

# Celebrate Social Sciences

January 2016

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MEAGHAN PEURAMAKI-BROWN???????

IN THIS ISSUE

## Newsletter



### Introduction

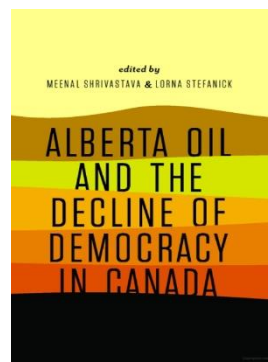
Welcome to the first Centre for Social Sciences newsletter. There are so many talented people in our centre including academics, tutors, students, and support staff who are doing amazing things. Unfortunately, given the nature of our institution, we know each other all too little. It is my hope that a quarterly newsletter will help pull us together and put us on a path to having more of a centre identity. I would like the newsletter to help us celebrate who we are, and the amazing things we all do every day.

Linda Chmiliar, Chair Centre for Social Sciences



### Feature: Maya Research

Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown is a Maya archaeologist. Maya archaeology is an exciting field of research, with many new sites and artifacts (re)discovered each year within the modern countries of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.



### New Book by AU Researchers

Meenal Shrivastava and Lorna Stefanick talk about their new book that features five CSS members.

## FEATURE

### Explorations of urban development and resource management in the ancient Maya lowlands.

Dr. Meaghan Peuramaki-Brown is a Maya archaeologist and is currently involved with two major research programs. Maya archaeology is an exciting field of research, with many new sites and artifacts (re)discovered each year within the modern countries of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Particular areas of interest include how the ancient Maya settled on the landscape, acquired raw materials, crafted “things”, and then distributed, used, and disposed of these items. The Maya had sophisticated methods and systems of resource extraction, manipulation, and trade going back to Formative times (ca. 1800 B.C.-A.D. 250) and continuing well into historic periods. In concert with these activities, villages, towns, and cities sprung up in advantageous places on the landscape, increasing in their degrees of urban complexity over time.

Meaghan’s primary research project, funded by a SSHRC Insight Development Grant, is located in the Stann Creek District of Belize. A little understood area of urbanization and resource development lies from the Maya Mountains in Belize to the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. Research by the *Stan Creek Regional Archaeology Project*

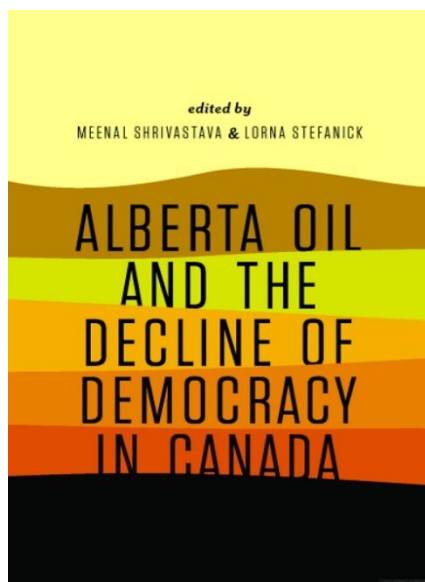


(SCRAP) aims to rectify this knowledge gap, and current investigations are focused on Alabama (map page 1). Alabama is a historic designation for the area, named by the owners of a banana plantation that previously occupied the area. The ancient Mayan name for the site is unknown. The monumental epicentre of Alabama consists of 21 major structures, including an ‘acropolis’ and ballcourt where the Mesoamerican ballgame was played. These structures are arranged around three plazas with a causeway leading into the site from the surrounding residential settlement zones. Meaghan’s current research aims to understand the development of Alabama as a possible example of rapid resource-based urbanism (boomtown), which arose during the Late Classic period (ca. 600-800 AD) in relation to the exploitation of local staple resources such as granite for the manufacture of corn grinding implements and construction material. 2015/2016 field and laboratory members (on first page of newsletter) include students from Canada (including an AU anthropology undergraduate student), the US, and Belize, as well as local Maya community members. For more information, visit [www.scraparchaeology.com](http://www.scraparchaeology.com)

Meaghan’s second project is located in the Calakmul Biosphere of Campeche, Mexico, where she is co-director of the *Proyecto Arqueológico Yaxnohcah*, along with colleagues Dr. Kathryn Reese-Taylor (University of Calgary) and Dr. Armando Anaya Hernandez (Universidad Autónoma de Campeche). The goals of the most recent (2015) field season included ground-truthing results of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data obtained in 2014, in order to gain a better understanding of the distribution of buildings and civic infrastructure across the vast Maya city of Yaxnohcah.

The team of 25 archaeologists and local excavators (picture above) have also initiated investigations of ancient houses to determine occupation dates and settlement distribution patterns of the Maya who lived at the site beginning over 2500 years ago. Intense studies of vegetation patterns and water catchment systems at the site, as they exist today as well as in the past, were also a critical focus of the month-long season. For more information, visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/reesetaylor/research>

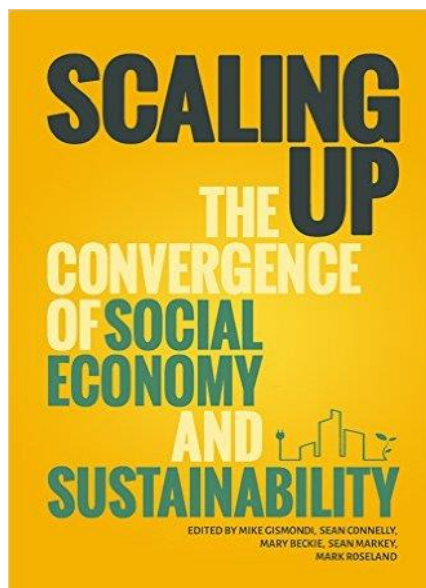
## New Books



Meenal Shrivastava and Lorna Stefanick Editors

Alberta Oil and the Decline of Democracy in Canada (AU Press, 2015) is now available at <http://aupress.ca/index.php/books/120251>. This book includes a selection of studies of political ideology, political economy, national security, political activism, gender, labour, and the visual arts to explore the impact of oil dependence, federally and provincially in Canada. Reflecting the cross-disciplinary reach of this topic, the fourteen scholars contributing to this book are from nine different academic disciplines. Ten of the contributors are faculty at the FHSS at AU, of which five are in the Centre for Social Sciences (including Jay Smith, Josh Evans, and Joy Fraser).

Congratulations to Everyone!!!!



This AU Press book will be out in January 2016. It is co-edited by Mike Gismondi, who also wrote a few of the chapters. Congratulations Mike!!!



## Linda Chmiliar Launches Pro Version of Early Childhood App

In 2015, Linda launched a new PRO version of her early childhood assessment app. This app was designed to provide an informal skills assessment for 3 to 5 year olds that is similar to what is used in the preschool classroom. The app provides practice before the assessment that helps the child learn how the screen interface works. It provides a complete informal assessment of Pre-K readiness skills through interactive activities and checklists. Links to teaching suggestions are provided for each skill. A summary of the assessment can be printed or emailed as a report.

In response to requests by teachers and schools, a new version of the app has been released that now provides teachers with the option of completing and storing up to 20 individual assessment profiles on the app.



### Additional Profiles

The PRO version of the app now allows the teacher to create up to 20 student profiles. Data from each child's assessment is securely stored on the app and password protected.



### Interactive Activities

The assessment covers a range of Pre-K readiness skills that primarily involve the child in interactive play activities on the screen. The app records the child's responses and compiles them into a report.



### Assessment Report

After the assessment is complete, the teacher has a complete assessment report for each child that can be shared with parents by print or email.

	Not yet	Sometimes	Yes
Enjoys being read to			✓
Knows how to use a book		✓	
Can hold a book and turn pages			✓
Can recite the alphabet			✓
Can spell name out loud			✓
Recognizes upper case letters		✓	
Recognizes lower case letters			✓
Identifies upper case letters		✓	
Identifies lower case letters		✓	
Recognizes letters by sound			✓
Identifies words that begin with the same sound		✓	
Identifies rhyming words		✓	

## Update

### By Josh Evans

I have a few forthcoming scholarly articles from two research projects I have recently completed. These are the first of a number of articles from these projects.

1) Two articles were recently accepted from my project entitled, "Creating alternative spaces of employment for people with mental health problems."

Wilton, R. Buhariwala, P. Evans, J. (Accepted) Social Enterprises as Enabling Workplaces for People with Mental Illness. *Disability & Society*

Wilton, R. and Evans, J. (Accepted) Social enterprises as spaces of encounter for people with mental illness. *Area*

This five-year study sought to develop a better understanding of the types of social enterprises that employ people with mental illness in Canada, how these enterprises create workplaces that are accommodating for people with mental illness, the challenges enterprises face in their efforts to sustain these workplaces, and the different experiences of people working in these enterprises. Recently completed, this study was the first national evaluation of social enterprise and mental illness in Canada.

2) Two articles were recently accepted which sprung from my project entitled, "From streets to homes: The rise of housing first models and programs in Canada."

Baker, T. and Evans, J. (Accepted) 'Housing first' and the changing terrains of homeless governance. *Geography Compass*

Alaazi, D. Masuda, J. Evans, J. Distasio, J. (Accepted) Therapeutic landscapes of home: exploring Indigenous peoples' experiences of a Housing First intervention in Winnipeg. *Social Science & Medicine*

In recent years, major changes have occurred with respect to how governments are responding to homelessness. The introduction of the 'Housing First' (HF) model is one example. In Canada, the HF model has featured prominently in recent government strategies and spread swiftly among cities. Our aim in this project was to explore the policy pathways that have contributed to the rapid diffusion of HF policies and programs. We set out to address several questions. Where and when have HF policies and programs found implementation in Canada? How has the HF model been presented abroad and within Canada? What pathways have permitted the flow of HF policies and programs to Canadian cities? How has the HF model been adapted to particular places?

## Update

### By Mike Gismondi

This fall has been busy with teaching and academic work. In October, I sent chapter galleys of *Scaling Up: The Convergence of Social Economy and Sustainability* out to editors and authors, and rounded them back up before Christmas. The AU Press book will be out in January. I co-edited the book and wrote a few chapters.

In November, I was the AU internal/external on the review panel for the doctoral degree in Distance Education. Over three packed days, I learned about the design of their doctoral program, how colleagues teach and conduct research with their students, and how they think about educational studies (not just DE).

Also, I chaired Committee 6 (Human Geography, Environment and Society, Communications & more) of the SSHRC Post-Doctoral Awards Competition. Reviewers assess about 50 applications each in the fall, and the group then adjudicates any disputed files. The committee teleconferenced in December (no more free trips to Ottawa) to rank dossiers, breaks ties, and review discrepancies. Only about 24 applicants in 125 receive funding each year.

AU/FHSS should develop a Post Doc strategy and tie it to our proposed FHSS Research Centre. Despite stacks of reading and thinking, this SSHRC committee work exposes you to fresh thinkers investigating new topics in novel ways. Also you learn how larger influential universities shape and control the Canadian academy.

This winter, I will be hunkered down in Athabasca (ARL) doing some cold weather writing about global warming for the textbooks *Power and Resistance in Canada* and *Critical Concepts in Political Science*. And, I'm working on some ideas about the concept of transition, not Bruce Jenner, but sustainability.

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## Update

### By Bob Brandes

The course revision PSYC 388 Introduction to Counselling is moving to version C7 in late spring/early summer 2016. Bob Brandes has edited new textbook [print] for course:

Gladding, S. T., & Alderson, K. G. (2012). *Counselling: A comprehensive profession*. In B. Brandes (Ed.) (2015), *Introduction to counselling* (2nd Custom Edition). Toronto, ON: Athabasca University/Pearson Learning Solutions.



Primateology Field School in Belize

## Monkey River Field School

By Hugh Notman

Every May since 2007 I have taken up to 20 undergraduate students to a remote little strip of forest called Monkey River in Belize. This forest is home to a healthy population of black howler monkeys, which are famous for being one of the loudest mammals on the planet relative to their size (think cocker spaniel producing a

call that can be heard over a kilometer away). The field school is a University of Calgary group study program but it is open to all students in Canadian universities. During the program students are taught, and gain first-hand experience in the basics of data collection methodology on wild primates, forest ecology, research design and the management of rigorous field conditions (including how to get along with fellow researchers in tight quarters). Monkey River is not only home to howler monkeys, but also jaguars, poisonous snakes (the *fer de lance*) and millions of mosquitoes (in fact, its original name was the Mosquito Coast). Conditions are rough – students share rooms at the end of long days in the forest and then completing “homework” each afternoon and evening – but the rewards are worth it (according to the feedback we get). We have a long-standing relationship with local field guides from the village of Monkey River, most of whom have been working with our project since the first group of students went in 1998 (I was a TA for that one). They accompany us in the forest and provide assistance with plant identification, trail clearing and forest safety.

Almost all of my current and past Masters and PhD students are field school alumni, as I am confident

Preparations are underway for the field school this coming that these students are fully aware of what they’re getting into with field work at the grad level once they’ve been through my Belize program! I also have a different site in Belize that has been used for my research program at Athabasca University, but only my graduate students visit this site. May in 2016.

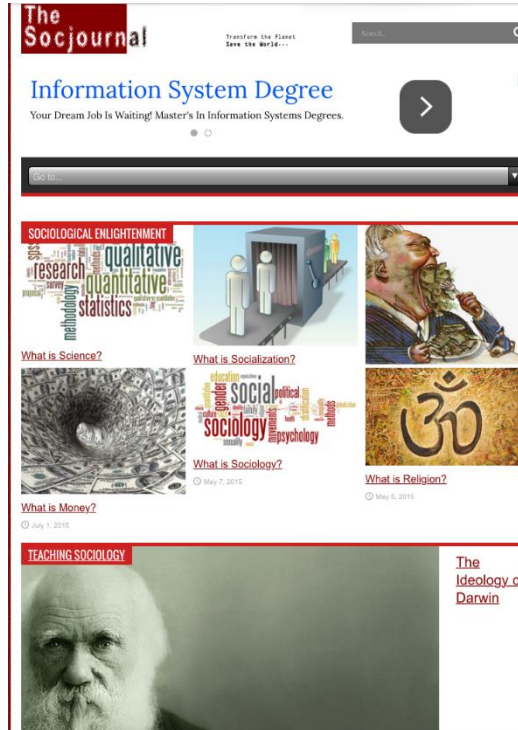


Adult male with two children

## Fun Fact

By Mike Sosteric

Last year the Socjournal (<http://www.sociology.org>) reached a milestone of over 2,000,000 hits a month in Sept, Nov, and Dec of 2015. Check it out.

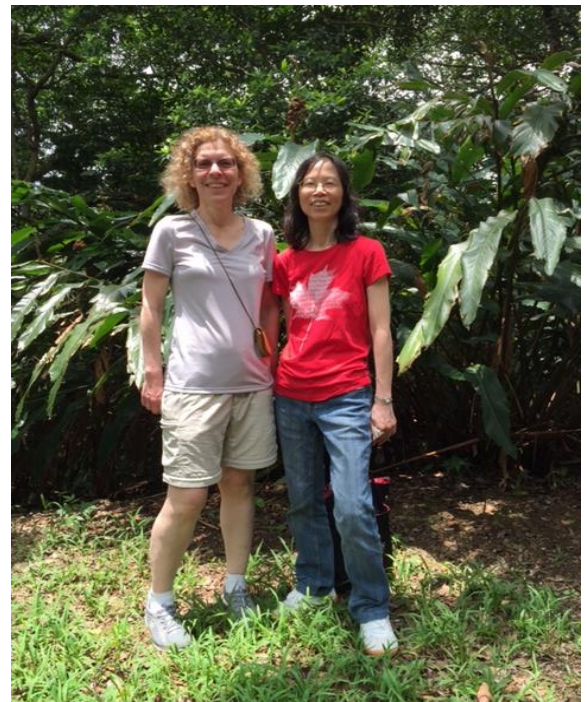
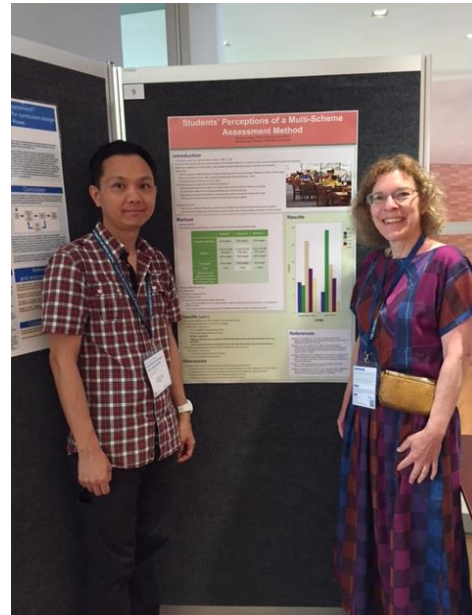




## Hong Kong Conference

By Cheryl Kier and Cheuk Ng

At the Assessment for Learning in Higher Education conference in Hong Kong in May, 2015, 28 countries were represented. Over 200 papers were presented, along with dozens of posters, workshops, roundtables, and keynotes. Dr. Ambrose Leung (Mount Royal University) and Dr. Cheryl Kier presented a poster on “Students’ Perception of a Multi-Scheme Assessment Method”. Basically, we showed that students were very satisfied to have options in the weighting of the components of their course evaluation, rather than having them fixed, like in most courses. As in much of Hong Kong, the conference was very “efficient” in the use of space. We got to know the presenter at the poster next to us quite well.



But even the most avid of conference goers has time to conduct psychology research, and Dr. Cheuk Ng and Dr. Cheryl Kier had their very own private psychology meetings. Here we are contemplating the psychology of Chinese flora and fauna.



And here we are mulling over the psychology of wearing purple to explore the Ngong Ping grounds.

But seriously, as a re-born tourist on vacation in Hong Kong, Cheuk Ng took the opportunity to collect  $n$  picture samples for her *Psychology and the Built Environment* course. She also accidentally stumbled onto a keynote lecture entitled *Chronic Disease and the Built Environment: the Public Health Challenge* delivered by Professor John Gallacher, Professor of Cognitive Health at the University of Oxford, who was visiting the University of Hong Kong at the time.

Overall, we would have to conclude that the time spent in Hong Kong was very worthwhile and highly recommended for the next conference....

## Tutor Update

### Prehistoric Bison and Ancient Hunting at Promontory Cave, Utah

By Vandy Bowyer

Dr. Vandy Bowyer, Study Tutor in the Center for Social Sciences at AU is an Environmental Archaeologist interested in understanding the interrelationships between humans and their environments. Throughout the Holocene (last ~10,000 years) precontact people developed a deep understanding of their natural surroundings which included a detailed knowledge of the animals upon which they survived. Based on this knowledge, hunters used a range of strategies to acquire resources at various times and places across the regional landscape. Vandy's research is especially well-suited to multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches that use a variety of data sets such as paleoenvironmental records, ethnographic sources, traditional knowledge, and biological literature to learn more about past human land-use.



Figure 1. Promontory Point, northern shore of Great Salt Lake, Utah. (Photo credit: Vandy Bowyer)

Vandy is currently working as Research Associate with Dr. Jack Ives at the University of Alberta on the Promontory Caves Project, Promontory Point on the northern shore of Great Salt Lake, Utah. The caves were originally excavated in the 1930s by archaeologist Julian Steward who believed that the occupants were northern Dene speaking bison hunters originally from the Canadian Subarctic. Ancient cave-dwellers left behind an array of well-preserved artifacts including moccasins, bows and arrows, and basketry. The main goal of Vandy's research is to better understand prehistoric bison populations and their relation to the Promontory Cave occupation at ~700 years ago. Large quantities of bison bones, hide and dung were recovered from the cave deposits. Bison dominates in Promontory culture even though herd populations in the region fluctuated significantly over time. It is unclear whether intensive human hunting, climate change (e.g. drought), or a combination of both is responsible for the changes in bison populations.





Figure 2. Bison skull found at Promontory Cave 1. (Photo credit: Dr. Jack Ives. University of Alberta)

Fieldwork has included surveys of modern vegetation and landform associations around Promontory Point. Laboratory work includes botanical analyses of the ancient bison dung found in archaeological deposits in the Promontory Caves to better understand past diet and environments. Research into a modern bison herd at Antelope Island State Park, not far from the Promontory Point, also provides important baseline data for understanding prehistoric bison in the area. Through these various lines of investigation more can be learned about environmental change, prehistoric bison ecology, and the impacts of intensive human hunting around Promontory Point. More information about the project is available at <https://sites.google.com/a/uAlberta.ca/ipa/home/people>.



Figure 3. Today a re-introduced bison herd inhabit Antelope Island State Park near Promontory Point, Utah. (Photo credit: Vandy Bowyer)



## Student Report

By Megan Williams

My name is Megan Williams, I am a fourth year Bachelor of Arts student majoring in Anthropology and I am currently involved in some pretty fantastic research at Athabasca University. Around the end of October, I received a notification informing me of an Athabasca University professor looking for a senior undergraduate student to do some part time work for a research project. I immediately emailed Dr. Peuramaki-Brown a little bit about myself and we agreed to meet up later in the week. During our meeting Dr. Peuramaki-Brown told me about her project, the study of urbanization and commodity trade/procurement in central Belize at the site of Alabama in the Stann Creek District, and what opportunities the position would offer. I learned that not only would I have a chance to learn hands on skills like the classification techniques of ceramics and obsidian artifacts, but I could also be part of the 2016 field season in Belize. Dr. Peuramaki-Brown also presented me with a unique and exciting opportunity to conduct my own research for Anthropology 405: Special Topics in Archaeology, a course that I had my eye upon for some time. She explained that they had made some surface collection finds of obsidian in Alabama last season and wanted to analyze it with

provide some insight for what we could expect to see conduct the analysis and use the results to form some preliminary assessments on the origins of the obsidian found at Alabama and its route through the region, this would ultimately be the topic of my Anth 405 paper. In order to conduct the X-Ray Fluorescence analysis on the obsidian we travelled to McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario where Dr. Tristan Carter of the McMaster Archaeological XRF Lab (MAX Lab) allowed us to use his facilities in order to determine the elemental composition of each of the Alabama obsidian artifacts. The trip was, without a doubt, my favourite academic experience to date as well as a fantastic opportunity for learning the procedures necessary to conduct EDXRF analysis on obsidian artifact and source materials; how to correctly interpret the data; and issues facing analyses using complex and expensive technology. Now that the analysis has been conducted and the results are in I have started my work on Anth 405, the goal of my research will be to better understand the roles and participation of the residents of Alabama in the Classic and Postclassic periods of Maya trade networks through the study of the obsidian they left behind. I am only halfway through my participation in Dr. Peuramaki-Brown's project at Alabama and I still have a month long field season to attend, but the amount of opportunity for learning skills and knowledge that I will need to further my academic career in the field of Archaeology has been immense and exciting beyond words! If you are interested in learning more about the Stann Creek Regional Archaeology project and its goals, you can follow the projects blog at [scraparchaeology.com](http://scraparchaeology.com).

