Deep Historical Perspectives on Native North America

Instructor: Lee Bloch
Office Hours: XXX-XXX
Class time: XXX
Office Location: XXX

Course Description
This class will study Indigenous peoples’ histories in eastern North America, drawing on research in archaeology and Native American Studies. As such, this course doubles as a) an area survey of the Native American past and b) a thematic inquiry into the politics of the past, with particular attention to how contemporary Indigenous perspectives can enhance or problematize archaeological accounts. Course questions include: whose perspectives are placed in the center of inquiry and whose are marginalized? How can feminist, queer, two-spirit perspectives help deepen scholarly understandings of the past? How might Indigenous peoples’ oral traditions, ways of knowing, and relationships with ancestral places inform archaeological research? Students will gain a more robust understanding of the historical depth and diversity of Indigenous cultures and lifeways in eastern North America while developing critical frameworks for thinking through multiple, at times competing historical perspectives.

Course goals
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
• Describe the diversity and deep history of Native American peoples in the Americas;
• Discuss the significance of ancestral places to living Indigenous peoples;
• Articulate key issues and concerns in the archaeology of Eastern North America, as well as Indigenous critiques of archaeology;
• Explain the importance of imagining past peopled with robust, complex humans;
• Problematize how understandings of the past are socially and politically constructed in the present;
• Identify how multiple lines of evidence and ways of knowing can contribute to more complex understandings of the past, particularly with attention to the use of oral traditions in archaeology.

Credit Hours
Success in this 4 credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.)

Grading
Students will be graded on participation in class discussions and written assignments.

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A: The student consistently makes creative contributions to discussion and moves the conversation forward in significant ways. The student draws connections course materials and extends key concepts by applying them to novel situations. Engages with both the instructor and with fellow students.

B: The student consistently contributes to class discussion and demonstrates a solid understanding of course materials. The student thinks through the readings, other students’ comments, and one’s own points well. Engages with both the instructor and with fellow students.

C: The student sometimes participates in class discussion and understands the basic facts of the readings, but perhaps not the big picture.

D: The student only infrequently participates in class discussion or makes statements that are unrelated or do not advance the project of the course. Only has a partial understanding of the materials.

F: The student does not consistently come to class, does not participate in or disrupts class discussion, or misses the point of course materials.

Assignments
All written alignments must be proofread, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and numerated pages. Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day they are late.

**Short Paper on the Earliest Americans**

There are two options for this assignment:

1. Choose an artifact or category of artifacts from the course readings. Describe the object, drawing on the text. How can this class of objects help us understand ancient peoples’ lives, for example in terms of subsistence, social dynamics, or migrations?

2. Find a Native American origin tradition and relate it to the insights course readings. Does this oral tradition help ask different kinds of questions about what life may have been like for past peoples?

The challenge of these papers is to go beyond the objects themselves and imagine past people. 3-5 pages, double-spaced.

**Short Paper #2**

**Topic TBA**

The challenge of these papers is to go beyond the objects themselves and imagine past people. 3-5 pages, double-spaced.

**Group Project**

Working in small groups, students will visit archaeological sites in the local area, conduct research on these places, and present their findings to the class. To prepare for your presentations, you should conduct research into the scholarly literature on that site and, during your visit, think about how the past is represented to the public. You should also research what Native American nations (there may be more than one) claim descendancy from the site or area. If you find information about oral traditions that relate to the site or region, or about descendant peoples’ ongoing relationships with that site, make a note and speak about it in your presentation.

Present on your findings in class. What is the history of this site as it is represented in scholarly literature? What did you notice visiting the site and how is the history represented to the public? Did you learn anything about descendant peoples’ perspectives on the site?

Presentations should be 20 minutes in length, leaving time for Q & A.

**Final Paper + Presentation**

At the end of the semester, students will complete a research paper on an ancestral place/archaeological site of their own choosing and deliver a short presentation on their research during the final presentation. Your paper should draw on previous research on the site in order to make an argument or interpretation based on the material record, oral traditions, and/or how the past is represented to the public.

Alternatively, instead of beginning with a site, you may choose to start from a Native American oral tradition or set of oral traditions. Relate this oral tradition relate to the archaeological record.
This should go beyond asking if the oral tradition is supported or contradicted by the archaeological record, asking instead how oral traditions might expand archaeological interpretation. Review Echo-Hawk’s essay from the beginning of the semester.

Like the short papers, the challenge here is to go beyond objects and imagine people. Your argument should draw connections to course themes and cite at least four readings from the syllabus.

Papers will be 10-15 pages, double spaced. They may also take the form of an academic poster (see http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/FileDownloads/pdfs/meetings/upload/How-to-Create-Anthropology-Posters.pdf for guidelines).

**Participation**
We will work through course materials through lecture and class discussion, during which we will review, interpret, extend, draw connections between, and critique the readings. As such, students must come to class having completed the readings and be prepared to discuss them. Please print out articles and essays so that you may reference them in class. Departing from a “banking” model of education in which knowledge is “deposited” in students’ brains and “withdrawn” in tests—primary teaching students to regurgitate information—the goal of these discussions will be to practice the tools of critical thinking and analysis.

**Absences**
Life happens, and so students have 3 “free passes” to miss class. After that, all unexcused absences will result in the student’s final grade being lowered by one letter: i.e., a student who would otherwise get an A would get a B, a student who would get a B would get a C, and so on.

**Email Policy**
I will respond to reasonable email inquiries within a reasonable timeframe: usually within 24 hours. I expect your emails to be courteous and professional: it is good etiquette to include a salutation and signature and to make the subject line relevant to the content. Proofread all emails before sending. Although grammar and email etiquette standards are ultimately a means of reproducing social hierarchies, I promise that having these skills will make your life easier.

Changes to the syllabus, accommodations for snow days, and other logistical issues for the course will be communicated over email.

**Students with Disabilities**
Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.
Academic Integrity
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Required Texts


Schedule of Readings

Week 1: Theoretical Frameworks
Jan. 14, 16

Week 2: The Politics of Archaeology
Jan. 21, 23
Week 2: Paleoindian: Clovis and Pre-Clovis
Jan 28, 30
1. Anderson and Sassaman, Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology, Chapter 2

Story from fieldwork: Mammoth feces as a gift item in contemporary communities

Week 3: Archaic: Watson Brake and Poverty Point
Feb 4, 6
1. Anderson and Sassaman, Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology, Chapter 3

Story from fieldwork: Owl People and owl landscapes

Week 4: Woodland: Interregional Connectivity
Feb 11, 13
1. Anderson and Sassaman, Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology, Chapter 4
Story from fieldwork: Kolomoki or the Four Beings of Light

**Week 5: Break**

**Week 6: Mississippian: Social Organization and Ritual Economy**
Feb. 25, 27
1. Anderson and Sassaman, *Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology*, Chapter 5

Story from fieldwork: Traders and diplomats

**Paper 1 due in class**

**Week 6: Mississippian: Maize, Art, and Spirituality**
Mar. 3, 5

Story: Ethnopoetics and the rhythms of gendered subsistence transformation

**Week 7: Group Projects: Local Sites**
Mar. 10, 12

**Week 8: An Archaeology of the Soul**
Mar. 17, 19
1. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul*, pg. 1-31

Story from fieldwork: Birdmen, birdwomen, and genderless moths

**Week 9: An Archaeology of the Soul**
Mar. 24, 26
1. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul*, pg. 32-172

Topic for Final Paper Due

**Week 10: Post-Mississippian, Collapse?**
Mar. 31, Apr. 2

**Week 13: Collaborative Historical Archaeology in New England**
April 7 ( NO CLASS ON 9)
1. Gould et al. *Historical Archaeology and Indigenous Collaboration*

Story from fieldwork: Bead lust
Paper 2 Due in class

Week 12: Break

Week 12: Collaborative Historical Archaeology in New England
Apr. 21, 23
1. Gould et al. *Historical Archaeology and Indigenous Collaboration*

Week 13: Futures
April 28

Week 14: Contested Pasts and the Politics of Recognition

Week 15: Futures
9. Optional: Anderson and Sassaman, Chapter 6

Final Paper Due During Exam Period