**PAESTA Podcast Series -- You Asked, We Answered!**

**Episode 2 -- What is the difference between paleontology, anthropology, and archaeology?**

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These career fields are front and center in pop culture, thanks to Hollywood blockbuster films, such as the Jurassic Park and Indiana Jones series. Unfortunately, popular culture can sometimes blur the boundaries and misrepresent these disciplines. This podcast explores the differences between the three fields of paleontology, anthropology, and archaeology.

Paleontology is the field of science that uses fossils to study life throughout geologic time. Note that a fossil is defined as the remains of an organism, whether it be pieces of the actual body or traces of a once-living organism’s activity, that dates back to at least 10,000 years ago. Both animal and plant fossils are collected, observed, described, and classified. Paleontologists use fossils to learn more about what the Earth was like in the past and how environments changed over time. Fossils also help us learn about evolving diversity—when did a new species come about, and when did that other species go extinct? Using paleontology, we can connect the dots and figure out what forces created changes on Earth. Though paleontology seems to be focused on what happened in the past, it can also be used to think about what could happen in the future by studying patterns observed back then that are reoccurring today.

Next, I’ll define anthropology - the study of humans from the past and present. The goal of anthropology is to better understand the different cultures of human history and to look for solutions in human problems. Anthropologists use social, biological, and physical science to get a better grasp on human cultures. Because of this integration of many different sciences, anthropology can be considered an interdisciplinary study.

Now archaeology is similar to anthropology in that it focuses on understanding human culture from the deepest history up until the recent past. But archaeology differs from anthropology in that it focuses specifically on analyzing material remains such as artifact and architectural remnants. Artifacts might include pottery, crude stone tools, and bones. Archeology is a more specific branch of anthropology.

So there you have it! Paleontology looks at fossils remains of once-living organisms, going back in geologic time to the beginning of the fossil record to the end of the Ice Ages 10,000 years ago. Anthropology focuses on just the study of humans past and present, specifically our history and culture. While archaeology examines the material remains of human cultures.

*(This audio file was recorded by Laura Guertin on July 20, 2015)*