

Todd A. Crane, PhD.

University of Georgia
Department of Anthropology
250A Baldwin Hall, Jackson St.
Athens, Georgia 30602-1619
(706) 742-2766
tcrane@uga.edu

My research interests and experiences have prepared me to make valuable contributions to the WAS*IS Workshop. As an ecological anthropologist with a focus on applied research, my overarching research agenda concerns the articulation of scientific research with popular practice, particularly in the area of agriculture. This entails an emphasis on collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects with scholars in geophysical and biological sciences. Weather and climate are obviously of fundamental importance in any agricultural endeavor and so have been a central aspect of my research experiences, both abroad and in the US.

I am currently working as a post-doctoral research associate at the University of Georgia with the Southeast Climate Consortium (SECC), which is a Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments program jointly funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US Department of Agriculture. My work with the SECC is directly involved in advancing weather and climate research with social impacts. The SECC is in the process of developing and disseminating of 90-day forecasts and decision-support tools intended to reach farmers, as well as other stakeholders in natural resource management in the southern coastal plains. I have just completed a first season of fieldwork, which consisted of interviews with over 40 farmers in 20 counties of South Georgia, plus the agricultural extension agents who helped arrange the interviews. This research focuses on several inter-related themes: understanding farmers' risk management strategies that pertain to climatic variability; identifying the farmers' sources for and use habits of weather and climate information; identifying ways that risk-management decisions can be informed and enhanced through access to forecasts; and identifying the constraints that might keep farmers from fully utilizing these forecasts. One of the most difficult issues we've found at the intersection of climate science and agricultural management is the translation of probabilistic forecasts of general trends into information that is immediately and easily useful to farmers, who have stated a preference for information with a high level of precision and reliability.

My research in West Africa, initially funded as a part of US Agency for International Development's Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management program, examines differential responses by farmers and herders in central Mali to the long-term drought that has persisted in the region for decades. My research has shown that cultural identity and ideology are significant factors in shaping adaptations to regional climate change. The prolonged drought, combined with the policy environment, has pushed both farmers and herders toward mixed agro-pastoral production strategies, but they still maintain different land management priorities and visions of rural development. Their responses to recent climate trends continue to play out in the process of policy development, as well as the day-to-day politics of contestation over land use. As a part of my research, I have already examined the interactions of folk knowledge of land management with scientific research on the same subject. I look forward to integrating weather and climate forecasts into that research program, and I know that my Malian partners will also highly value that addition.

Given my research interests in human adaptation to climatic variation and building connections between scientific research and rural resource management, I think I have a lot to contribute to the WAS*IS Workshop and the realization of the public benefits of climate science. My career research agenda overlaps with the WAS*IS goal as discussed on the website and my experience as a social scientist working with geophysical and biological scientists on collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects makes me well-suited to the objectives and approach of the WAS*IS Workshop. I am well-qualified to contribute to the WAS*IS Workshop, to benefit from participation in the workshop, and ultimately to advance WAS*IS' goals of better integrating weather sciences and social sciences in the public interest. Thank you for your consideration of my application.