WELCOME!
Department of Anthropology Fourteenth Annual Honors Symposium
Friday, April 26, 2024, 1–4 pm, Ruth Adams Lounge (3rd Floor)

Program
WELCOME AND A FEW WORDS
Professor David Hughes
Professor Hylke de Jong

HONORS PRESENTERS:

Yash Balaji
Major: Cultural Anthropology
Minor: Creative Writing
Advisor: Dr. Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi
Second Reader: Dr. Pilar Rau
Title: Twin Tigers: Hindu Nationalists and Image in India

Christina (CJae) Franke
Major: Evolutionary Anthropology
Minor: Archaeology
Advisor: Dr. Brenda Frazier
Second Reader: Dr. Hylke de Jong
Title: Does the Obstetrical Dilemma Hypothesis (1960) influence how clinicians are taught about the female pelvis?

Emily Kane
Major: Anthropology
Minors: Archaeology, Art History, Psychology
Advisor: Dr. Brenda Frazier
Second Reader: Dr. Evan Bird
Title: An Assessment of Bias in Metric and Nonmetric Pelvic Sex Estimation Methods

Michael Marciano
Major: Anthropology
Minor: Geography
Advisor: Dr. David Hughes
Second Reader: Michael Reagan, School of Management and Labor Relations
Title: Automation and Surveillance in the Workplace: Gaps, Traps, and Social Morality
Honors Participant: Yash Balaji
Advisor: Dr. Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi
Second Reader: Dr. Pilar Rau
Major: Cultural Anthropology
Minor: Creative Writing

Title: Twin Tigers: Hindu Nationalists and Image in India

Abstract: Shiv Sena was founded by Balasaheb Thackeray as a Hindu nationalist group that used violence, intimidation, and murder to achieve their goals. They eventually became a political party, and in 2022 this party was split into two parties due to an internal coup. The usurper, Eknath Shinde, and the son of the founder, Uddhav Thackeray, now lead two competing parties. Shinde has used a recent hit film to push the narrative that his late mentor was the founder’s true protege, setting himself up as the rightful heir to the throne. Both leaders try to portray themselves as brutal men of action, and Shiv Sena perpetuates its violent image. This is because members of Shiv Sena rely on their reputation for violence to accomplish their political aims. They believe that others will only do what they say if they fear them, something one interlocutor dubbed “nuisance value.” Nuisance value is necessary because people get things done in India primarily through backchannels.

Rather than being seen as corruption, everyone views leveraging personal connections i.e. cronyism as the norm. The massive population of India means that resources are always too limited, and people have no expectation of fairness because systems of fairness break down under such numbers. Though Shiv Sena members look after themselves first and foremost, this does not mean they don’t view their actions as selfless. However, for them it doesn’t matter what they do unless they’re seen doing it. In fact, they often construct images of them doing things and parade use these to build social capital. This is because, in positioning themselves as “80% social work 20% politics”, the group has tied its identity to quick, tangible results. Only visual proof seems to carry any weight, which has had the effect of members crafting their personal reputations, as well as the reputations of the parties, out of houses of cards—these are built out of video/photographic evidence of their works, images with no substance behind them. When viewed from any angle besides the front, the hollowness becomes clear.
Honors Participant: Christina (CJae) Franke

Advisor: Dr. Brenda Frazier
Second Reader: Dr. Hylke de Jong
Major: Evolutionary Anthropology
Minor: Archaeology

Title: Does the Obstetrical Dilemma Hypothesis (1960) influence how clinicians are taught about the female pelvis?

Abstract:
In 1960 Sherwood Washburn introduced the Obstetrical Dilemma (OD), an evolutionary explanation connecting key features of human anatomy and physiology. Washburn proposed that human babies are born earlier than is ideal in order to fit the large-brained infant through a narrow bipedal pelvis, under the assumption that a wider pelvis would be detrimental to bipedal locomotion. This simplistic view of the selection pressures on the human pelvis may have detrimental effects on how pregnant people are cared for clinically. To what extent might reflexive deference to the OD predispose us to view women’s anatomy as inherently compromised, particularly with respect to childbirth?

This study seeks to understand the influence of the OD on the teaching of medicine with respect to the female pelvis and human childbirth. Specifically, it asks whether “OD thinking” influences the teaching of medical professionals through anatomy textbooks. The content of 30 clinical anatomy textbooks, representing a mixture of digital and traditional print editions, were scored using a seven yes-or-no question system created to assess the potential influence of the OD. Notably, none of the 30 sources explicitly mentions the OD or alludes to a “trade-off” or “compromise” between the demands of bipedal locomotion and childbirth. Descriptions of female pelvic anatomy are nonetheless focused on the demands of childbirth to the near total exclusion of any other function. Taking this literature as a whole, it is difficult to distinguish the direct influence of the OD from the historical non-inclusion of female anatomy and physiology in medicine, more generally.
Title: An Assessment of Bias in Metric and Nonmetric Pelvic Sex Estimation Methods

Abstract:
Skeletal sexual dimorphism in humans is best observed in the pelvis. The sex of an unknown individual can be estimated using both metric and nonmetric methods. Previous research has found that biases favoring one sex over the other seem to arise either when nonmetric approaches are used to assess the pelvis and skull or when metric methods are used on bones other than the pelvis. This study compares the results of applying a metric method (DSP2 program) vs. a nonmetric method (MorphoPASSE program) of sex estimation to a sample of innominates of unknown sex.

Most specimens (83%) exhibited agreement in the overall sex estimate between the two methods and only four (17%) did not exhibit agreement. Every time disagreement occurred, DSP2 (metric) estimated the sex of the specimen to be male and MorphoPASSE (nonmetric) estimated the sex of the specimen to be female. These results suggest that there may be a systematic sex bias at play, despite the fact that mean maleness (or femaleness) across the sample does not differ statistically between the two methods. This research suggests that a comparative study of metric vs. nonmetric methods of sex estimation on a larger sample of innominates of known sex is warranted.
Honors Participant: Michael Marciano

Advisor: Dr. David Hughes
Second Reader: Michael Reagan,
School of Management and Labor Relations
Major: Anthropology
Minor: Geography

Title: Automation and Surveillance in the Workplace: Gaps, Traps, and Social Morality

Abstract: The primary socio-political and theoretical implications of this ethnographic study are to help understand and raise an awareness to the role of automation and surveillance in the workplace and how it is affecting the worker. Automation and surveillance are subjectively and instrumentally objectifying the worker. When the worker is subjectively and instrumentally objectified, while concurrently struggling to find time for care-work, they will exploit an intimate method of resistance that alleviates and/or suspends this strife. This intimate method of resistance is called the surveillance gap. The surveillance gap helps in diminishing the worker’s frustration while restoring a sense of autonomy.

With a greater understanding of how automation and surveillance is affecting the worker, relief in the future could come in the form of decentralized mutual aid care networks, that are supported by the idea of social morality. In this study, I also interviewed warehouse workers, and asked if they were worried about losing their jobs to automation. The results were no, they are not worried. Instead, people are not looking at automation and technological advantages as a threat to them in the form of job loss, but rather they are looking at automation and technological advantages as a gain in services within the home.