What is the current state of museum anthropology—anthropological study in museum collections and of museums themselves—and how does it intersect with universities’ stewardship of material culture collections? University museums are uniquely situated at multiple intersections (theory and practice, colonization and decolonization, local and global, past and present, and academia and the public). A perennial challenge is what to do with the assorted relics, trophies, wonders, souvenirs, specimens, and artifacts in museums stores. A return to object-based teaching is today’s strongest paradigm, but university collections do more than illustrate lectures and impart museological skills. With reference to broader disciplinary goals, many university repositories have successfully merged methodological innovation, ethical scholarship, and instructional excellence. They offer models for re-conceptualizing and redistributing social authority; integrating approaches of materiality and embodiment; supporting decolonization; and exposing the constructed nature of academia itself. Through existing and planned programs, the Stanford University Archaeology Collections stands alongside others in these efforts.

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If you have any questions regarding our events, please contact:

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