ANTHROPOLOGY 308: DEBATES IN ARCHAEOLOGY
Tuesdays 7-10PM (RM SSC 2257)

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My preference is for you to meet me during office hours. You can also contact me by e-mail, however I can’t provide immediate responses, and if the matter is something I can’t address quickly in reply, I will likely direct you to meet during office hours prior to the next lecture.

Course Summary

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the differing ways archaeologists think about the archaeological record, and especially how that thinking leads to differing interpretations, and so debates about the past. The course will first review the major intellectual trends and theoretical schools of thought in North American and British archaeology that have emerged in the 20th century, and the critique these ways of thinking about archaeology have subsequently triggered. Then we will look at particular dimensions of archaeology, and how differing ways of thinking about the past have led to very different interpretations (or even an ignoring) of those dimensions.

Course Readings

Johnson, Matthew Archaeological Theory An Introduction (Blackwell Publishers)

This text is available at the University Bookstore. Some limited additional reference material will be assigned for particular lectures. These will be accessible on line or through 2 hour reserve at Wheldon library.

Course Expectations

It is expected that students will attend all lectures and keep up with the readings. Lecture notes will not be available for students missing a class. Students are welcome to ask questions during the lectures, and will be expected to participate in discussions. Deadlines for all assignments will be enforced. Students can expect a loss of grade on the assignment (-5% to begin) if materials are submitted late, unless accompanied by University-approved documentation justifying the delay.

At the end of most lectures, a half hour will be available for an open discussion of the night’s topic, or to field any other questions students might have on the course. Attendance is not mandatory during this period, but you are encouraged to take advantage of it, especially if you are having difficulties with the concepts or topics being reviewed.
## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Course text chapters relevant to specific lectures appear in brackets.

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<td>Sept. 20:</td>
<td>Culture History &amp; Normative Approaches to Archaeology (Ch 1)</td>
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<td>Sept. 27:</td>
<td>Processualism, Objectivity &amp; Science Ch (Ch 2, 3)</td>
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<td>Oct 4:</td>
<td>Postprocessualist strands of thought, Subjectivity &amp; Postmodernism (Ch 7, 11)</td>
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<td>Oct 25:</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion Group 5, Group 4 Papers due</strong></td>
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Nov 15: Gender (Ch 8)
Additional reading:
Gero, J. and M. Conkey (1997) “From Programme to Practice: Gender and Feminism in Archaeology.” Annual Review of Anthropology 26: 411-437 available on line

Group 5 Papers due

Nov 22: Descendent Claims (Ch 11)
Additional reading:

Essays Due

Nov 29: Commercial Consulting Archaeology (CRM – Cultural Resource Management)
Additional reading:
Bergman and Doershurk “Business of Archaeology” In Ethical Issues in Archaeology, pp. 85-98

Dec. 6: Course Summary and Tying It Together, or,
What the Other 90% of Archaeologists Get From All This (Ch 12)
ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discussion Seminars (15% of mark) see page 5-7 for details

All students will participate in a discussion seminar. The class will be divided into sections (group size depending on class size). These sections will be set and announced during the September 27\textsuperscript{th} class, and discussion seminars will begin with the October 18\textsuperscript{th} lecture. On the nights of the seminar, the third hour of the class will be devoted to the discussion. Students not part of the night’s discussion will be free to leave at the start of the third hour. All students participating in the seminar will be expected to read the research articles assigned. Almost all these readings are available on-line. At the start of the discussion I’ll randomly select people to summarize each of the articles. The discussion will then be focused on the main themes and issues reflected in the pieces, and the group will be expected to critique the relative merits of the views offered. As well, students are expected to be able to offer insight into the discussion based on their understanding of the different theoretical perspectives arising from the first part of the course.

One week after the discussion, students for that group will submit a 6-8 page report (double-spaced) evaluating the readings and issues raised during the discussion. I DON’T want you to summarize the papers, but to provide your own take on what you read and heard and feel are the critical issues to the topic being discussed.

Please note: attendance and participation for your seminar is mandatory. If you fail to attend the seminar, but still hand in the written component, it will be marked against only 5% of the overall 15% grade for this assignment.

2. Course Paper (40%) see page 8-10 for details

The course paper is due November 22\textsuperscript{nd}. I am happy to provide anyone who needs it a week extension to the 29\textsuperscript{th}, but you won’t get your paper back until the final exam. No extensions are available past the 29\textsuperscript{th} unless with University approved documentation. Students will select from a range of broadly defined topics. The paper will need to be no less than 2500 words, and no more than 5000, exclusive of bibliography. This is a major requirement, and failure to submit a paper will cause the student to fail the course.

3. Final Exam (35%)

The exam will cover the material reviewed in lectures and assigned class readings.

4. Class Participation (10%)

As this is a course about debates in archaeology, and about theory in archaeology, there are no “right” answers, just differing perspectives and ways of interpreting the archaeological record. I also hate spending the entire class talking. So I hope you will make the effort to participate during class by asking questions, offering opinions, or starting a debate! Feel free to offer up your knowledge of archaeology topics from other courses and suggest how they would play out based on the school of thought or approach being reviewed in the lecture that night.

Janet (the Course TA) will track the quantity and quality of the participation each student offers over the length of the course to determine the final participation mark.
SEMINAR ASSIGNMENT FOR ANTHRO 308

A - Discussion Group 1 Seminar Date – October 11th (paper due October 18)

Evolutionary Archaeology – Holy Grail or Smoke and Mirrors?

Evolutionary or Neo-Darwinian Archaeology has been aggressively promoted in American archaeology as the heir apparent to Processual archaeology and the true means of finding explanation in the archaeological record. But many others have been hesitant to support the rhetoric and precise terminology advocates for Evolutionary Archaeology demand. Bamforth’s article questions the notion that Evolutionary Archaeology is any kind of theoretical “school” or distinct approach to archaeology. What do you think?

Readings all available on-line:


B - Discussion Group 2 Seminar Date – October 18th (paper due October 25)

Archaeological “Science”?

In the ongoing debate to try and link Postprocessualism and Processualism in archaeology, accusations of an anti-science of the former has been a common refrain from those favouring the latter perspective, suggesting postprocessualism is less rigorous. But just what do we mean by “science?” In these readings, the concept of science, as people think it does or does not apply to archaeology, is explored within the context of the divide between Processual and Postprocessual archaeologists. Read the Van Pools’ 1999 article first, and then the responses and their rebuttal. Then look at the Wylie paper. Can any archaeology be science, or is all of it?

Readings all available on-line:


C - Discussion Group 3 Seminar Date – October 25th (paper due November 1st)

Conceiving Technology by Theoretical Perspective

Often it is in the technologically, and terminologically, complex studies of material culture that differing theoretical approaches to archaeology tend to generate very different analyses and interpretations of the same assemblages. Beyond losing oneself in descriptive minutia of artifacts, how the archaeologist assumes technology to have operated within the society under study, and in creating the archaeological record, can lead to, for example, studies of pots as microscopic thin sections of clay, or cognitive-psychological profiles of ancient potters. Loney’s critique of the theoretical assumptions in American analyses of ceramic technologies was heavily critiqued. What do you think?

Readings all available on-line:


D- Discussion Group 4 Seminar Date – November 1st (papers due November 8th)

North American Archaeology or Archaeologies?

Is there a single, emerging theoretical foundation for much of North American archaeology? Can a unified theoretical foundation redress the many issues facing the discipline? Or are the issues of theoretical perspective largely moot to the real issues facing archaeology these days?
Readings all available on-line:


E – Discussion Group 5 Seminar Date – November 8th (papers due November 15th)

Oral Histories/Multi-Vocality in Archaeology

Critical for robust archaeological interpretation, or fanciful fiction? The papers here look at oral histories, and the role archaeological interpretations non-archaeologists, especially descendant populations, can or can't play in archaeological interpretation.

Some Readings on-line (Hodder articles available through 2 hour reserve):


ESSAY ASSIGNMENT FOR ANTHRO 308  
(Due November 22nd)

Each student needs to select one of the seven topics presented below, and write a research paper of between 2500 and 5000 words (not counting your reference section). Your papers will be graded and returned either by the last class, or at the start of the final exam.

The following features will be expected of the paper and will affect its grade:

- A thorough job of researching the topic. While each essay topic will provide students with a few key references to look at, the thoroughness of your paper will be evident from the number and quality of the references cited on the topic, and from the informed quality of your discussion. We expect you to demonstrate that you have found and used scholarly journal articles related to your research, not just texts, and we also recommend not using popular magazines like *Discovery, National Geographic*, etc.

- The development, in the body of the paper, of your own independent contribution to the topic. A thorough research job is necessary, but not sufficient, for a good grade. This means being able to consider your sources critically, evaluating them and identifying any shortcomings in their arguments, interpretations, or data. You need to bring your own reasoned arguments to the topic, demonstrating your independent assessment of the material, and ability to recognize theoretical differences in yourself and the writers you review.

- Quality of writing, especially grammar and the clarity of expression. Don’t assume we’ll “get it.” Write as though you need to explain the subject and present your arguments to someone no different than yourself, prior to having researched the topic. We recommend you write a draft, and then let it sit a couple of days before revising and editing it into the piece you submit. This may be pretty obvious stuff, but it is important to realize you cannot get a high grade if you cannot communicate your thinking clearly; we won’t be able to just guess at what you were trying to get at in your paper.

The paper will be double-spaced, and single-side printed. Staple it firmly in the upper left-hand corner, rather than using covers or paper-clips. Make sure your name, student number and date of completion are all on the cover page. Please keep an electronic version of the paper available if needed until after you’ve received your paper back with its final grade.

Please cite references following standard social sciences format, that is, not footnotes but citing the author, date of publication and page number directly in the text, e.g. (Spence 1991:14). Your references section must only include sources actually cited in the text of your paper. You will also only directly quote an author on a rare occasion, such as when their exact words will make a strong point or impact in the paper, or demonstrate a contradiction in something they said elsewhere. Typically you will paraphrase the writer, describing the point they are making, rather than providing the exact words. This presentation of thoughts into your own words is important, but you also need to be careful not to plagiarize the idea behind the words.
ESSAY TOPIC

Politics and Archaeological Research

Can archaeology be separated from the social and political contexts in which it is produced? Scientific approaches have tended to try and reach some form of “objectivity” in which the archaeological interpretations that are created are not biased, but reflect the past as it actually happened. Others, like Shanks and Tilley (1987) Theory in Archaeology, suggest that archaeology can never be anything more than politics in the present and thus any claim about the past is essentially an expression of political interests. The idea that any knowledge is “scientific” or “objective” simply masks the political biases that are present. Some Marxists and feminists have often sought a middle ground. They argue that although archaeology is a political endeavor, subject to gender, colonial and racial biases, archaeological research is able to still find ways of achieving a “mitigated objectivity” that can address political interests while also telling us about the past.

Examine a contentious debate in contemporary archaeology to examine how politics and theory interrelate. What are some of the differing positions in the topic you have chosen? Are the positions outlined by the participants simply a product of different theoretical orientations? To what extent does politics play a role? Finally, what do you think is the solution to the problem at the center of the debate? If archaeologists are only a part of the issue, what roles do archaeologists, internally with their research or externally, have in contributing to the solution?

Your paper will be based on one of the following themes (Note: The references offered here are to get you started. You will be expected to explore much more deeply the issues discussed in these references. However, they will help you by providing you with very good additional sources to look at):


