Archaeological Theory in 1988, by Simon James (in Johnson)

Classroom: Saywell 9152
Lecture Monday 2:30–5:20
Seminar Wednesday 3:30–5:20
Office EDB 9627
Office Hours M, Th 10–11; T 9-10; by appointment; by chance
Contacts: Office: 782-5709; e-mail: nicholas@sfu.ca
Course WebCT http://webct.sfu.ca/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct (to log on)
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COURSE PROSPECTUS

“It’s not what you find, it’s what you find out.” This oft-cited statement by David Hurst Thomas characterizes much about what differentiates contemporary Americanist archaeology from its predecessors. And what we find out about the past is dependent upon the questions asked. What those questions consist of, in turn, is based upon how we think about the past—or, in other words, upon archaeological theory.

This tip-of-the-iceberg course reviews the history of archaeological theory, from its earliest manifestations through to what’s going on in the current issues of *American Antiquity* and *Journal of Social Archaeology*. In doing so, we will examine each of the major schools of thought, including culture history, processualism, and various flavors of post-processualism. In addition, we will also look not only at the historical context and sociopolitics relating to the development of these different approaches, but at how archaeology has influenced contemporary society and also who benefits from archaeological research.

A basic understanding of archaeological theory will thus provide you with a greater understanding of the dynamic nature of archaeological thought, an appreciation of how and why archaeological thought has developed, and the means to evaluate different ways of looking at the past.

Course Requirements

The structure of this course includes both lecture and seminar components. You are required to attend scheduled classes, to participate in seminar discussions, and to complete all assigned work on time. The mid-term exam consists of short- and long-answer questions, plus essay-type questions; the final is a take-home, consisting of a series of four essay questions.

The grading for this W-course is structured as follows:

- **Written Exercises (4 pts each/20 pts)**
  - “Reading for Content/Effective Note Taking” (4 to 5 page (total) synopses of two articles)
  - “The Legacy of Processualism” (2–3 page essay)
  - “Phenomenology for Dummies” (2–3-page essay)
  - “Deconstructing Archaeology Journals” (2–3-page essay)
  - “What Theory Looks Like” (a graphic visualization)

- **In-class Presentation and Written WebCT Summary (2-page) (5 pts) (separate handout)**

- **Mid-term Exam (25 pts)**

- **Final Take-home Exam (4 essays) (25 pts)**

- **Term Project (25 pts) (see separate handout)**
  - prospectus and preliminary bibliography (5% [factored into final term paper grade])
  - complete draft for review and preliminary grading (20% [same])
  - final draft incorporating requested revisions for final grading (75%)

There will also be several ungraded class exercises that feed into class discussions. Attendance, will be tracked but grading is based primarily on your contributions to seminar discussions (and if you’re not in class, you’re obviously not participating). Keep in mind that a seminar format is more enjoyable than lectures, but does requires input from everyone.

Late work is penalized 5% a day. Extensions will be granted for documented medical situations. If you anticipate a problem before the due date, let us know.

You will find it very helpful to form discussion groups, of any size, to meet on a regular basis to discuss course readings and assignments and to complain about readings and assignments (ha!).
Readings and Videos
There is a significant amount of reading, but no more than is expected for an upper-level course (see Some Advice, below) The required texts for this course are A History of Archaeological Thought (2nd ed.) by Trigger, Archaeological Theory (2nd ed.) by Johnson; and the ARCH 471 Custom Courseware Package (bookstore). Additional required readings are on line through the SFU Electronic Library, on WebCT, and/or placed on Library Reserve. Two additional books are recommended: Archaeology: The Key Concepts, edited by Renfrew and Bahn, and Fit to Print: Canadian Student’s Guide to Essay Writing, by Buckley. You will find the various readings interesting, important, and often provocative. There’s other fun or interesting stuff on WebCT.

It is essential that each of you complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. My lectures tend not to be reviews of material covered in readings. Instead I often use the readings as a starting place, or as a source of alternative examples and ideas. Thus, without having first done the readings, it may be difficult to understand important concepts and examples presented in lecture. More importantly, commenting intelligently on an article being discussed in seminar is difficult if you haven’t read it.

Since archaeology is such a visual discipline, a number of videos will be shown throughout this course to provide additional information or points of contrast. Careful viewing and note taking is important and should be done analytically and critically. You should consider each video to be the same as a lecture. A viewing guide will be provided for each.

Some Advice. As noted above, there is a substantial amount of readings for this course. But I believe that this is necessary to give you an adequate sense of, and appreciation for the immense literature of archaeological theory (you are seeing only a miniscule amount—really and truly).

Also keep in mind that at 5 credits, this course is almost two courses.

My advice: 1) develop an effective reading strategy; 2) form study or discussion groups; and 3) read to grasp the essentials (see WebCT handout on the latter).

In-Class Presentations (see handout)
Each student will responsible for one ten-minute in-class presentation, done individually or jointly with another student. This will focus on the life and work of a key individual whose work will be covered in the Required Readings list (see handout for the list of individuals to choose from). There will be a sign-up sheet for the presentations on my office door. Presentations will begin in Week 3.

Presentations will be biographical in orientation, including who the individual was influenced by and their contribution to archaeological theory. As with conference presentations, the 10-minute limit is firm. A 2 to 3-page biographical summary (including highlights of their careers; key publications) will be submitted for posting on the course web site. Your grade for these is based on peer evaluation.

Other Materials
In addition to the recommended readings list here, and others recommended in class, you should spend some time reviewing archaeology journals to get a sense of the nature of archaeological thought both today and in past decades. You are thus strongly encouraged to peruse American Antiquity, Antiquity, Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory, and Journal of Social Archaeology, as well as such regional journals as Australian Archaeologist, Canadian Journal of Archaeology, Mid-Continental Journal of Archaeology, Norwegian Archaeological Review, North American Archaeologist, and others. You have access to these and others through the SFU Library. Use it!
Course Web Site
A copy of the course syllabus and other handouts, as well as lecture slides, will be available on the ARCH 471 WebCT site. Other course-related materials will be placed there for distribution.

Research Project (see handout)
A major element of this course is a research paper that provides you with the opportunity to explore a particular aspect of archaeological theory that you find particularly interesting. A separate handout is provided on this, which includes examples of topics.

This is not a stand-alone project; you are expected to connect your topic to materials read and discussed in class. A separate handout covers this project.

Writing Workshops
One of the most important tasks in university is developing solid writing skills. Unless you can effectively convey what it is you want to say, you are doing yourself a disservice. Plus, potential employers look very carefully at applicants writing skills; this is true even in consulting archaeology because report writing is such an important task. And if you are considering graduate school—or a career in consulting archaeology, you absolutely need to have good writing skills.

The SFU Student Learning Common offers a variety of workshops, as well as personal appointments, that will provide substantial assistance towards improving writing, studying, and other critical skills. Everyone is strongly encouraged to at least check out their website and list of services: http://learningcommons.sfu.ca/ Please consider taking advantage of these free programs, especially so for those of you who may find writing difficult. But everyone can benefit substantially.

This syllabus is subject to change. An updated syllabus will be posted on the website.
Any changes in weekly readings will be announced in class and also posted.
— COURSE SYLLABUS —

Part 1: Introduction

1) January 7th Week
   • The Past is a Foreign Country: Putting Theory into Context
   • Basic Epistemology; When are Ideas Wrong?
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 1; Johnson: Preface, Ch. 1; Renfrew and Bahn

Part 2: A History of Archaeological Theory

2) January 14th Week
   • Classical Beginnings, Antiquarian Yearnings, and Scientific Glimmers
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 2–4; (Trigger 1966)
     Video: Belzoni in Egypt
   • Colonialism and the Rise of Imperial Archaeology; Culture-Historical Archaeology (Pt1)
     Readings: Barnard; Trigger Ch. 5; Waxman
     Video: The Lost City of Zimbabwe

3) January 21st Week
   • Culture-Historical Archaeology (Pt 2)
     Readings: Carlson; Webster; Willey and Phillips 11-43; (O’Brien et al.)
     Video: Looking for One Beginning: The Fallacy of Diffusionism?
     Exercise 1 Due: “Article Synopses of Barnard and Waxman”
   • Functionalism: A Growing Concern with Ecology and Economic Issues
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 7; Longacre 2010; Steward and Setzler

4) January 28th Week
   • The Emergence of the “New Archaeology”/Archaeology as Science
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 8; Johnson Ch. 2–3; Binford 1962, 1972; Clarke;
   • The Transition to Processualism
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 9; Johnson Ch. 4, 5; Flannery 1982; Longacre 1964
     Term Project: topic due

Part 3: Key Contemporary Themes

5) February 4th Week
   • Ecological Archaeological Theory, Behavioral Archaeology, and Beyond
     Readings: Bettinger; Kelly; Wilson and Rathje; Yesner
     Video: Garbage!
   • Contextualizing Archaeology: The Life and Times of Patty Jo Watson
     Video: Secrets Underground: A Profile of Patty Jo Watson
     Exercise 2 Due: “The Legacy of Processualism”

February 11th Week
   • Reading Break

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1 For each week, the bullets (“•”) represent the class (Monday) and seminar (Wednesday), respectively.
2 A Recommended text only, Renfrew and Bahn provides an excellent guide to key concepts as needed; reading it through before the mid-term exam will be beneficial. You will find a copy On Reserve.
3 O’Brien et al. provide an excellent review of this history of processual archaeology, that begins with culture history. It is strongly recommended. You will find in On Reserve.
6) February 18th
   • Exploring the Middle Range/Ethnoarchaeology
     Readings: Binford 1980, 1982; David and Kramer
     Slides: The Archaeology of Early Place (The Robbins Swamp Project)
     Term Project: Prospectus due
   • Post-Processual Archaeology(ies)/Archaeology as a Humanity
     Readings: Trigger Ch. 10; Johnson Ch. 7; Heider, Hodder 1985; Shanks

7) February 25th Week
   • Çatalhöyük and Beyond;
     Readings: (Balter), Hodder 1997; Van Pool and Van Pool
   • The Archaeology of Action: Thinking about Agency
     Readings: Barrett; (Gardner)

8) March 4th Week
   • **Mid-term Exam**
     • Marxist and Neo-Marxist Approaches
       Readings: Johnson Ch. 6, 10; McGuire; Paynter

9) March 11th Week
   • Structural and Critical Approaches
     Readings: Flannery and Marcus; Leone; Leone et al.
     Exercise 3 Due: “Welcome to the Real World, Comrade”
   • Symbolic, Cognitive, and Contextual Approaches
     Readings: Hall; Hosler; Whitley

   **Part 4: Other Flavors**

10) March 18th Week
    • Interpreting Rock Art/Questioning Analogy
      Readings: Lewis-Williams; Wobst
      Video: Images of Another World
    • Feminist and Gendered Archaeologies
      Readings: Johnson Ch. 8; (Conkey 2007); Conkey and Gero 1997; Spector; Watson and Kennedy; Wylie

11) March 25th Week
    • Indigenous Archaeologies
      Readings: Johnson Ch. 11–12; Conkey 2005; Nicholas 2008; Watkins
      Term Project: draft for review due
    • Archaeology and Descendant Communities
      Readings: Atalay; Blakey; Echo-Hawk and Zimmerman; Schmidt and Walz

12) April 1st Week
    No class Monday
    • Archaeology and Descendant Communities
      Video: Pagu Va: Archaeology and Native Americans at Fish Lake
Part 5: Grounding Contemporary Archaeological Theory

13) April 8th Week

- Theory, Ethics, Power, and Prestige
  Readings: Trigger Ch. 6; Arnold; Horning; Nicholas and Hollowell
  Exercise 4 Due: “Deconstructing the SAA Conference Program”

- Putting Theory into Context; Anointing of the Trowels
  Readings: Hegmon; Moss; Nicholas 2006
  Exercise 5 Due (by 11am): “What Archaeological Theory Looks Like”
  Term Project: Final version due
  Final Exam: Take-home exam distributed

Take-home final exam due date: Wednesday, April 15th

REQUIRED READINGS
Part 1: Custom Courseware Package

Bettinger, R.L.

Binford, L.R.

Carlson, R.L.

David, N., and C. Kramer

Flannery, K.V., and J. Marcus

Gardner, A.

Hosler, D.

Kelly, R.L.

Leone, M.P.

Lewis-Williams, D.

McGuire, R.H.
Maschner, and C. Chippindale, pp. 73-93.

Shanks, M.

Spector, J.

Waxman, S.

Watson, P. J., and M. C. Kennedy

Webster, G. S.

Willey, G.R., and P. Phillips

Wilson, D.C., and W.J. Rathje

Yesner, D.

Wylie, A.
Part 2: Readings Available On-Line Reserve/WebCT

Atalay, S.

Arnold, B.

Barnard, A.

Binford, L.R.

Blakey, M. L.

Clarke, D.L.

Conkey, M. W.

Conkey, M.W., and J.M. Gero

Echo-Hawk, R., and L. Zimmerman

Flannery, K.V.

Hall, R. L.

Hegemon, M.

Heider, K.

Hodder, I.

Horning, A.
2007 Cultures of Contact, Cultures of Conflict: Identity Construction, Colonialist Discourse,
Leone, M.P., P.B. Potter, Jr., and P.A. Shackel
Longacre, W.A.
Moss, M.
Nicholas, G.P.
2006 On Archaeological Theory as a Rite of Passage. Canadian Journal of Archaeology 30(1): iii–vi. (webCT)
Nicholas, G.P., and J.J. Hollowell
Paynter, R.
Schmidt, P., and J. Walz
Steward, J.H., and F.M. Setzler
Van Pool, T., and C. Van Pool
Watkins, J.
Whitley, D.
Wobst, H.M.