

Introduction to Archaeology

ANTH 1003
Spring 2023

Dr. Susan Johnston
Corcoran 101A

Course Description

Among the questions that all human groups ask are where we came from, what life was like in the past, and how we came by that knowledge. There are many disciplines that seek to address these questions, but one of them is archaeology. Archaeology studies life in the past through the examination of the physical remains left behind by our ancestors. Within the larger approach of anthropology, archaeology is the study of past human cultures.

This course provides a basic introduction to the way archaeology is practiced as part of anthropology, and the kinds of knowledge about the past that it can provide. It is divided into two halves. First, we consider how archaeology is actually done. How is the past thought about, how do we frame questions about it, and what techniques do we use to gather evidence with which to answer them? In this course, archaeology is considered a scientific discipline which investigates the past through framing hypotheses and then collecting data with which to evaluate them. What evidence is available about the past, and how do we go about collecting it? How reliable is that evidence, and what are some of the uncertainties in this investigation? All of these questions are intended to get you to think critically about how knowledge about the past is gained, and which interpretations of archaeological evidence are more or less likely to be correct.

In the second half, we will then broadly survey some of what archaeologists have learned about the past. Starting with the appearance of deliberately produced artifacts some two million years ago, we will explore how material culture has changed over time and what this tells us about changes in past societies. While we will cover a lot of ground in terms of chronology, the focus is to understand the overall patterns in the past. Who were the peoples who buried their dead, made stone tools, and produced cave art? How did some become farming and herding societies? Why did some places produce cities and states? What is the evidence for these conclusions, and are there alternative interpretations? In the most general terms we are seeking to consider what happened in the past, and what evidence we use to construct that knowledge. While we can't know the past in the same way we know the present, understanding past societies is an important step in providing the cross-cultural perspective that is central to anthropology as a discipline.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Learning Goals:

Specific: By the end of this course, students should:

- ❖ have a general understanding of the ways that archaeologists collect and interpret physical evidence of past cultures;
- ❖ have a specific understanding of the evidence we have for the past;
- ❖ understand how that evidence has been interpreted to show us what the past was like and how past cultures have changed over time
- ❖ see the connection between anthropological knowledge and the interpretation of the past.

General: This course will contribute to student competence in:

- ❖ critical thinking, in which the logic and evidence underlying an interpretation is evaluated in terms of the conclusions reached;

- ❖ scientific reasoning, in which interpretations that are founded on evidence are understood as distinct from speculation (legitimate or otherwise);
- ❖ cross-cultural perspectives, which are given an important time depth by including knowledge of past societies;
- ❖ written expression, in which these ideas are communicated in an effective and coherent way.

Textbooks:

Feder, Kenneth L. 2019. *The Past in Perspective: An Introduction to Human Prehistory* (8th Edition). Oxford University Press: New York. ISBN 978-0190059934

Renfrew, Colin and Paul G. Bahn. 2018. *Archaeology Essentials: Theories, Methods and Practice* (4th Edition). Thames & Hudson: New York. ISBN 978-0500841389

Reading and topics:

January	18	Introduction
	20	What is archaeology? No reading, watch on Blackboard (under GWU Lecture Capture)
	25	Varieties of evidence—meeting on Zoom Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 2
	27	Looking for data—meeting on Zoom Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 3
February	1	Digging for data Renfrew and Bahn Ch.3
	3	Archaeological dating Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 4
	8	The archaeology of people Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 8 Debate 1: cannibalism at Cowboy Wash? (Blackboard)
	10	Environmental data Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 6
	15	Reconstructing society Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 5 Debate 2: Modern hunter gatherers as models? (Blackboard)
	17	DVD: Stonehenge and experimental archaeology
	22	Symbolic analysis Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 9
	24	EXAM 1

March	1	Archaeology and the law King (Blackboard); Gerstenblith (Blackboard)
	3	Archaeological ethics Renfrew and Bahn Ch. 11 Debate 3: Should archaeologists engage with social media? Here (or as a pdf on Blackboard)
	8	Earliest ancestors Feder Ch. 3
	10	More recent ancestors Feder Ch. 4
	15-17	SPRING BREAK
	22	Neandertals Feder Ch. 5
	24	The Upper Paleolithic Feder Ch. 6
	29	The human diaspora Feder Ch. 7
	31	EXAM 2
April	5	First food producers Feder Ch. 8
	7	The effects of producing food Feder Ch. 9
	12	Complex society Childe (Blackboard)
		PAPER DUE
	14	Old World complexity I: Mesopotamia and Egypt Feder Ch. 10 (focus on Mesopotamia and Egypt)
	19	Old World complexity II: Indus Valley and Europe Feder Ch. 11 (focus on the Indus Valley); Thurston (excerpt) (Blackboard)
	21	New World complexity I: Mesoamerica Feder Ch. 12
	26	New World complexity II: North America Feder Ch. 14
	28	Final thoughts

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week for this class (as per federal regulation 34 CFR 602.24(f)): 5

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. It should be completed by the day on which it appears in the syllabus. You are also responsible for anything which 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 do the paper and take all three exams in order to pass the course. There are three exams, two during the semester and the third during the final exam period. Each will cover the section of the course that preceded it. This includes the third exam which, although held during the final exam period, is not cumulative. Each exam is worth 100 points (25% of your grade).

If you are ill and therefore miss an exam or have to turn in a paper late, **I WILL REQUIRE YOU TO TURN IN DOCUMENTATION TO SHOW THAT YOU SAW A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER**. If you are sick enough to miss class, you are sick enough to see a health care provider. Also, **I WILL CALL AND VERIFY THAT YOUR DOCUMENTATION IS LEGITIMATE**. I don't need to know any details of why you saw a health care provider, but I have received fake health notes before so I will make sure that anything you provide is real.

There are also discussion sections for this course. **YOU MUST ATTEND AT LEAST 10 OF THE 11 SECTIONS TO PASS THIS PART OF THE COURSE**. Any review sessions in connection with the exams do not count as one of the ten discussion sections you must attend. Attendance will be taken to verify that you are there. Each discussion section is worth 4 points, for a total of 40 points (10% of your grade). To get the points, you must also turn in any assignments required by that discussion section.

Finally, there is a short paper for this course. The paper topic is described below, but the idea is to think about archaeology in its social context. **THE PAPER IS DUE APRIL 12 IN CLASS**. Late papers may be accepted under some circumstances, but I will deduct 2 points (a grade level) for each day it is late. If it is late the reason should be something more serious than "I just ran out of time" or "I had a lot of other things to do that week." You know about this paper well in advance—schedule your time accordingly!

The paper is worth 60 points (15% of your grade). YOU MAY ONLY SUBMIT FINAL PAPERS BY E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO DO SO. Last minute submissions by e-mail without such arrangements will not be accepted. If you want to discuss any details about this paper with me, please come to my office hours or email me. 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. Draft papers may be emailed to me. **If you want me to read a draft, please give it to me no later than ten days before the paper is due.**

Testing Goals:

The exam questions will consist of multiple choice, the identification of terms, and a longer essay question. For identifications, you should note 1) what it is and 2) why it is important for this course; for sites, you should also give an indication of its chronological position (specific date or period) and where it is located. For the essay

questions, you should be sure to 1) address all required parts of the question; 2) provide specific information (and avoid generalities); and 3) demonstrate knowledge of material in the reading and presented and discussed in class.

Recordings

Since the university has requested it I am going to record all the class sessions so you can access them later. However, **I DO NOT WANT YOU TO USE THIS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR COMING TO CLASS.** According to GWU policy, students are supposed to be in class in person. The recordings are being provided for students who might want to review a class, or who are ill or for some reason are prevented from coming to class in person. **IF YOU WANT TO VIEW A CLASS RECORDING, PLEASE CONTACT ME AND I WILL MAKE IT AVAILABLE.** Recordings will not be generally available, so you need to give me some kind of explanation for why you would like to see the recording.

To access a recording (once you have talked to me), click on "Class recordings" in the Course Menu (on the left side of the screen) under Blackboard. You'll see a list of recordings and you can click on the one for the class you want to watch.

Recordings can't be downloaded from Blackboard, only listened to. **YOU MAY NOT DOWNLOAD THE RECORDINGS OR CIRCULATE THEM IN ANY WAY.** I consider doing so the same as plagiarism and I will pursue all of the options open to me in terms of penalties if I find out anyone did that. It will also piss me off personally, and there are worse things than university sanctioned penalties. So just don't.

Housekeeping:

My office is Rm. 203 in 2112 G St. and you can reach me at extension is 4-6964. My mailbox is in the main anthropology department office, 2110 G St. My office hours are Wednesday and Friday 11-12:30, if you need to see me. I am only on campus those two days, but you can also reach me by e-mail at sjohnsto@gwu.edu and I check my email frequently.

I am also happy to meet with you online if you prefer. I have access to both WebEx and Zoom so it's easy to set up a meeting that way if you like. If you want to use this option send me an email and we can work out the details.

If you are having trouble with the course material or did not do well on the first exam, **I urge you to come and talk to me.** After a certain point in the semester, it will be too late to correct any errors in approach or help you understand the reading or the discussions. **DON'T PUT IT OFF AND ASSUME THAT SOMEHOW YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT ALL UP. I DON'T DO EXTRA CREDIT, SO DON'T EVEN ASK.**

University policies

Academic Integrity

All students must practice academic integrity. This means doing your own work. When you use **the words or ideas of others in any written work in any way, you must:** 1) indicate the source of any ideas that are not your own using appropriate referencing forms; and 2) identify any direct quotations with quotations marks. **THE RULE IS THAT, IF IT IS NOT YOUR OWN IDEA OR COMMON KNOWLEDGE, YOU MUST PROVIDE A CITATION.** That includes both quoted material and general summaries or other references to the ideas of others. If you have any questions at all about what this means, ask me. Plagiarism, and all breaches of academic integrity (for example, the sale of lecture-notes from this class, or use of content from the internet as though it was your own), will be severely dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. If I have any suspicion that you might have plagiarized, I will run it through Safe Assign. For more information

on The George Washington University's policies on academic integrity, please consult:
<https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity>

Academic Integrity is an integral part of the educational process, and GW takes these matters very seriously. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and in other ways outlined in the Code of Academic Integrity. Students accused of academic integrity violations should contact the Office of Academic Integrity to learn more about their rights and options in the process. Outcomes can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the University, including a transcript notation. The Office of Academic Integrity maintains a permanent record of the violation.

More information is available from the Office of Academic Integrity at studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity. The University's "Guide of Academic Integrity in Online Learning Environments" is available at studentconduct.gwu.edu/guide-academic-integrity-online-learning-environments. Contact information: rights@gwu.edu or 202-994-6757.

*The policy on academic integrity in this course is that if you commit a breach of academic integrity in any assignment or exam, you will receive a zero for that assignment or exam. This infraction will be reported to the University's Academic Integrity Council. You will be **clearly** notified by the instructor in person OR by email before the Council is informed.*

University policy on observance of religious holidays

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines

Support for students outside the classroom

Writing Center

GW's Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online. See gwu.mywconline.

Academic Commons

Academic Commons provides tutoring and other academic support resources to students in many courses. Students can schedule virtual one-on-one appointments or attend virtual drop-in sessions. Students may schedule an appointment, review the tutoring schedule, or access other academic support resources at academiccommons.gwu.edu. For assistance contact academiccommons@gwu.edu.

Disability Support Services (DSS) 202-994-8250

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact [Disability Support Services](#) to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services 202-994-5300

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services

Safety and security

- In an emergency: call GWPD 202-994-6111 or 911
- For situation-specific actions: review the Emergency Response Handbook at safety.gwu.edu/emergency-response-handbook
- In an active violence situation: Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out. See go.gwu.edu/shooterprep
- Stay informed: safety.gwu.edu/stay-informed

Bias-Related Acts

Bias-related acts are characterized by some expression of hate or bias against a particular group, or towards and individual because of their membership (or perceived membership) in that group. Bias incidents may range from acts considered to be offensive to actions that cause harm.

There are several ways to report such an incident, which are listed here: <https://diversity.gwu.edu/how-report-bias-related-act>

Diversity and inclusion

I personally support the idea of diversity and inclusion, and I also will not tolerate insulting or problematic language in our discussions. For the former, if you feel there is some perspective missing in class or in our reading, please feel free to come and talk to me about it. I am always open to suggestions that will enhance our collective learning. For the latter, keep in mind that not being face-to-face with a person or group doesn't make that person or group any less a human being. Think about that when you make comments about others in the class or the peoples that we are discussing, whether in the past or in the present. I am always interested in trying to broaden my perspectives and to understand, and I hope that you will join me in this endeavor.

Paper Assignment

ANTH 1003
SPRING 2023

Dr. Susan Johnston

The paper for this course is supposed to be more of a “thought piece” than a research paper. The idea is to get you to think critically about archaeology and archaeological knowledge in today’s world, and how our particular cultural perspectives are included in archaeological analysis and its presentation. You can approach this topic any way you like. However, I want you to do this by analyzing something specific, such as a TV show, a social media site, a museum exhibit (virtual is fine), a book, a survey, a site, etc., and use that analysis as the center of the paper. The basic questions you are attempting to answer are how does archaeology work, how is archaeological knowledge acquired and conveyed, and what is its impact? Papers that receive As are ones that do an analysis of something specific that stems from an understanding of archaeological issues and avoid superficial discussions of how great archaeology can be or simply summarize movie plots or exhibits. If you are still describing the exhibit or the show or whatever at the end of page two, then you are summarizing, not analyzing! If you are not clear about the difference between analysis and summary, please come and talk to me.

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. Just go ahead and email it to me. **If you want me to read a draft, please give it to me no later than ten days before the paper is due.**

Suggested topics:



Visit a museum or historical site and look at a specific exhibit. Online (virtual) exhibits are fine. This should be an exhibit with archaeological things in it; archaeological things are objects produced by humans or their immediate (hominin) ancestors, and have been excavated. It does not include dinosaurs, fossils, or other non-human animal ancestors. **Note that many things made by Native Americans that are in museums are from the 19th or 18th centuries, and so were probably collected from living people and not excavated!** These would not be acceptable for the paper—you can’t use it if it wasn’t dug up. While the exhibit may include documents, you should not focus on these unless you are considering them as objects rather than in terms of their content (historical analysis is related to archaeology but it is a different skill set). You should then analyze the exhibit. What does the exhibit tell you about the past? What choices did they make when they created the exhibit and what is left out? Is the exhibit slanted in a particular way? What is the specific content of the exhibit and does this have an impact on the general ideas being represented? Why is this information useful/interesting/educational etc.? Is it important or valuable? Is it worth using taxpayers’ money to support it? Why, specifically? Does it matter if it is virtual and not physical? Does that affect your experience of it, and if so, how? Be sure that you analyze the exhibit, not just summarize what is in it and then conclude that it was really great. It may have been, but I want to know why. Also, be sure to tell me what museum you visited and what the exhibit was called.



Watch a TV show or movie, or read a novel or nonfiction book about archaeology (NB: the textbooks for this course don’t count!), or visit a website or social media site (e.g. YouTube, blogs, TikTok, etc.) and analyze how archaeology is presented. Are there actual archaeologists present, how are they portrayed, and how can you tell they are archaeologists? If there aren’t real archaeologists, should there have been? How is the past being represented in this case? Is evidence being presented to support whatever interpretations are offered? Do the interpretations make sense? Are they slanted in any particular way? Is there anything obvious left out? Why is this information useful/interesting/educational etc.? Is it important or valuable? Be sure that you analyze the show/book/movie/site, not just summarize what is in it and then assume I know what is important. PLEASE NOTE: YOU MAY NOT DO RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK FOR THIS CHOICE. We will be talking a little

about this film in class so I want you to do something different. Again, this should be about archaeology (objects produced by humans or their immediate ancestors that have been excavated), not written history, dinosaurs, or biological anthropology of human ancestors (unless there is a significant component about material culture).



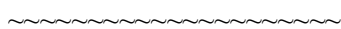
Go to Blackboard and look at the pdf called SAA Ethics Bowl Cases. The Ethics Bowl is an annual debate for students held during the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology. Each year, hypothetical cases are devised and teams then formulate and defend solutions to these ethical dilemmas, which are then judged. For this paper, select **ONE** of the cases described and devise a solution. You should note in your paper your understanding of what the ethical problem is (including how each side has a legitimate point) and why it is relevant to archaeology, how you would address this issue, and why you think this solution makes sense in terms of archaeological practice. YOU SHOULD CITE AT LEAST ONE ETHICS CODE FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN YOUR DISCUSSION, e.g. the one for the SAA that we discussed in class or others that you may find online (e.g. SHA, AIA). I'm not looking for something superficial here, you should really analyze and consider the issue and what you would do under those circumstances. Also, be aware that these cases are intended to be complex and don't have a single obvious answer. They all have two sides and you should be thinking in more nuanced terms than "protect archaeological resources at all costs." Consider what the real-world consequences are and whether it's worth it. Also, if you're going to say that something is illegal, be sure it is! For example, ethics codes aren't laws, and laws aren't retroactive—if something was made illegal in, say, 2002, then it doesn't apply to events in 1992.



Pick a space that you are familiar with and think about it archaeologically about a 1000 years from now. This should be a relatively small space and not, say, Washington, DC or the town where you grew up. Describe what has happened to make it into an archaeological site (in other words, was the site abandoned, was there a natural disaster, or what; this affects what might survive). What specific evidence would survive and under what circumstances? How would archaeologists interpret the meaning and/or use of these objects and features? What techniques might they use for the analysis of data recovered? Would they know what they were? How? What would it tell you about society and how would we know? What wouldn't survive, and what would be lost about that society that was of value? You can do this as a semi-fictional piece if you want, e.g. as someone excavating it 1000 years in the future. Just be sure that you describe specific evidence in your analysis, and make sure you explain why someone would interpret the remains this way—don't just guess, use archaeological thinking! Keep in mind what it is that archaeologists might or might not know from the material remains that you are describing—this somewhere between "omniscient" and "mind-numbingly stupid." So, for example, if a photograph of your family has survived and you suggest that this indicates that people in the past valued family, you would need to explain 1) how an archaeologist would know the people in the photo were family, and 2) how they would know that the people in the photo were valued (and it wasn't, say, a photo of a bunch of unrelated people that came with the frame or a wanted poster for local criminals). An archaeologist might infer this, but how? Also note: **1000 YEARS IS A LONG TIME**. Just to give you some scale in terms of time, 1000 years ago, the Norman conquest was still decades in the future, Cahokia wasn't yet a city, and it would be centuries before the Ming Dynasty was established in China. In terms of language, the poem Beowulf was written about 1000 years ago in the English that was spoken at the time. Here's the opening line from it:

Hwæt. We Gardena in geadagum, þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon, hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

‘Nuff said.



These are just suggestions. I am open to other possibilities, but if you want to explore other options **you must let me know what you want to do to make sure you don't get too far away from what I'm intending you to get out of this paper**. However, the idea is to do a specific analysis of something (rather than a more general

discussion), and there are certainly other ways it can be approached. For example, I'm open to a video or podcast rather than something written, if you would prefer that. Just remember that I will use the same criteria for grading!

As noted elsewhere, this is supposed to be a paper about archaeology. By the time the paper is due, you should know what this means—however, to be clear, it doesn't mean living people, dinosaurs (or other ancient non-human animal species), materials collected from living people (typically from the 18th or 19th centuries), or written history (unless the focus is on the material culture rather than documents per se). If you are uncertain whether or not the topic you wish to do fits this criterion, run it by me in advance.

References

While this is not a research paper, you should provide references if you use a website, book, or other media presentation so that I can look it up if necessary. If you cite references, make sure that you use some consistent format. I don't care if you use footnotes or references in the text, but whatever you choose, stick to it.

A word about **Internet resources**. There are lots of sources of information on the Internet about lots of subjects, and you can certainly use them for this paper. However, unless you are using a website to represent a particular perspective, **PLEASE DO NOT USE A WEB SITE AS PRIMARY REFERENCE MATERIAL UNLESS YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY SURE IT IS A LEGITIMATE WEBSITE**. There is a lot of, well, crap about archaeology on the web, and it's important that you not use such, well, crap, as sources of basic information. So be aware of what you are using, and if you are unsure, send me the URL and I'll let you know.

Grading criteria

The paper will be 5-7 pages long, double-spaced, and will be worth 60 points (15% of your grade). And please remember—I was a student too and I am not stupid. I know all about large type faces and large margins. Please give me some credit for intelligence.

The paper is due **IN CLASS** on **APRIL 12**. Papers turned in before the due date can be put in my mailbox in to the anthropology department (2110 G St). It is open most days until 5:00, but if the anthropology department is closed there is a plastic bin on the outside of the department door and you can leave it in there (so please don't claim that you went to turn it in and you couldn't because the office was closed). **DO NOT PUT THE PAPER UNDER MY OFFICE DOOR**. There are too many ways this can go wrong. I will check my mailbox when I get back from class on the day the paper is due. If your paper wasn't turned in during class and isn't my mailbox, it will be considered late.

And in case you missed it the first time, **YOU MAY ONLY SUBMIT PAPERS BY E-MAIL IF YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO DO SO**. Last minute submissions by e-mail without such arrangements will not be accepted.

As noted above, I take plagiarism very seriously. I am a researcher, and like all researchers, I respect the right of people to own their own work. You should do the same. If I suspect that you might have used outside sources inappropriately, I will run your paper through Safe Assign and use other tools at my disposal, so be warned and don't be stupid.

As noted above, late papers may be accepted under some circumstances, but I will deduct two points (one grade level for each day it is late). If it is late the reason should be something more serious than "I just ran out of time" or "I had a lot of other things to do that week." You know about this paper well in advance—schedule your time accordingly!