

**Research Methods in Archaeology and Bioarchaeology
Winter 2017/2018**

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Nelson
Class Time: Friday 9:30-12:30 – SSC Room 3102
Office: Social Science Centre 3410
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-

Thursdays 9:30-10:30am

or by appointment

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3pm

Course Description:

There are several aims to this course. The proximate aim is to work with the MAs to develop their thesis research proposal, and to have the PhDs craft their statement of interest in preparation for their comprehensive exams and to work toward their proposal next year. The ultimate aim is to examine how methodology is applied to address issues that flow from theory and to appreciate that there are common themes among the various methodological approaches that are utilized in archaeology and bioarchaeology. Among the issues that we will be addressing through readings, presentations and discussions are: the nature of anthropological research – and specifically anthropological archaeology and bioarchaeology; the nature of research questions and the design of research programs to address those questions; how our research is situated in relation to the existing literature; ethics; and the nitty-gritties of data collection and analysis. Students are expected to be in close communication with their supervisors as they develop their proposals and statements of interest.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course,

- the MA students will have made significant progress on producing a final version of their research proposal for presentation to Archaeology and Bioarchaeology faculty members in a proposal hearing by late April/early May;
- the PhD students will have made significant progress on producing a final version of their research statement of interest for presentation to their supervisory committee by late April/early May;
- all students will have, if necessary, initiated a research protocol ethics review by Western's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NM-REB);

- all students will have communicated to the seminar group, in considerable detail, various aspects of their proposed research project, and gained greater appreciation of the complexities of the research projects of the other students in the seminar;
- all students will have gained an appreciation of the scope of methodological approaches that a researcher can bring to bear on archaeological or bioarchaeological research questions.

Grading Breakdown:

20% - Informed Participation, Reflection Papers and ungraded assignments

In a class like this, participation is expected – and it is crucial in order to make these informative and useful sessions. Thus, you are expected to come to class having done the readings and ready to engage in active discussions. There will also be frequent reflection paper assignments. For these assignments, write a 2 page paper reflecting on the weeks assigned readings. What is the key point of the readings? How are they relevant to you? Find two more articles that are relevant to the week’s discussion and be prepared to describe them to the group. Those articles will be pooled in a dropbox folder. Finally, students will occasionally be tasked with preparing to lead part of a class discussion (see Week 5 – ethics).

30% - Research Proposal Flow Chart

For this assignment, you will state your thesis research question, which you will then set in the context of a complete research program. The idea of doing this as a flow chart is to graphically demonstrate the relationships among the various components of your research program and to see how things *flow* from theoretical background, to research problem, to methodology to outcomes... or not. The flow chart will be presented to the group as part of the participation stuff discussed above, and it will be handed in (with accompanying text – ca 2000 words) for grading.

The flow charts will be submitted and presented to the class on February 2nd, 2018

30% - Data Collection and Meta-Analysis

For this assignment, you will delve into the literature to find at least 3 sources that contain data that are relevant to your research topic. There are a couple of different ideas here. The first is to gather data that you will be able to use – either in helping to develop your proposal or in your actual thesis research. The second is to see how the data sets were analyzed in the first place and to think about how you might go about analyzing them – as well as your own data once you have gathered it. Questions to consider are: Is this quantitative or qualitative? What kinds of statistical analyses are done? (that you need to learn!) and so on. You will present summaries of your meta-analysis to the class, and your written part of the assignment (ca. 2500 words) will be handed in for grading.

This assignment will be submitted and presented to the class on March 16th, 2018.

20% - Final Project – Proposal/Statement, Annotated Bibliography and Proposal Abstract

Proposal – For the master’s students, one of the main goals of this course is to help you prepare your thesis proposal – which you must do and present by mid-April. This document will be reviewed by your committee and any other faculty member in the Department who would like to sit in on your proposal hearing. Proposal hearings regularly involve all available faculty members with archaeology/bioarchaeology/biological anthropology backgrounds and research interests (and, technically, any faculty member in the Department could attend any proposal hearing), so it is important that the document you submit be detailed enough to satisfy specialists in your area while still general enough to be comprehensible to any anthropologist. Achieving this mix can be a challenge. We have tried to design this course to help towards this end.

For the doctoral students, the final assignment for this course is their statement of interest – which is an initial draft of their dissertation proposal that acts as a guide for the formulation of their comprehensive exams.

Proposals/statements are generally short – around 6 pages for the MA and up to 15 pages for the PhD. They should contain a number of standard features such as: an introduction, a literature review, a methods section, a conclusions (or expected conclusions) section and a comprehensive bibliography. The PhD proposals commonly follow the format of a grant application (e.g. Wenner Gren). Students should prepare the proposal/statement that is appropriate to their level.

These proposals/statements should be developed in close collaboration with your supervisor.

- [the official Department document describing the MA thesis proposal and hearing is here](#)
- and the official Department document describing the [doctoral comprehensive exam process is here](#), and the document describing the [doctoral dissertation proposal is here](#)

In week 6 (February 16th) we will circulate, read and discuss preliminary (3-4 page) drafts of these proposals. All students are expected to contribute to the discussion.

Annotated Bibliography (due March 23rd) - You will prepare the annotated bibliography from 30-50 sources. At least 10 of these references should include a brief (250 word) overview and description of how the source will figure in your proposal and project.

Proposal Abstract and Presentations (due April 6th)

Finally, you will produce an abstract (between 200 and 300 words) of your proposal -- something accessible to a general readership that might be included on the department website. Nothing will be posted without your permission.

Dry runs of the proposal presentations will be done On April 6th. Proposal documents will be presented that week as well.

Course Readings:

Course readings will be posted to dropbox and supplemented during the term as appropriate.

Week by Week Breakdown: (subject to revision)

(blended means 9101B & 9201B meet together)

January 12	Week 1	Introductions
January 19	Week 2 blended	Theory and research, research questions, research design and construction of proposals – I - what is a research question? – hypotheses, inferences, propositions - how does the rest of your project flow from that question?
January 26	Week 3	Theory and research, research questions, research design and construction of proposals – II - your paradigm; how does your theoretical perspective shape how you do research - for today, talk through with your supervisor what theoretical perspective(s) will underpin/guide your research
February 2	Week 4	Theory and research, research questions, research design and construction of proposals – III Presentation of flowchart in class
February 9	Week 5 blended	Ethics in anthropology, archaeology and bioarchaeology
February 16	Week 6	Theory and research, research questions, research design and construction of proposals – IV – flow chart follow up - discussion of proposal drafts
February 23	Week 7 no class	Reading week
March 2	Week 8 blended	The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – I
March 9	Week 9	The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – II – presentation, visualization
March 16	Week 10	The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – III Presentation of data collection and meta-analysis projects
March 23	Week 11 blended	Knowledge mobilization - annotated bibliography due today
March 30	Week 12	Good Friday
April 6	Week 13	Proposal Abstracts and Presentations – wrap up

Details:

Week 1 – today will be a general info session with preliminary discussions of the course assignments and about research in general. Finally, we will set up the week 2 topics.

Week 2 – Research Questions. This will be a blended session with 9201B. The key topic at hand is: what is a research question? These can be formed in different ways: as hypotheses, as more general questions, as inferences and so on. How you frame your research question will tell a lot about your theoretical stance, and it will shape everything else you do.

For this session, talk to your supervisor about this issue. Find two articles that either use a particular approach, or advocate for that approach. Be prepared to discuss across the range of research interests of the whole group.

A reflection paper will be due today on the topic of “what is a research question?”.

Week 3 - The core of the discussion this week is how theory affects how you do research, including the concept of paradigm. For this session talk to your supervisor about what their theoretical paradigm is, and what theoretical approach you should use to guide your research program.

Find two articles relevant that advocate or use your theoretical approach/perspective and be prepared to talk about your own paradigm, and how it shapes what you do. A reflection paper will be due on this topic.

We will discuss the research process in general, and how things should flow from one stage to the next. This will be the set up for the preparation of the flow chart assignment next week.

Week 4 - **Presentation and discussion of flowcharts in class.**

Set up for the ethics discussion next week.

No reflection paper for this week.

Choice of ethics topics for next week.

Week 5 - Ethics in anthropology. This will be a blended session with 9201B.

In this session, we will have a broad discussion of ethical issues in anthropology. Common issues on the archaeology/bioarchaeology side include the reburial and repatriation of skeletal or artifactual remains, the presentation of ancient artifacts in museums, the display of human remains and the responsibility of foreign archaeologists in the countries in which they work and so on.

For this discussion, you'll team up in pairs to present one of these topics to the group as a whole.

A reflection paper will be due on how ethics is relevant to your research.

Week 6 – Flow chart follow-up and discussion of proposal drafts

For this week we will have an overall discussion of the flow charts, where you are expected to participate in the constructive analysis of your colleagues' efforts. You should also have a draft version of your own research proposal that can be presented and discussed.

No reflection paper is due this week (subject to reconsideration).

Week 7 – Reading week

Week 8 - The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – I. This will be a blended session with 9201B.

This week we will start a general discussion of the nature of anthropological data and how it is gathered. This will in part require revisiting the issue of what is a research question. It will also include issues such as quantitative/qualitative, categorical/continuous, sample size etc.

Please bring 2 papers that are relevant to your area of interest that include some sort of discussion of data, data gathering and analysis. A reflection paper is due on this topic.

Week 9 - The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – II

This week we will discuss data analysis and visualization. We will also discuss the meta-analysis project that is due next week.

Please bring 2 papers that present data from your research area and be prepared to discuss how they gathered their data, how they analyzed it, and how they presented it. A reflection paper is due on this topic.

Week 10 –The nature, acquisition and analysis of data – III

Presentation of data collection and meta-analysis projects.

We will also discuss data archiving. No reflection paper this week.

Week 11 – Knowledge Mobilization. This session will be blended with 9102B.

This week we'll have a visit from Erin Huner, Western's Knowledge Mobilization Officer. We'll talk about how our research has several audiences and how we should be cognizant of how our research can be mobilized to those audiences as well as be guided by those audiences.

Please bring 2 papers that show creative efforts at knowledge mobilization in your area. A reflection paper is due on this topic.

Week 12 – Good Friday

Week 13 – wrap up day. **Proposal presentations** – general discussion

No reflection paper is due today.

Western's Academic Policies:

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, mental wellbeing, accommodation for medical illness, and plagiarism and scholastic offences. These policies are outlined with links to the full policies at:

http://anthropology.uwo.ca/graduate/course_information/academic_policies.html