



Recovered from Ruins Exhibit—learn more on pg. 5

Spring 2026 was a very busy semester for **Washburn’s Sociology & Anthropology Department!** In this newsletter, we honor SOAN spring and summer graduates (pg. 2), our teaching accolades, (pg. 3-4 and 11) and scholarship recipients (pg. 6). You can also learn about Dr. Ibañez and Miller’s academic sabbaticals (pg. 7), SOAN faculty and student research (pgs. 8-9). And as always, the department has been busy in the community as well (pgs. 10 and 12). We have a lot to celebrate!

Elvia Nino-Elliott (BA Sociology and BBA Marketing) and her family were honored as the 2025-2026 **First-Generation Family of the Year** during halftime of a women's basketball game. Dr. Park and President Mazachek celebrate with Elvia!



Congratulations to our Graduates!

Keira Bird

BA Anthropology, Leadership Studies Minor

Erika Borgeson*

BA Anthropology, Museum & Curatorial Studies Minor

Rebecca Fasching

BA Sociology, Family & Human Services Minor

Joi Hayes*

BA Sociology, African American & Africa Diaspora Studies Minor



Cayla Heckman

BA Sociology



Lois Liljestrom*

BA Sociology, BA Psychology

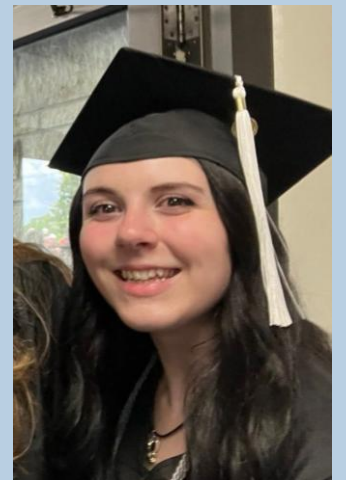
Cat Roberts

BA Anthropology, English Minor

Konner Verbeck*

BA Anthropology, Sociology Minor, History Minor

**denotes department honors*



Photos right: Joi Hayes (top), Konner Verbeck (middle), and Cat Roberts (bottom)

Above, from left to right: Keira Bird, Lois Liljestrom, Dr. Ibañez, Dr. Murphy, Cayla Heckman, Erika Borgeson

SOAN BODS In (and Out) of the Classroom

Dr. Sundal's **AN324 History and Theory of Anthropology** class explored anthropological theory in game design, rhetoric, and play. Students modified classic games into anthropology-themed versions and designed music playlists, zines, Taro cards, a Choose Your Own Adventure game, a curiosity cabinet, and scannable nail art with NFC microchips!



Time flies when you are having fun! Dr. Kiales' **AN374 Forensic Archaeology** students showed off their cast impressions and muddy gear after completing a mock burial case on the last day of the weekend workshop.



Dr. Park led the Sharing Culture Project with visiting Japanese students in both his **SO310 Social Class in the U.S.** and **SO300 Explore Japan Study Abroad** classes this semester.



Dr. Maxwell's **AN112 Cultural Anthropology** class visited the Mulvane Art Museum where Dr. Sara Stepp, Mulvane Director, presented the *Staying Focused: Photography in the Attention Economy* exhibit, curated by Washburn's Dr. Rik Hine. Students completed an ethnography of art worksheet on an art piece that retained their focus and attention.



More BODS In (and Out) of the Classroom



In **AN490 Applied Anthropology**, Dr. Murphy organized guided trip trips to the newly remodeled Kansas Museum of History, the “Americans” traveling Smithsonian exhibition at the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Constitution Hall in Lecompton, and Mount Aeolia. Students learned best practices in the public interpretation of Archaeology in museums, which they put to good use in their own exhibition (see next page)!



Recovered from Ruins: Telling Kansas Stories through Household Objects

Category : MulvaneExhibits

Location: Main Level Galleries
April 3–August 1, 2026

Guest curated by Dr. Laura Murphy's Spring 2026 Applied Anthropology class

A 2025 archaeological excavation at the site of a Kansas mansion built in the 1850s produced buttons, medicine bottles, animal teeth, and thousands of other artifacts. These objects provide a snapshot of the lives of those who called the mansion home—from its first inhabitant, Frederick P. Stanton, Acting Governor of Kansas Territory, to Civil War squatters, to former Kansas Governor Harry Woodring, who purchased the property in 1940. *Recovered from Ruins* tells their everyday stories through household objects, inviting you to reflect on domestic life in Kansas over time.

Join us at the [April 3 opening reception!](#) The student curators of this exhibition and Dr. Laura Murphy, the Project Investigator for the 2025 Archaeological Field School, will be available at the event to answer questions and offer insights about the excavations and the recovered artifacts.



Dr. Laura Murphy's AN490 Applied Anthropology students presented their artifact research at the opening reception for the exhibition *Recovered from Ruins: Telling Kansas Stories through Household Objects* at the Mulvane Art Museum for 200 guests. The exhibition runs until August 1, 2026. The student contributors are pictured with Dr. Murphy on page 1 of this newsletter.

(page 1 from left to right) Erika Borgeson, Keira Bird, Emily Dame, Danae Camacho Chevannier, Emme Fuchs, Cat Roberts, Jennifer Zuno, and Konner Verbeck.





Congratulations to our 2026-2027 Scholarship Recipients!

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Jay-Lynn Bauer, Anthropology

Beetle Hatch, Anthropology

Griffin Lickteig, Forensic Anthropology

Elvia Nino-Elliott, Sociology



SOAN DEPARTMENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Ruth Burkdoll, Forensic Anthropology

Emily Dame, Anthropology

Teagan Harris, Sociology



BEN AND JUDY COATES' SOCIOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Bryana McDaniel, Sociology



Thank you to our 2026 Day of Giving friends who donated **\$1865** to our SOAN scholarship fund!





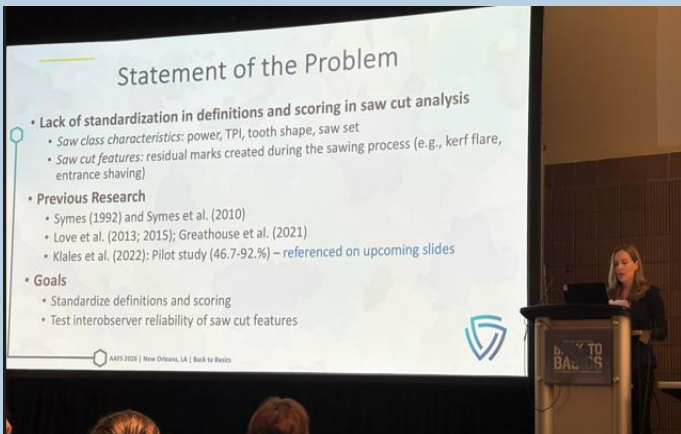
Dr. Lindsey Ibañez was on sabbatical for the academic year to research the therapist-client relationship using original survey and interview data. She presented findings at the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society and the Southern Sociological Society. This semester Dr. Ibañez also participated in the “What is Intelligence?” course through the University of Chicago's Classical Texts, Contemporary World program (funded by the WU Professional Development Grant). To explore the question of what it means to think, participants read and discussed philosophical works on the theory of mind, alongside classic sci-fi novels and computer science essays. Her additional sabbatical activities included updating several of her courses and finalizing edits on her forthcoming book, *The Reputation Game*.

Sabbatical Catch-Up

Also on sabbatical for the academic year, **Dr. Jason Miller** conducted ethnographic research focused on place-based community engagement and public representations of Indigenous peoples. He completed more than 50 hour-long interviews with local community leaders, faculty, and nonprofit organizations to better understand opportunities for strengthening community-engaged partnerships and place-based initiatives. He also spent a month in Japan to research, through discourse and content analysis, how Japanese museums portray the Ainu. Finally, Dr. Miller chaired a session, “Valuing Applied Work: Strengthening the Case for Applied Anthropology in Tenure and Promotion”, at the Society for Applied Anthropology annual meetings this semester.



SOAN Research Spotlight



At the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), **Dr. Ashley Maxwell** presented her grant research, "Standardizing and Re-evaluating Observer Agreement in Kerf Traits Commonly Used to Predict Saw Class Characteristics" (co-authored with Dr. Alexandra Klales) (photo left).

Dr. Alexandra Klales co-authored two additional presentations at the same meeting and published her co-authored article, "Testing Approaches to Population Affinity/Sex Classification Using Fordisc 3.1: Considerations for Best Practice Recommendations for U.S. Forensic Casework" in the journal *Forensic Anthropology*.

SOAN Faculty consistently present research and teaching pedagogy at annual academic conferences and through the WU's Center for Teaching and Excellence in Learning (CTEL). Faculty also mentor student research and encourage student presentations as well. This semester was no exception!

Dr. Laura Murphy presented her work, "Preliminary Findings from the 50th Kansas Archeology Training Program: The Stanton Mansion, Mount Aeolia, Site 14DO375" at the Kansas Anthropological Association's annual meeting. She also presented, "Community Engaged Learning: Washburn Archaeological Field School, the 50th annual Kansas Archeology Training Program, and the Lecompton Community" at a CTCL panel this semester.

At the CTCL Celebration of Teaching event, **Dr. Sangyoub Park** co-facilitated a session about "Leading Learning Abroad: A Celebration of Faculty Innovation, while **Dr. Mary Sundal** presented "Curriculum Design Successes and Challenges: Learning to Pivot during International Travel" at the same event. Dr. Sundal also received the Open Textbook Grant to revise the required readings for her classes this semester.



Dr. Murphy mentored anthropology student **Beetle Hatch** who presented their research on ginger beer bottles from Fort Hays on loan from the Kansas Historical Society (KHS) at the 2026 Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol and at the annual Apeiron undergraduate student conference.

SOAN Research Spotlight Continued



Also at Apeiron, sociology student **Joi Hayes** presented her WTE capstone project, “Founding Mothers and Hidden Black Women in Sociology.” Joi (center of photo) celebrates her presentation with sociology faculty and her project mentor, Dr. Sundal.

Anthropology student **Jeweli Blaine** participated in a roundtable discussion, “Telling the History of 6th Avenue” (moderated by Dr. Kerry Wynn in WU’s History Department) at the Kansas Association of Historians (KAH) conference.



Students can join the SOAN club [here](#) and everyone can stay up-to-date with club activities on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

SOAN In Our Community

The **Brenneman Leadership Series** students awarded an additional **\$2000** to Community Action, Inc. too!

Students in Dr. Park's **SO310 Social Class in the U.S.** organized the 7th annual diaper drive, which collected \$2,200 worth of diapers that they donated to Community Action, Inc. of Topeka—way to go bods!



Washburn hosted Topeka Public Schools USD 501's first Indigenous Games Day for nearly 100 local second graders. Dr. Murphy, along with Ava, Paloma, and Chavanna, taught students how to use the atlatl spear thrower on April 13, 2026.



Elvia and Mariah helped Dr. Park at the Soup and Dumpling Festival with the Washburn International Club.

Dr. Park and the Office of International Programs hosted the 2026 Lunar New Year Festival.



Honors and Recognition

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING AWARD

Dr. Laura Murphy

STUDY ABROAD DEDICATION AWARD

Dr. Sangyoub Park

CTEL CERTIFICATE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dr. Lindsey Ibañez

Dr. Ashley Maxwell

Dr. Laura Murphy

Dr. Mary Sundal

CTEL CERTIFICATE OF INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dr. Lindsey Ibañez

Dr. Mary Sundal

CTEL DEPARTMENT CERTIFICATE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

WASHBURN YEARS OF SERVICE

20 years Dr. Sangyoub Park

10 years Dr. Alexandra Klaes

10 years Dr. Laura Murphy





Spring 2026 by the numbers = 24 cases

- 2 case reviews
- 2 evaluations for KS Unmarked Burial Sites Preservation
- 3 search and forensic archaeological recoveries
- 3 laboratory analyses (ID and trauma)
- 14 determinations of medicolegal significance

Welcome DR. BRADLEY J. ADAMS, ABFA Diplomate #78 and AAFS Fellow

Before “retiring” to his home state of Kansas, Dr. Adams (photo above) served as the Director of the Forensic Anthropology Unit at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner - City of New York for 21 years and was employed as a Forensic Anthropologist at the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command’s Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) for 6 years. Dr. Adams has also served on the editorial board of the Journal of Forensic Sciences (2008-2023), the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA) Board of Directors (2011-2017), and as a Board of Trustees Member for the Forensic Sciences Foundation (2011-2015). Dr. Adams was awarded the 2026 T. Dale Stewart Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) and elected to the ABFA Board of Directions this semester!



WU-FARU student volunteers Dominick, Katie, Emme, James, Cynthia, and Griffin are back on campus after forensic archaeological recoveries (from left to right in the pictures above)



SOAN faculty toured the anthropology teaching and research labs and faculty offices at Advisors Excel Hall. We will be in our new spaces by January 2027!

You can help support majors in our three amazing degree programs!!

To donate go to <https://wualumni.org/givenow> and select "other" in the designation and type "**Sociology and Anthropology Scholarship fund.**" Donations are accepted year-round.

To stay up-to-date on current program activities, check out our [Department Facebook Page](#) and the [WU-FARU Facebook Page](#).

A look ahead...

Thank you to our 2026 Day of Giving donors who contributed **\$3190** to support these students on their Study Abroad adventure!



The **SO300 Explore Japan Study Abroad** class has prepared for their upcoming trip (May 25-June 9) with Dr. Park throughout the semester, researching various aspects of Japanese culture, and of course, trying Japanese cuisine! Stay tuned for a recap (and loads of pictures) of their travels.