Introduction to Archaeology: Notes 1

Introduction to the course
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- Anthropology 202: Introduction to Archaeology
- Before I begin to explain why archaeology is so much fun and so relevant to us today
  - please do this brief exercise—I’ll give you five or ten minutes for it
  - get out a piece of paper and something to write with
  - put your name on it
  - answer the following questions:
    - How do you think archaeology contributes to society, that is, what good is it?
    - If you could go back to any time and place in the past, when and where would you choose, and why?
    - pass’em in
- Archaeology is an amazing field
  - Archaeology is our only access to much of the past,
  - from the origins of humans into historical times.
  - knowing about the past is important because
    - it helps us understand how we got to where we are now
      - if we know how and why something is
      - we can think more clearly about how to maintain it
      - or how to change it
      - or predict possible outcomes or responses to social or environmental situations
    - gives us examples of other ways that people have done things
      - options we might take or modify
    - it can build people’s sense of ethnic, religious, or national identity or connection to a particular place
  - Archaeologists have the privilege and responsibility of figuring out what happened before now,
    - and trying to explain why it happened or how it worked
  - But how do archaeologists know what they claim to know?
  - This course will answer that question by introducing the goals, methods, theories, and practice of archaeology.
- I’m Bruce Owen
  - I am an archaeologist
  - I work mostly on the far south coastal region of Peru, from the seashore up to very high elevations
    - Desert, mountains, deep valleys, of which you will see pictures at various times during the course
    - I’ve spent over 5 years there since 1983
  - My main interests are in complex societies, from early farmers through expansive empires
    - The Inka empire, still growing when the Spanish arrived in 1532
    - The Tiwanaku and Wari states, around AD 500 to 1000
    - Local chiefdoms that built huge irrigation systems and hilltop fortresses
Early farmers who first cultivated the coastal desert and buried their dead under specially built mounds

I am particularly interested in the important role of multiethnicity in and around these complex societies

as they were forming, as they flourished, and as they collapsed

relations of differential power, status, wealth, and social roles

population movements

To follow my curiosity about these subjects, I have participated in and directed a variety of different kinds of projects

I get to find sites that no archaeologist has ever visited

map them, using methods from very low to fairly high tech

Dig up stuff that no one has seen since it was buried 500, 1000, even 3500 years ago

places where people lived, cooked, slept, and worked

cemeteries

places where they practiced religious rituals

Pore over artifacts in the lab and sift through computerized data looking for patterns

especially ceramics

and metal artifacts

but also human remains, stone tools, plant material, etc.

this involves database work, statistics, and GIS (Geographic Information Systems)

I have also done some technical studies to work out issues with radiocarbon dating in coastal Peru

even aerial photography using kites

I have also done some historical archaeology

when I was an undergraduate

recently, doing statistical analyses of data from 19th century San Francisco and Oakland, collected by huge projects run by SSU’s own Anthropological Studies Center

and unintentionally in my most recent field season in Peru, when some sites we excavated turned out to be more recent than I expected

As an archaeologist, I get to write my own version of a part of the past

An archaeologist gets to add his or her grain of sand to the mountain of knowledge of human societies

It beats retail!

I get to propose my own stories about what people were doing, what events occurred, how society was organized, how it changed over time, and even why

Try to test, refine, and defend my stories using data I have personally gathered

Archaeology is particularly fun for people with wide interests, because it involves so many different areas and skills

historians, linguists, ethnographers

chemists, physicists, geologists, DNA experts

botanists, zoologists, anatomists, demographers, pathologists

statisticians, database experts, GIS (geographic information systems) experts

photographers, illustrators, artists
– hikers, photographers, mechanics, skilled diggers
– usually a project has some of these specialists, but archaeologists get to do a little bit in all of those areas and more
  – while constantly thinking like a scientist and an anthropologist.
– So I have personal experience with a lot of the material of this class, and indirect experience with much of the rest through my colleagues and friends in the field
– I personally find archaeology fascinating, challenging, and fun
  – I hope to convey some of that in this course

– In this class, we will start with
  – the history, goals, and general approaches of archaeology.
– Then we will look at field methods,
  – including finding sites (survey)
  – and digging sites (excavation).
– We will move on to ways to squeeze conclusions from archaeological data,
  – from methods for studying animal bone, plant material, and human remains.
  – to ethnographic analogies and experimental archaeology,
– We will look at how archaeologists use these tools to approach grand questions like
  – the origins of agriculture,
  – inequality,
  – gender roles,
  – complex societies,
  – and even human consciousness.
– Finally (as well as all along), we will consider how archaeology fits into the real world:
  – the conservation and study of archaeological remains as a moral and legal matter,
  – the role of the observer in creating the past,
  – archaeology and the television-watching, museum-visiting public,
  – and the thorny issues of who owns archaeological remains
  – and the purposes, politics, and ethics of their use in the modern world.
– The focus is not on the past itself, but on the thinking, methods, issues, and ethics of the field.
  – we will see a lot of examples of archaeology, but we will not cover prehistory in any systematic way
  – for that, consider World Prehistory or Emergence of Civilizations
  – by the way, archaeologists study the remains of human activities, not physical evolution per se
  – for that, consider Intro to Biological Anthro
  – nor do we study dinosaurs
  – dinosaurs were long gone by the time anything human-like appeared
  – for dinosaurs and fossil evidence of other animals, take Paleontology

– In this class, you will
  – learn archaeological concepts and terms like
    – stratigraphy,
– relative and absolute dating, sampling,
– cultural resource management,
– and many others.
– interconnect and apply a wide range of anthropological, scientific, and practical spheres of knowledge as you learn about
– lab techniques for dating,
– computer methods,
– ethnographic analogy,
– and the many other areas that contribute to answering archaeological questions.
– develop your critical thinking skills
– by studying examples of the relationship between theoretical questions and empirical research designed to address them.
– practice those skills
– by devising research questions and research designs to resolve them.
– build your critical thinking abilities further
– by learning to evaluate the significance and reasonableness of archaeological arguments and claims in the professional and popular media.
– exercise scientific creativity
– by inferring possible interpretations of archaeological data.
– gain a clearer idea of
– why it is important to study the past,
– what kinds of things we do and do not know about the past
– the issues surrounding divergent views of the “truth” about the past (who writes the past, and why?)
– the roles of archaeological research in the modern world,
– the importance and uses of the past in the present
– and the ethics of preserving and studying archaeological remains.
– The not-very-hidden agenda:
– This should be a good exercise in logical, critical thinking,
– using complex and incomplete evidence,
– and explaining yourself in writing,
– that should sharpen skills that you will use not only in other social sciences, but also in the rest of life
– Format of the course
– Mostly lectures with a fair amount of class discussion, usually with Powerpoint slides
– I hope you will ask questions and make comments
– Course mechanics, from the syllabus
– Key to the course: the class web page
– note that this is NOT a WebCT (Blackboard) page
– You can get to it from the SSU “Class web pages” list
– From the SSU web page (sonoma.edu)
– click on "Information for...students",
– then "Class web pages",
– then "Anthropology 202: Introduction to Archaeology (Owen)"
– You are responsible for checking it regularly
– The web page takes precedence over the paper syllabus
– It will change over the semester, so check it!
  – I will post new announcements, assignment information, deadlines, study guides, etc.
  – I may adjust the reading schedule if we fall behind or get ahead
  – I will add some online readings that are not listed yet
    – but don’t worry, it won’t be too much
  – I may change deadlines, exam dates, etc.
– The web page features:
  – Class news, reminders, changes to assignments deadlines, readings, test dates, etc.
    – These can be important!
  – The schedule of readings
    – Each day shows what you should read from the textbook,
      – and has links to online assigned readings
    – Please do the readings before the class session
  – The readings are fairly light, about 19 pages per class from the textbook, or about 38 pages per week
    – plus occasional online readings, but not too much
    – the textbook is well-written and fairly easy to read
    – I will not cover everything in the reading, but you are responsible for it on the tests
      – if you don’t understand something, ask!
  – The schedule also has links to
    – lecture notes
      – Usually will be posted before the class session
      – These notes can be useful for studying
    – PowerPoint slides used in class
      – usually posted after the class session
      – also good for assignments and preparing for tests
    – Optional online sources of additional information and images related to some class sessions
  – The schedule also shows
    – dates when each assignment is due
    – dates of the tests
  – Virtual handouts
    – the syllabus
    – detailed information about each assignment
    – charts, maps, and other items
    – study guides, etc.
    – Links to other websites with useful and interesting information and images
  – The class web page URL is in the syllabus (which is on the website… what use is that?)
  – To access some items, you will need a class user ID and password
because some of the reading is copyrighted
restricting access meets the requirements of use for "educational purposes"
Class user ID:
Class password:

Enrollment
No waiting list, special permissions, etc.
If you want to get in, just keep checking PeopleSoft and grab a seat if someone drops

Furloughs
Because of the severe state budget cuts to the California State University system, most staff other than Police Services must take 2 unpaid furlough days a month, and faculty must take 9 unpaid furlough days each semester.
We have to sign a statement that we will not work on furlough days.
We have been urged to divide the days proportionally among class days and days for preparation and grading (which extends both before the first class and after the last one.).
This works out to three class sessions cancelled per semester for courses that meet twice a week.
or over nine percent less school for your (increased) fees overall.
3 furlough days for this class, this semester:
Tuesday Sept. 8, the day after Labor Day holiday (Monday Sept 7)
Tuesday Nov. 10, the day before Veteran’s day holiday (Wednesday Nov 11)
Tuesday Nov. 24, the day before Thanksgiving holiday
Furlough days are not holidays, although I have scheduled them adjacent to holidays to give you more flexibility.
The furlough days are indicated in the class schedule, along with required activities comparable to a class period.
You may schedule those activities whenever you want, before the next class meeting.
Other furlough days will delay my returning some assignments or tests.
Should you wish to contact your Governor or legislators about funding for the CSU, contact information is posted at
http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/legislators.shtml

We use one book:
ISBN 978-0-495-60291-0
Available from the Northlight Books, Amazon.com, and elsewhere

Grading
20%: Short reading quiz at most class sessions (about 0.8% each)
20%: Occasional in-class exercises
these are brief problems that you will solve or data that you will interpret in writing in class.
We will discuss the exercises immediately.
These will not be announced in advance, and there will be no makeups.
20%: Evaluation of a journal article.
− You summarize and evaluate an archaeological article in an academic journal,
− explaining the research question(s) and its significance,
− the arguments and methods,
− and the results and interpretations. Details will be posted on the class website.
− 20%: In-class midterm
− 20%: Final exam during exam week
− essays, short answers, and map questions
− study guides will be posted on the web page
− Grading scheme: This course is graded on a curve, with the minimum score for a B- initially set near the median (that is, about half the class gets a B- or better).
− I may then shift the grade ranges up or down somewhat to better reflect the performance of the class.
− Submitting assignments: The evaluation of an article paper must be submitted as a file attached to an email message to me.
− No paper copy is needed.
− I will comment and grade the paper on an evaluation form tailored to each assignment.
− This form will be included in the assignment information, to help you understand what I am looking for.
− I will email the completed form back to you.
− The computer file is due by midnight of the due date.
− Due dates will be on days when the class does not meet, so that coming to class will not conflict with last-minute work on your assignment. Due dates will be indicated on the class web page.
− Details on submitting assignments will be included in the assignment information.
− Late assignment policy:
− I will accept assignments up to one week late with a 10% grading penalty. I will not accept any assignment more than one week after the due date.
− Drafts: I encourage you to submit drafts of the assignments so that I can comment on them and suggest directions for the final version.
− Email is fastest, but I will also look at paper drafts.
− please indicate that you are sending a draft, and not submitting a final version
− Email: I usually reply to emails within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, assume that I did not get your message and try again.
− Plagiarism
− Don’t do it!
− I have failed students for plagiarism
− I have posted an explanation of plagiarism on the course web page that you may want to look at. It explains how to easily avoid plagiarizing
− Please see me if you have any doubts or questions about this
− I do not take attendance, but
− I cover things in class that are not in the readings
− I show lots of pictures that make things easier to visualize and remember
− I explain overall patterns, important points, and errors in the readings
− You and your colleagues can ask questions
– Sometimes I announce changes to assignments, deadlines, readings, etc. in class
– Students who come to class tend to do better on the assignments and tests.
– But I won't patronize you or waste time by taking roll, so I'll leave attendance up to you.
– Students with Special Needs:
  – If you are a student with special learning needs and you think you may require accommodations, your first step is to register with the campus office of Disabled Student Services, Salazar 1049, phone 664-2677.
  – DSS will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations.
  – You then bring this recommendation to me, and we work out how to handle the accommodations.
  – If you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know what type of assistance you think you may need.
– University policies
  – the syllabus includes a link to University policies on adding and dropping, appealing grades, cheating, and other things you might want to know about
– Contacting me:
  – My office hours:
    – Tu-Th 2:30-3:30; Tu 5:30-6:30
    – in Stevenson 3007
    – or see me after class
    – or arrange to see me at some other time, if none of these are convenient
    – email me at: bruce.owen@sonoma.edu, which I usually check at least once every day
    – or click on the email link near the top of the course web page
    – Don't bother with my office phone, since I am rarely there except during office hours, and I rarely check the voice mail.
    – I have a box in the Anthro department office, Stevenson 2054, where you can leave messages or papers for me
      – If the door to Stevenson 2054 is locked, go in through Stevenson 2070
      – please don't slide things under my office door, stick them to a nearby bulletin board, etc., because I share that office with several other people who may not correctly figure out what to do with your paper.
– Photos