

THE ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM SERIES PRESENTS

Polynesian Outliers: The State of the Art

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“Polynesia” includes thousands of islands, most arranged in a rough triangle bounded by Hawai‘i, New Zealand, and Easter Island. Outside this triangle, in the western Pacific, lie about two dozen islands, rather small and widely separated, whose inhabitants speak Polynesian languages. These are the **Polynesian outliers**. Because of their geographic isolation and other factors, many experienced little European contact until relatively recently, making them crucial for the comparative study of Polynesia. Who are these peoples? Where did they originate, and how did they come to settle in these remote islands? What is their relationship to the better-known Polynesian cultures? Can they, in some way, be thought of as representing Polynesian society before it became permanently altered by contact with Europeans? This talk reviews the findings of a new monograph, exploring these and other questions. The book is the first synthetic, comparative treatment of these unique islands.

RICHARD SCAGLIONE is UCIS Research Professor of Anthropology at University of Pittsburgh. A specialist in the study of the Pacific islands, he is particularly interested in human migration and mobility in Oceania, people’s relationships with their natural environments, and the development of social complexity. His applied work has involved the anthropology of law and sustainable development in island nations. He has a special relationship with the Abelam people of Papua New Guinea, with whom he has conducted long-term field research beginning in 1974.

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