Great Discoveries in Archaeology
ANTH 7a
Monday/Tuesday/Thursday 11:00AM–1:20PM
Department of Anthropology
Brandeis University

Professor Travis Parno
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We passed hieroglyphic scrolls, gold jewelry, sarcophagi, statues of pharaohs, and huge chunks of limestone. Why would someone display a rock? Aren't there enough of those in the world?
- Rick Riordan, The Red Pyramid

This course is an introduction to archaeology based on some of the greatest discoveries in the field. Archaeology is the study of past human activities through the scientific analysis of material remains. It provides a general framework for our understanding of what makes us human and what constitutes cultural similarities and differences. Through a series of case studies, this course explores major transitions in the human condition over time. We begin with human origins in Africa and move along exploring the domestication of plants and animals, food production, craft technology, artistic production, ancient writing systems, and social ideology in the development of ancient civilizations. Some of the best-known discoveries in archaeology are used to illustrate the most salient topics covered—Olduvai Gorge, Stonehenge, Troy, King Tut's tomb, the fort at Jamestown (my personal favorite), and the monumental walls of Inca kings, to name a few. In addition to such great discoveries, the course will present the discovering archaeologists, what they did, and how they made their interpretations. The course will end with an evaluation of how the past is presented, valued, and protected in modern society. We will do all this in order to allow us to better comprehend and appreciate what makes us all human and how and why our societies past and present seem at once so alike and so entirely different.

Course Expectations
Throughout this course, I will lecture on the history of archaeological discoveries and we will discuss their impact on our knowledge of the past. Because of this, it is expected that
you will come to class prepared to engage the material in a thoughtful manner. You will undertake a midterm exam at the halfway point of the course and a final exam at the conclusion of the term. You will also write two essays in which you will explore the impact of archaeology in contemporary society.

Learning Goals

- Engage the history of major archaeological discoveries and learn how they shaped and continue to shape our understanding of the human past.
- Develop critical thinking skills by exploring complex concepts in peer-to-peer discussions and two analytical essays.
- Understand fundamental archaeological practices, particularly how to study cultures via written and material evidence.
- Compare social and technological development cross-culturally in pursuit of commonalities and idiosyncrasies.
- Evaluate the ways in which archaeology is used in contemporary society to further ideological agendas.

Course Texts

All readings for this class other than the required text below are available through the course website.

Required:

Course Grading

Course grades will be determined by four main components; (1) class participation; (2) a midterm exam; (3) two response essays; and (4) a final exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Archaeology in the News&quot; essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Archaeology in Popular Culture&quot; essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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CLASS PARTICIPATION counts towards 15% of the final class grade. Class participation includes:

1. *Attendance:* Barring an emergency situation, you are expected to attend every class meeting.
2. *Completion of reading assignments:* You should arrive prepared to discuss the assigned reading on the day it is due.
(3) Thoughtful contribution to class discussions: This includes discussions of class readings, active engagement with small-group work, and completion of in-class exercises.

A MIDTERM EXAM and FINAL EXAM account for 25% and 30% of the grade, respectively. These exams will be completed in class. You will receive a study guide prior to each exam that will assist you in your preparation.

Two RESPONSE ESSAYS comprise the final 30% of your grade (each assignment is worth 15% of the final grade). You may complete the essays in any order, but one must be submitted by July 14 and the second must be submitted by July 30.

- "Archaeology in the News" essay: For this essay, you will conduct research in the library or on the web to find an archaeological discovery made within the last three years. You will then write a 1–2 page essay describing the discovery, who is credited with the discovery, and how the work changes our understanding of the past.

- "Archaeology in Popular Culture" essay": For this essay, you will need to locate an example of archaeological practice and/or archaeological subject matter in contemporary popular culture. Your example should come from film, television, theater, toys/games, or some other medium you have discussed with me prior to the completion of your essay. You will engage with your chosen piece of popular culture and then write a 1–2 page essay critiquing the representation of archaeology in your example. What does it "get right" about archaeology? What does it "get wrong"? What would someone who knows nothing about the archaeological subject matter learn about it from your example?

Final grade / percentage equivalences are the following: A = 94–100%; A- = 90–93%; B+ = 87–89%; B = 84–86%; B- = 80–83%; C+ = 77–79%; C = 74–76%; C- = 70–73%; D = 60-69%; F = <60%.
I only accept late submission of assignments with prior notification of an existing conflict or proof of an emergency that necessitated your late submission. Barring extreme, unforeseen circumstances, all late work is subject to one letter grade per day penalty.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

**Laptop Policy**

I find that students using laptop computers in class is distracting to me and other students, in part because the temptation to take “just a second” to check email or web updates is hard to resist. If you feel that your learning will be hampered by not having access to your laptop for note-taking or other legitimate purposes, please speak to me. Otherwise, keep your laptop turned off and stowed away during class.

**Plagiarism Policy**

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai)). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.
Schedule of Course Meetings

Readings should be prepared prior to the first class meeting of each unit. Any additional assigned readings will be posted on our course website and announced well in advance.

WEEK 1 (July 6–10)

Introduction—What is Archaeology? Archaeological Principles and Practices


Reading: Images of the Past pgs. 1–33, 137–138, 543–557

Early Hominins on the Human Path


Reading: Images of the Past pgs. 34–96

Becoming Human


Reading: Images of the Past pgs. 98–133


WEEK 2 (July 13–17)

Neolithic Revolution and the Spread of Agriculture

The Natufians at Jericho and Abu Hureyra. The first domestication of plants and animals. The Neolithic town of Çatalhöyük. Agriculture throughout the rest of the world. Fishing at Franchi Cave, living by the lakes, and investigating the Iceman.


First Cities, First Civilization: the Sumerians

Emergence of civilization/complex societies. The “urban revolution.” The Sumerians of Mesopotamia. Sir Leonard Wooley and the Royal Cemetery at Ur.

Reading: *Images of the Past* pgs. 483–487, 418–435

*** Essay #1 due today***

Stonehenge and the European Iron-Age

The megaliths of northwest Europe. Fantasy and reality at Stonehenge. Bog-bodies in the fields of Denmark and elsewhere.

Reading: *Images of the Past* pgs. 98–133

WEEK 3 (July 20–24)

Midterm

Egypt, Pharaohs, and the Pyramids


Reading: *Images of the Past* pgs. 444–456
"New generation of archaeologists takes ancient Egypt into 21st century." *The Guardian:*  


Ancient Life in Southern and Western Asia and the Mediterranean


**Reading:** *Images of the Past* pgs. 436–443, 514–523  

**WEEK 4 (July 27–31)**

The Life and Archaeology of the Classical Greeks and Romans


**Reading:** British Museum: What are the Elgin marbles?  
[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/w/what_are_the_elgin_marbles.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/articles/w/what_are_the_elgin_marbles.aspx)  
"Amid sanctions, British Museum lends Russia controversial Elgin Marble" *CNN:*  
[http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/05/world/europe/uk-elgin-marbles-russia/](http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/05/world/europe/uk-elgin-marbles-russia/)  
"Greece unveils museum meant for "stolen" sculptures." *NPR:*  
Africa and Eastern Asia: Great Zimbabwe, Early China, and the Khmer of Angkor

Discovery and politicization of Great Zimbabwe. Archaeology in the national consciousness. The rise of Chinese civilization. An army of clay and the world contained within a tomb. Angkor Wat and other sites that can be seen from space.

Reading: Images of the Past pgs. 457–473
"Terra-Cotta Army: True Colors." National Geographic (2012):
http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/06/terra-cotta-warriors/larmer-text

Teotihuacán and the Maya; Culture Shock: Aztecs & Conquistadors

One of the largest cities in the pre-Columbian Americas. El Mirador and Tikal. Maya art, script, and calendrical system. The Aztec Empire of central Mexico encounters the Spaniards under Hernan Cortes.

"Giant Maya carvings found in Guatemala." National Geographic:

*** Essay #2 due today***

WEEK 5 (August 3–7)

Andean Civilizations and North America’s Deeper Past


Archaeology of the Recent Past; Cultural Patrimony and Pseudoarchaeology


**Reading:** *Images of the Past* pgs. 550–553


*Final Exam*