Course Objectives

ANTH 603 is the foundation course for our archaeology program, and as such reviews the development of myriad theoretical approaches used in the last century of Americanist research. We have two central goals in this class: (1) to understand historical trends in how archaeologists construct knowledge; and (2) to examine a range of strategies that archaeologists use to evaluate knowledge claims. To meet these goals, we first examine "first principles": archaeology as an academic discipline, epistemology and explanation, the role of theory in archaeological interpretation, and key concepts of time/change and culture. The second part of the course examines theoretical approaches for explaining culture change or culture transformation. The third part addresses several theoretical frameworks with close ties to anthropology and history (e.g., neo-idealist interpretive and neo-historical/contextual approaches; practice and agency theories; indigenous theories of identity). This survey illustrates the active presence of multiple archaeologies and their intellectual and epistemological relationships to the discipline of anthropology (and to other social and historical sciences), and should prepare you for advanced seminars in selected topics in archaeological theory.

Pluralism and tolerance of the views of others are essential to productive discourse in any field, and anthropology is not exceptional in this regard (G. Clark 2003:59).

Course Organization

ANTH 603 is a graduate seminar: the burden is on students to carefully read the assigned materials and to reflect on, discuss, disagree with, and comprehend the major theoretical movements in archaeology. My tasks, as instructor, are to choose the readings and evaluate student performance. After the first three weeks of class, one student will be assigned each week to lead discussion of the readings; two other students will be assigned specific topics for formal seminar presentations. Student participation is essential to the success of each weekly session: all students should complete all of the assigned readings prior to each class meeting, complete the 3-page weekly readings summary, and identify at least two questions or discussion topics.

Students are expected to comprehend material at the level of theory and concept and to master (i.e., commit to memory) sufficient detail to illustrate discussion points. Students who are not familiar with Americanist archaeology are encouraged to undertake
supplemental reading during the course on key concepts; one useful ‘introductory’ text is *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, 2008, Thames & Hudson, 5th edition). I do not expect you to memorize a multitude of details (e.g., dating of smudge pits, Luo ceramic designs, or the precise configuration of Poverty Point settlement patterns). You should, however, understand key terms used in the readings (Renfrew and Bahn provide an online glossary at: [http://www.thamesandhudsonusa.com/web/archaeology/5e/glossary.html](http://www.thamesandhudsonusa.com/web/archaeology/5e/glossary.html)), concepts for the week (these are listed) and also know how/when to use specific data and particular research findings to bear in order to elaborate discussion on a higher level of abstraction.

**Student Facilitation of Seminars**

An appropriate strategy for the discussion leader is to develop a PowerPoint that summarizes subthemes; using a case study to illustrate themes is one good strategy. The discussion leader should also raise specific questions to clarify details of the readings, and formulate general questions to engage in subsequent group discussion. Students must address some (but not necessarily all) of the listed “potential case studies” and topics from the list that follows the reading assignments. The presentation should be 45 minutes-1 hour, followed by discussion. The discussion leader will need to consult additional readings beyond the course assignments (at least two). The discussion leader should also distribute a 1-2 paragraph abstract or one-page outline of the presentation to the class and a 1-2 page bibliographic list of literature used to prepare this presentation. Appropriate sources include recently published texts, books and peer-reviewed journals. The discussion leader will hand in the outline (or notes or text) s/he prepares for the discussion. (When you are the discussion leader, you do not need to hand in the weekly summary; just submit your outline or notes or text).

Students are also expected to participate actively in this semester-long survey of archaeological method and theory. Active participation requires: (1) taking primary responsibility for two (2) articles each class session to the extent that peers (and the instructor) can ask detailed questions about the article’s argument, methodology, and epistemology; and (2) preparing several key discussion points for each class. To actively participate, all students must read and understand all readings without imposing their particular theoretical bias. Given the heavy reading load, students may wish to establish a reading and discussion group to meet outside of regular class hours. Students are also encouraged to consult additional readings beyond those required for the course in order to participate fully in the class.

**Required Texts**:


Miscellaneous readings (journal articles & book chapters) in pdf format.

**Course Grades**
Grades are calculated on a 100-point system:

- **Weekly summaries** = 50 points
- **Participation (attendance** and discussion) = 20 points
- **Class Presentation** and class facilitation = 30 points

**Notes on grading**

1. Full credit for weekly summaries is only given to those students who submit class summaries at the beginning of the class session each week.
2. Full credit for attendance is only given to those students who arrive at the beginning of the class session, and remain in class for the entire session (unless they have documented compelling reasons to leave, like a medical emergency).
3. Full credit for class presentation is only given to those students who make their presentation on the previously scheduled date.

**Weekly Summary of Readings**

Students are required to submit a 3-page single-spaced essay each week (for weeks 2-17) that discusses the week’s readings. Some readings are programmatic statements; others are theoretical discussions; still others review the literature critically; and some readings are case studies in archaeological method and theory. The objective of your weekly essay is to draw together your thoughts about a group of readings. The first half of each essay should summarize the week’s assigned readings. By this is meant a summary of the goals, description of databases and analytical methods used in case studies; statement of central findings of the study and evaluation of the study. Decide whether the author poses questions that can be explored using archaeological methods. Identify the authors’ underlying assumptions, and determine whether these assumptions are reasonable or whether they undermine the foundation of the argument. Investigate whether the presentations of the problem, the data and the interpretations follow a clear line of argument. Think about what elements, if any, would strengthen the authors’ position and research. Then consider the ways in which any articles challenge those we have read previously, or those that we are reading for the week.

The second half of your essay should concentrate on the general topic that the readings concern. A good strategy is to organize the essay around one or more general statements, and use the individual articles to illustrate your point. Try to strike a balance between general statements that apply to the group of articles, and specific points that refer to the individual articles.
ANTH 603 Reading Assignments & Class Schedule

WEEK 1 1/10 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE


Key concepts for this week: critical theory, Thomsen, Squier and Davis


Key concepts for this week: professionalism in archaeology, ethics, decolonizing, accountability

WEEK 3 1/24 HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY: FROM CULTURE HISTORY TO PROCESSUAL ARCHAEOLOGY


Key concepts for this week: culture history, idiographic, nomothetic, culture process

WEEK 4 1/31 ARCHAEOLOGICAL REASONING: HOW IT'S DONE


Key concepts for this week: positivism, epistemology, ontological materialism, realism, idealism
WEEK 5  2/7  COMPETING APPROACHES TO THE STRUCTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: SOCIAL SCIENCE MODELS


Key concepts for this week: functionalism, behaviorism (social sciences), V.G. Childe, Karl Marx, G. Clarke

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WEEK 6  2/14  COMPETING APPROACHES TO THE STRUCTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE MODELS


Key concepts for this week: behavioral ecology, cultural transmission, sociobiology, evolutionary psychology

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WEEK 7  2/21  COMPETING APPROACHES TO THE STRUCTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: ALTERNATIVES TO SCIENCE


Key concepts for this week: habitus, processual, post-modernism, structuralist & post-structuralist archaeology

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WEEK 8  2/28  BEYOND INTELLECTUAL “REDLINING”: TOWARD SYNTHESES
Key concepts for this week: critical realism, archaeology as social science

WEEK 9 3/6  ARCHAEOLOGICAL USES OF INFERENCE


Key concepts for this week: analogical reasoning, ethnoarchaeology, cultural transmission, middle-range theory

WEEK 10 3/13  ARTIFACT TYPOLOGY & CLASSIFICATION


Key concepts for this week: culture history, style vs. function, artifact classification strategies

WEEK 11 3/20  DEFINING ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNITS: STYLE

D.C.


Key concepts for this week: theoretical pluralism, technological traditions, social boundaries, cultural transmission

WEEK 12  3/27  NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

WEEK 13  4/3  SOCIAL COMPLEXITY, EVOLUTIONIST & EVOLUTIONARY


Key concepts for this week: neoevolutionary models, unilineal vs. multilinear approaches, J. Steward

WEEK 14  4/10  POLITICAL ECONOMY


Key concepts for this week: chiefdoms, production, consumption, distribution, agency

WEEK 15  4/17  SCALAR ISSUES IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES


Key concepts for this week: “house societies”, household, community, regional systems, landscape archaeology

**WEEK 16  4/24  ETHICS, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE**


Key concepts for this week: indigenous archaeology, Aboriginalism, essentialism, pluralism

**WEEK 17  5/1  ARCHAEOLOGY AND IDENTITY**


Key concepts for this week: G. Kosinna, Hedgehogs and Foxes, descendant communities, relativism/objectivism/subjectivity, obloquy
ARCHAEOLOGY’S IDENTITY

What core concepts and methods define archaeology?

Is archaeology anthropology?

Is archaeology a social science? A natural science? An historical science?

What do we mean by “archaeological theory” and how might pluralism be relevant?

How does linking archaeology’s identity to a particular paradigm advance or constrain knowledge acquisition and knowledge production?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ETHICS

What ethical responsibilities do and should archaeologists have:
  • to their funding agencies
  • to the public
  • to stakeholders
  • to descendant communities

What does “collaboration with stakeholders” mean in archaeological terms?

What forms should fulfilling these ethical responsibilities take in our daily practice?

CULTURAL PATRIMONY

What does it mean to have one’s history, story, or knowledge examined, interpreted, and displayed by “outsiders”? Who has access to this knowledge?

Who has the right to examine a group’s cultural heritage, to write about it?

Who owns the imagery, symbols, and knowledge of a cultural, social, or ethnic group, and who controls how that is used?

Who has the right to interpret a group’s cultural heritage, speak about it, display it, profit from it?

Clark (2003) asserts that indigenous constructions of various pasts are equivalent to constructions based on fundamentalist western religions (i.e., Christianity, Judaism, Islam). In what ways do you agree or disagree with this assertion?

Are indigenous archaeologists calling for the replacement of the Western, scientific practice of archaeology with an Indigenous one, or should they advocate for a blending of these and other ways of knowing/viewing/interpreting the past?

FUTURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

How would we like archaeological research to be conducted?