

Kaitlin Sennewald – 4S Conference Statement

In early November of 2023, senior ENSP Culture and Environment Student, Kaitlin Sennewald attended and presented a paper at the annual meeting for the Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S) in Honolulu, Hawaii, with assistance from the ENSP program, the Department of Anthropology, and the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. 4S is an international organization focused on research and education in the social studies of science and technology, and the intersections between tech, social science, and natural science. The theme of the 2023 meeting, “Sea, Sky, and Land: Engaging in Solidarity in Endangered Ecologies” focused on these intersections and their relationships to social issues such as oppression and colonialism.

Kaitlin was invited to speak on the panel “Technological complexity and archaeological interpretation in the deep past.” This panel created an interdisciplinary dialogue about the presence and dangers of social biases in anthropology and archaeology, focusing on discussions of human and ancient hominin complexity. This included summaries of ongoing archaeological research into ancient hominin behavior and tool use, as well as theoretical discussions of how complexity and modernity have historically been identified. Kaitlin gave a presentation on her paper, “Imperialism’s Wayward Child: The Impact of Imperialist Thought on Neanderthal Reconstructions,” which originated as a final paper for her professional writing course and was recently published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Undergraduate Research in Anthropology*. The paper discusses the history of how social biases have impacted biological anthropology and how both ancient hominins and modern human groups are understood socially and scientifically. In particular, it outlines the history of how racism and imperialism have influenced representations of *Homo neanderthalensis*.

During this panel, Kaitlin was able to learn from and converse with anthropology researchers from around the world. In addition, she was able to attend other STS panels, which covered a broad range of topics including epigenetics research, bioengineering, and

conservation ecology. “After studying ENSP and anthropology, I strongly believe that interdisciplinary research and education is critical for addressing social, scientific, and technological issues in an increasingly complex world,” she says. “Attending the 4S conference, where a huge diversity of researchers and subjects come together, was a great experience to see first-hand how environmental science and anthropology interact with other disciplines in current social and natural science research, policy, and technology. I am honored to have been invited to participate in this experience.”

