

## **Anthropology 3838.80/3838W.80/6838.80**

### **Archaeological Theory and Practice**

Fall 2013, Tues and Thur 12:45 – 2:00

2110 G Street Rm. 201

**Instructor:** Dr. Jeffrey Blomster **E-mail:** blomster@gwu.edu  
**Office:** HAH (2110 G St.), Rm. 303; 994-4880  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 2:30 – 4:30, or by appointment.

#### **General Course Description:**

The material record of the “past” is the main source for archaeologists to make interpretations concerning human societies. There is a great diversity of theoretical approaches and models archaeologists use to explain the structure of archaeological remains and these frameworks shape archaeological investigation. This course provides an overview of major theories and positions in American archaeology as well as examining the practice and ethics of archaeology. While this course is not intended to provide an exhaustive survey or history of all types of archaeological theory, much of the semester will present a review and critique of the major trends in archaeology since the 1960s. Students will engage with the primary literature written by some of the most prominent contributors to archaeological theory and practice, and examine significant ethical issues in the field.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

- 1) Students will explore and learn archaeologists’ contributions to theory and if there is a coherent body of theory to which most archaeologists subscribe.
- 2) Students will learn how archaeologists use data to advance arguments and theoretical positions, and will be able to critique these efforts.
- 3) Students will critically assess important ethical, political, and practical impacts of archaeology.
- 4) Students will analyze archaeologists’ self-appointed position of stewards of the past.
- 5) In order to further students’ professional preparation, throughout the semester we will engage in examinations of the politics and practice of archaeology, from publishing/citation strategies to ethical issues, such as archaeologists’ relationships with Native Americans, museums, collectors and the public.
- 6) Students will examine—and contribute to—debates about whether archaeologists can overcome entrenched theoretical perspectives and navigate difficult ethical issues to produce a richer, more cooperative discipline.

#### **Prerequisites:**

As a capstone class for archaeology majors, it is expected students have had exposure to archaeology. For students who have not had much background in the anthropological theory from which much archaeological theory comes, I recommend looking at Marvin Harris’ *Rise of Anthropological Theory*, on reserve at Gelman.

**WID Students** will have the opportunity to produce an outline and revised drafts of 3 essays, and will receive a cumulative grade for each essay. They will also write a 1 – 2 page critique of a student essay. A schedule for assignment/revisions will be distributed.

**Graduate Students** will have additional readings (see reading list), assignments and meetings to be discussed. Any interested undergraduates are welcome in these discussions as well.

### **Grading:**

There will be three brief essays, an article review/critique, and a take-home final exam. These items are weighted as follows:

Czar Essay/Presentation	10%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2 /Midterm	25%
Essay 3	15%
Final exam	20%
In-class participation	10%

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

There are three required textbooks for the class, available at the bookstore:

Johnson, Matthew

2010 *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA.

Zimmerman, Larry J., Karen D. Vitelli, and Julie Hollowell-Zimmer (editors)

2003 *Ethical Issues in Archaeology*. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.

Praetzellis, Adrian

2011 *Death by Theory: A Tale of Mystery and Archaeological Theory*. Revised edition. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA.

### **Required for graduate students** (and recommended for undergraduates):

Trigger, Bruce

2006 *A History of Archaeological Thought*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Cambridge, New York.

The remainder of the readings for this course will be available on Blackboard.

### **Class Schedule and Assignments:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due</b>
8/27-T	Why Theory and Practice? Introduction to the Class.	
8/29-Th	Archaeology 2013: A Cacophony of Voices. The Place of Archaeology in Anthropology and History.	
9/03-T	Before New Archaeology: Culture History and The Long Sleep of Theory?	
9/05-Th	The Rise of the “New Archaeology” and the Processual Polemic.	
9/10-T	Explanation and Analogy in the New Archaeology.	
9/12-Th	Science, Laws, Middle Range Theory and Behavioral Archaeology.	
9/17-T	The Practice of Archaeology: Ethics, Politics and the Public.	
9/19-Th	Authority and Legitimacy: Archaeo-hierarchies and Citation Strategies.	
9/24-T	Systems Theory and Complex Systems Approaches.	
9/26-Th	Evolution and Archaeology: Darwinian Approaches.	

10/01-T	Structuralist Approaches.	Essay 1
10/03-Th	Marxist Archaeology.	
10/08-T	The Postprocessual Critique of Archaeology.	
10/10-Th	Postprocessualism Applied and Reaction: Can Postprocessualism be Scientific?	
10/15-T	Radical Postprocessualism and Critical Archaeology.	
10/17-Th	Agency/Practice Theory: Basic Concepts. <b>REVIEW:</b> analyzing a pot from different theoretical perspectives.	Examine pot (on Blackboard)
10/22-T	Agency/Practice Theory: Applied and Appropriated.	
10/24-Th	World Systems Approaches and Post-colonial Archaeology.	
10/29-T	Ethnographies of Archaeology	
10/31-Th	No class; midterm/epistemology essay due in department office by 4:45 pm!!	Essay 2
11/05-T	The Politics of the Past: Colonialism, Museums and Descendant Communities.	
11/07-Th	Native Americans and Archaeologists.	
11/12-T	NAGPRA and Kennewick Man.	Present ethics essays
11/14-Th	Archaeological Ethics: Preservation and CRM.	Present ethics essays
11/19-T	Archaeological Ethics: Looting, Owning, and Protecting the Past.	Present ethics essays; Essay 3 due
11/21-Th	Archaeology of Gender and Identity: Theory and Issues.	
11/26-T	Gendered and Alternative Archaeologies: Case Studies.	
11/28-Th	No Class – thanksgiving recess.	
12/03-T	Make up day; no class.	
12/05-Th	The Future of Theory: the Return of Cultural History or the Ultimate Triumph of Scientific Archaeology?	
12/12	Take Home Final Exam – due in department by 4:45 pm!!	<b>FINAL DUE!!</b>