WHO OWNS OUR PAST?

Native Americans in the United States recently have been successful in obtaining the passage of federal and state laws not only preventing the further disenfranchisement of human skeletal remains and cultural objects but also repatriating remains and objects to appropriate tribes and individuals. The seminar will examine this phenomenon. Topics will include a history of federal and state legislation pertaining to repatriation; the role and strategies Native American leaders have used in bringing about this legislation; historical practices of "collection" for museums and scholars; native objections to the study of this material; the various types of scientific and scholarly knowledge obtainable from skeletal remains, etc.; the complexities and difficulties involved in the actual repatriation process; and new relationships which are developing between Native Americans and scholars and scholarly institutions. Seminar material will be drawn from a variety of sources and disciplines, including recent repatriation cases from the Smithsonian Institution and state museums and universities.

Readings:

Books and Articles On Reserve in the Department of Anthropology Reading Room: (Note: Thomas can be purchased at Book Store [Anthro C269R].)


Course Outline

9/28/06: Overview and Introduction
10/05/06: Background
   Reading: Thornton, “Who Owns Our Past.”
   Video: Thieves of Time (30 minutes).

10/12/06: Repatriation as a Social Movement
   Reading: Leonard and Feezor-Stewart, "Human Remains at UCLA."

10/19/06: History of Repatriation Law

10/26/06: Science, Ethics and Native Americans
   Reading: Thomas, Skull Wars.

11/02/06: No class

11/09/06: Issues in the Return of Human Remains
   Video: The Long Journey Home (15 minutes).
   Slide Presentation

11/16/06: Case Studies: Human Remains
   Slide Presentation

11/23/06: Thanksgiving

12/01/06: Case Studies: Cultural Objects-I
   Videos: Return of the Sacred Pole (30 minutes).

12/08/06: Case Studies: Cultural Objects-II
   Zuni Repatriation (13 minutes).