

## PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

### “Choose Your Own Adventure,” University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology

[00:00] You’re listening...you’re listening...to a University of Kentucky...University of Kentucky...College of Arts and Sciences podcast.

[00:08] *Music plays.*

[00:16] *Narrator:* Anthropology is the comparative holistic study of humankind in all places and times. Within it are four subfields of study: archaeological, biological, and cultural anthropology, taught in the anthropology department, and linguistics, taught in the linguistics program. The diverse and interdisciplinary nature of anthropology makes it unique enough, but what really helps to separate it from other majors is the degree to which students get to create their own experiences as extensions of their varied interests, interests as wide-ranging as the discipline itself. For anthropology majors Camille Westmont and Jacob Welch, their adventures were discovered in the subdiscipline of archaeology at the Yucatan Peninsula. For Jordan Neumann, it was cultural anthropology and all things Tibet that would eventually take him halfway across the globe. What unites the three stories in this podcast is the array of opportunities anthropology presents and the department’s faculty and staff who are ready and willing to help students find their way. Now we begin with Camille Westmont’s story.

[01:18] *Music fades out.*

[01:18] *Camille Westmont:* So, I majored in anthropology because I’m, I’m originally from Arizona, um, so we have a lot more contact with, uh, like, living Native American cultures, and I did a mission trip in high school and just thought interacting with, with native cultures was the greatest thing ever. And, uh, it wasn’t until I got to, to college that I realized that I wasn’t so much interested in, like, the living cultures as much as, like, archaeology and past cultures and past civilizations. I went down with one of our professors here, Dr. Scott Hutson, down to Yucatan. The reason I was allowed to go is because I had taken the...kind of like the field methods course the previous summer. So I, I knew what I needed to know to go down to Yucatan and actually be helpful. Jacob Welch, who’s another undergrad, and I, uh, started out doing survey in, in uh, rural Yucatan. And Yucatan is, uh, it’s described as a semi-arid thorn forest, so it’s just lots and lots of walking through a dense desert underbrush. And then, that, that was the beginning of the summer, and then at the end of the summer I had received a grant from undergraduate research to do my own project looking at, kind of, wealth and equality and how that is tied to the size of Mayan houses. And so Dr. Hutson gave me a crew of, of four local Mexicans who didn’t speak any English and just kind of sent me on, on my way. So I got to practice research design, and, and of course he, he was overseeing all of it so, so I wasn’t totally by myself. But yeah, it was a great experience.

[03:08] *Narrator:* Sharing that experience with Camille was Jacob Welch. From the trip to Mexico, Jacob’s studies took him to Honduras, as he explains.

[03:17] *Jacob Welch:* Um, so two summers ago I went to Mexico with Scott Hutson who directs the Ucí-Cansahcab Regional Integration Project, and there I studied a Maya site called Kancab, and my goal was to map it, or map portions of it, to help try to find the site boundary, which may or may not be meaningful to the Mayan people of the past. Um, so that was my first research experience, and that was a two-month experience, if I remember correctly. And then this past summer I went to Honduras with Cameron McNeil of CUNY-Lehman College in New York, and there I studied small residences on the

hillside of a site called Rio Amarillo in the Copán Valley. And the point of this research was to find evidence for post-classic or late occupation of the Maya in this valley. So those were the two other research abroad experiences that I've had. And I definitely got some help from the honors program and the Office of Undergraduate Research through their summer research grants so because definitely helped me explore my, my interests in that regard.

[04:25] *Narrator:* Jordan Neumann's interests lie in Tibet, but like Jacob Welch, Jordan notes the mentoring roles of anthropology's faculty and staff.

[04:33] *Jordan Neumann:* Well, I'm interested in all things Tibetan—in Tibetan culture, religion, in even more abstract issues like Tibetan identity and the forging of, like, a refugee population and identity and community. And this upcoming fall, I'll be taking a trip to India for six months in an attempt to learn Tibetan, um, from a local Tibetan population. My reason for my interest in the language is so I can more fully explore other sorts of research questions like how do different cultural practices amongst monks and how they eat affect their own biologies, which in turn might affect how they practice, whether or not they are healthy or not healthy. In this particular region I'm going to, um, it's also very hard to find literature about that people, and I know that there are a lot of elderly Tibetan refugees that have come here since, you know, since they had to cross the Himalaya from Chinese invasion in like 1950s, and they have a whole bunch of stories that have gone untold, and so I think that it could be very interesting to tap into that and share that with the world. And also, the professors in anthropology work very close with students, especially interested students, in coming up with projects like this, um, as well as mentoring them throughout their undergrad and providing them with research opportunities. Um, it's really great how closely I can work with my professors. It's been a very collaborative effort between myself, my professors, education abroad, and also with a community of Tibetan Buddhists back home in Louisville, to kind of make this all come together. It's been very fun.

[06:10] *Music fades in.*

[06:21] *Narrator:* Thanks for listening. And thanks to the College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Anthropology for making this podcast possible.

[06:28] *Music continues and fades out.*