



Anthropology 2261B – Course Outline Winter 2024



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Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course description

Famous archaeological sites and objects have long captured the public imagination, so it comes as no surprise that archaeology abounds in popular culture. It's often represented -- both fictionally and factually -- on television and movie screens, in video games and comics, and online. In this course we'll explore these representations in all their entertaining, exciting, ridiculous, and sometimes troubling glory! We'll examine the interplay between archaeology and its popular culture representations, discuss how both are influenced by the broader social context, and consider how they shape public perceptions of archaeology. We'll explore common tropes in pop culture archaeology, discover that pseudoarchaeology is not only laughable but also dangerous, and think about how to effectively counter misrepresentations and bad science for public audiences.

Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Critically evaluate representations of archaeology in popular culture by exploring their use of common tropes, the messages they convey about archaeology, and how they compare with past and present archaeological practice
- 2) Compare and contrast the ways archaeologists construct knowledge with the arguments of pseudoarchaeologists
- 3) Deconstruct popular culture examples of pseudoarchaeology by identifying the communication strategies they use and exposing their problematic underlying assumptions
- 4) Encourage others to think critically about representations of archaeology in popular culture.

Assigned Reading/Viewing

Each week, we'll consume a range of popular culture representations of archaeology. That will usually mean watching television episodes or films, reading websites etc. We'll also read related archaeological commentary including reviews, blogs, academic articles etc. Please be sure to view/read the week's materials before class. Videos are available primarily on Netflix and YouTube (links to the latter are in the course outline and on OWL). Other sources are clearly noted on the course outline and are usually available at no cost. Readings are posted on OWL as links (also in the course outline) or PDFs (OWL only).

Assessment

Your work will be evaluated as follows:

	<i>Weighting</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Evaluates LOs</i>
Participation	10%	In class and on OWL	1, 2, 3, 4
Twitter thread	20%	February 13	1
Group project	20%	March 19	2,3, 4
Final exam	50%	Exam period	1, 2, 3

Participation

Everyone in this class is part of a learning community – we are learning with and from each other. We'll often discuss the material as a group as a means for analysis and learning. This means you should come to class prepared to discuss the readings and other media. Other ways to participate in the course include finding related materials and relevant examples to share with the class, submitting discussion questions, and contributing to the online forums. Your participation grade will reflect your attendance, preparation for class, engagement with the material and contribution to the conversation (in person and/or online). We'll discuss expectations and evaluation in more detail in the first class. Please let me know if you need to miss a class, and feel free to check in about your participation grade throughout the term.

X (Twitter) Thread

You will write a twitter thread – a series of up to 5 tweets (I'd encourage you to use all five) of up to 280 characters each – exploring how a particular pop culture portrayal of archaeology uses one or more of the tropes that we will explore in class. As a class, we'll create a list of three possible sources (they could be movies, tv programs, video games, comics etc) that you can choose from. Your thread will need to provide specific examples of the use of these tropes and discuss their implications. What unspoken messages do they convey about archaeology to the public? Is that problematic? Is there an upside? It's entirely up to you whether you actually want to post it on X. For class purposes you'll submit it as a Word document. More detailed instructions will be available on OWL.

Group Project

You will collaborate with classmates in groups of 4-5 students to design a public outreach tool (poster, short podcast, short video, comic etc) that encourages a public audience to think critically about a particular example of pseudoarchaeology in popular culture. We will discuss the details in class and full instructions will be posted on OWL.

Final Exam

The final exam will be an in-person exam scheduled in a 2-hour timeslot during the final exam period. It will cover all aspects of course material and include a mix of formats: multiple choice, short answer and mini-essay questions.

Other Course Information (PLEASE READ CAREFULLY):

Mental Wellbeing: If you are experiencing emotional/mental distress please refer to Health and Wellness at Western <https://www.uwo.ca/health//psych/index.html> for a complete list of supports.

Student Responsibilities: This syllabus may be adjusted as required throughout the term. You are responsible for attending class for information in this regard. Updates will be reflected in the syllabus on the course site in OWL.

- You are responsible for all assigned reading and viewing unless notified otherwise by the instructor. Please read/watch them before class each week since we will discuss them in class.
- Class participation is important and will help you get the most out of the course. Please let the instructor know if you have to miss a class. Attendance forms part of your participation grade.

Use of Electronic Devices: You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet for taking notes and consulting course materials during class. I may also ask you to search the internet for particular content from time to time. Please avoid other uses that are not directly related to this course as they are distracting to those around you.

- No electronic devices (mobile phones, tablets etc) will be allowed during the exam.

Submitting Assignments: Please submit Assignments electronically through the Assignments tab in OWL. Assignments are due on Tuesdays at 11:55 pm. You can continue to submit assignments, with no penalty, until 11:55pm on the Friday after the due date. Late assignments submitted by the Friday deadline will receive a number grade but may not receive feedback. After the Friday late submission deadline, I will deduct a late penalty of 5% per day for each additional day late. **Unfortunately, assignments submitted more than one week after the due date will receive a zero.** (see below for exceptions!)

Missed Deadlines or Exams: Occasionally illness or other personal issues make it impossible to meet assignment deadlines or complete an exam. Reach out to me if there are extenuating circumstances preventing you from completing work on schedule! Make any requests for academic consideration as early as possible through Academic Counseling in your home faculty. Please read the details and instructions on "[What is Academic Consideration](#)".

Accessibility, Medical Accommodation, Plagiarism and Scholastic Offences:

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding academic accommodation, medical consideration, and scholastic discipline (for offences like plagiarism). These policies are outlined below:

For students with disabilities: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

For medical consideration: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

For scholastic offences: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Class Schedule and Reading/Viewing list

January 9 Introduction

Topics: Representations of archaeology in popular culture; Common Tropes; Science versus pseudoscience; Traditional approaches to public communication in archaeology

Read:

Lynne Sebastian

2003 The awful truth about archaeology. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 3(2): 35-37.

January 16 Tropes and stereotypes - Archaeology as Adventure

Topics: The history of archaeology in action & adventure media, archaeologists as 'heroes', how do archaeologists engage with Indy? How should they?

Read:

Holtorf, Cornelius

2007 "The A Theme: the archaeologist as adventurer." In: *Archaeology is a Brand!* Archaeopress. Pp. 62-75.

Holtorf, Cornelius

2008 Hero! Real archaeology and "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull"

<https://web.stanford.edu/dept/archaeology/cgi-bin/archaeolog/?p=189>

Killgrove, Kristina

2021 The Enduring Myths of 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/enduring-myths-raiders-lost-ark-180977923/>

Watch:

Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) (Netflix)

January 23 Tropes and stereotypes – Archaeology as Treasure Hunt

Topics: Archaeological ethics, treasure hunting and the law, archaeology as 'hobby', looting and the antiquities trade

Read:

Kloor, Keith. 2012. Archaeologists Protest 'Glamorization' of Looting on TV. *Science Insider*.

<https://www.science.org/content/article/archaeologists-protest-glamorization-looting-tv>

2 blog posts from the Society for Historical Archaeology website:

- <http://www.sha.org/blog/index.php/2013/03/historical-archaeology-will-be-televised-ethics-archaeology-and-popular-culture/>
- <http://www.sha.org/blog/index.php/2014/05/diggers-making-progress/>

Watch:

Portable antiquities scheme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ft60mrHDw>
<https://finds.org.uk/about>

Read:

Thomas, Suzie. 2013. Editorial: Portable Antiquities: Archaeology, collecting, metal detecting. *Internet Archaeology* 33. <http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue33/editorial.cfm>

Plundered Heritage: The Antiquities Trade on Social Media. Alliance to Counter Crime Online. <https://www.counterincrim.org/plundered-heritage-antiquities-trade-on-social-media>

Watch:

Diggin with KG & Ringy, S2E1: Clash of the Copper Kings:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaR0LehFe4Q>

AND

BBC 4's *Detectorists* Season 1, Episode 1 – on Amazon Prime (or elsewhere)

January 30 Tropes and Stereotypes – Archaeology as entertainment

Topics: The fiction of 'reality TV', accuracy of archaeological narratives in entertainment, problematic 'educational' television

Read:

Time Team: The rise and fall of a television phenomenon. *Current Archaeology* 274
<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/articles/features/time-team-the-rise-and-fall-of-a-television-phenomenon.htm>

Bonacchi, C. 2014. Audiences and experiential values of archaeological television: the case study of Time Team. *Public Archaeology* 12(2):117-131.

Watch:

Time Team S9E7 – Cornwall's biggest Iron Age Site:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmFxCVppfT4&list=PL3nVK6mXS9Qou5ybl8MYzG1RwvaxKzqRq&index=25>

February 6 Uncomfortable truths – Archaeology, Pop Culture Portrayals and Colonialism & Racism

Topics: Archaeology's colonial history, archaeology's ongoing complicity in colonialism & racism, decolonizing & anti-racist archaeology and pop culture representations

Read:

Humphreys, R. et al. 2020. Archaeology is changing, slowly. But it's still too tied up in colonial practices. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/archaeology-is-changing-slowly-but-its-still-too-tied-up-in-colonial-practices-133243>

Bruchac, M. 2014. Decolonization in Archaeological Theory. In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, edited by C. Smith, pp. 2069-2077

Ackerly, A. 2022. Visualizing Colonial Hierarchies in Images of Archaeology in Mandate Palestine. H-Empire.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/5293/blog/h-empire/12000338/visualising-colonial-hierarchies-images-archaeology-mandate>

Watch:

Season 2 Episode 1 of *Wild Archaeology: People of the Longhouse*

<https://aptnlumi.ca/#/videoDetails?videoId=MjoxX2cxdGxjY2ly&type=video&sid=MTI6Mzc3OTQyLTE%3D&sName=Season%2002&epNo=1> (you can sign up for a 14 day free trial)

February 13 Uncomfortable truths – Archaeology, Pop Culture Portrayals and Gender

Topics: Representation of women in the past, in popular culture archaeology, and within the discipline

Read:

Baxter, J. .2002 Popular images and popular stereotypes. Images of archaeologists in popular and documentary film. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 2(4). 16-17, 40.

Zorpidu, S. 2004. The Public Image of the Female Archaeologist: The Case of Lara Croft. In: *The Interplay of Past and Present*, edited by H. Bolin, pp. 101-107. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola.

Hodgetts, L. et al 2020. Broadening #MeToo: Tracking Dynamics in Canadian Archaeology through a Survey on Equity and Diversity. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 44: 20-47.

Hilts, Carly. 2021. The Dig: 'poetic licence aside'. *Current Archaeology*, March 5. <https://the-past.com/review/tv-film/the-dig/>

Hilts, Carly. 2021. The women of Sutton Hoo: tracing female stories at a celebrated cemetery. *Current Archaeology*, March 31. <https://the-past.com/feature/the-women-of-sutton-hoo-tracing-female-stories-at-a-celebrated-cemetery/>

If you want to see Wagstaff and Lack's photos, you can browse them here:

<https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/article/the-photographic-collection-of-mercie-lack-and-barbara-wagstaff-at-sutton-hoo>

Watch:

The Dig (2021) – on Netflix

February 20 Reading week – no class

February 27 Pseudoarchaeology

Topics: knowledge construction in archaeology, pseudoarchaeology arguments and communication strategies, harmful underlying assumptions of pseudoarchaeology

Read:

Fagan, G. 2003. Far Out Television: What to think when Atlantis is just one click of the remote away. *Archaeology Magazine* 56(3):45-50 <https://archive.archaeology.org/0305/abstracts/tv.html>

Romey, Kristen M. 2003. Seductions of Pseudoarchaeology: Pseudoscience in Cyberspace. *Archaeology Magazine* 56(3). <http://archive.archaeology.org/0305/etc/web.html>

Halmhofer, S. 2021. Did Aliens Build the Pyramids? And Other Racist Theories. *Sapiens*. <https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/pseudoarchaeology-racism/>

Watch:

Von Danekin – Chariots of the Gods 1970: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXEgMJrBIUo>

Optional viewing: Any episode of *Ancient Aliens*. There's a compilation here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LtpRAGX3Xw>

March 5 Pseudoarchaeology and Conspiracy Theories

Topics: Pseudoarchaeology and the broader anti-science movement

Read:

Onion, R. 2022. The Ancient Absurdities of Ancient Apocalypse. *Slate*. <https://slate.com/culture/2022/11/ancient-apocalypse-graham-hancock-netflix-theory-explained.html>

Dibble, F. 2022. With Netflix's Ancient Apocalypse, Graham Hancock has declared war on archaeologists. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/with-netflixs-ancient-apocalypse-graham-hancock-has-declared-war-on-archaeologists-194881>

Society for American Archaeology Letter re *Ancient Apocalypse*. https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-governmentaffairs/saa-letter-ancient-apocalypse.pdf?sfvrsn=38d28254_3

Colavito, Jason. 2022. The Strange and Dangerous Right-Wing Freakout over Ancient Apocalypse. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/169282/right-wing-graham-hancock-netflix-atlantis>

Griffin, A.R. 2023. Ancient Apocalypse Isn't Just Wrong, It's Sinister. *Epoch*. <https://www.epoch-magazine.com/post/ancient-apocalypse-isn-t-just-wrong-it-s-sinister>

Watch:

Ancient Apocalypse S1E1: *Once There Was a Flood* – on Netflix

March 12 Archaeologists respond – debunking and public education

Topics: How are archaeologists responding to pseudoscience? How should they?

Read:

Holtorf, C. 2005. Beyond crusades: How (not) to deal with alternative archaeologies. *World Archaeology* 37(4). 544-551.

Anderson, David S., J.J. Card and K.L. Feder. 2013. Speaking up and Speaking Out: Collective efforts in the fight to reclaim the public perception of archaeology. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 13(2):24-28.

Lizzie, W. 2019. Beliefs in aliens, Atlantis are on the rise. *Science*.
<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.364.6436.110>

Anderson, D.S. 2019. "I don't believe, I know": The Faith of Modern Pseudoarchaeology. *SAA Archaeological Record* 19(5):31-34.

No viewing this week – instead, you'll share a resource with the class on the Forum:
Find and share a good example of an archaeologist debunking/countering pseudoarchaeology online in any format on any platform.

March 19 Outreach project presentations

March 26 Review
