Scholars working in Copan during the 1980s proposed that the ninth-century collapse of this ancient polity was caused by environmental mismanagement, in particular, deforestation. Analysis of a sediment core from a body of water near the ancient Acropolis called this hypothesis into question, demonstrating instead that at least some areas of the polity were more heavily forested in the Late Classic period than they were during the Early Classic period. Current research in the valley has been designed to investigate how its inhabitants managed their natural resources. This talk will discuss both past research in Copan’s center and new research at the ancient town of Rio Amarillo.

**DR. CAMERON MCNEIL**

Dr. Cameron L. McNeil is an associated researcher of the New York Botanical Garden and joins Lehman College as an assistant professor. Dr. McNeil is an archaeologist whose research focuses on ritual plant use and landscape transformation processes of the ancient Maya. She has worked at the pre-Columbian Maya city of Copan in Honduras since 1999 and is currently conducting paleoecological research at the site of Tayasal in Guatemala. Dr. McNeil edited the book *Chocolate in Mesoamerica: A Cultural History of Cacao* and co-edited a second, *The Ch’orti’ Maya Area: Past and Present. Chocolate in Mesoamerica* was awarded the Society for Economic Botany's 2008 Mary W. Klinger Award for Outstanding New Book. Recent work by Dr. McNeil has called into question the hypothesis that deforestation was a major contributing factor to the ninth-century collapse of Copan.