

Myths and Mysteries in Archaeology

ANTH 3821
Fall 2012

Dr. Susan Johnston
Duques 259

Textbooks: Feder, Kenneth L. 2011. Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries. 7th Edition. McGraw-Hill: New York. ISBN 978-0-07-811697-1

Stiebing, William H., Jr. 1984. Ancient Astronauts, Cosmic Collisions. Prometheus Books: Amherst. ISBN 978-0879752859

Kehoe, Alice Beck. 2005. The Kensington Runestone Waveland: Long Grove, IL. ISBN 978-1577663713

Recommended: if you have not had an archaeology course before, read Paul Bahn's book Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction (2000, Oxford University Press); it's on reserve in Gelman.

Reading:

August	29	Introduction
	31	Epistemology—how do we know things? Feder Ch. 1
September	5	Science and knowledge Feder Ch. 2
	7	Archaeology—how do we know things? Bahn Ch. 1-7, on Reserve (if you have not had any archaeology before)
	12	The Discovery of America? Feder Ch. 6; Stiebing VI
	14	The Discovery of America, case study: St. Brendan Review Feder Ch. 5; <i>The Voyage of St. Brendan</i> (Blackboard); Tim Severin and Saint Brendan (Blackboard)
	19	<u>The Kensington Runestone 1</u> Kehoe Ch. 1-5
	21	<u>The Kensington Runestone 2</u> Kehoe Ch. 6-9

	26, 28	All things Egyptian Feder Ch. 10, Stiebing Ch. V
October	3	Ancient Astronauts? Feder Ch. 9; Stiebing Ch. IV
	5	Stonehenge Chippendale, Stonehenge (Blackboard)
	10	King Arthur—historical fiction or reality? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Roman_Britain Skeptics and King Arthur (Blackboard) Looking for King Arthur (Blackboard)
	12	ESP and archaeology Feder Ch. 11; Hyman, Psi experiments; Schwartz, Glastonbury (both Blackboard)
	17	EXAM
	19	That Old Time Religion Feder Ch. 12; Stiebing Ch. I
	24	The Piltdown Hoax Feder Ch. 4
	26	New Age archaeology? Review Feder Ch. 12, pp. 327-31 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_calendar http://www.survive2012.com/ http://www.greatdreams.com/2012.htm http://www.universetoday.com/2008/05/19/no-doomsday-in-2012/ http://www.skepdic.com/maya.html http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fajada_Butte Sun Dagger shifts; Crystal skulls (Blackboard)
	31	Ancient matriarchies? Gimbutas, Eller, Meskell (all Blackboard)
		PAPER DUE
November	2	Atlantis: Introduction Feder Ch. 8, Stiebing Ch. II
	7	What Plato said (and didn't say) Critias (Blackboard); Section from Timaeus (Blackboard)

	9	DVD: The Quest for Atlantis
	14	Atlantis locations? Jordan, New World (Blackboard) Antarctica http://www.flem-ath.com/2009/07/atlantis-in-antarctica/ Aegean http://www.greeka.com/cyclades/santorini/santorini-volcano/atlantis.htm Straits of Gibraltar http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1554594.stm Bimini http://funandsun.com/1toct/inf/bim/bimini.html
	16	Ireland in Atlantis, Part 1 Erlingsson Ch. 1-2 (Blackboard)
	21, 23	THANKSGIVING BREAK
	28	Ireland in Atlantis, Part 2 Erlingsson Ch. 3-4 (Blackboard)
		ESSAY DUE
	30	How to evaluate Plato Jordan, Plato (Blackboard)
December	5	Why do we believe? Stiebing Ch. VII; Hyman, Belief (Blackboard)
	7	Final thoughts

References, additional readings:

Bahn, Paul. 1996. *Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Chippendale, Christopher. 2004. *Stonehenge Complete*, 3rd Ed. Thames & Hudson.

Eller, Cynthia. 2001. *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory*. Beacon Press.

Erlingsson, Ulf. 2004. *Atlantis from a Geographer's Perspective*. Lindorm Publishing.

Gimbutas, Maria. 2005 (1982). *Old Europe in the Fifth Millennium B.C.* Reprinted in, *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Anthropology*. Kirk M. Endicott and Robert L. Welsch (eds.) McGraw-Hill.

Hyman, Ray. 1989. *The Elusive Quarry: A Scientific Appraisal of Psychical Research*. Prometheus Books.

Jordan, Paul. 2003. *The Atlantis Syndrome*. The History Press.

Meskell, Lynn. 1995. Goddesses, Gimbutas and 'New Age' archaeology. *Antiquity* 69:74-86.

Schwartz, Stephen A. 1978. *The Secret Vaults of Time*. Grosset & Dunlap.

Learning Objectives

- * to learn how to think critically about evidence and its interpretation
- * to give you an idea of what archaeologists do and don't know about the past, and how they know (or why they don't)
- * to consider some of the popular things people think about the past, and why they might think they are correct
- * to do this in a fun way!

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### **Course Requirements:**

This syllabus represents the basic framework of this class. However, **I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE IT IF IT BECOMES NECESSARY**. This would only happen if we get behind, or want to pursue a topic for more time than I have allowed for that topic. You will get plenty of warning if I do have to change the syllabus.

All of the reading listed in this syllabus is required. You are also responsible for anything that happens in class. It will make this class both more interesting and more useful for you if you will **PLEASE DO THE READING**. That will make it easier for you to enter discussions, which will be numerous in this class.

You must also take both exams and turn in both the paper and the essay in order to pass the course. There are two exams, one during the semester and the other during the final exam period. Each will cover the section of the course that precedes it. This includes the second exam that, although held during the final exam period, is not cumulative. Each exam is worth 35% of your grade, the paper is worth 20%, and the essay is worth 10%.

**FAILURE TO APPEAR AT AN EXAM WITHOUT LETTING ME KNOW IN ADVANCE, WILL GET YOU AN F ON THAT EXAM.** If you must miss an exam, you will have until I hand back the graded exams to make it up. This is usually about a week. If this becomes necessary, please see me as soon as possible to arrange a time.

My office is Rm. 302 in 2110 G St. and my extension is 4-6075. You can also reach me by e-mail at [sjohnsto@gwu.edu](mailto:sjohnsto@gwu.edu). Email is the quickest way to reach me, but I will be available in my office on Wednesday 2-4 and Friday 11-12 if you need to see me in person.

## Essay

One of the major questions that this course raises is why we believe things, so we will be discussing that very issue. In order to prepare you to take part in the discussion, I would like you to write a short essay (1 - 2 pages) answering that question—since there is little scientific evidence for most of what we will be covering in class, why do people believe it? Is it wishful thinking? Are they deluded? Are they skeptical of science, or at least suspicious of it? Are they relying on some other form of gaining knowledge? You should take some position on this question, and argue it in your essay. This is a personal essay, so does not require research or references. It will be turned in to me **NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 28**. Discussion will then be held in a subsequent class.

YOU MAY ONLY SUBMIT PAPERS BY E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO DO SO. I am not a printing service. Last minute submissions by e-mail without such arrangements will not be accepted.

## Paper Topic

For the paper, I would like you to select any published claim with an archaeological subject. It can be from anywhere—newspapers, tabloids, pamphlets, books, TV, magazines—as long as it is **archaeological** (that means it is about the past—the current state of Lindsay Lohan’s rehab does not count). By the time this is due, you should know what that means. It isn’t dinosaurs or physical anthropology, though it can include a significant portion of history (i.e. documents) if you want. Then, critically evaluate this claim in the way we have been doing in class. Some of the questions you should consider are:

- Who said it and what is their background?
- Do they present any evidence for their claim?
- Are there any references provided?
- Is it possible to verify what they said?
- What information would you need to properly evaluate this claim?
- What are some of the ways you might go about testing what the person said?

You need not be limited to these questions, but these are intended to give you some guidelines. The idea is to encourage you to apply what you have learned here to a real example of the kinds of claims that are made every day in the media and elsewhere. **If possible, you should also make some attempt to actually verify the claim made.** For example, you might consult introductory archaeology texts, regional archaeology surveys, etc. If you can’t actually verify the claim, at

least consider what would have to change in the current state of knowledge in order for the claim to be true (for example, if someone claims to be channeling a spiritual entity from a city 200,000 years old, you might be given to wonder why that is earlier by roughly 195,000 years than any known city in the world).

You may use the Internet as a source for claims. If you do, please **PRINT** a copy of the claim for me and attach it, along with the URL, to the paper. **Also, you may not use one of the topics we covered in class—that would be cheating!**

You may also use the Internet for research, but be very careful—there are far more unreliable sites out there than reliable ones (that being sort of the point of the class). If you are unsure whether the site you are using is reliable, send me the URL and I'll take a look at it.

If you want to discuss any details about this paper with me, please come to my office hours. Also, I would be happy to read a draft version of your paper, and make comments on it before you turn the final version in. **If you want me to read a draft, please give it to me no later than ten days before the paper is due.**

The paper will be 5-10 pages long, and will be worth 20% of your grade. And please remember-- I am computer literate! I know all about large type faces and large margins. Please give me some credit for intelligence.

It is due **IN CLASS** on **OCTOBER 31 (happy Halloween...)**. **ONCE AGAIN-- YOU MAY ONLY SUBMIT PAPERS BY E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO DO SO.** I am not a printing service. Last minute submissions by e-mail without such arrangements will not be accepted.