

## Myths and Mysteries in Archaeology

ANTH 2821  
Spring 2021

Dr. Susan Johnston  
My basement (and wherever you are...)

Textbooks: Feder, Kenneth L. 2020. Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries. 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw-Hill: New York. ISBN 978-0190096410

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 (2012, Oxford University Press)

### Reading:

January	13	Introduction
	15	Epistemology—how do we know things? Feder Ch. 1; Breakstone et al (I know but it's mostly tables...)
	20	<b>NO CLASS</b> (Inauguration Day—celebrate or commiserate accordingly)
	22	Science and knowledge Feder Ch. 2; Rekdal
	27	Archaeology—how do we know things? Andersson; Fagan (Bahn Ch. 1-7 for archaeology background)
	29	The Discovery of America? Feder Ch. 6; Anderson 2016
February	3	The Discovery of America, case study: St. Brendan Review Feder Ch. 6; <i>The Voyage of St. Brendan</i> ; Tim Severin and Saint Brendan
	5	<u>The Kensington Runestone 1</u> Kehoe Ch. 1-5
	10	<u>The Kensington Runestone 2</u> Kehoe Ch. 6-9
	12	All things Egyptian Part 1 Feder Ch. 10; Hadingham <a href="http://www.gizapower.com/">http://www.gizapower.com/</a> , <a href="http://www.thepump.org/">http://www.thepump.org/</a>

- 17 All things Egyptian Part 2  
Nelson; NYT King Tut's curse; Hawass et al (this is technical but get the gist)
- 19 *Ancient Aliens: Unexplained Structures (S2:E8)*  
In-class DVD; Nickel & McGaha
- 24 Ancient Astronauts?  
Feder Ch. 9
- 26 Alien bodies?  
Bhattacharya et al 2018; Colavito 2018; Feagans 2018; Heaney 2017
- March 3 Stonehenge  
Stonehenge
- 5 ESP and archaeology  
Feder Ch. 11; Hyman (Psi experiments); Schwartz (I know this one's long, just get the gist of the ESP aspect); Plummer
- FIRST EXAM DUE**
- 10 Archaeology and Christianity  
Feder Ch. 12; Bielo; Wood
- 12 Creationism and archaeology  
Feder Ch. 4 (and review Ch. 12); DeGroot et al
- 17-19 **SPRING BREAK**
- 24 Ancient matriarchies?  
Gimbutas; Eller; Meskell
- 26 Atlantis: what Plato said (and didn't say)  
Feder Ch. 8; Critias; Section from Timaeus
- PAPER DUE**
- 31 Atlantis locations?  
Jordan (New World)  
<http://atlantipedia.ie/samples/> (look through some of the theories here)  
Antarctica <http://atlantipedia.ie/samples/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/1tocf/inf/bim/bimini.html>

April	7	Atlantis from a Geographer's Perspective, Part 1 Erlingsson Ch. 1-2
	9	Atlantis from a Geographer's Perspective, Part 2 Erlingsson Ch. 3-4
	14	How to evaluate Plato Jordan (Plato)
	16	The implications of alternative ideas Colavito 2019, 2020; Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2014; Zaitchik 2018
	21	How should archaeology respond? Biesaw; Holtorf; Reece; Feder 2016; Anderson 2019
	23	Why do we believe? Hyman (Belief); Flemming; Laycock 2019
	28	Final thoughts

### **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!

### **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. **IF I GET THE SENSE THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF YOU ARE NOT DOING THE READING AND ARE INSTEAD RELYING ON CLASS DISCUSSIONS, I WILL START CALLING ON PEOPLE RANDOMLY FOR YOUR OPINIONS.** So be prepared.

I am also going to count participation in class discussions for 25 points (10%) of your grade. You don't have to be brilliant every day, but you will need to say something every now and then that indicates that 1) you did the reading and 2) thought about it. At the end of the semester, if I have no idea who you are and you have never said

a word in class, I will deduct points accordingly. At that point it will be up to you to convince me that you have indeed participated.

You must also take both exams and turn in the paper 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 due during the final exam period, is not cumulative. Both will be take-home exams that will ask you to think about the readings and the issues we discuss in class in more complex ways. The exams will be posted on Blackboard and they will be turned in and graded there. Each exam is worth 80 points (35%) of your grade, the paper is worth 45 points (20%), and class discussion is worth 25 points (10%).

There is a short paper for this course. The paper topic is described below, but the idea is to apply what we have talked about in class to a claim about the past. **THE PAPER SHOULD BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM ON MARCH 26.** Late papers may be accepted under some circumstances, but I will deduct two points 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!

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 (as recently as last semester) so I will make sure that anything you provide is real.

**I DON'T DO EXTRA CREDIT, SO DON'T EVEN ASK!** If you are having trouble with the course material, please get in touch with me. **This should be done earlier rather than later.** I am happy to help you succeed in this class, but I can't do it if I don't know that you need help, and there will come a point in the semester where it will be too late to do anything. So stay on top of it!

### **Testing Goals:**

Given that this is an online class and I am not particularly happy about the options for online proctoring, I am going to have take-home exams for this class. What that means is that I will assume when I write the questions that you will have factual information readily available. The goal will therefore be to demonstrate that you understand those facts and can use them in convincing ways to answer the questions. Questions will therefore ask you to do things like evaluate claims about the past, think about why people believe what they believe, what the real-world impact is of any of this, and otherwise use the information we have discussed in class. In that way, the questions will resemble essay questions on an in-class exam except that you can look up whatever factual information you need.

For these questions, make sure you 1) address all required parts of the question; 2) provide specific information (and avoid generalities); and 3) demonstrate knowledge of material, both in the reading and what was presented and discussed in class.

## **Remote class information**

For the spring of 2021, this class will be held remotely but synchronously. That means (in the new language we now have) that, while we will be online and who knows where, physically speaking, we will meet online at the time scheduled for the class—Wednesday and Friday, 12:45-2:00 EDT (the time zone in Washington, DC). If this time is a problem for you because of time zone issues or if you have technological problems on any given day, the class will also be recorded (see below). However, I expect you to make an effort to come to class at the scheduled time. Being there at the same time will allow us to have meaningful discussions, for you to ask questions, and generally for us to interact together. I know it's clunky, but we can make it work and it's much more fun that way.

## **Accessing online sessions**

I am going to hold this class through Zoom, but within Blackboard. That means that, while we will use the Zoom platform, it will be accessed through Blackboard. I have created a dedicated link on Blackboard to get you directly to the online class sessions. It is in the menu bar on the left on the main course page and is called "Online classes" (clever title, I know). Click on that link and it will take you to the main Zoom page where the classes will be listed. Then find the class for that day (yes, you will have to know what the date it...) and click on Join. You should be able to enter at any time.

To do this, you will need to download the Zoom app the first time you access the class, if you haven't already. GWU has its own Zoom license, so you should be able to access it using your GWU login information. If you have trouble with this please contact the ITL folks. They are very helpful and patient.

If for some reason I lose connectivity during class and disappear, please wait for me to come back. My wifi is generally reliable so I don't anticipate this being a big problem, but if I can't access my wifi I can always use my phone, so I will either be back or I will email you to let you know what's going on.

When you are online, make sure your microphone is muted, unless you are asking a question. That way we don't pick up everyone's background noises (entertaining but not conducive to anthropological learning). Also, if you are comfortable with it, I'd prefer it if you turn on your camera if you are talking. I'd rather talk to a real human face than a generic gray silhouette or whatever your avatar of the day is. You can also enter questions or comments in the Chat.

## **Recordings**

**ALL SESSIONS WILL BE RECORDED.** That means that, if you are in a different time zone where it isn't feasible to attend class when it is scheduled, or if you lose connectivity for some reason, you can access the recorded versions. To do this, click on the Online classes menu link, which will put you in Zoom. At the top there is a tab for Cloud recordings, so click on that. From there you can click on the one for the date you want to listen to. It has both audio and video, so you can listen to the recording and it will also show you any powerpoint as I showed it. If you have specific questions after that, feel free to email me or schedule a time to see me.

Recordings can't be downloaded, 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.

## **Other online issues**

For students with DSS accommodations that might impact your taking this course online, DSS has resources to help. Please contact them (see below) and see what they can do for you. Also, if there is something I can do that will help, please let me know so we can work out how to make that happen.

For students who may have issue in terms of technology or online access, please contact ITL. They are very helpful and patient. Their webpage is <https://online.gwu.edu/student-support> and that has their various contact information.

## **Housekeeping**

My office hours are going to be held via WebEx on Wednesday and Friday from 2-3:30. You can access this by clicking on <https://gwu.webex.com/meet/sjohnsto> If you get there and I'm not there, just hang on, I'll be there shortly. It will also send me an email to let me know that you are waiting.

I will be in class around 15 minutes before it starts and I'm also happy to hang around after class if anyone has issues they want to discuss (related to class or otherwise). You can also email me, either to ask questions or to set up an alternative time to meet.

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](http://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](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/guide-academic-integrity-online-learning-environments). Contact information: [rights@gwu.edu](mailto: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](http://provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines)

### **Support for students outside the classroom**

#### **Virtual academic support**

A full range of academic support is offered virtually in fall 2020. See [coronavirus.gwu.edu/top-faqs](http://coronavirus.gwu.edu/top-faqs) for updates.

Tutoring and course review sessions are offered through Academic Commons in an online format. See [academiccommons.gwu.edu/tutoring](http://academiccommons.gwu.edu/tutoring)

Writing and research consultations are available online. See [academiccommons.gwu.edu/writing-research-help](http://academiccommons.gwu.edu/writing-research-help).

Coaching, offered through the Office of Student Success, is available in a virtual format. See [studentsuccess.gwu.edu/academic-program-support](http://studentsuccess.gwu.edu/academic-program-support)

Academic Commons offers several short videos addressing different virtual learning strategies for the unique circumstances of the fall 2020 semester. See [academiccommons.gwu.edu/study-skills](http://academiccommons.gwu.edu/study-skills). They also offer a variety of live virtual workshops to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in a virtual environment. See [tinyurl.com/gw-virtual-learning](http://tinyurl.com/gw-virtual-learning)

#### **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](http://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](http://academiccommons.gwu.edu). For assistance contact [academiccommons@gwu.edu](mailto: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](http://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](http://safety.gwu.edu/emergency-response-handbook)
- In an active violence situation: Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out. See [go.gwu.edu/shooterprep](http://go.gwu.edu/shooterprep)
- Stay informed: [safety.gwu.edu/stay-informed](http://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>

I also personally support the idea of diversity and inclusion, and 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 being online doesn't make anyone 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 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, websites, blogs, social media, TV—as long as it is **archaeological**. By the time this is due, you should know what that means. It isn't living people (as in “Pacific tribe worships Elvis statue”—interesting but not archaeological), dinosaurs, or written history (unless there is some significant material culture component or there should be one). It also has to be “real”, by which I mean it can't be something in a clearly fictional piece (like a novel). You should be evaluating a **single source** (e.g. a TV show, website, or article) rather than a particular topic—not whether or not aliens built the pyramids in general but a particular individual, article, show etc. that says they did. If you are unsure, please tell me what you want to do and I can let you know whether it's okay.

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 was 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 that the mounds they found were cities 200,000 years ago because they are channeling a spiritual entity who once lived there, you could check how this lines up in terms of when cities emerge archaeologically in that region, but you probably couldn't verify whether the person was actually channeling a spiritual entity...).

**In case I need to say this, you may not use one of the topics we covered in class—that would be cheating!**

Be careful using the Internet for research in terms of locating factual material—there are far more unreliable sites out there than reliable ones (that being sort of the point of the class). Using a pseudoarchaeology site to critique a pseudoarchaeology claim kind of misses that point. If you are unsure whether the site you are using is reliable, send me the URL and I'll take a look at it.

Grammar and organization count! While I don't expect you to be writing prize-winning prose, your grade will go down if there are large numbers of typos, grammatical errors, lapses in logic, etc. An A paper will not look like something you spit out after midnight the night before it was due and clearly haven't read over since. If English is your second language, I would strongly encourage you to either write a draft (see below) or use the writing center.

I have all kinds of sympathy for people who are writing papers in a second language, but ultimately it is your responsibility to see that you write in a way that I can understand.

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. You can email drafts directly to me, or we can set up a meeting to talk over ideas and approaches. **If you want me to read a draft, please get it to me no later than ten days before the paper is due.**

The paper should be 5-7 pages long, double-spaced, and will be worth 45 points (20%) of your grade. And please remember—I have been using computers for longer than most of you have been alive! I know all about large type faces and large margins. Please give me some credit for intelligence.

**THE PAPER SHOULD BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM ON MARCH 26.** I know we have different time zones and such in play here, but you can do math, plan accordingly. If you are having difficulties accessing Blackboard, you can also email papers directly to me. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE YOUR PAPER IS UPLOADED CORRECTLY.** I have enabled unlimited uploads, so you should check what you uploaded and swap it out if you need to.

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, 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 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." That also goes for waiting until the last minute to upload the paper and then encountering technical difficulties. You know about this paper well in advance—schedule your time accordingly!