

## **Anthropology 5300/3301 – Archaeological Theory I / History of Anthropological Thought**

Fall 2026, Thursdays 1:00 – 3:50

Instructor: Dr. Devin Pettigrew, Office: Ferguson 114B

This course reviews basic theoretical issues in archaeology beginning with Renaissance humanism to the present. In this and its sister class (Theory II), we will consider four broad trends in archaeological theory: culture history, processual archaeology, postprocessual archaeology, and post-postprocessual archaeology/post-humanism. We will also take a step back and consider debates and trends in archaeology from the perspective of the Philosophy of Science, and discuss the directions that archaeological theory may take in the near future. Readings include both important theoretical pieces and case studies that put theory into practice. As we will cover a lot of material during the course, it is absolutely critical that you keep up with the readings and come prepared to discuss them in seminar. All readings will be supplied to you on Blackboard.

In addition to readings, you will prepare weekly summaries of the reading (10% of the final grade), participate in class discussions about the readings (40%), write a term paper (40%) and present it to the class (10%). The term paper will explore the genealogy of a concept in archaeological theory of your choice. You will trace how the concept was used in case studies, and defined through the history of the discipline. You should discuss debates surrounding the concept at different times in the history of archaeological theory, focusing in particular on the present. Be sure to discuss the key scholars in the development of the concept. The paper should be well-written and should involve research well beyond the course readings. I would like to know which concept you will be examining by around the middle of the semester (see course calendar below). You should work on the paper throughout the course as we consider the history of the discipline. You will present your term paper to the class in a conference-paper format (15 minutes). In addition, your written summaries of each week's readings should be at least 5 single-spaced pages and address the main points of the readings. This can be in narrative or in outline form.

The attached undergraduate course (3301) will follow the same format but with reduced course load in terms of reading and paper length. The undergraduate theory student is expected to read at least two articles or three book chapters per class and come prepared to discuss them (40%), turn in weekly outlines of these readings (20%) and write a 4,000 word term paper following the same instructions as above.

### **Books:**

Johnson, Matthew. 2019. *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, Newark.

Rosenberg, Alexander, and Lee McIntyre. 2020. *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction*. 4th ed. Routledge, New York.

Trigger, Bruce G. 2006. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

### **Student learning outcomes (slos):**

1) The students will acquire an in-depth understanding of trends in archaeological thought beginning with the Renaissance humanists to the present.

2) The students will demonstrate an understanding of the trajectory of changes in the theory over time as they relate to changes within broader social contexts in and outside of Science.

3) The students will be able to demonstrate ability to apply different theoretical lenses to problems in archaeological reasoning and the consequences of applying specific theoretical lenses to questions, methods, and output.

**Goals and objectives:** This course aims to introduce students to the trends in archaeological theory since the late Medieval period until today. Students will understand how those trends shaped the field and were in turn shaped by broader social and historical trends in and outside of the field. Students will also learn to research a theoretical topic deeply and understand on a more finite scale how different theoretical paradigms can radically shape the questions they ask, the methods they use, and the final product, an interpretation of the archaeological record.

## CLASS POLICIES AND RESOURCES

### ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu) or contact Alejandra Valdez, at 830-758-5006 or email [alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu](mailto:alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize him/herself with the requirements of such laws.

### DISTANCE EDUCATION

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

### SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu/](http://library.sulross.edu/). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting [library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/](http://library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/) or ask a librarian by emailing [srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu). Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. Using AI generated text on papers and assignments is a form of plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of your college degree and higher education overall.

### CLASSROOM RESPECT

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

Tentative Class Schedule (I will inform you at least one week in advance if readings change):

#### **Aug. 27 - Introduction to the course**

Trigger book chapter 1

Johnson book chapter 1

#### **Sept 3 – Early developments**

Trigger book chapters 2-3

Schnapp, Alain, and Kristian Kristiansen. 1999. Discovering the Past. Edited by Graeme Barker. Companion Encyclopedia of Archaeology 1:3–47

### **Sept 10 - Cultural evolution and culture history**

Trigger book chapter 4, 5, 6

Meltzer, D. J. 1983. The antiquity of Man and the development of American Archaeology. In *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, Vol. VI, edited by M. B. Schiffer, pp. 1-51. New York: Academic Press.

Morgan, L. H. 1996[1877]. Ethnical periods [from *Ancient Society*]. In *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*, edited by R. J. McGee and R. L. Warms, pp. 41-51. Mayfield, Mountain View. Johnson book: 143-152

Taylor, W. W. 1948. *A Study of Archaeology*. Memoir Series of the American Anthropological Association No. 69. Menasha, Wisconsin. (pp. 45-67, 152-159, 168-180)

### **Sept 17 – Early functionalism and evolutionism**

Steward, J. H. 1955b. The levels of sociocultural integration: An operative concept. In *Theory of Culture Change*. Edited by J. H. Steward, pp. 43-63. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Steward, J. H. 1949. Cultural causality and law: A trial formulation of the development of early civilizations. *American Anthropologist* 51:1-27.

White, L. A. 1949. *The Science of Culture*. New York: Grove. (pp. 363-378)

Sahlins, M. D. and E. R. Service. 1960. *Evolution and Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (pp. 23-44)

Childe, V. G. 1950. The urban revolution. *Town Planning Review* 21(1):3-17.

### **Sept 24 – The new archaeology**

Johnson book chapter 2

Binford, L. R. 1962. Archaeology as Anthropology. *American Antiquity* 28:217-225. Binford, L. R. 1965. Archaeological systematics and the study of culture process. *American Antiquity* 31:203-210.

Fritz, J. M. and F. T. Plog. 1970. The nature of archaeological explanation. *American Antiquity* 35:405-412.

Flannery, K. V. 1967. Culture history versus culture process: A debate in American Archaeology. *Scientific American* 217:119-122.

### **Oct 1 – The new archaeology**

Salmon, M. H. 1975. Confirmation and explanation in archaeology. *American Antiquity* 40:459-464.

Watson, P. J., S. A. LeBlanc, and C. L. Redman. 1984. *Archaeological Explanation: The Scientific Method in Archaeology*. New York: Columbia University Press. (pp. 1-66).

Clarke, D. L. 1978. *Analytical Archaeology*. New York: Columbia University Press. (pp. 10-41)

Wylie, A. 2002. *Thinking from things: essays in the philosophy of archaeology*. Berkley: University of California Press. (Chapters 1-2)

### **Oct 8 – Neo-functionalism and evolutionism**

Johnson book: chapter 5

Binford, L. R. 1968. Post-Pleistocene adaptations. In *New Perspectives in Archaeology*, edited by S. R. Binford and L. R. Binford, pp. 313-341. Chicago: Aldine.

Flannery, K. V. 1972. The cultural evolution of civilizations. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 2:399-426.

Clarke, D. L. 1972. A provisional model of an Iron Age society and its settlement system. In *Models in Archaeology*, edited by D. L. Clarke, pp. 801-869. London: Methuen.

### **Oct 15 – Behavioralism versus processualism**

Flannery, K. V. 1973. Archaeology with a capital S. In *Research and Theory in Current Archaeology*, edited by C. L. Redman, pp. 47-53. New York: Wiley.

Schiffer, M. B. 1972. Archaeological context and systemic context. *American Antiquity* 37(2):156-165.

Binford, L. R. 1981. Behavioral archaeology and the "Pompeii Premise" in archaeology. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 37:195-208.

### **Oct 22 – Professor at Plains Conference**

Work on your term papers!

### **Oct 29 – Behavioralism versus processualism**

Schiffer, M. B. 1985. Is there a "Pompeii Premise" in archaeology? *Journal of Anthropological Research* 41:18-41.

Binford, L. R. 1980. Willow smoke and dogs' tails: Hunter-gatherer settlement systems and archaeological site formation. *American Antiquity* 45(1):4-20.

Binford, L. R. 1982. The archaeology of place. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 1:5-31.

Schiffer, M. B. 1988. The structure of archaeological theory. *American Antiquity* 53(3):461-485.

Present term paper chosen concept and outline

**Nov 5 – Analogy and middle range theory**

Johnson book: chapter 4

Binford, L. R. 1967. Smudge pits and hide smoking: The use of analogy in archaeological reasoning. *American Antiquity* 32:1-12.

Binford, L. R. 1981. *Bones: Ancient Men and Modern Myths*. New York: Academic Press. (pp. 13-30)

Binford, L. R. 1985. "Brand X" versus the recommended product. *American Antiquity* 50:580-590.

Gould, R. A. 1985. The empiricist strikes back: Reply to Binford. *American Antiquity* 50:638-644.

**Nov 12 – Analogy and middle range theory**

Schrire, C. 1984. Wild surmises on savage thoughts. In *Past and Present in Hunter Gatherer Studies*, edited by C. Schrire, pp. 1-25. Orlando: Academic Press.

Stahl, A. B. 1993. Concepts of time and approaches to analogical reasoning in historical perspective. *American Antiquity* 58(2):235-260.

Dunnell, R. C. 1982. Science, social science, and common sense: The agonizing dilemma of modern archaeology. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38(1):1-25.

Wylie, Alison. 1985. The Reaction against Analogy. In *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, edited by Michael B Schiffer, pp. 63–111. Academic Press, San Diego.

**Nov. 19 – Some philosophical musings**

Rosenberg and McIntyre book: chapters 1-6

**Nov. 26 – Thanksgiving holiday, no class**

**TBA – Class presentations & term papers due**