



## Archaeologist Of Mayan Cave Rituals To Speak At UNH

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DURHAM, N.H. — The Religious Studies Program at the University of New Hampshire will host a lecture by archaeologist Keith Prufer on the ancient rituals conducted deep inside caves across the Mayan territories of Central America Thursday, April 14, 2005, at 4 p.m. in Room 203 of the Memorial Union Building. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Prufer, an assistant professor of anthropology at Wichita State University, has excavated several of these caves himself and will illustrate his lecture with the results of his excavations, which were featured in a 2002 National Geographic television special.

His lecture, “In the Maw of the Earth Monster,” will highlight many of the new findings he and others have advanced in a new book of the same name. As portals to the supernatural realm that creates and animates the universe, Prufer argues, caves always have been held sacred by the peoples of Mesoamerica. From ancient times to the present, Mesoamericans have made pilgrimages to caves for ceremonies ranging from rituals of passage to petitions for rain and a plentiful harvest.

Drawing on new archaeological findings and other sources like hieroglyphs, specialists in Mesoamerican religions like Prufer have begun to ask new questions about the role that caves played among the many belief systems of Mesoamerica and about the possible continuities between modern Mayan cave rituals and those unearthed by archaeologists.

For more information about Prufer’s lecture or the Religious Studies Program, contact Program Director David Frankfurter at 603-862-3015.