MEMORANDUM

TO: All Sociocultural Anthropology majors, Dept. of Anthropology faculty, and advisement staff

RE: New field school policy for ethnographic field projects and senior thesis oversight

November 3, 2011

In order to promote better mentoring and more successful ANTHR 495 ethnographic field projects, sociocultural anthropology majors must conduct their thesis research in specific areas where faculty members (regular, adjunct, and associated) have expertise. This will ultimately improve the quality of senior theses in sociocultural anthropology. To achieve this effect, students will be required to undertake their ethnographic field research for ANTHR 495R in one of the field school programs directed by faculty in the Department of Anthropology or affiliated faculty (currently Janis Nuckolls in Linguistics, Ralph Brown in Sociology, and Eric Hyer in Political Science). In extreme circumstances, exceptions (including local options) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The current field school programs include the following (annual changes to these offerings may occur, but will be presented to students in ANTHR 442; these are current projections):

India (Charles Nuckolls) (Fall, Winter, Sp/Su, annually)
Thailand (Jacob Hickman) (Sp/Su annually)
Namibia (David Crandall) (Sp/Su 2012, 2015)
The United Kingdom (Sheila Bibb) (Sp/Su annually)
Ecuador (Janis Nuckolls) (Sp/Su annually)
Cambodia (Ralph Brown) (Sp/Su annually)
China (Eric Hyer) (Sp/Su annually)

As part of the process of developing a proposal for the 495R field project, all students will select an appropriate field school experience and the corresponding responsible faculty member to serve as their primary advisor for their project and write up. Within that selection, student and faculty should negotiate a mutually agreed upon project focus consistent with the possibilities inherent in the location of the field school, the abilities of the faculty to provide mentorship and guidance, and the theme, if any, of that term’s collective interest or focus. Students must work with prospective advisors to select a topic for their thesis that relates closely to their advisor’s expertise and interests. While this policy forecloses some topics and geographical areas from possible study, it will also increase the degree of concordance between faculty expertise and student projects, such that the quality of senior thesis projects will increase to the benefit of both faculty and students.
All students will be required to convene a senior thesis proposal hearing between the primary advisor, the ANTHR 442 instructor, and the anticipated instructor for ANTHR 499. This should happen before the middle of the semester in which the student is taking ANTHR 442. The student will submit a 500-word summary of the research proposal (and additional bibliography for the project), including the research question and its theoretical significance, the analytic approach the student intends to take, and the methods that will be used. The student will be responsible for scheduling a meeting with this faculty committee, submitting the précis well in advance of the meeting, and integrating the committee’s feedback in revising their proposal for the course requirements in ANTHR 442.

Finally, "special enrollment" (via independent study or other non-standard offerings) for ANTHR 442 and 499 will not count toward graduation in the Department of Anthropology. In other words, these essential courses must be taken on campus when they are regularly offered by the department. These courses are critical for students’ training, proposal development, and write-up for their theses, and for these reasons must be taken through the regular channels for graduation.