

INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY

AN210 • Spring 2008
Mon./Weds. 2:00--3:15 pm
Moore Hall, Room 1115

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Office Hours:
Mon. 3:15-4:30 / Tues. 1-2
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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the modern practice of archaeology. It will investigate the methods and theory used in the field and how archaeologists reconstruct the human past from mute physical remains. We will examine the types of evidence studied by archaeologists and the kinds of information we can gain this material using modern scientific techniques. Several labs will involve students in hands-on examination of artifacts and maps. The course presumes no prior knowledge of the field and fulfills a general education requirement, but it will also be useful for anthropology majors as preparation for further work in archaeology.

Goals:

The primary goal of the course is to learn how archaeologists understand the human past and human behavior from the material remains people have left behind. The first part of the course will give you an understanding of how the field developed and the remainder of the course will investigate how we interpret artifacts, features, and other data to reconstruct the past. By taking the course, you will also learn how broad theoretical shifts have influenced the field, and what the newest theories from social science suggest about how research should be conducted today.

Textbook:

Thomas, David H. and Kelly, Robert J. 2007 (3rd edition). *Archaeology: Down to Earth*. Thomson-Wadsworth. Belmont, CA.

Other required readings not in the textbook are either web pages or are in pdf format and available online in WebCT/E-learning. This syllabus is also posted at the following web page for this course:

<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~bfv7046/introarch08.html>

Structure and Requirements:

Attendance at all class meetings is expected and recommended. Grades will be based primarily on three examinations (2 exams and a final), each worth 25% of the final grade.

The only excused absences for exams are documented illness or family emergency - if you miss an exam for one of these reasons, you may make it up without penalty. If you will be out of town over an exam date, talk to your instructor in advance to arrange making it up at another time.

One written assignment will also be required which will make up 10% of the grade. Class participation, including the hands-on labs during class, will make up the remaining 15% of the grade.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: January 7 and 9

Reading: Chapter 1 in textbook

Introduction and development of the field

Week 2: January 14 and 16

Reading: Chapter 2

*Lab on household garbage - Weds.

The scientific method and archaeological explanation

Week 3: January 23 (no class Monday, MLK Jr. day) Survey methods

Reading: Chapter 3

Web reading: Belize caves project - difficulties with remote sensing

<http://www.archaeology.org/interactive/belize/index.html>

Week 4: January 28 and 30

Reading: Chapter 3-4

*Lab on reading topographic maps - Mon.

Survey and excavation

Week 5: February 4 and 6

Reading: Chapter 4-5

Web reading: Compare excavation project web pages for their theoretical background.

Links will be posted on course web page listed above

Excavation and chronology

Week 6: February 11

Reading: Chapter 5

Web reading: Dendrochronology at Univ. of Arizona

<http://www.ltrr.arizona.edu/dendrochronology.html>

*Lab on seriating artifacts - Mon.

Chronology

Wednesday, February 13: Exam 1

Week 7: February 18 and 20

Reading: Chapter 6

Web reading: How to draw a potsherd: a first-hand account

<http://www.archaeology.org/interactive/hierakonpolis/field07/4.html>

*Lab on analyzing ceramics and lithics - Weds.

Artifact classification

Week 8: February 25 and 27

Reading: Chapter 7

“Smudge Pits” article on WebCT

Middle range theory

Spring Break - week of March 3

Week 9: March 10 and 12

Reading: Chapter 8

Paper: On environmental change and culture collapse (due March 31)

**Plants and animals in
archaeology**

Week 10: March 17

Reading: Chapter 9

Bioarchaeology

Wednesday, March 19: Exam 2

Week 11: March 24 and 26

Reading: Chapter 10

“Raised Fields” on WebCT

Social/political systems

Week 12: March 31 and April 2

Reading: Chapter 11

*Lab on symbols and meaning

Reconstructing mind

Week 13: April 7 and 9

Reading: Chapter 12

Web reading: Mulberry Row slave houses at Monticello

<http://www.monticello.org/archaeology/research/architecture.html>

Historical archaeology

Week 14: April 14 and 16

Reading: Chapter 13

Cultural heritage

Final Exam: April 22, 12:30-2:30pm

Readings posted in WebCT:

“Smudge Pits and Hide Smoking: The Use of Analogy in Archaeological Reasoning” by Lewis R. Binford. 1967. *American Antiquity* 32(1):1-12.

“Raised Field Agriculture in the Lake Titicaca Basin: Putting Ancient Agriculture Back to Work” by Clark Erickson. 1998. *Expedition* 30(3):8-16.