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Expedition Team Visits Ethiopia

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Expedition Team Visits Ethiopia

Two USF St. Petersburg anthropology professors are taking an expedition team for an intense three and a half month archaeological scavenger hunt to Ethiopia. They left Sunday, May 7.

In February, the National Science Foundation awarded John Arthur, Ph.D., and Kathy Weedman, Ph.D., almost \$60,000 for their project "An Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Gamo Caste System in Southwestern Ethiopia."

Arthur, an assistant professor of anthropology, and Weedman, a visiting assistant professor of anthropology, were awarded the grant to study the intricate workings and development of the caste system in Ethiopia. They spent two years, 1996 -1998, in Southwestern Ethiopia studying the Gamo people.

"What is unique about Ethiopia is almost all of the societies are a caste system, but no studies have been done about its development," Arthur said. "We have no cultural history about how the system has worked in the past."

The team is studying a number of households to find signatures that mark their caste system status. Once the households have been studied, the team will look into Ethiopian history by testing archeological sites to compare signatures from present day caste systems. The team will conduct interviews with elders in different societies to learn how they perceive the caste system and how word of mouth has contributed to their cultural history lessons throughout the years.

The expedition team is: Arthur, Weedman, Michelle Pudlak, USF St. Petersburg undergraduate student, Rebecca Rollins, USF St. Petersburg undergraduate student, Matt Curtis, Ph.D., University of Florida and Josephine Lesur, Ph.D., France.

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