Analysis of Ancient States
Fall 2013 Th 1:30-2:45 Dean Hall 202

Instructor: Dr. Miriam Stark
E-mail: miriams@hawaii.edu
Office hours: Wed 1:30-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines archaeological theory concerning the origins and organization of ancient states. Complex societies (a term that can include chiefdoms, middle-range societies, states, civilizations, and empires) have commanded a great deal of theoretical discussion in archaeology, and we will explore a broad cross-section of that discussion. Readings and discussion will blend a review of world prehistory (using case studies) with theoretical discussions about complex societies.

Various perspectives on the origins and structure of early states and social stratification will be discussed, and competing hypotheses seeking to explain the development of centralized political organization and institutionalized relations of social inequality will be evaluated. A primary objective of class is to familiarize you with these theories and provide you with the conceptual tools needed to evaluate their usefulness in analyses of complex societies.

We begin by reviewing the global record for the origins of complex societies, and then turn to discussions of classic neo-evolution as cultural anthropologists envisioned and revised this model, and as archaeologists critiqued it. We then review some classic archaeological discussions of cities, states and civilizations. Next we return to the archaeological record to examine some defining characteristics of complex societies, including how they differ from other types of ancient societies. We combine our own expertise in Southeast Asia and the Pacific with knowledge gained in this class on three thoroughly-documented case studies: Mesopotamia, East Asia, and Mesoamerica. Equipped with this background, we spend one week reviewing some political models for complex societies, and then devote the rest of the semester to case studies in the archaeological analysis of ancient states.

Course textbook: Selections from one source form the backbone of this course: Trigger, Bruce G. (2003) Understanding Early Civilizations (Cambridge University Press). Additional assigned readings are also available in pdf format through Laulima.

Requirements: Grading will be based on a series of assignments that involve weekly discussions and written work (c. 22 written précis and an essay associated with each class that the student leads), and class participation. No term paper is required. Non-majors are welcome to join the seminar.
FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

1. **Discussion sessions.** I expect students to take an active role in the weekly discussion sections, and each seminar participant must contribute to the seminar regularly. I also expect regular attendance for this course. As intellectual colleagues during the seminar, each student will also bring a series of questions to the course to facilitate conversation.

2. **Critiques of readings and related assignments.** Participants are responsible for all assigned readings, including auditors. I will ask students to prepare précis for a subsample of the listed readings; these readings are highlighted with an asterisk. Each student will distribute a 1-2 page précis (abstract) on an article or chapter to other seminar participants.

**About Participation**

I request that you do not use cell phones, laptop computers or other electronic devices during class as the presence of electronics and screens creates a distracting barrier between yourself, the professor, and your fellow students. If you require a computer for note-taking purposes, please come see me during my office hours so that we can make alternative arrangements. Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Kokua Program for further information: [http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/services.htm](http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/services.htm)

**GRADING**

Grading will be based on a series of assignments that involve weekly discussions and written work (the weekly précis, periodic take-home assignments that involve answering structured questions from the instructor, an essay associated with each class that the student leads), and class participation. Precise percentages will be determined after class size is established to avoid over-burdening students.

As a graduate-level seminar, students are expected to lead most discussions. Depending on class size, students will take turns in leading classes. In some cases (e.g., weeks 10-13), students should begin the class with an overview (aided by PowerPoint) of the culture area/culture history or topic/methodological issues. This role will require additional reading beyond the course assigned readings, and the student is encouraged to consult with Dr. Stark about potential readings.
# ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT STATES COURSE SCHEDULE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 (8/26)</td>
<td>Introduction: Archaeological Approaches to Complexity</td>
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<td>2 (9/2)</td>
<td>Orientation: Ancient States and the Comparative Method</td>
<td>Trigger: Chapters 2 &amp; 3</td>
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<td>Assignment: 3-page take-home essay</td>
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<td>4 (9/16)</td>
<td>Critiques and Revisions of Archaeological Cultural Evolution</td>
<td>Brumfiel 1992; Yoffee 1993*</td>
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<td>Assignment: précis</td>
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<td>Smith 2005; Wolf 1990</td>
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<td>Assignment: précis</td>
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<td>6 (9/30)</td>
<td>Ancient States and Power</td>
<td>Mann 1986: Chapter 1; Trigger 2003 Chapters 5 &amp; 10; Yoffee 2005 Chapter 2*</td>
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<td>7 (10/7)</td>
<td>State-Sanctioned Power Strategies (Like Violence)</td>
<td>Eeckhout and Owen 2008; Swenson 2012; Winkelman 1998</td>
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<td>8 (10/14)</td>
<td>Civilization as Ideology for Ancient States</td>
<td>Baines and Yoffee 1998*; Van Buren and Richards 2000*;</td>
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<td>Trigger 2003 Chapter 22</td>
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<td>NO CLASS WEEK OF OCTOBER 21st (INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 (11/4)</td>
<td>Ancient China: from Millet to Oracle Bones</td>
<td>Campbell 2009;* Liu and Chen 2005; Assignment: 3-page take-home essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (11/18)</td>
<td>Political Models of Complex Societies</td>
<td><em>Parkinson and Galaty 2007;</em> Helms 1979 Chapters 3 &amp; 4; Trigger 2003 Chapter 13</td>
<td>précis (and one student leads class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO CLASS WEEK OF NOVEMBER 25th (THANKSGIVING)</td>
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Course Readings


Structure of the Précis (Article Summary)

You will submit précis (article summary) for selected reading assignments throughout the semester. Each précis must be typed and include the full article reference (i.e., author[s], date, title, page numbers, publisher [if book chapter]) along the top of the page in *American Antiquity* format. Please also include your name and the date in the upper-right-hand corner of the page.

Writing a succinct and trenchant article summary requires hard work. The goal of these précis assignments is, to help us think critically about the material that we read. Remember that a précis is a critical summary. I expect you to react to, and form opinions about, the material you read, but your first responsibility is to distill the article into its essence. Do include your own opinions only after you have summarized the article.

This summary should be an abstracted version of a much longer piece of work; it should be no longer than one and one-half typed pages, single-spaced. Some articles for which you will prepare a précis are case studies in archaeology. The structure of the précis is flexible; however, it should include the following information:

1. Summary of the goals of the article (or chapter)
2. Description of database used in study
3. Delineation of analytical methods
4. Summary of central conclusions/findings of the study
5. Evaluation of the study. This should be a balanced assessment of the research that addresses one (or more) of the following questions:
   -- What are the primary contributions of this research?
   -- How successful do you feel the researchers were in accomplishing their stated goals?
   -- What changes would you have made to the interpretive framework, research design, or analysis to improve the study?

Your list of reading assignments may include chapters from books. The précis that you prepare for chapters should thus address a slightly different range of topics:

1. Summary of the goals of the chapter;
2. Description of the topics addressed in the article (substantive and theoretical);
3. Critique of ideas the author advances; and
4. Discussion of the relevance of this article/chapter for understanding interpreting early states and civilizations.

GOOD LUCK!