



# Culture Inscribed

The Newsletter of the Department of Anthropology  
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## Anthropologist of the Fortnight Ernst Mayr (1904-2005)

One of the greatest evolutionary thinkers of the 20th century, Ernst Mayr was born on July 5, 1904 and died on January 3, 2005, aged 100. Below is a portion of his obituary in the Times Online (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk>).

Mayr devoted eight decades to the systematic study of the natural world that he learnt to love as a boy growing up in Bavaria before the First World War. He began as an ornithologist, became an evolutionist, and in later life developed his interests in the philosophy of biology. His longevity and his appetite for work enabled him both to establish a prominent place in the history of 20th-century evolutionary biology, and to write that history himself.

In an essay marking his 100th birthday, which fell last July, Mayr described himself as “the last survivor of the golden age of the evolutionary synthesis”. That process, which occupied the middle decades of the past century, integrated two theories which had originated in the middle of the century before: Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection, and Mendel’s theory of heredity.

## AnthroGeek

**Student:** Isn’t it interesting that **Ernst Mayr** and **Sewall Wright**, two of the greatest Darwinians of our times, both published significant work into their late 90s, long after most members of our species are dead? Can evolutionary theory account for this? Is this proof of the Gaia hypothesis? Is Darwin’s spirit somehow involved?

**AnthroGeek:** Let me remind you of two important statements made by Ernst Mayr:

“Life is simply the reification of the process of living” and, “Our understanding of the world is achieved more effectively by conceptual improvements than by discovery of new facts.” If these don’t help, take Anthropology 161 ASAP!

Image in print form only

## Anthros Closer to Home Interview with Walter Dodd

### What is your area of expertise?

My specialty is archaeology, and more specifically ethnoarchaeology. I am particularly interested in the spatial organization of activity among small-scale farmers, how their behavior translates into the structure of archaeological sites, and how and why different site-structural patterns have evolved over time.

### Describe your current research?

I have recently been analyzing spatial patterning at cerros de trincheras (literally “entrenched or fortified hills”). These terraced hilltop sites in the American Southwest and northern Mexico have generated considerable controversy over whether they are residential sites, fortifications, farming plots, or ceremonial locations.

### What is most memorable about this project?

I am bringing a novel ethnoarchaeological perspective to interpreting these sites which will hopefully broaden our understanding of them.

### Why are you interested in this topic?

I am always looking for an interesting problem that has a potential solution.

### If you could be born into any other culture what would it be?

The Seminole culture of south Florida during the eighteenth or nineteenth century. I cannot imagine a greater challenge than trying to farm the Everglades in the midst of snakes, Spanish moss, gators, snowy egrets, mosquitoes, hurricanes, and hummocks.

### Who’s your favorite anthropologist?

Lewis Binford, Marvin Harris, or Charles Darwin.

### What is your favorite novel?

“An American Tragedy” by Theodore Dreiser. Or “The Good Earth” by Pearl S. Buck.

### What advice would you give to anthropology students for entering the work world?

Know the fundamentals. Make learning a lifetime pursuit. Don’t be afraid to take chances.

## **AnthroAnnouncements**

### **Women's History Month Lecture**

In honor of Women's History Month, faculty of the Women's Studies Program of California State University, Fresno, are proud to present the final event of their lunchtime "brown bag" series, focusing on our research on women's lives. This event is open to everyone! Please join us! Bring your lunch!

Professor **Ellen Gruenbaum's** discussion is entitled, "**Feminism and Female Genital Cutting**".

WHEN: March 30 (Wednesday), 12:00-1:00.

WHERE: Student Union 312-314.

### **-- AnthClub Meeting --**

The AnthroClub will be holding a meeting this Thursday, April 7 at 3:30pm in the Hall of Skulls (i.e., Peters 389).

### **Announcement from the International Coffee Hour**

**Ayami Sasaki, Student Coordinator**

It is my great pleasure to invite you to the Exploring Global Diversity International Coffee Hour. This has been one of the more popular programs here at Fresno State for more than 10 years.

Please join us for this Tuesday, March 29. **Hyder Alamgir**, a Pakistani citizen who was born and raised in **Kuwait**, will talk about the Middle East. His presentation is on the real Middle East, a region of beauty and generous people, not the stereotypes that frame the Middle East, in general, as a violent place. Hopefully the presentation will help change negative images.

The Exploring Global Diversity International Coffee Hour is **Tuesday, March 29, 2005 from 2-3 p.m. in the USU, rooms 312-314**. Please join us!

### **Quotation of the Fortnight**

Mathematics is as little a science as grammar is a language. - *Ernst Mayr*

### **Contributing Editorial Board**

Crystal Alvarez Elizabeth Campos Tara Ders  
Gilberto Lopez Juanita Rivas Morghan Young

**Faculty Advisor:** James Mullooly, PhD

**Website:** [www.csufresno.edu/Anthropology/newsletter](http://www.csufresno.edu/Anthropology/newsletter)

## **The Darwin Awards by Tara Ders**

The Darwin's are awarded every year to the persons who died in the most stupid manner, thereby removing themselves from the gene pool. This is the second in a series of reports on the nominees for Culture Inscribed (adapted from [www.darwinawards.com](http://www.darwinawards.com)):

**Nominee No. 5:** [Bloomberg News Service]: A terrible diet and a room with no ventilation are being blamed for the death of a man who was killed by his own gas emissions. There was no mark on his body, and an autopsy showed large amounts of methane gas in his system. His diet had consisted primarily of beans and cabbage (and a couple of other things). It was just the right combination of foods. It appears that the man died in his sleep from breathing the poisonous cloud that was hanging over his bed. Had he been outside or had his windows been opened, it wouldn't have been fatal? But the man was shut up in his nearly airtight bedroom. According to the article, "He was a big man with a huge capacity for creating "this deadly gas." Three of the rescuers got sick, and one was hospitalized.

**Nominee No. 6:** [The News of the Weird]: Michael Anderson Godwin made News of the Weird posthumously. He had spent several years awaiting South Carolina's electric chair on a murder conviction before having his sentence reduced to life in prison. While sitting on a metal toilet in his cell attempting to fix his small TV set, he bit into a wire and was electrocuted. (South Carolina entrants are always perennial favorites.)

**Nominee No. 7:** [The Indianapolis Star]: A cigarette lighter may have triggered a fatal explosion in Dunkirk, IN. A Jay County man, using a cigarette lighter to check the barrel of a muzzle loader, was killed Monday night when the weapon discharged in his face, sheriff's investigators said. Gregory David Pryor, 19, died in his parents' rural Dunkirk home at about 11:30 PM. Investigators said Pryor was cleaning a 54-caliber muzzle loader that had not been firing properly. He was using the lighter to look into the barrel when the gunpowder ignited.

Nominee 7 is NOT related to **Professor John Pryor** of our Department, as far as we know.