *Dialectical Anthropology* and *Antipode*. His research has received support from the Wenner Gren Foundation and the Institute for Advanced Study at Central European University where he was a postdoctoral fellow in 2016-2017. He has taught Anthropology of Food and Agriculture at multiple institutions and is now very excited to be joining Union as a Visiting Assistant Professor!

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The subject of Prof Kappeler’s new course (offered WI 18) sounds mundane – work. Work is part of our everyday lives (the average person spends a third of their life working!) and most of us take it for granted. The objective of this course, however, is not to think of work as something entirely commonplace, but rather as a strange and even exceptional activity. As human beings we have the innate capacity to work (and some would even argue the innate desire), but many of the things we associate with work: its rhythms, patterns, and routines as well as the processes and rationales behind it, e.g. markets, profit, efficiency, are anything but natural. Drawing from the tradition of critical political economy, in this course we will come to appreciate that all societies must establish a metabolism with their environment through labor. But the forms that activity takes are historically specific and deeply cultural, having a great deal to do with power. In this course, we will take the term ‘work’ in its broadest sense to mean all the forms of practical activity in which human beings engage in order to satisfy needs—whatever those needs may be. The goal of the course is to get you to think critically about labor and for you to be able to critique what is taken as objective in the world of work. The class is organized around a historical trajectory of the development of work patterns from the earliest to the most recent forms and the meanings associated with them. In this class, we will study examples of work from settings in Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, and Latin America. Taking the era of globalization as a diagnostic moment, we will also interrogate the key issues, which have arisen over the past few decades as a way to ask questions about the present and the potential future of work.

Prof Kappeler’s current ethnographic project, *Outstretched Hands: Indigenous Land Rights, Sovereignty, and the Formation of Ethnic Boundaries in Venezuela*, explores the ways in which social order is fabricated through the provision of collective property. Taking as its object the struggle for indigenous land tenure in the sierra of Perija, a highland frontier region in the western part of Venezuela, the project examines how the efforts of the Venezuelan government to settle longstanding land claims in the area and provide developmental assistance to indigenous communities have resulted in a transformation of the ethnic and territorial boundaries of the nation. In step with Article 119 of the Bolivarian Constitution of 1999 (which recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to traditional forms of landholding), the Venezuelan government has returned large portions of former ancestral range to indigenous communities along the border with Colombia. But his research shows that these forms of recognition and inclusion are producing new and sometimes surprising forms of social exclusion. While lauding indigenous peoples as “the original Venezuelans” and a force for the revitalization of the nation and the struggle against foreign dependency, the reality of the state’s interventions in the region often bely the sovereignty of indigenous peoples over these territories and overshadow their interests and decisions.
Professor George Gmelch returned to Newfoundland this summer for the 5th consecutive year where he does research in a remote, outport community on work mobility and the long-term responses to the collapse of the traditional cod fishery. This summer he worked with 3 students and a filmmaker who is making a documentary about the research.

Professor Sharon Gmelch taught her environmental anthropology field school in Sitka, Alaska. She and George Gmelch have a new book coming out with University of California Press called *In the Field: Life and Work in Cultural Anthropology*. She also has a new (3rd) edition of her anthology *Tourists and Tourism* appearing in the fall. (Cover pictured below).

The past summer Professor Osborn returned to Nairobi, Kenya with the support of a Faculty Research Fund grant to conduct follow-up research with national and county government officials. She examined how shifting political legislation has impacted the distribution of state services to marginalized residents in the city’s informal settlements. It was a fascinating time to be in Kenya as the nation was preparing for national and local elections. In a surprising turn of events, the presidential election was deemed invalid and overturned by the nation’s supreme court. This is unprecedented within the region and speaks to Kenya’s commitment to the democratic process and the strength of the judicial system. Kenya’s presidential rerun is set for this coming October. One of the most fulfilling aspects of this research period was introducing her son, Calder, who just turned one, to friends and colleagues in Nairobi. He had a great time and loved Kenya’s cuisine! He tried everything from ugali to chapati to maharagwe. Prof Osborn is excited to bring a bit of Kenyan cuisine to Union this winter when she teaches a course on the anthropology of food (ANT 130-Food and the Self). She will also be introducing a new course in the spring on the anthropology of humanitarian aid (ANT 233). Also in 2018, her chapter covering “Chiefs, Elders, and Traditional Authority in Kenya” will be published in the *Oxford Handbook of Kenyan Politics*. 
As Schenectady After-School Programs Close, Cocoa House Expands Role in Community

Schenectady—
For two decades, COCOA House (Children Of our Community Open to Achievement) has been providing after-school care and academic enrichment to elementary school children of Schenectady. Founded in 1996 by Union Alum Rachel Graham ‘98, countless Union students have volunteered their time tutoring at the on-site location on Hamilton Hill to have an active role in the Schenectady community beyond Union borders. This year, COCOA House has become more essential than ever as several local after school programs have recently closed, leaving hundreds of children without the after-school care on which they and their families depended. Further, Rachel Graham has also stepped down from her administrative role in COCOA House, rendering its continuation tenuous. However, Anthropology Professor Jeffrey Witsoe has since taken on this role to prevent yet another loss of Schenectady after school programs. One organization that remains in service is Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady. This program has taken on over a hundred children in need, despite minimal available volunteers and resources to tutor and supervise these children. COCOA House has recently partnered with Boys and Girls Club supervisor Danielle Mitchell, who has organized sending groups of these children to COCOA House for more individualized tutoring and care.

The group of Union Students working with COCOA House has continued to grow this year, with forty members of COCOA Club trained to volunteer, which has been essential due to increased need in the community. COCOA House looks to expanding the reach of the program in the future, and establishing a network of strong connections with other organizations throughout Hamilton Hill and the Schenectady Area. In addition to COCOA Club volunteers, senior Anthropology major Abby Salamone is using COCOA House as a site to explore education and the reproduction of social inequality in the United States for her senior thesis.

Featured in the picture above is COCOA Club President Sapan Shah (right) running Math Jeopardy with Union College volunteers (Hayley Ream ‘18 and Nate Stekler ‘20) and a new group of kids from the Boys and Girls Club last Friday. When asked later whether they enjoyed themselves, one boy exclaimed that his favorite part of the day was “every part!” and that he could not wait for the next day of COCOA House.
From Aisling Kearns (edited for length):
Planning on going to Ireland this coming October with my dad, and really looking forward to it!
I have been working as a research assistant in the Anthropology department at UMass Boston for the past year and a half. We have been collecting data for an interesting study on the health effects of financial debt. I have really enjoyed being a part of it, and have definitely been learning a lot about research techniques. However, the grant ends 2018, so I am looking into a variety of positions, mostly teaching history and some research and museum-related ones as well.
In other news, my sister Eva has been accepted and is going to Union College in the fall. She is thinking about enrolling in a couple of anthropology classes to try it out!

Former Administrative Assistant Maggie Busman White sends her well wishes and an update:
“Things in Romania are really good—we just finished our time in Targu Mures. We worked with four different children’s organizations teaching English, playing games and developing a life skills program to teach a group of kids some basic skills that they would not learn otherwise (washing hands, healthy eating, team work, cooking, sewing, etc.). It’s been an awesome experience. Next we head south to Lupeni summer camp. I will totally stop in once we’re back for good in October!

Professor Samet’s recent article, “The Denouncers: Populism and the Press in Venezuela” won the Latin American Studies Association award for the best social science article on Venezuela. Another shorter piece, co-authored with Naomi Schiller, was featured as the lead article in a special edition of *Anthropology News* (the magazine of the American Anthropology Association). Professor Samet will be on sabbatical during the 2017-2018 year. He plans to spend his time finishing a book project about crime reporters in Caracas and doing preliminary research for a new project on Venezuela.

Professor Khan spent the summer in Karachi Pakistan continuing his research on the Islamic piety movement, the Tablighi Jamaat, and working on his book manuscript.

Professor Witsoe has been continuing his book project “Citizenship as Struggle.” This project documents struggles for the implementation of India’s massive public employment program (the largest anti-poverty program in the world), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. A primary method of investigation involves documenting individual struggles through the lives of five Dalit women activists as they fight for their “right to work,” with as much material and analysis as possible being captured in their own words. As part of this project, he did three rounds of fieldwork in rural Bihar over the past year, including living in a village where the activists are headquartered and spending a month at a continuous *dharna* (sit-in protest). The struggles of the activists who are at the center of this project reveal what it means for a low-caste woman laborer to be a rights-bearing citizen of twenty-first century India. Above all, these women have taught Prof Witsoe that the "universalism" of rights - the applicability of rights to everyone, including the most marginalized - is impossible without collective struggle.

From Arden (Sack) Estep, ’13:
After graduating from Union, I moved to the Rochester area where I currently work in the Compliance Department at Trillium Health, an FQHC-LAL providing primary and specialty care, including LGBTQ+ care. I graduated from Keuka College in May with my Master's in Management. I live outside of Rochester with my husband and we are expecting our first child in October!