Beer is and has always been more than an intoxicating beverage. Ancient beer produced in the Near East, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas was a food that had a remarkable role in shaping the development of agriculture and some of the earliest state-level societies. Its invention 13,000 years ago was one of the fundamental motivations for the domestication of grains around the world. In early states, the control over the technological knowledge and resources to produce beer contributed to social hierarchies. Beer even likely provided the capital to motivate laborers to construct the ancient pyramids and other large-scale public works. The fermentation of beer also provided a healthy and safe alternative to the contaminated drinking water in early states and it continues to do so among rural Indigenous populations today. Beer brings people together and, in many Indigenous societies both past and present, is a gift connecting people to their ancestors. The same innovations pioneered by ancient brewers are transforming the types of ingredients and flavors produced by the global craft beer industry.

Short bibliography on lecture topic (for lay readers):

John Arthur
Professor of Anthropology (University of South Florida)

Thursday 29 September, 7:30pm
SMU, Dallas Hall, room 306