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**Unraveling the Mysteries of Easter Island (Rapa Nui)**

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W.A. Franke Honors College & School of Anthropology

Spring 2022

January 19 – February 23, 2022

Wednesdays, 5-6:30 pm (live online)

***Course Description***

In **Unraveling the Mysteries of Easter Island (Rapa Nui)** we will critically examine what we know about Rapa Nui’s spectacular archaeological history. Over the past two decades intensive research, much of it led by the instructor, has dramatically transformed our understanding of this remarkable and often misunderstood island.

Rapa Nui, has become widely known as a case study of human-induced environmental catastrophe resulting in cultural collapse.  The island’s alleged tragic history is offered as a cautionary tale of our own environmental recklessness and flirtation with catastrophe on a global scale.  However, a closer look at the actual archaeological and historical record for the island reveals that while an ecological transformation unfolded, the ancient Polynesians adapted and persisted. Indeed, the ancient islanders succeeded despite the odds.

In this course, we review the evidence for Polynesian migrations and ancient American connections.  We will examine Rapa Nui archaeology in detail, including how the massive statues were transported to every part of the island. And how did they place multi-ton “hats” (*pukao*) atop the giant statues? We go on to consider deforestation, climate, and the constraints ancient islanders faced. Then our attention turns to the island’s ancient population, resilience, and social life. We will conclude our class contemplating Rapa Nui’s contemporary problems and future challenges.

***Modality***

Our course will be fully online via Zoom. We will meet in six live sessions on Wednesdays from 5-6:30 pm, January 19 to February 23. Each class session will be recorded to enable viewing outside scheduled meeting times.

***Instructor***

**Terry Hunt** is an internationally renowned anthropologist, archaeologist, and educator. Dr. Hunt is one of the world's foremost experts on the human and environmental histories of the Pacific Islands, where he has conducted field research for more than four decades. Dr. Hunt has conducted field research over the past 21 years on Rapa Nui (Easter Island), where he involves students in this work. His current and continuing field research on Rapa Nui is funded by the National Geographic Society.

Dr. Hunt is the author of *The Statues That Walked: Unraveling the Mystery of Easter Island*, co-authored with Carl Lipo, which details Rapa Nui's ancient history. The book won the Society for American Archaeology's Book of the Year award in the public audience category in 2011. Dr. Hunt's research was the focus of a National Geographic magazine cover story in July 2012 and a Nova-National Geographic TV documentary that first aired on PBS in November 2012.

Dr. Hunt is Dean of the W.A. Franke Honors College and Professor in the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona. He previously served as Dean of the Clark Honors College, University of Oregon, and taught at University of Hawai`i-Manoa for 25 years.

***Recommended Reading***

Participants in the course should read in advance *The Statues that Walked: Unraveling the Mystery of Easter Island*, Terry L. Hunt and Carl P. Lipo (2011), Free Press-Simon & Schuster, for an overview and background to the course content. The book is available for purchase on Amazon.

***Class Schedule and Recommended Readings***

**January 19: Polynesian Migrations and Rapa Nui Origins**

Reading:

“The last great migration: Human colonisation of the remote Pacific Islands” (2017), T.L. Hunt, C.P. Lipo, In: N. Boivin, Crassard, R., and Petraglia, M.D., Editors, *Human Dispersal and Species Movement - From Prehistory to the Present* (pp. 194-216), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

“The Archaeology of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)” (2018) T.L. Hunt, C.P. Lipo, In E.E. Cochrane and T.L. Hunt, Editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Oceanic Prehistory*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 416-449.

**January 26: “Collapse?” Rapa Nui Archaeology**

Reading:

*Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. (2005) J. Diamond, Penguin U.S.A.

(Chapter Two: Twilight at Easter).

“Ecological catastrophe, collapse, and the myth of ‘ecocide’ on Rapa Nui (Easter Island)” (2009), T.L. Hunt, C.P. Lipo, In P.A. McAnany and N. Yoffee, Editors, *Questioning Collapse: Human resilience, ecological vulnerability, and the aftermath of empireAn anthropological and environmental reader….*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 21-44.

**February 2: Deforestation: Causes and Consequences**

Reading:

“Rethinking Easter Island’s ecological catastrophe” (2007), T.L. Hunt, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 34:485-502.

**February 9: *Moai* (statue) Making and Transport; *Pukao***

Reading:

“The ‘walking’ megalithic statues of Easter Island” (2012) C.P. Lipo, T.L. Hunt, S. Rapu-Haoa, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40:2859-2866.

“The Colossal Hats of Monumental Statues: An analysis of *pukao* variability on Rapa Nui (Easter Island): Analyses of *pukao* variability, transport, and emplacement” (2018) S.W. Hixon, C.P. Lipo, T.L. Hunt, C. Lee, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 100:148-157.

**February 16: Ancient Rapa Nui Competition, Cooperation, Resilience**

Reading:

“Triump of the Commons: Sustainable community practices on Rapa Nui (Easter Island) (2021), R.J. DiNapoli, C.P. Lipo, T.L. Hunt, *Sustainability* 13, 12118. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112118.

“The ethnohistory of freshwater use on Rapa Nui (Easter Island, Chile)” (2019) R.J. DiNapoli, S. Hixon, T.L. Hunt, C.P. Lipo, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 128(2): 163-189.

“Rapa Nui (Easter Island) monument (*ahu*) locations explained by freshwater sources” (2019) R.J. DiNapoli, C.P. Lipo, T. Brosnan, T.L. Hunt, S, W. Hixon, A.E. Morrison, M. Becker, *PLOS-One* 14(1): e0210409.

**February 23: Overview and Rapa Nui’s Contemporary Problems, Future Challenges**

Film: *Eating Up Easter*