

Department of Anthropology
ANTHRO 2229F-001: Principles of Archaeology
BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE
Fall 2025

Date: July 3, 2025

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Neal Ferris

Method of delivery: in person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: None.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

Course Description:

This course is intended to introduce you to the practice of archaeology in its many forms, and how archaeologists apply their unique gaze on the objects, places and landscapes of the past to come to know ancient and recent human lifeways; a perspective that informs our understandings of shared and distinct heritages in place. Archaeology is a practice of meaning-making arising from the material, temporal and spatial dimensions of human-lived life, accessible beyond the detail and particularity of written accounts, the personal and community contexts of heritage known and understood in the present, and even beyond our own reckoning in the moments of living our lives. The archaeological record is made up of the tangible, accumulated material of human life left behind. This emphasis makes archaeological ways of knowing human life and environments, both in the past and in the present, distinct to this field of study – not "better" or "more accurate" than other ways of knowing that past.

The questions that guide this course are foundational to understanding and doing archaeology: how do archaeologists come to know and infer human experiences through the recovery, identification and interpretation of the buried and surface material remnants left behind by the endless past generations who came before us? How does our ability to place these remnants into a "deep time" context lead to unique, archaeologically-based understandings of human life? How does the practice of archaeology and the role archaeologists take in society today shape broader, popular understandings of what archaeology is, and does that, in turn, revise what we think it is we do? And what are the differences and commonalities between an archaeologist's values and ways of knowing, and the heritage values people identify with and value from the material record?

At the end of this course, you will have a deeper knowledge and appreciation of how archaeology accesses, organizes and interprets the ancient and recent belongings and leavings we find, the unique gaze archaeology brings to know a past beyond written records and distinct from oral ways of connecting past and present, and the many varied ways archaeology is practiced in society today.

Course Materials:

There is no course text assigned to this course. You may wish to review the following as a helpful accompaniment to class lectures/assignments:

Introducing Archaeology, 3rd edition (2020, University of Toronto Press) by Robert Muckle and Stacey L. Camp.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

In-class exercises	20%
Archaeological survey project	30%
Making meaning from garbage	35%
Interviewing archaeologists	15%

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