Anth 551: Strategies in Archaeology

Course Meetings:
Wednesdays, 8:30-11:30, Science I, Room 143

Instructors:
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ofc hrs: Mon 3:30-5:30, or by apt

Course Prospectus:

Strategies in Archaeology is intended to introduce students to the major theoretical frameworks shaping anthropological archaeology. The course emphasizes current issues and debates in the discipline rather than a comprehensive historical overview. However, the early weeks of the course will be devoted to a consideration of the historical foundations of major trends in the field. Following this introductory section, we will intensively survey current theoretical positions and issues that are having significant impacts on the practice of archaeology today.

A central theme guiding the course is that of the archaeological research design. Throughout the semester we will address the nature of archaeological enquiry by “taking apart” case studies to get at their objectives and the underlying structure of the research design used to address their goals. Issues raised through readings and related discussions will resurface throughout the course as we examine the underpinnings of various perspectives and the attempts by archaeologists to articulate theory and practice.

Some of the major topics we will be examining are processual archaeology (which characterizes much of North American archaeology) and Marxist, feminist, postprocessual, postcolonial, and collaborative approaches. In addition to addressing the concepts that these various perspectives bring to bear on research design, we will be concerned with critically evaluating how researchers’ perceptions are affected by the dialectical relationship between theory and data.

Course Format and Requirements:
The format of the course is a three-hour seminar. Some material will be presented in a lecture style, but most meetings will be discussion-based. Regular, informed discussion is expected of all students in a seminar, and you should come to each session prepared to talk about any and all of the readings. Lack of participation in class discussions will have a negative effect on your grade and on your learning.

Course Materials:
There are two required texts and one recommended text that can be obtained at the University bookstore or through online booksellers. One copy of each will be on 2-hour reserve in the Newcomb Reading Room at Bartle Library (when they become available).
Required Texts


Recommended Text

The Gamble book is a very short and simple introduction that covers archaeology at a general level, bringing everyone into the course at approximately the same place. Trigger provides a comprehensive overview of historical developments in archaeology, and you will read most of it over the course of the semester. Bentley et al. is a useful resource that will clarify many of the theoretical topics we will address.

Other readings: Most of the readings for the course will come from journal articles and book chapters. These can be found on electronic reserve in “Course Reserves” on our course Blackboard site.

Grades
This is a graduate level course and all students – undergraduate and graduate – will be graded using the same criteria. Grades are based on your annotations, class participation, midterm essay, research design, and final essay, as follows:

- Annotations: 30%
- Participation: 10%
- Midterm Essay: 15%
- Research Design: 30%
- Final Essay: 15%

Annotations (30%): Annotations are capsule summaries that are descriptive and critical. Over the semester you will write annotations following the framework below. You must submit annotations for TWO works for at least 8 class meetings. You must submit 4 of your 8 sets of annotations before the midterm, and 4 after. We will assign a letter grade to each set of annotations, and we will drop the lowest grade at the end of the semester. You are required to do all 8 sets – you cannot do 7 and then ask to “drop” or omit the final set. You may not submit more than two annotations in one week. Please do not annotate readings from your textbooks (Gamble, Trigger, Bentley et al.) – these readings are descriptive and synthetic and thus are not suitable for annotation. Also, very short reading excerpts are not suitable for these annotations. Each annotation must be submitted at the class for which the reading is assigned. No late annotations will be accepted.

The annotations are aimed at facilitating your efforts to “take apart” scholarly works to get at the researcher’s objectives and the underlying structure of the research design used to address their goals. The emphasis is on thinking critically and reflectively on the readings, not simply
summarizing them.

**Annotation Template:** Each annotation should be approximately 2 double-spaced pages in length. Address the following questions in essay format.

1. What three quotes capture the critical import of the text?
2. What is the main argument of the text?
3. Describe at least three ways that the main argument is supported.
4. Describe the main literatures that the text draws on and contributes to.
5. Describe at least three of the text’s themes or topics that are of significance to our understanding of the theory and practice of archaeology.
6. Explain how this essay could inform your research (as you imagine it), and/or how it shifts your understanding of the analytic possibilities of the discipline.

**Participation (10%):** All students are expected to have completed the readings prior to class meetings and come prepared to synthesize and discuss them in depth. This requires that you come prepared with something to stimulate and contribute to conversation (e.g., cross-cutting themes, questions, or critiques). Because this is a small seminar, it is even more important that students come to class ready to participate in discussion. You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions. We will provide you with a midterm assessment of your participation to date to let you know where you need to improve.

**Midterm Essay (15%):** The midterm will consist of a take-home essay exam that will cover the course material up to the date of the midterm. You will receive the question(s) for the midterm no later than 1 week before the exam is due. **Due in class on October 27**

**Final Essay (15%):** The final will consist of a take-home essay exam that will cover the course material from the second half of the semester. You will receive the question(s) for the midterm no later than 1 week before the exam is due. **Due by 12 noon on December 15**

**Research Design (30%):** The research design consists of a paper of approximately 12-15 pages (12 pt. font, double-spaced, 1” margins), in which you present a specific research problem, linked to a particular theoretical and/or methodological framework, and a plan for investigating the problem. This research design may form the core of your research proposal when you take Anth 592 (Proposal Writing) next fall. **Due in class on November 24**
The specific topic for the research design is at your discretion. However, you are advised to choose a subject and study area with which you already have some familiarity and/or which you may choose for your MA or PhD research. It is to your benefit to choose a topic relatively early in the semester so that you can begin your research as soon as possible. As you begin to think about your topic, please come speak to me about it so I can offer guidance. We will be talking about research design throughout the semester, but we will devote one class, on October 27, to a specific discussion of some of the nuts and bolts of putting a good research design together. You should come prepared to discuss the topic and direction of your research design.

General grading detail for written assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent. Well-written, clearly communicated, demonstrates a clear understanding of material and shows critical and creative thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/B+/A-</td>
<td>Good to very good. Fulfilled the assignment, with a few minor improvements suggested. Shows understanding that goes beyond simple definitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/C+/B-</td>
<td>Basically completed the assignment as required, but little more. General understanding demonstrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/C-</td>
<td>Content missing and limited demonstration of understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Missing significant content or did not follow guidelines. Major omissions and no understanding demonstrated.</td>
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**Course Schedule and Readings**

**September 1 - Introductions**


Please read before the first class meeting.

**September 8 - no class, Rosh Hashanah**

**September 15 - Culture History - Siobhan**

Trigger, chapters 1, 5, 6


**September 22 - New and Processual Archaeology - Ruth**

Trigger pp. 353-444


**September 29 – The “Post-Processual Turn” - Siobhan**

Trigger pp. 444-483


October 6 – Analogy and Ethnoarchaeology - Ruth


Optional:

October 13 - Technology and Style – Siobhan


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**October 20 - Materiality and Practice** – Ruth


Optional


October 27 – Research Design/Problems and Politics of Archaeological Knowledge Production – Siobhan

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

NOTE: Come prepared to discuss your ideas for your research design.


November 3 – Space, Place, & Landscape - Ruth, with Adam Smith


Optional:


**November 10 – Marxism and Time, History, & Evolution** – Randy McGuire

Trigger pp. 322-353, and 486-496


Optional


**November 17 – Feminisms and Identities** – Siobhan


Optional


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**November 24 – Memory and Meaning – Ruth**

**RESEARCH DESIGN DUE**


December 1 – Collaborative and Indigenous Archaeologies - Siobhan


Optional


December 8 - Representations of Archaeology - Ruth


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**FINAL ESSAY DUE Wednesday, December 15, noon**