

**ANTHROPOLOGY 3320**  
**Archaeological Field School – Nevis**  
***Summer 2023***  
***Course Outline***

**May 29<sup>th</sup> - June 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**(in the field and on site on Nevis)**  
To Be Confirmed by February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Instructor:** Neal Ferris

**Email:** nferris@uwo.ca

**Credit value:** 1.0 credit

**Prerequisites:** Registration in Anthropology and permission of the instructor.  
Application required.

**Course Description:**

This course is a detailed, hands-on introduction to field archaeology and site management. Students will participate in survey, excavations and field laboratory work on a series of archaeological sites, mostly along the Bath Stream on the island of Nevis, in the country of St Kitts Nevis, in the eastern Caribbean. These archaeological sites include ancient Indigenous material culture, but will mainly consist of historical material culture associated with community households, British military forts, and the earliest formal hotel established in the eastern Caribbean. Aside from completing final assignments, this course will occur over three weeks in Nevis. The course requires students to learn to live and work together in a foreign country, experiencing Nevisian society and culture, while learning field methods and contributing to the larger research project this fieldwork supports.

Our fieldwork will primarily explore that very rich, complex and contested part of the human past from the last 500 years through the archaeological record. This period encapsulates the period marked by the global expansion of European colonialism and the emergence of modern capitalism – a global past that continues to shape our understanding of how the world works today and how it needs to change. This recent archaeological record is also the material heritage of the people and society we are guests of during our time in the field. We will be

working with Nevisians to care for this material heritage, and they will be looking to us to advance knowledge about their past in a caring and respectful manner.

The course's primary objective is to provide you with instruction and practical experience in the basic methods and techniques of archaeological fieldwork – survey and site excavation – and the processing, identification and care of artifacts recovered from that work. The experience is gained in the context of a research project designed to advance knowledge that augments written and oral histories about communal and colonial traditions of health, wellness, and community-making on Nevis. You are thus making important contributions to this research while you learn basic field and lab methods that are applicable anywhere, and especially when encountering the material record of European generally, and British specifically, colonialism. Through discussion, training sessions, and practical applications, you will develop a thorough understanding of how your work in the field and the research arising from it relates to Nevisian efforts to promote and protect their archaeological heritage.

### **Deportment on Nevis**

Participants are expected to act as team members rather than students, and as field assistants rather than tourists. Participants will engage with other team members and St Kitts Nevis citizens, working towards the greater good of the project. Participants should think of themselves as ambassadors of Canada, Western University, and archaeological practice at all times on Nevis and need to behave accordingly.

Please refer to the Nevis Information Sheet for further information.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:*

- 1) Operate as a team member in an archaeological field crew, undertaking standard survey and excavation methodologies, the use of digital tools used in the field, and the methods to process, analyze and curate archaeological findings;
- 2) Understand the unique fieldwork expectations of historical archaeology, and have a good knowledge of the archaeology and history of the eastern Caribbean more generally;
- 3) Work with community members and volunteers in the field and in the lab, and support the conservation efforts of the Nevis History and Conservation Society;

- 4) Apply the principles of a reflexive and ethical historical archaeology when considering the heritage legacies that have been shaped by European colonialism and global capitalism, and people continue to negotiate today. Appreciate the value and importance of community-shaped archaeology.

### **Course Materials:**

There is no required course text. In terms of recommended texts, I would encourage you to read some or all of Charles Orser Jr.'s text: *Historical Archaeology 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* (Routledge, 2017).

In addition, I recommend looking at Dr. Orser's recent article:

*2022 Attempted Erasure and Recovery of the Free Black Community of Wilberforce, Ontario. Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage Vol. 11 no. 3*

It is a good case study on the challenges and unique opportunities archaeology offers in offering counter-colonial approaches to marginalized pasts and heritage.

Finally, I have written Permit reports for archaeological and historical investigations of the [Bath House Hotel](#) and for the [Bath Village Community around Gallows Bay](#). These are available as pdfs, and I recommend you read them or download copies to have in Nevis while we are there.

### **Evaluation:**

Most of your evaluation in this course will arise from your direct participation in field and lab work.

### **Fieldwork (30%):**

Five days a week during our time on Nevis, we will head out to conduct survey, mapping or site excavation work. You will be trained in the methods used to identify archaeological sites, define their extent, excavate controlled contexts, and record findings. Fieldwork will be based primarily along the lower Bath stream, but, as directed by the NHCS, it may also include visits to other archaeological sites on Nevis to conduct service work for the society and Nevis government. Fieldwork will also include being trained on using whatever digital tools we have on hand for mapping and recording archaeological deposits and artifacts.

### **Labwork (30%):**

All students will participate in Labwork, which will happen most days in the afternoons and occur at the NHCS Archaeological Research Centre. Labwork will

mainly consist of cleaning, sorting and storing artifacts recovered from our excavations. Other work will include repairing field equipment, and caring for and cataloging NHCS archaeological collections in their repository. You will be trained in collections management methods and the identification of diagnostic historic artifact classes. Depending on availability, we may also host a guest lecture or two from colleagues or project partners during this time.

***Daily Logs (10%):***

Each of you will be given field notebooks and will be expected to keep a daily log of what you did that day in the field and lab. In effect you are maintaining a field diary. Field notebooks are an important record of helping us recall what we did when, what was found, what issues were encountered, etc. And they are a vital archive to understand the recovered collection during subsequent analysis months or years afterwards. Yes, we are going old school and using an analogue method of recording. But field notebooks are more durable than digital devices, especially in the hot and dusty settings we will be working in (and will still be augmented by digital recording devices, too). You will receive further instructions on what to record in your notebooks in Nevis.

***Field Trip/Service Digital Reflection (15%):***

During our time in Nevis, we will take some field trips and do some service work for the NHCS at important cultural or natural heritage places on the island or on St Kitts. These field trips will happen on the off days we have each week. You will be expected to generate a digital reflection on one of these trips/activities, either by generating a blog or video report of the place visited and how you found that place/experience connects to communal, colonial, both, or neither heritage legacies on Nevis.

***Final Paper/Poster/Video (15%):***

Following your return to Canada, you will be required to generate a 1000-1200 word paper or generate a conference poster or video analysis arising from a dimension of the archaeological field or lab work you participated in. Each student's topic will be discussed with me on Nevis, and can range a detailed report of a unit you excavated, a site you mapped, and piece of digital equipment you used, or an artifact or class of artifact you processed or analysed.

## **Academic Accommodations**

No accommodations can be granted for field and lab work and daily logs, since they are essential components of learning in this course, and vital to the success of this research project.

Please consider your choice to enroll in this course if you feel you are not able to participate in the course as designed.

## **Statement on Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

## **Academic Rights and Responsibilities**

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [academic policies](#) which include, but is not limited to, academic consideration for medical illness, academic appeals, academic accommodation for students with disabilities, as well as scholastic discipline.

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