

2016/17 Dissertation Titles and Topics

Did Anatomical Changes in Upper Limb Morphology Between Hominin Species Influence the Development of New Stone Tool Technologies?

Research on early hominins has focused mostly on the origins and nature of bipedalism. I believe that there is as much scope for consideration in the upper limbs, especially with regard to stone tool production and use. Therefore, I want to discover whether there is a link between the anatomical structure of the arm (bone lengths and muscle sizes [contributing to force production]). Using data from this research I want to use this to see if there is a correlation between changes in anatomy in hominin species (likely from *Homo habilis* to *Homo erectus*) and the complexity of their stone tools.

The Liverpool - China story: from industry and collecting to contemporary museum representations

My dissertation will use theories and approaches from anthropology and critical museum studies to explore interactions between the UK city of Liverpool and China. It will examine how the advent of the Blue Funnel Shipping Line in 1863 established new trade relationships and resulted in new forms of material culture in Liverpool as well as giving birth to a new Chinese community who settled in Liverpool. It will look at the maritime collecting families and explore the 19th century ideologies that were governing perceptions of China. Moving to the present day, it will compare representations of China and the Liverpool Chinese community in two of Liverpool's museums: the World Museum and the Museum of Liverpool. Throughout, I will be focusing on issues of power, from the imperial/colonialist mindsets that fueled the Liverpool-China trade to the museum spaces today and the place of the Chinatown community in Liverpool.

Did symbolism and language emerge symbiotically in *Homo sapiens* or are they independent cognitive traits and present in other hominins?

The conservative line is that symbolism and language arose 40-50kya in European *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Mithen argues that such cognitive features are unique to humans; evidence for symbolism in Neanderthals is argued to be imitation without understanding since they lacked fully articulated speech. Shea denounces this 'human revolution' hypothesis and regards modern cognition as archaic. Language is archaeologically illusive, so symbolism is used as a proxy indicator because it implies the expression of abstract thoughts and feelings. Debates centre on morphology, technology, burial, 'art', ornamentation, and genetics. I will interrogate the origins of symbolism and language in Africa or Europe. To what extent does the documentary series *Time Team* aid the advancement of engagement with the wider archaeological community? I aim to look at the relationship between the media and archaeology through the example of Channel 4's *Time Team*. I hope to explore to what extent what the public sees on TV is representative of the true archaeological realities of excavation and what this means for public engagement in the discipline.

Towards the study of Stature: Femur-• Tibia Ratios in Post-•Medieval Britain

I will examine the effects of the post-•Medieval class system in Britain on femur: tibia length ratios and survival among children. I will compare wealthy vs poor and male vs female individuals. By comparing the length ratios and the age of death in children and the longevity of adults, I aim to understand the connection between stature and longevity within the class context. With my access to grey literature from commercial archaeological archives, I'll collect a wide enough data set to draw a conclusion on whether or not the poor died younger with a shorter femur: tibia length ratio.

Habitus and Henry James

I want to explore the way in which anthropology has approached literary texts, and assess the relationship between cultural and literary frames of interpretation, paying special attention to the different ways that they construct social concepts like gender, family and aesthetics. I will frame my analysis against Peter Macdonald's assertion (2011) that once culture has been deconstructed and is no longer a bounded concept, literature is a more appropriate medium to understand the way in which perspectives come together 'interculturally'. I will do this by contrasting post-structural and phenomenological approaches, and will use Bourdieu's idea of habitus to suggest the different levels of description that they operate at – the former the axiomatic and subconscious environment that frames perspectives, and the latter as the way in which the conscious agent both manifest that, as has already been considered in the field, and contest it. I will argue that literature – in this instance, Henry James' novels – may nuance an anthropological account of how habitus' change over time, and help articulate the difference in assumptions between existential anthropology and the more radically relativistic idea of ontologies.

Contrasting the lived experience and social and legal treatment of homeless men in the UK

Drawing on interviews facilitated by the charity *Aspire* and secondary source materials, I will explore the ways in which the experience of homelessness impacts the self-image of men through the lens of masculine identity. I will also examine in contrast public perceptions of homeless men and their masculinity. My working assumption is of a tension between the hyper-masculinized image of the rough-living, resourceful, sometimes aggressive male versus a homeless man emasculated by lack of property, success and associated social status. Or, otherwise put, between fear, on the one hand, and patronization on the other. Finally, again through my work with *Aspire*, I will explore the ways in which such notions of masculinity impact the ways in which the legal and charitable systems around homelessness treat homeless

men in particular.

Unearthing the Child: Investigating Child Burial Practices in the Ancient Greek Mediterranean c.900-300 B.C.

I aim to analyse variation between child and infant burials across three sites in the Archaic Greek World (c.900-400 BC). These sites are Athens, Megara Hyblaea and Carthage, with discussion drawn from other significant sites. I will discuss key themes when considering child archaeological practice; *where* the child is buried, *how* they are buried and *what* they are buried with in order to emphasise the importance of the child in archaeology as a whole, and to consider if the way a child is buried is effected primarily by environmental factors or if cultural variation has an impact. The other primary aim of my dissertation is to discuss the lack of consideration children receive in archaeological study; how they have been overlooked, why this is of huge detriment to archaeology and a consideration of the anthropological importance of childhood".

To what extent can social structures be traced through exchange in the late 11th to early 9th centuries in the Aegean?

The Submycenaean (or Subminoan) period was a time of great social change in the Aegean, bridging the transition from the Mycenaean palatial system to the development of the early polis. The creation of social identity will be considered through funerary evidence at three prominent sites, Athens, Lefkandi, and Knossos, with a particular focus on the relationship between imported grave goods and gender displays among local elites, and on the differing adaptations in social structure across the three sites.

Art and Ostracisation: an analysis of the visible reactions to Islamophobia amongst diasporic Muslim youth in New York.

In my dissertation I aim to explore the notion of identity politics amongst groups of diasporic Muslim youth within New York City. I will examine the significance of media such as visual art, poetry and music to these groups as forming a "third space", and it's use in navigating liminal identities and carving out political niches. I will investigate the visible reactions to Islamophobia amongst Muslim youth communities, and how the use of the arts has enabled Muslims to react against this homogenous identity and stereotype that is being forced upon them in the contemporary political climate, drawing upon examples such as Taqwacore (Muslim "punk" music) or Muslim hip-hop as reactions to labels such as "terrorist". I also hope to identify why and to what extent the use of the arts in this way is governed by ones gender, class and age. I hope to overall unpick the importance of the arts in theories of oppression, racism and ostracisation.

The opportunities and limitations of mobile phone technology as a platform for information on contraception in developing countries

The use of mobile phones as a platform for reproductive health information has potential to address unmet needs of family planning. Using insights from the social sciences when implementing mobile-based projects we can successfully link technology to the demands of those in developing countries, improving access, adoption and continuation of family planning. Understanding the way people interact with this technology and how it is used is crucial in providing sensitive and effective information. This Dissertation seeks to critically evaluate how technology can facilitate optimal reproductive health practices, and how this could be improved upon in the future.

An evaluation of the Norse colonisation of the North Atlantic.

The primary factor in the collapse of the Norse presence in the western North Atlantic was their failure to adapt to the new landscapes they colonised. In order to test this hypothesis, comparative research will be carried out into the ecological features of the different environments (focusing primarily on Iceland, Greenland and Vinland), and thus what limitations the colonists would have faced. Through further research the extent to which the Norse did or did not adapt to their environments will be evaluated, and potential other factors in the collapse of the whole North Atlantic system explored.

Social use of Tell el yahudiyeh ware: a contextual study

I will compare the social use of the Tell el yahudiyeh wares in three sites in the late Middle Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean: Tell el Dab'a, Tell el Ajjul and Enkomi. Through analysis of other objects found in graves and settlements, I will analyse the social implications of the different ways this ware was used, whilst considering the differing historical context. As the Tell el yahudiyeh ware is thought to have been used primarily for perfumes, I will focus on the differing modes of bodily representations apparent in these 3 sites and civilisations. This study will be framed by the historical background of this period: the burgeoning international trade network that reached its peak in the Late Bronze Age.

The oldest Palaeolithic bone tools from Europe? Experimental and use-wear analysis of bone fragments from Cueva Negra, Spain.

The present dissertation explores whether the use-wear traces present in certain bone fragments from the site of Cueva Negra, Spain, are the result of their use by hominins as tools. In order to test this hypothesis, experimental research and use-wear analysis will be carried out. Furthermore, their micromorphology and the morphometrics will be compared to the currently available evidence from later Middle Palaeolithic sites. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that, rather than representing a novel and revolutionary dimension, bone tool use is a long-term feature of the set of cognitive and behavioural strategies of early Pleistocene hominins in Europe.

Exploring the Fabric of Norse Temples: Space, Materiality and Bodily Experience

Norse religious architecture has long been studied in terms of its relation with Norse cosmology and mythology, and how it may be assimilated within greater continuity of Iron Age ritual and depositions. However, the study of these structures would benefit from incorporating theoretical viewpoints of phenomenology (e.g. Barrie, 2010), materiality (e.g., Gosden, 2005), practice theory (e.g. Bourdieu, 1987), bodily experience (e.g. Clack, 2009) and spatial discrimination (e.g. Lewis-Williams, 2009). Using this body of theory as a heuristic device, a selection of "temple" sites from Viking age Scandinavia will be considered to create a nuanced understanding of sacred spaces and how people interact within them, perform ritual, and understand religion and spirituality within architectural space.

The Practice, Structure, and Reproduction of Online Hospitality Exchange

In this thesis, I argue that online hospitality exchange networks can be understood through the analytical framework of Practice Theory, in as much as the reproduction of reciprocal behaviours and social practices within such networks is mediated through the agentic actions of individuals, whilst these behaviours are simultaneously subject to wider structural influence. I will explore this dichotomous relationship between structure and agency through selected ethnographies of the website warmshowers.org, a sharing platform for travelling cyclists. Within this ethnography, areas of economic anthropology will also be explored and discussed, specifically the notion of generalised reciprocity and exchange systems.

A study of non-human selfhood and the conceptual groundings and implications of human-animal relations

Two significant fields of contemporary anthropology are those of personhood/selfhood, and of human-animal interaction on a conceptual level. Traditional studies of "kinship" focused solely on relations between human actors, in which the actor was assumed to be a temporally unchanging universal entity. But animals may play significant roles in kinship systems; their identities as conscious selves making them indistinguishable from human selves. I wish to explore the intersection of the two afore-mentioned fields, in which animal selves are created through interaction between non-human and human actors whilst emphasizing the active roles of animals in the creation of the social universe.

The effects of exercise on encephalisation.

The encephalization observable through human evolution has most often been interpreted in terms of selection pressures on cognition in the context of changing ecological conditions and increasing social complexity of groups. The Social Brain Hypothesis presents one of the most nuanced pictures to date of how various factors interact in driving brain growth and development at different points in prehistory. I seek to add a novel dimension to this hypothesis that draws on recent research within evolutionary anthropology. Based on the view that the hunting and gathering lifestyle adopted by human ancestors approx. 2 mya required a significant increase in their aerobic activity, I will explore how this may have directly affected human neurobiology. There is a growing body of evidence for proximate mechanisms linking physical activity and neurobiological changes in modern humans and for the co-evolution of aerobic physical activity and encephalization in other species. I will examine the relevance of this wide-ranging and interdisciplinary literature for the evolution of the human brain, cognition, and sociality.

Diet, birth, and bone: Possible correlation between interbirth interval, degree of frugivory, and jaw morphology among the great apes.

The cause of variation of the length of interbirth interval in great apes has been attributed to a number of factors. This dissertation will look at variation of interbirth interval data at both intra and interspecies levels among the great apes, and compare this to the most up-to date data on diet, (in particular the degree of frugivory) and aspects of jaw morphology associated with coarseness of diet. The possible relevance of the findings to fossil taxa will also be considered.

The Role of the First Punic War in Shaping Ancient Mediterranean Politics and Naval Warfare

The naval battles of the First Punic War both drastically changed how maritime warfare was conducted in the Mediterranean as well as the balance of power between states in the region. Maritime archaeology allows academics to excavate and analyze material which would otherwise be inaccessible to researchers. Preexisting technologies like bow mounted rams were combined with new advancements like the corvus, and other technological advancements as well as improved strategies of deployment/formation to change the nature of naval warfare. The Battle of the Egadi Islands in particular both exemplified these tactical changes and led directly to the shift of political power/influence in the western Mediterranean.

As the official end to the first naval sphere of the first Punic War and effectively the conflict as a whole, this sizable engagement (involving some 450 vessels in total) holds great significance as the point at which Rome became the sole/dominant naval power in the western Mediterranean.

Chants, light sticks, towels: Atmosphere and the making of the idol cult in contemporary Japan

The present dissertation examines how concerts of J-Pop, as a form of performance and ritual activity, bind singers to the fans. In order to explore this topic, I will analyse ethnographic data collected from attending two concerts in Japan, data from concert Blu-rays and correspondence with concert goers. I will draw on the well established anthropological literature on fan culture, ritual and performance, but this dissertation also aims to demonstrate the usefulness of the concept of atmosphere, a spatial phenomenon that transcend the supposed boundaries between people, things and environment, as a theoretical framework to analyse pop concerts as well as a range of other multi-sensory ritualised performances.