

CSN Subject Matter: Anthropology

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*Meghin Delaney:* Welcome to this week's edition of CSN Subject Matter, the College of Southern Nevada's weekly radio program in conjunction with KNPR. I'm your host, Meghin Delaney from CSN's Communications Office. CSN is Nevada's largest and most diverse higher education institution so naturally we have plenty of great stories to share. Today, we're talking anthropology. I have with me Dr. David Wangsgard, CSN's Department Chair of human behavior, and Dr. Diane Hargrave, a medical anthropology professor here.

Anthropology is a wide-ranging field filled with many opportunities for students to explore their passions. In the second half of the show we're going to chat with one of those students who recently finished a prestigious summer internship playing with bones. He'll tell us more about that later because it's definitely more complicated than that.

As always, you can learn more about CSN by visiting [csn.edu](http://csn.edu) we look forward to helping you succeed, now we're onto the show.

Hi guys, thanks for being with me today, can you start by giving our audience a brief introduction of who you are and what you do for CSN, David do you want to go first?

*David:* Sure, I am a cultural anthropologist, I specialize in gender studies, gender relations, I dabble in some linguistic anthropology and I teach courses in cultural anthropology that have to do with general cultural anthropology with gender across cultures and also courses in linguistic anthropology. I've done research in Vietnam, primarily, did some research with street children and looked at their involvement in the grey tourism economy there and then most recently I did some long-term research with an ethnic minority group in the highlands of North Eastern Vietnam where I looked at gender relations and masculinity.

*Meghin:* And how about you, Diane, tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do here?

*Diane:* Well I'm a medical anthropologist and essentially that means I'm interested in the ways in which health and culture articulate, how do the different cultures of populations look at health, how do they define it, how do they approach it and in that I've worked for over a decade throughout Africa, in the Middle East, for Save the Children looking at cultural ways to address some of the health challenges that show up in the Gambia or Ethiopia or Sudan and so I bring that experience when I came to CSN and brought medical anthropology courses to the curriculum, so I was able to add that to the curriculum and also develop a forensic anthropology certificate program to add to that and so it's like the best thing ever.

*Meghin:* And since we're an education institution, I love to ask folks to share their education story and how they got to CSN, you guys have traveled to some amazing places so how did you end up in Las Vegas, Nevada, and how did your educational path bring you here? Diane, why don't you share with us first?

*Diane:* Okay I'd like to say I am not the poster child for becoming an anthropologist. My undergraduate degree, in New York where I'm originally from, really focused on a double major with theater and communications but I join the Peace Corps and my job in the Peace Corps in Liberia was to look at

some of the health challenges and find culturally appropriate ways of broadcasting through radio ironically some of those issues. That led to further graduate work specifically focused on this idea of how different cultures perceive and approach health and one thing led to another and after over a decade with Save the Children and working overseas I just said I need to come back to the states to do a doctorate in anthropology which I did here in Nevada and CSN was just an absolute perfect fit for me to translate those into course material.

*Meghin:* And David were you the poster child?

*David:* Uh, no. It really began when I was volunteer work in the Washington DC area working with Vietnamese immigrant communities where I first became familiar with Vietnamese culture, learn Vietnamese language and then after that experience, I decided to go back to university and so I took one of those aptitude tests and they told me I should be an archaeologist and so I started exploring anthropology courses and I just fell in love with a cross-cultural research, understanding cross-cultural differences and similarities and what makes us human and as an undergraduate I decided, I'm going to become an anthropologist, went on I did a master's degree, went on I did my PhD and then I was looking for work and there was an opening at CSN, I checked CSN out and fell in love with the place, amazed with the with the expertise of my colleagues who I work with in the amazing things they've done and the breadth of anthropology courses offered in the program itself. They offered me the job and I jumped.

*Meghin:* You guys have talked about some of the research that you've done and what you study I think that sort of helps people develop an idea of what anthropology is, but folks who are unfamiliar, can one of you maybe give us a basic rundown of what is anthropology and what does it mean to study anthropology?

*Diane:* Essentially the quick definition of anthropology is the study of humankind in all places at an all-time and it's the only discipline that studies the species completely not just didn't in one area and so students that are exposed to cultural anthropology what they learn about is what different cultures are doing, we all want the same things, we want to be healthy, we want to be safe, we want to raise a family and we want to feel like our lives are meaningful. Discovering how different cultures do that not only opens students up to what's happening around the world, but particularly here in Las Vegas, more than half the cultures that you might study in a course, you might come in contact with individuals from that culture, so it really provides an opportunity for further connection for their understanding and an open-mindedness that they may not have had otherwise, so that's where anthropology has its value.

The other sections, there's cultural archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and biological anthropology subfields that are still trying to address this question "what does it mean to be human" and what are the ways that that information informs us about who we were, who we are, and maybe some suggestions for how we might want to behave in the future.

*Meghin:* I think the department of human behavior though, does it encompass a little bit more than anthropology. David, can you tell us a little bit about some other disciplines in that department or how they connect to anthropology?

*David:* Human behavior is one of the largest here at CSN and it does encompass psychology, sociology, applied psychology that deals with counseling and personal development in mental health in disability disorders, and then as well anthropology. All of these disciplines they are looking at you makes us tick, looks at human behavior but if they come after that question that you know about what it

is to be human from different angles. In the psychology, of course, look at individual psychology and sociology looks at mostly western societies and how we organize ourselves in society here and then the applied psychology is how you actually put psychology to work in bettering people's everyday lives and then of course anthropology takes this more holistic approach to looking at all aspects of being human but so I can binds all of these disciplines together, they're all great programs, is that what we have in common is that we are looking at human behavior and how people go about being human, why they do what they do.

*Meghin:* Specifically, on anthropology I wanted to talk a little bit about what a career could look like for a student in anthropology and I'm almost laughing in my head as I ask you guys this question after you explain to me how you came to anthropology, it seems like there's probably no one particular pass for a student, but maybe the better question is, what is the value for a student to come to CSN and study anthropology?

*Diane:* Well my first response would be that all disciplinary roads lead to anthropology, but essentially if a student is coming to CSN and they're doing their general education they make an anthropology 101 course and one of the things that they immediately realize is that this can be applied to my job. I give students an assignment in my 101 classes to talk about their careers at the end of the course and they're like I have to deal with so many different people in the casinos, I never realized that certain cultures had this idea about space or about lighting, I can use that. I have students through going into Health Sciences and like I'm going to be dealing with clients that have so many different ideas about health, about how you speak about certain illnesses, this is going to be really helpful. I have students that are business major like this is you know it's a global market for most business people that want to go into business. this now gives them tools for addressing a global community and they never even thought it was going to be relevant at the start and that's really the value, but it's afterwards so that's why we always encourage students, take the courses because then all of a sudden you see it is applied everywhere. So for students that's interested in that in terms of a job they can go this straight route like Dr. Wangsgard wanted to go straight for this is what I want to be, I want to be an anthropologist, you could go into business. I have former students that are in retail that work as anthropologists designing spaces in stores that encourage people to move about the store in a certain way, there are so many different ways within health, within the business, obviously within academia and because anthropology is both a hard science - I don't particularly care for that word - and a soft science it follows scientific methods so it functions as a science and it functions as a social science. There's no place else you going to get that kind of marriage so you can apply it anywhere in the media, anything, just anything like that.

*David:* And just to add one anecdote to that. I had a student, she was she was a nurse and she was furthering her education and we were talking about kinship and we were talking about how different cultures reckon relatedness who you're related to and who you're not and she was so confused because this couple who just had a baby had the parents as brother and sister and she wanted to report them as you know something was going on and it turns out, it clicked in her head, in some cultures when people get married they start referring to one another as brother and sister and so it was just a cultural misunderstanding, it just clicked in her head and said I need to look out for this.

*Meghin:* That's a great example. I wanted to go back to a term that you used that you said you don't like Diane, the the hard science vs soft science, can can one of you maybe describe or explain when people use those terms what they typically mean and then maybe why you don't think that would fit for anthropology?

*Diane:* Science is science, you are either using the scientific methodology, you're either approaching things from an empirical perspective that is based on data that's based on objectivity, what you're observing should not determine the nature of how you describe the discipline, so sometimes when they say hard sciences they're really thinking about specific disciplines but the term implies that a social science, particularly anthropology, isn't using those methodologies and biological anthropology which is what medical anthropology falls under no difference, so that's really where that that comes from I think it's just language that gets used over and over. The social sciences, the hard Sciences, but really that's that's a little bit of an allusion, because if you're if you're using scientific methods, if you're empirical, if you following all of those dictates of that methodology, it's science. Finished.

*Meghin:* For sure, before I move on to the second half of our program I wanted to ask you about your forensic anthropology certificate. I know it's a fairly new certificate at CSN so can you tell us a little bit about what the certificate is and what a student what skills a student will learn in that certificate program?

*Diane:* The discipline of forensic anthropology is now one that's pretty standard within in universities and colleges that offer anthropology programs, and to be honest the CSI series that started showing up on television had an incredible boost for a for the discipline. The certificate here at CSN require students to take specific courses that will give them skill sets that will allow them to either pursue specific academic work in forensics if they want to go on for the BA or the Masters, or if they're interested in going into the field to serve as a forensic technician, they've got the basic courses, so I designed the certificate so that students could take their general education courses and some of those would still apply for the certificate.

So in other words they weren't having to finish the AA and then take other courses. This gives students hands-on experience, there's an internship component to it, which I guess we'll hear about later that gives them this experience so that they can now have a toolkit for pursuing a higher education or going directly in the field.

*Meghin:* Great, well I'm excited to watch that certificate program grow and you know see more of our students end up on TV shows like Bones and CSI, right, that's what they're going to do? I think that's a pretty good transition to the second half of the show. If you're just joining us, you're listening to CSN subject matter the College of Southern Nevada's weekly radio program in cooperating with KNPR.

I just finished chatting with our first two guests today Diane and David from CSN's department of human behavior. We're talking all about anthropology today and now we're going to hear from a student who is studying anthropology Silvio Ernesto Mirabal Torres. He recently had the opportunity to intern at the University of South Alabama as part of a National Science Foundation grant.

I'm going to brag for him before he joins us because it is overall rare for an underclassman to be selected for this type of internship and it's even a more rare opportunity for a student to be chosen from a community college such a CSN. Silvio thanks for being here with me today, would you mind introducing yourself to her audience?

*Silvio:* My name is Silvio, I am 20 years old, 21 years old, I just turned it, I'm working on an associate of arts in anthropology and I'm doing the forensic anthropology certificate and I'm going to start my sophomore year here at CSN.

*Meghin:* And I know you're told me before, but can you tell her audience about how you ended up at CSN and how you chose anthropology?

*Silvio:* About a year and a half ago, I came to the United States, I'm from Cuba, and I was already late for college so I was like I need to start right away, but I have no money, so I started asking about and they told me about CSN, that it was cheap for students that just came from another country and needs financial aid and so I started as a communications major and as one of my general courses I took anthropology 102, biological anthropology and I fell in love with it. I don't know if it was because of the great professor that I had or because of how interesting the subject was but I knew right away that I have to change my major, so I change and the next year next semester I took introduction to cultural anthropology and help me help me to understand this new culture that I came in the United States but it also helped me understand my own culture and things that were that are happening, that were happening around the world, and I got to see them in a different way. It's just like magic when you take an anthropology class.

*Meghin:* And let me just ask you for the record that very first anthropology class you took who was your professor?

*Silvio:* Oh, Dr. Diana Hardgrave!

*Meghin:* And she just stole you into the anthropology program. Well, I'm glad that you're here, I'm glad you found something you're passionate about, so let's talk about this amazing internship opportunity that you just completed. Why don't you tell us how you heard about this opportunity and why it was with something you were interested in?

*Silvio:* Well, it's a long story, I've always liked science, like social sciences and I never elementary and middle school and high school found like this middle point where I could do both until I got to anthropology and during taking the cultural anthropology class, the human behavior department sent an announcement about the fellowship from the NSF and I said why not take the change so that the same day I went to both of my professors offices I asked them if they could tell me about it, write me a recommendation letter if I need it and they were on board and I was so excited because I was a freshman at the moment so it was going to be hands-on experience of work in anthropology.

*Meghin:* And what was it like when you found out that you got to accepted?

*Silvio:* I love to tell the story so I was on the computer, and I started screaming out loud and everybody started looking at me and then I realized, well I'm a freshman I have not a lot of experience in anthropology, so I went out, because the internship was a lot about bones so I went out and bought myself books about bones, about human skeleton. I started reading about the directors of the program, about the research they have done about the same area, I was going to study in the internship I basically just prepared myself as much as I could before getting there so I could be up to what they asked me to do.

*Meghin:* And this was a six-week fellowship, right?

*Silvio:* Eight weeks.

*Meghin:* Eight weeks, OK, and can you take us through what you learning, what were you doing?

*Silvio:* The eight weeks were broken basically the first two and a half weeks were crash osteology courses, we learn all the basics that we need to and even more we had to learn how to cite the bones, identify fragments as small as 3 centimeters. After that, we actually started with the research the other weeks that were left and the research was also broken down so we could take it easy so the first week we did a lot of reading because they internship is archaeology and as part of archaeology, it takes a lot of reading, you have to prepare about the civilization that you are studying at the moment. Later we actually we started gathering data with the bones, we study the humerus in your arm, and we did sex estimations, we interpreted our results, we made a YouTube video so the general public you'll understand what we did turn this research and we also make a poster for the AAPA conference in Los Angeles next year.

*Meghin:* Was there a specific portion of this fellowship that is your favorite moment or memory or experience that you had?

*Silvio:* So we have these the program, while we were doing the research, our directors had the amazing idea that we will have a guest speakers every week that will touch tell us about anthropology, about archaeology and the challenges that he faces because we are working with human remains so there's a lot of ethics involves working with human remains because in some cultures bones are just the remains of a dead person and you can study them, but other cultures think that handling or researching the bones is messing with their ancestors and not letting letting them rest in peace, so it was interesting to hear about the other side, not just that the scientist needs to find this data to make these connections about passed civilization, but to think about the bones that you're studying, who are the relatives are they okay with it.

*Meghin:* And that's why it's described as a sort of holistic approach, right, you're not just literally looking at the bones, you taking into account all those cultural and societal aspects from this community right?

*Silvio:* Yes so for example, the whole reason we are studying the bombs is to see what was like during the period the bones belong to. We don't know a lot about this culture, most of the material culture that is left are graves and graves are good and also bones and this culture for the evidence that has been gathered up until now seems to be completely different from everything that was around them. The Mesopotamians that had a lot, they have a graves, counting and stuff like that and then you have to work with a culture that has no writing left, no records beside their tongues, and some houses and so all you have are bones and you how to tell about the culture through the bones and what we found out my team specifically was apparently there was no difference what sex gets into the tomb, cause we found an even amounts of males and females in the tombs that we studied.

*Meghin:* So since it was a rare opportunity for us at CSN to send a student on a fellowship like this, what are you bringing back but now you're able to share with your CSN professors and your fellow students this fall?

*Silvio:* I'm going to give a talk about how to get into an internship founded by the National Science Foundation, how is to get through because it was two months and it was a lot going on, so it's really stressful, so I would like to encourage other students to go there and I think this talk that I'm that I'm going to give it's going to help them understand it, and to understand that yes I'm from a community college like you said but I'm just as well prepared as all the other students that were on the internship

so I would like to to always remind the students at CSN don't worry about applying to all of these amazing opportunities, if you are prepared, if you believe in yourself,you will get it.

*Meghin:* So now that you have your second year at CSN studying anthropology, have you thought about what the next steps might look like for you or what a future career might look like for you?

*Silvio:* So right now I'm going to finish my associates and getting the forensic anthropology certificate, I'm going to transfer to either UNLV or UNR even our amazing schools and hopefully get my Master's and PhD in the next 10 years and my final goal is to be a professor, my dad and my mom are professors, I used to hate being a professor because I thought like handling with students but through life I have learned that I like helping people to know more. I think being a professor is going to be my final dream.

*Meghin:* Thank you so much for joining us Diane, David and Silvio, and you've been listening to CSN Subject Matter, the College of Southern Nevada's weekly radio program in conjunction with KNPR. I'm Meghan Delaney from CSN's Communications Office. You can learn more about CSN by visiting [csn.edu](http://csn.edu) or finding CSN on any of your preferred social media sites you look forward to helping you succeed and I'll see you next time.