ADVANCED ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY
ANT 411H

Fall 2014
Wednesdays 12-2pm
Room: SS1080

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Office Hours: Thursdays 10:00 am-12:00 pm or by appointment
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Outline
All archaeologists work within a theoretical framework, whether explicitly or implicitly. Theory influences the kinds of questions that archaeologists ask, the methods they use, the kinds of data they collect and how data are collected. In this seminar, students will examine the history of archaeological theory and the major theoretical approaches that define the discipline today. We will examine competing schools of archaeological thought concerned with the study of material culture, past social formations, and historical process. These range from functionalist and natural science paradigms, to postmodern, or post-processual, investigations of meaning, representation, and politics. We will also look at the way in which other disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, human ecology, historiography and post-modern geography, have influenced key ideas and epistemologies. We will address key themes in archaeological practice including materiality, spatiality, historicity, and hermeneutics. Moreover, students will come to appreciate the way in which broader social, political and economic contexts have shaped theoretical discourse in archaeology. Ultimately, the seminar should provide students with a rich understanding of the theoretical frameworks that underpin contemporary archaeological research and the unique problems inherent in archaeological efforts to represent and interpret the material record.

Course Design
The first 70 minutes of each class is dedicated to lecture, while the last 30 minutes is reserved for a discussion on the assigned readings. The lectures are intended to clarify problems encountered in the readings but are also designed to introduce subjects lacking in the texts. Each week we will examine a particular school of thought and related theoretical perspectives in archaeology. Also, we will either look at the ways in which particular theoretical approaches have been applied to an archaeological problem or examine the methods employed within a specific program of theoretical research (see “Theory in Practice” subheadings).

Course Requirements and Assignments
**Attendance / Participation / Student Presentations (15%).** Your presentation/participation mark is determined as follows:

- Being well prepared for class. Please read carefully the assigned readings so that you will be able to participate in the in-class writings and discussion.
- A weekly sign-in sheet will record student attendance. Students must attend at least seven of the twelve sessions to receive a passing grade.
- Periodically throughout the course we will do some in-class writing. These are not individually graded, but will form part of your participation mark. These are important tools to help you learn and understanding key concepts at a deeper level. On occasion, I will take these up at the end of class and review them in order to see what concepts are well understood and what concepts remain problematic.
- Beginning with the second class (Session 2, September 17th), one or two students will be responsible for preparing a short presentation, which will be followed by an open class discussion. The presentation should consist of a critical assessment of the reading material assigned for the week. You need to consider:
  - The central ideas in the readings
  - How these readings relate to others we have covered
  - How successful the authors are in making their points

  Presenting students will need to come up with a clear questing stemming from the readings in order to direct the class discussion. Please send these questions to me via email by the Sunday before their presentation and I will post them on Blackboard. Non-presenting class-members will need to prepare a response to both questions that they can use during discussion.

(2) **Short Papers (10% each for a total of 30%).** There are three short papers in this course due October 1st, November 5th and November 25th. Each paper is 5-6 pages long. I ask you to narrate and analyze your understanding of a particular component of the course thus far. The topics are:

1. Culture
2. Functionalism and Processualism
3. Post-Processualism.

These are by and large reflection exercises, in that I want you to show me how your understanding of these topics has evolved over the duration of the course. You will need to draw on specific ideas from the readings (you much cite at least 4 assigned and 2 unassigned reading) in each case.

(3) **Critical Book Report / Essay.** I will post on blackboard a list of some of the most influential texts in archaeological theory. Select one of these works to read and review. Your review should include the following:

- An overall summary of the book’s contents
- The author's main question (what was he/she thinking about?)
- What his/her question was responding to (what is the historical context of the work?)
• The changes that the author hoped to bring about in terms of how archaeologists approach their work
• The legacy of this work (why is this work important and how do archaeologists still use these ideas?)

The main objective of the report is to relate the author’s perspective to the historical and theoretical context in which it was written (citing articles assigned in class to support your argument will be particularly useful). Your review should also include a summary of the book’s contents, as well as a discussion of the legacy of this work and your thoughts on the extent to which this work has effectively interpreted past societies or advanced archaeological understanding. The critical report will be due in class on November 26th.

(4) **Final Exam**  A take-home final exam consisting of an essay question and short answers will be due on **Monday December 8th at 8 pm on blackboard**.

Texts and Readings

I will post all required and further readings on Blackboard. I have assigned a number of chapters in Bruce Trigger’s *A History of Archaeological Thought* and Gavin Lucas’s *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork*, and students may purchase these texts at the University Book Store. Further readings present themes relevant to lecture and are intended for students interested in further research, but you can also draw on them for your short papers.

Grading

| Attendance / Participation / Presentation: | 15% |
| Short papers (10% each): | 30% |
| Critical Book Report / Essay | 30% |
| Take-home final exam: | 25% |

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

**SESSION 1: Wednesday, September 10th**

Introduction to Archaeological Theory: Positivism vs. Historical Relativism / Universalism vs. Particularism

*Required Readings*

- Dawdy, Shannon 2009: Millennial Archaeology. Locating the Discipline in the Age of Insecurity. *Archaeological Dialogues* 16(2): 131-142 (read a select few of the critiques following the main article).
- Lucas, Gavin: Chapter 1 (*Critical Approaches to Fieldwork*)
- Trigger, Bruce: Chapter 1 (*A History of Archaeological Thought*).
• Johnson, Matthew 2006 On the Nature of Theoretical Archaeology and Archaeological Theory. *Archaeological Dialogues* 13(2): 117-182 (read a select few of the critiques following the main article).

**Further Readings**


• Hodder, Ian 2012. *Archaeological Theory Today*. Chapter 1


**SESSION 2: Wednesday, September 17th**

**Culture-History and the Practice of Archaeology**

*Theory in Practice: Typology as process and explanation: artifact classification and the Ford-Spaulding debate*

**Required Readings**


• Lucas, pp 36-51; 107-123

• Spaulding

• Trigger, Chapter 6
Further Readings

- Kidder, Alfred V. 1924 *An Introduction to the Study of Southwestern Archaeology with a Preliminary Account of the Excavations at Pecos*. Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

SESSION 3: Wednesday, September 24th

Functionalisms Emerging

*Theory in Practice: The conjunctive approach and settlement pattern analysis*

Required Readings

- Trigger pp.367-382.

Further Readings


**SESSION 4: Wednesday, October 1st**

*Functionalism Triumphant—Positivism, Process, and Explanation in the New Archaeology to 1968*

*Theory in Practice: Ceramic sociology*

**Required Readings**


• Trigger pp. 386-418.

**Further Readings**


• Kehoe, Alice 1998 *Landscapes of Prehistory*. Read Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 115-149.


• Trigger, Chapter 8: pp. 386-417.

**SESSION 5: Wednesday, October 8th**

*Maturing Functionalisms—Archaeology as Science: Systems Theory, Behavioral Archaeology, and Methodological Challenges*
**Theory in Practice: Bordes-Binford debate (Mousterian Debate)**

**Required Readings**
- Trigger pp. 418-444.

**Further Readings**
- Trigger, Chapter 8: pp. 418-444.

**SESSION 6: Wednesday, October 15th**

**Post-Processual Rumblings: Structuralist and Cognitive Archaeology**

**Theory in Practice: Excavating mind**

**Required Readings**
- Renfrew, Colin (*Archaeological Theory Today*).
- Trigger. Pp.444-467
Further Readings

- Deetz James 1977 *In Small Things Forgotten*. Doubleday (especially Chapters 2 and 4)

SESSION 7: Wednesday, October 22

Knowledge, Reflexivity, and Uncertainty: Questioning Functionalism (structural, systemic, Marxian, or otherwise)

*Theory in Practice: The fate of empiricism*

Required Readings

- Lucas chapter 5

Further Readings

- Shanks, Michael (*Archaeological Theory Today*)
- Shanks, Michael and Christopher Tilley 1987 *Re-Constructing Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press.
SESSION 8: Wednesday, October 29

The Turn to Power (the New Obsession): Marxist, Feminist, and Political Theory in Archaeology

Theory in Practice: Excavating Agency

Required Readings

- Trigger, pp.467-483

Further Readings

SESSION 9: Wednesday, November 5

History vs. Evolution

Theory in Practice: Cultural evolution vs. Selectionism vs. Annales school vs. Historical Processualism

Required Readings

- Trigger, Chapter 9

Further Readings

- Lucas, chapter 4.

SESSION 10: Wednesday, November 12

**Postprocessual Archaeologies: “Context” and the Return to Culture**  
*Theory in Practice: Archaeologies of Personhood, Embodiment, and Emotion*

**Required Readings**

- Harris, Oliver J.T. and Tim F. Sorensen’s 2010 Rethinking Emotion and Material Culture. *Archaeological Dialogues* 17(2): 145-163 (read a select few of the critiques following the main article).

**Further Readings**

- Boric, Dusan and John Robb *Past Bodies: Body-Centered Research in Archaeology*. Oxbow.

SESSION 11: Wednesday, November 19
Practice Theory and the Search for the Historical (Archaeological) Subject

Theory in Practice: “Spatialities and phenomenology”: place, space, and landscape

Required Readings

- Barrett, John C. (Archaeological Theory Today)
- Thomas, Julian (Archaeological Theory Today).

Further Readings


SESSION 12: Wednesday, November 26

Conclusion: Future Directions in Archaeological Interpretation / Archaeology in a Postmodern World / Materiality studies

Theory in Practice: Archaeology as political action / the material turn

Required Readings
• Gosden, Chris (*Archaeological Theory Today)*
• Ingold, Tim 2012 Towards an Ecology of Materials. *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 41:427-42
• Lucas, chapter 6
• Meskell, Lynn (*Archaeological Theory Today)*
• Shanks, Michael (*Archaeological Theory Today)*

*Students can choose to read just one of the three articles in Archaeological Theory Today.*

**Further Readings**

• Moser, Stephanie (*Archaeological Theory Today*).
• Pearson, Mike and Michael Shanks 2001 *Theatre / Archaeology* Routledge.
• McGuire, Randall 2008 *Archaeology as Political Action*. University of California Press.
• Trigger, Chapter 10

**FINAL EXAM DUE MONDAY, December 8th, 2014 BY 8:00 PM (BLACKBOARD)**