8-7-2007

Interview with Dianna Shandy, Professor of Anthropology

Dianna Shandy

MACALESTER COLLEGE

Macalester College Archives, DeWitt Wallace Library

Oral History Project

Interview with:	**Dianna Shandy** Professor of Anthropology, 1999-present
Date:	**Tuesday, August 7th, 2007, 10:00 a.m.**
Place:	Macalester College DeWitt Wallace Library, Harmon Room
Interviewer:	Laura Zeccardi, Class of 2007
Interview run time:	43:23 minutes
Accession:	2007-12-21-44
Agreement:	Signed, on file, no restrictions

Subjects

31:27 International Roundtable
32:35 Committee involvement
33:41 New hiring in the department
34:56 Curriculum change and designing courses
38:03 Size of the department
38:52 Learning by doing
39:52 Sudan symposium
41:22 Research and writing with tenure

Interview with Dianna Shandy

Laura Zeccardi, Interviewer

August 7th, 2007
Macalester College
DeWitt Wallace Library
Harmon Room

[00:00]

LZ: My name is Laura Zeccardi and I am a new graduate of Macalester College, conducting interviews for the Macalester Oral History Project. Today is Tuesday August 7th, 2007, and I am interviewing Dianna Shandy, Professor of Anthropology, in the Harmon Room in the DeWitt Wallace Library. First of all, I'll just have you state your name and where you're from originally, and then what year you came to Macalester.

DS: Okay. My name is Dianna Shandy, I'm originally from Kansas, and I came to Macalester in 1999.

LZ: If you could talk about your educational background kind of in general and what you were doing with that, and then what steps led you to come to Macalester to teach.

DS: So, I went to Washington, D.C. and attended undergraduate university at Georgetown, and I got very interested in Africa as an undergrad. So I spent a lot of time going back and forth between Washington and Africa doing study abroad and then I volunteered after I graduated. And that's—I think Africa's kind of been my door into academia. So technically I was a French

major as an undergrad, but I was actually African studies and Russian area studies concentrations, and I pulled them together, and somehow that went under the umbrella of a French major. So, in some ways, I think my undergraduate education was how can I do what I want to do and have the fewest rules, restrictions, someone telling me what to do. So I guess that's an anti-authority theme or something there. And anthropology fits very nicely with that. So I took some anthropology courses as an undergrad, and the faculty that most interested me were people who did African studies who happened to be anthropologists. I ended up doing my graduate work at Columbia in New York City, and… I guess, I don't know if I'm getting ahead of things, but my graduate work brought to Minnesota, and I happened to be living in Minnesota when a job opened at Macalester and things went from there.

[02:23]

LZ: Did you know much about the school before you—did you apply or were you approached by Macalester?

DS: Yeah, it's funny; it's very tough to get a tenure, tenure-track job in anthropology, it's—a lot of people go and do applied work, working for corporations, working for nonprofits, because it's so competitive to get a job teaching anthropology. And it was very strange; I was working, writing my dissertation, I had just talked to Hamline and I thought it would be interesting to do some teaching. I'd signed up to teach a course for them over J-term, and I'd recently taken a leave of absence from Wilder Research Center where I was a research associate, I think, at the time. And I was writing my dissertation one day and the phone rang and it was Jack Weatherford, from his chair in the Anthropology Department. And he just called me up out of

the blue and said, “Do you want to come in and talk about teaching some courses? We have a visiting position for one year to replace someone.” So I came in and things went really well, and they hired me for a one-year replacement position. And then the second year I was there they did a search for a tenure-track position. And there were two hundred and forty applicants, it was a national search, which is what one would expect for an anthropology position, and things just worked out and I was offered the job.

[03:50]

LZ: Did you know anything about Macalester before you came to teach for the year here? I guess, just being in the Twin Cities…

DS: Yeah, I had—it was funny, driving past Macalester on Snelling and then, you know, I lived near Lake Como, and I would always say, “Oh, that’s so unattractive!” [laughter] The red brick that you see from Snelling, that’s not a very nice view of the campus. And Hamline I thought just looked nicer. And I hadn’t really—you know, I wasn’t necessarily thinking of applying for positions here in the Twin Cities. But I had heard of Macalester, actually, as an undergraduate. I went back to some of my notes and I’d seen in the margins I’d written Jack Weatherford’s name, and his book *Indian Givers* was very hot in the late eighties, and so I’d written that down. I think I’d read a review in the *Washington Post* review of books. And then I used Dave McCurdy’s textbook as an undergrad, and I had heard of Jim Spradley, who is deceased but who used to teach here at Macalester. And so I actually knew about Macalester before I came here, so I mean, it very much had a national rep—the *individuals* had a national reputation for me, even if the college itself didn’t.

[05:09]

LZ: What was—I guess, once you were here then, what was your impression of Macalester in that first year where you weren't necessarily committed to being here?

DS: I was surprised by the diversity of the student body. Just doing my graduate work in New York City, I kind of—when I left Kansas, I pretty much spent my whole adult from eighteen until, you know, my late twenties in D.C. and New York. And various places in Africa. And I guess I always thought I was going to be in an edgier institution, whether it be kind of like an inner city university in New York, or—just something where you had less traditional students, you know, in terms of age, in terms of background, life experiences. And so I think Macalester with its residential, you know, private, selective, liberal arts college approach to the student body, I was surprised at how much diversity you do find here in terms of socioeconomic background, in terms of life experiences. I mean, there's a lot that's below the surface. And I find that very intriguing.

LZ: Who else were the faculty that you kind of worked with both in that first year and throughout? I don't know, it probably hasn't changed too much but…

DS: Yeah, the department—I came in in a year when two people were on sabbatical. And that actually, my first couple of years here there was a lot of turnover; either people, senior faculty, full professors moving to other institutions, senior faculty kind of unexpectedly retiring, and then also some planned retirements. And I think one of the things that was helpful for me in getting

hired is students were interested in having, you know, a face that they could connect with and work with, and I was so excited to be teaching and there was just a lot of energy there. And I think that momentum was really helpful in me getting the position, because I just spent all my time here [laughter]. Students and I, we'd be hanging out, it's well, seven, eight o'clock at night and we're hanging out chatting in my office. And I think students were really—that was a nice thing to do. I find with what's going on in my life now, it's rare that seven, eight o'clock at night I'm hanging out, chatting with students in my office because I have two kids at home and so forth. But just, I think there was kind of a mutual, positive connection there. And those students that I taught my first couple of years, actually, many of my students I stay connected with and so forth, but that first group, it's just you connect with very intensely and you want to see what happens to them.

[07:56]

LZ: Had you taught before? Any sort of teaching experience?

DS: I had teaching experience, but not at the university level. So right after I graduated from Georgetown, that first year I spent teaching in Namibia, and I taught adults. So it was the first year that—it was Namibia, it was transitioning from Afrikaans to English as a medium of instruction in the schools. So it was right after the end of apartheid, it was that first year of Namibian independence. And so I'd had experience teaching adults, and I'd also taught adult literacy on a volunteer basis as an undergraduate. And I had also done my master's research with high school students in Namibia. And that was enough—it was wonderful, I learned a lot, but that was enough to convince me that I didn't want to teach high school students. That

college students, I thought, was a more natural connection for my interests and the way I wanted to be challenged. And I'd given guest lectures and things like that, but I hadn't actually—and even in graduate school I hadn't taught a class. So we didn't have teaching assistantships in that way, they just kind of encouraged us to go out into New York City and get a job. And so I actually worked for the University of Namibia, raising money to build Namibia's first university.

[09:15]

LZ: What was the first course, or did you come on to teach more than one course that first year?

DS: Yeah, I was writing my dissertation, and I had never taught before, and I was teaching five brand new courses. So…[laughs] so it was kind of exhausting, but also energizing. So the students, in some ways, I think one of the reasons I connected with them so strongly, we had some really graduate level seminar experiences. Because I was still trying to calibrate my teaching and what we were doing to an undergraduate audience, and I had come right from a Ph.D. program. So some days, some nights, I'd be up all night writing a chapter of my dissertation and then it was time to teach a course that was related to my dissertation. So, hot off the presses, it would come out of the printer and my dissertation would become my lecture notes for that day. And so, you know, in some ways, I think the students' feedback and their questions were helpful in taking me back to first principles. You know, it's like not just—let's just not enter this discussion at this high level of detail, but what are the basic building blocks that someone needs to know before they can engage and appreciate the significance of that discussion.

[10:32]

LZ: Have your courses been specifically courses on Africa or do you do more of the general kind of intro to anthropology type courses as well?

DS: Yeah, all of us in the Anthropology Department teach our intro course, and that's a good experience for a professor because it keeps this idea of first principles in mind. It's like kind of the basic building blocks of the discipline. And what does it take to communicate that set of knowledge to someone whose—the uninitiated, I suppose. And I think that also helps—I think in my department we do a really good job of teaching to a broader, writing to a broader audience, and so all of us are kind of committed to not using excessive amounts of jargon and so forth, and so, kind of this communicating to a broader public. And teaching intro helps with that. I've taught three or four different courses on Africa. Peoples and Cultures of Africa, it's just kind of the inherited title for the course. Conflict/Post-Conflict Societies in Africa, Gender and the Family in Africa, and Gender and Power in Africa. And I anticipate continuing. So it's what I'm interested in at the time, I create a topics course around it. I've taught Culture and Globalization, and that draws heavily on my own work with forced migration and humanitarian response issues and then from that—it's kind of like a series, a sitcom or something, I spin off [laughs]. I spun off a Refugees and Humanitarian Response course. And then I also teach our department's research methods course. And that's kind of the history, that's kind of the interesting history part of how I connect with the department and with Macalester. Macalester's just known nationally for teaching research methods to undergraduates, and that started way back in the seventies with David McCurdy and James Spradley. And they were really pioneers in coming up with this particular methodology that makes it possible, makes it feasible to do, for

research designed to final thirty-five page ethnography in one semester. And so I was kind of intrigued by how one does this. And David McCurdy was just a really great mentor, still is a great mentor to me. So I picked up the research methods class. I think that was also instrumental in my getting the position here, is, you know, someone to continue that…legacy in some ways. And since then, Dave McCurdy and I have written a second edition of the textbook that he and Jim Spradley did.

[13:14]

LZ: When you joined the Anthro Department in 1999, were they offering these courses on Africa or is that something that you specifically brought to the department?

DS: They had them on the books, but they didn't have an Africanist in the department, so it would be a visiting person. So I think the way that I most closely fit into the department is this interest in research methods. And because I've done a lot of applied work—I worked for Wilder Foundation, I've worked for the Minnesota Department of Health, the School of Social Work at Columbia University. I did a policy research fellowship at Mathematica Policy Research in D.C. These are all pretty unusual credentials for an academic anthropologist. But you know, it's perfect for a place like Macalester where you're expected to teach broadly and connect your students out there to the larger world. I think what I added that the department hadn't done, and I guess when I was doing it it wasn't as popular as it is now, but teaching courses on refugees and humanitarian response. And that's really the subject matter of my dissertation. And now, when we do a job search, it seems like a third of the candidates are doing something related to war or violence. And, so, just as luck would have it, I was slightly ahead of the curve with that

one. And so it's good that that's established here at Macalester, those courses are always very popular.

[14:41]

LZ: Did you know that you wanted to eventually teach at the college level was that—because it seems like you had a lot of jobs before you came and taught and other things, other directions you could have gone, and so I'm just curious if that was something you knew eventually you wanted to reach or was that just kind of…here it is?

DS: Yeah…and I've only told you some of the jobs [laughs]. I didn't tell you about the cocktail waitress in the African nightclub—we'll save that for another time. But all good experiences [laughs] that contribute to how I see the world. No, I consider myself a bit of an accidental academic. So, I'm a first generation college student, you know, how I ended up at Georgetown, how I ended up at Columbia, how I ended up with a tenure track job at Macalester, how I ended up tenured at Macalester, like these are all…you know sometimes I kind of stare at the sky and say, "How did this happen?" So, no, I didn't know that I was going to teach. I think I appreciated that an academic lifestyle is helpful if you want to have a family, and I know that I can't take my two-year-old and my six-year-old to south Sudan. And I think if I weren't here and I didn't have a family, I probably would be involved more in humanitarian work and I probably would be based in Africa somewhere. And you know that's just, at least for me, it's not feasible with young kids. And so Macalester is kind of, in some ways, best of all worlds. I can take time off and do that but I can come back and have a home base, and do things that are more compatible with…the other kind of life.

[16:23]

LZ: Right. Have you been involved—I know Mac has a study abroad to Africa, or to South Africa—have you been involved in any sort of study abroad opportunities involving the African Studies program?

DS: I do a lot of advising of students. I'm one of the faculty in the African Studies—I guess we call it, it's a concentration. So, more at that level, not at the level of negotiating the international exchange. But it's funny, that was one of my jobs before I went to graduate school, is I negotiated exchange programs with African universities and U.S. universities.

[17:00]

LZ: So your courses, what I have, you're involved in the African Studies concentration, the International Studies, and then the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality. Are those then anthropology courses that happen to cover those areas or have you actually gone into those, I guess, concentrations and specifically taught courses in those areas?

DS: Well, my colleague Arjun Guneratne has this wonderful quote: "Anthropology is a license to poach from other disciplines." And I think that's one of the things about anthropology that appeals to me is you don't have to say, "Well, I'm not going to—I'm an anthropologist, I can't do history," or "I'm an anthropologist, I can't read economics journals." So I think virtually all of my courses are very interdisciplinary. Because when you do African studies, when you do migration, when you do gender work, like all of those are by definition interdisciplinary. You

would be missing something if you closed off, and said, "Oh, we're only going to read anthropologists this semester." And so where anthropology ends and women and gender and sexuality studies, or international studies, or African studies begins, I can't really say. You know, it would be an artificially-constructed boundary and I don't see the need to…

[18:26]

LZ: Do you then get to see kind of a larger slice of Macalester students because you're not just teaching in a department where, say, only history students are only taking history courses or something like that? Do you kind of get a broader range of the types of students that are at Macalester?

DS: Well, especially when I teach Intro to Cultural Anthropology. At one point David McCurdy had some statistic on this, but like a *huge* percentage of Macalester students went through that class. And he would teach up to seventy students in that class. And I teach, you know, in our department we teach maybe thirty-five to forty students and then we teach multiple sections. And so, you know, it's a good class if you're going to become a medical doctor or a teacher, or you're going to go off and do whatever you do. But it's a good citizenship of the world kind of class, because it opens your eyes to some new ways of seeing the world. And so in that class I would see students from all over, they wouldn't necessarily be anthro majors. And in upper level classes I think it becomes tougher to do that because, one is, you know, there's a pressure for access to certain classes, and so by cross-listing you do kind of diversify things a bit. And I'm still a sucker for if someone says, "Oh, yes, this is going to be,"—this is the key into my classes when the course is full—but, you know, if someone is doing African Studies and there aren't

many African studies courses offered, and someone's just back from Africa and they're really excited. It's hard to say no to letting students into the class. So yeah, and I appreciate that, I think people bring in different perspectives into the classroom and, you know, that pushes our thinking in anthropology. That's part of this interdisciplinary, this holism across disciplines, that comes as really a central foundational principle in anthropology, this idea of holism. And, yeah, students from econ or the sciences or whatever bring different perspectives, different questions.

[20:28]

LZ: Have you had the opportunity to teach like a first-year seminar or a senior seminar? Have you been involved in either one of those spectrums of Macalester student life?

DS: I actually just finished my first cycle of teaching students with the first-year course and then having them as seniors. So that was fun. And I just, this is my first-year course last year, so the folks are sophomores this year, and I have some of them in classes again. And some of them, I think, are probably likely to declare an anthro major. And that's fun to look forward and see when they're going to be seniors. Yeah, it's exciting to be able to work with people over that time span.

[21:15]

LZ: So, to shift gears a little bit, you recently received tenure, and I guess I wanted to ask you about what that process was like for you, and kind of at Macalester what the tenure process is exactly?

DS: I think it's rigorous. I think when I talk to colleagues at other institutions the expectations for publishing and excellence in teaching and still—they call it service, but this idea of making the place run. You know, somebody needs to sit on the committee to decide which students get the summer fellowship, and someone needs to—you know, all of these things that make the institution go 'round. And keeping all of those balls in the air and keeping your priorities straight within that, it keeps you busy. I think I have a very strong work ethic, I think actually most academics have a very strong work ethic, and I guess I'm wondering now, post-tenure…you know, I guess we set our own milestones. I'm struggling a bit to figure out how to come up with my next five-year plan. So that's actually, I'm up for sabbatical and that's, I operate along five-year plans. [laughter] I took a lot of Soviet econ as an undergrad and this whole idea of the five-year plan. So I'm working on my next five-year plan.

LZ: Macalester has a three-year review for professors, is that correct?

DS: Yeah.

LZ: So do they essentially say, "Yes, you're eventually going to get tenure," or, I mean, I guess…?

DS: Well, after your third year review—and it's a wonderful dry run for the tenure process, and in some ways there's almost more anxiety, or more hours logged I think, putting together your packet for your third year review than for your tenure review. Because you can take your third year packet and use it as a, you know, base for your tenure packet. And I think the key is to

just—I've heard other people on campus say this and I would agree, that just, always have something in the pipeline. And so it's pretty rare that I don't have some publication out being reviewed or a book contract that I'm working on, or… And so that always working to deadline is really helpful.

[23:40]

LZ: Do you find that the publication takes away from the amount of time you can spend in the classroom or is it that your publication then enhances, I guess, what courses you might teach?

DS: I think it definitely enhances, because it means that I'm out there reading the latest of what's been written. It means I'm out there presenting my work at a national conference with a national—there's a national peer review process or international for international conferences I attend. I'm not sure students always see it that way. When I was on sabbatical—actually, it was when my first crop of first years were here and I was just finishing my book. And the only way I could finish my book was to teach my class, have my office hours, make appointments to see students, but the rest of the time I closed my door and was just furiously writing, revising, and just trying to complete a thought. And, you know, I think some students maybe had been surprised by the change in my level of accessibility because I like to have an open-door policy. But sometimes you just have to finish the project and you need a little bit of solitude for writing, I think. So there's a tension there, but I think it's a healthy tension.

LZ: If maybe you want to talk a little bit more about your personal research and the publication that you've done while at Macalester…

DS: Well, I think the first…nutty [laughter] intersection of deadlines was—this was the year after my first year of teaching, and I was getting ready to—I turned in my draft of my dissertation to my committee, and I had edited a peer reviewed volume for the American Anthropological Association with a co-author, and both of them were due the same week. And we were producing camera-ready copy [laughs] for this publication. And so that's an example of set a deadline, and then just kill yourself to deliver what you said you were going to deliver. And what's been nice about my work is most of it has really revolved around issues of forced migration, and Africa, and research methods. So I've kept, you know, as long as you keep what you're trying to write in a limited enough sphere, you get this nice synergy where one publication is feeding into another publication that's feeding into your courses which feed into where you want to do service on campus. And so if you can make all of that happen, it's feasible, if you were doing all different things—I actually don't know how people do that [laughter].

[26:25]

LZ: So specifically is it all on Africa and kind of migratory patterns? Is that where, I guess if you've done multiple publications…

DS: Well, my book came out this year. It's called *Nuer-American Passages: Globalizing Sudanese Migration*. And so I trace migration of refugees from south Sudan to various places in Africa, eventual resettlement here to the United States, and then how they return to Africa. So there's kind of this story of migration. And that was my dissertation, an elaborated version. I

did additional field work in Africa and I wrote a couple additional chapters and thought a lot more about the material than originally appeared in my dissertation. And then I wrote another book with Dave McCurdy, this research methods book. So that was a slight detour in some ways, but they were both projects that I loved and wanted to complete. So that's where most of my publishing that I've had articles and film reviews and things like that, about, pretty much, about the topic of migration.

[27:33]

LZ: Is that typical in the Anthropology Department, Mac's Anthropology Department, for two professors to kind of work jointly on a project, or is that kind of a, I don't know, a more special thing, I guess?

DS: Well, I think what's interesting is the intergenerational connection. You know, Dave McCurdy's—I don't think he'd mind my saying this—I mean, he's old enough to be my father. And not so much—it's not the age difference, but the generational difference in terms of when we were trained. I think that's—it's unique that we're both coming together, that he and I can communicate and then write together. And he had co-authored the book originally with Jim Spradley, and Jim Spradley's work is so fundamental to this second edition, he's still an author. So it's McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy, which is really—it's fun to be a part of that history. I don't know that anyone else in the department—I mean, people do different enough things. And I guess if Dave McCurdy had continued in the department, I think I still would have added enough that was different from what we already did that there would have been room for both of

us. But in a smaller department, if you have people whose interests are so close that they're able to write together, you know, is there room for both of those people at the same time?

[28:50]

LZ: Have you been able to do much research in collaboration with students and either senior projects for them or even your own research?

DS: Yeah, definitely with honors projects. You know, I think most years I have an honors student or two. And they do related work, but our work is also quite separate and distinctive. I think that's different in anthropology than say, econ or chemistry. Where, like, in econ you can have…you know, you're all asking questions of the same data set. But in anthropology the data set, you know, our stories, our interviews, it's proprietary in some ways. So if a student were going to—if this were your work to interview these faculty members, I think it would be hard to think of how you could slice off a piece of that and say, "Well, you write about that and I'll write about this and we won't step on each others' toes." I did get a consulting project with Mathematica Policy Research in Washington, D.C. and Ramsey County, and I was able to work with a Mellon Mays fellow that I'd been working with. And partly I took the consulting because I was working with her, and it allowed us to go out and do interviews with women who were reaching their time limits on welfare. And that was—I could say, "I'll do this project for Mathematica if you let my student do some of these interviews." And so that was a good experience for her. And we actually wrote something up and then ran into some problems with securing final approval, and our findings, I think, diverged from what the county was hoping to find. And so in some ways that project's still pending.

[30:35]

LZ: Do you feel as kind of one of the younger professors at Macalester that you are more easily able to relate to students, or that maybe you're more approachable towards them compared to, you know, some of these more senior professors in the department? I mean, do you feel that or see that with yourself?

DS: I guess I'm feeling it less as the years go on. I know when I first started, you know, and I was out at First Avenue for these great African concerts and I'd see my students there and we'd—they'd, I guess, look a little surprised [laughter] and maybe a little self-conscious to have their professor that they saw in class hanging out where they were also partying. I guess I see…I guess I don't feel that young at present [laughter] but I can see how that dynamic works in general.

[31:27]

LZ: I wanted to talk about in 2003, you were involved in the International Roundtable and I guess I was curious what, I guess, what was your role in that and how you became involved with the roundtable?

DS: Well, I guess I've done two roundtables. So in '03 I got to introduce Ngugi wa Thiong'o. I just read his work, you know, over—you know, for decades, and so that was exciting, and then this last year, I guess '05? No, it was '06. I responded to Francis Deng's—he presented, he was one of the roundtable speakers, and I was one of the respondents, and that required that I had to

be critical of one of my idols. He's from Sudan, he's a former ambassador, I rely so much on what he has written to support my own work that it was challenging to be critical. Which, in the way that you need to be of someone who's kind of a hero.

[32:35]

LZ: Have you been involved with any sort of committee work within the college? I know there's a bunch of different committees that the faculty either choose to serve on or are elected to serve on. Have you been a part of any of those?

DS: You know, I haven't done a major committee. One of the things in the Anthropology Department, we've been relatively short staffed as of late. We've been three tenure, tenure track people and then have been in the process of trying to hire, trying to get a position back. And so with one of us, or more [laughs], on sabbatical at any given time, you know it takes—and we're a pretty hands-on department with our students. The department really takes up a lot of my energy in that regard. And then I do lots of student focus, smaller service kinds of commitments like the Lilly Project, and projects like that rather than faculty governance. I haven't dipped my toe into those waters yet. I understand it's coming [laughter].

[33:41]

LZ: Since you've been here have you seen changes within the Anthropology Department, I guess significant changes, and then are there changes that you feel in the coming years should be made to the department?

DS: Well, we're all—we had one faculty member who was hired at the same time as I was and she got a position at Yale, so understandably she left Macalester for Yale. It was a good opportunity for her. And we've just hired a new tenure, tenure track position, Olga González, and she does fascinating work, and I really think she—we had a number of excellent candidates, but she does work that really, I think, builds upon yet compliments what we do. She really looks at things with a more symbolic perspective, she's interested in art, and memory, and violence. And she, herself, is from Peru and her fieldwork site is Peru, and so I really think she adds something that we don't quite do. So that's very exciting. And then we've been approved to hire a biological anthropologist, so we'll be doing a search this year.

[34:56]

LZ: Have you seen the curriculum kind of change as, I guess, the times change, basically?

DS: Well, one of the nice things about our department is we have—so students are required to take nine courses and very few of those courses are required. They have to take an introductory course, they need to take a senior seminar, a methods, and a theory course. So that basically leaves five courses, or the bulk of their major, to be designed by the student. And I think that suits both the kinds of students who are attracted to our department, and then it suits faculty, because we kind of teach what we're interested in teaching. And even, of course, I teach like "Culture and Globalization," that's a very broad title, and it's got a very, very broad description in the course catalog, but that basically means whatever I'm working on at the time I can pull that into the class. So, for example—and this actually relates to your previous question about coauthoring with someone—a faculty member that partially replaced me when I was on reduced

teaching load two years ago, Julia Meredith Hess, who focuses on Tibetan forced migration, she and I did an American Anthropological Association panel on Global Childhood and the State. So we solicited papers from scholars around the world. And it was a really amazing panel, and so from that panel we approached a peer review journal, *Anthropological Quarterly*. They were excited about the topic and wanted us to guest edit a special issue on this subject matter. So, anyway, long story short that's all moving along nicely and we're going to have that out within the next year or two. But the papers, I'm going to have a section in my "Culture and Globalization" class where we're going to read the papers that I edited, and we're going to have a section on Global Childhood and the State. So that's an example of—so this course title has remained the same since the 1990s, but whereas my predecessor who was interested in teaching that course focused on tourism, I'm doing forced migration. And I also, I just realized this this year, that I think I always set my courses up so I take my own courses. So I deliberately choose new books, sometimes that I haven't read [laughter] before I actually chose them, which means I have to really—you know, I know enough about them that it fits into the course where I want them, but then before class, you know, it forces me, like in August I have a big stack of things that I really need to get through, because we're reading them for class. And so that pushes me to keep what I teach very fresh. And I don't have it all figured out every day when I walk into the classroom, I expect to learn from the student discussion and to consider angles that—it's not like I've taught the book fifteen times, it's probably unlikely that you'll teach me something new. But if it's new…and I think excitement of new learning, I mean, at least I hope that animates my classes.

[38:03]

LZ: Just on a side note, about how large, I guess, maybe major-wise is the Anthropology Department?

DS: We graduate twenty to twenty-seven students a year. Yeah, it's pretty large, and there's a lot of demand for courses, so most courses have a waitlist. You know, so it's healthy, it's very healthy. For some reason we kind of hover around that twenty mark. It doesn't grow unduly. I guess we also cut students off; I think you get to a point where for an upper-level class if you just keeping letting students in because they're interested, I think that affects the experience.

LZ: Changes the dynamic…

DS: Yeah, yeah. Because, you know, when students are paying as much money as they're paying, they deserve to have a seminar experience that helps open the door to what things are going to be like in graduate school.

[38:52]

LZ: So are most of your—like when you're in class, I would assume most of it is discussion-based and not lecture? Or is it a pretty even mix?

DS: It's a pretty even mix. There's lecture and discussion but I also try—I feel like people learn by doing, and so whenever I can I try to build in something where students are actively doing something. So, for example, our Culture and Globalization class, we're going to have a debate on open borders. So you know, debate what would happen—it's a good idea to have no border

controls and just open everything all up. And then of course they have an assigned set of readings and for both, they can pull arguments from that. And I think you remember that and you remember the papers you write, at least I do, from when I was an undergrad. I don't know how much I remember from just lecture or just discussion, but those things where I actively had to take control of my own learning, decades later that's what I remember.

[39:56]

LZ: I only have two final questions. The first is just, have you had kind of a standout memory thus far of your time at Macalester either with students or teaching? It's kind of a hard question to pin down one thing, but…

DS: Yeah, there are a lot to choose from. I think one of the really encapsulating moments of why I love teaching here happened a few years ago. I was working with a group of students; none of them was an anthropology major, so I guess this also speaks to the—you connect with students very broadly here. But they organized a Sudan symposium, and it was a student whose father was very involved in Sudan and the peace process through his work, and another student who was just very passionate and interested in Sudan—he's actually at Columbia now. And they organized this symposium and I was one of the faculty sponsors of the project and helping to decide who to invite. And they got these really big-name people, the former ambassador, U.S. ambassador to Sudan, a big person from Human Rights Watch, this big international human rights lawyer, and it was really fun to be involved with that. And it was very student-centric, and it was faculty supported, but student driven. And that was amazing. So that was a really good experience.

[41:22]

LZ: When you look towards the future what are you most, I guess, excited about or most kind of—you know, now that the tenure process is done and you have tenure and you're at Mac, I guess what is the next thing to look forward to?

DS: I think even more freedom than I already have to determine this intellectual trajectory that sometimes, you say, "I can't believe they pay me to, you know, be in the stacks looking for books." And writing. I really, I like to write, I think it's hard work, but I think it's important work. And I look forward to more time to write. My colleague Jack Weatherford, I think he had five books in fifteen years and so he—and, you know New York Times bestseller, like, books. So it's exciting to have someone that's that kind of an inspiration around you. I look forward to more interdisciplinary work, I look forward to publishing in the places that I think are important to publish not just what looks good on my CV for a personnel review committee. Karine Moe in the Economics Department, she and I just signed a book contract to work on a very different topic. We've been working on it, but this is to actually write the book, on highly educated married women with children opting out of the labor force. And so we've been doing a lot of one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and then also with Karine's background as a labor economist we have all that big picture data set kind—we can ask questions of that material as well. So that's, it's very different from my refugee work, but the gender piece is a consistent theme.

LZ: Well, those are my questions. I don't know if there's anything that you wanted to mention or talk about that we haven't covered.

DS: I think this—you did a great job.

LZ: Okay, well, thank you very much.

DS: Thank you.

[End of Interview, 43:23]