

ARKY 327.01: FRAUDS, MYTHS, AND MYSTERIES

Spring Semester 2015

Instructor: Don H. Butler

Office: ES750

Email: dhbutler@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: by appointment

Class Location: MFH 164

Times: TR 12 - 2:45 pm



The Vinland Map

Course Description:

What is archaeology... how about pseudoarchaeology? Who was the Piltdown Man, the Cardiff Giant, Kennewick Man, Anzick Boy, Naia, or Leif Ericson? Where and what are Atlantis, the Nazca Lines, and Lascaux? Who discovered North America? What does the Vinland Map tell us about the Norse exploration of North America? Is there any convincing archaeological evidence for the existence of King Arthur? These are just a sample of the many fascinating questions asked and answered in ARKY 327.01, *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries*. Through addressing such questions, students will gain the working knowledge necessary to assess the validity of claims made about the past. Separating fact from fiction, we will differentiate popular misinterpretations of the past from archaeological realities. Central topics include distinguishing science from pseudoscience, exposing archaeological hoaxes, cultural materials fraud as a product of the antiquities market, and addressing issues with the peopling of the new world. Key archaeological theory and method, include the myths of the North American Moundbuilders, ancient Egyptians building their pyramids with the help of extraterrestrial technology, and Atlantis. Our course concludes with several case studies of actual archaeological mysteries, including Dorset and Norse contact in the Canadian Arctic, a prehistoric murder mystery in the Ötztal Alps, and Palaeolithic cave paintings in Europe.

Key Student Achievements:

- We will sharpen critical thinking skills applicable to assessing knowledge claims across disciplines.
- Students will develop understandings of how misinformation is created, legitimized, and propagated.
- Students will gain basic understandings of the methods archaeologists use to make sound interpretations about the past.
- We will become familiar with a diversity of past cultures, such as the Dorset, Norse, Palaeoindians, ancient Egyptians, the Maya, and the Nazca.
- Students will practice summarizing evidence and arguments concisely and coherently.

Required Text:

Feder, Kenneth (2014). *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology* 8th Edition. McGraw Hill Publishers.

Course Grading:

- **Midterm: 30%** (Thursday, June 4th) Material covered up to the midterm; multiple choice.
- **Film Review: 30%** (Thursday, June 18th) A 2 page (double spaced; ~500 words) assessment of a class film's claims about the past.
- **Film Review Discussions: 10%** D2L Discussion Board (Complete by Friday, June 26)
- **Final Exam: 30%** (TBA) The final will be a multiple choice exam that covers all course materials, including readings and lectures. Emphasis will be placed materials presented after the first midterm. This exam will be scheduled by the registrar during the final exam period.
- *Note: a passing grade on any particular component is not required to pass the entire course.

Important Dates:

Midterm, Thursday, June 4th

Film Review Due, Thursday, June 18th

Film Review Discussions End, Friday, June 26th

First Day of Spring Classes, Thursday, May 14th

Victoria Day, No Classes, Monday, May 18th

Last Day of Classes, Friday, June 26th

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1: Archaeology and Pseudoarchaeology

What is Archaeology?

Science, Pseudoscience, and Archaeology

Readings: Text, Chapters 1–2

Week 2: Archaeological Frauds and Hoaxes

Historic Humbugs and Profiteering: The Cardiff Giant and Piltdown Man

Frauds and the Antiquities Trade: The Crystal Skulls and Persian Princess

Readings: Text, Chapters 3, 4, and 12: pp 319–320

Week 3: Myths in North American Archaeology

Who Discovered North America?

Myth of the Moundbuilders

Readings: Text, Chapters 5–7

Week 4: Myths in Old World Archaeology

Mummification and Pyramids in Ancient Egypt

Archaeological Evidence for Arthurian Legend

Myths in Biblical Archaeology

Readings: Text, Chapters 10 and 12

Week 5: Searching for the Unbelievable

The Search for Atlantis

Archives of Ancient Aliens

Psychic Archaeology

Readings: Text, Chapters 8, 9, and 11

Week 6: Unsolved Mysteries

The Ice Man: Prehistoric Murder Mystery

Mysteries of the Canadian Arctic; Solved: Discovering the Lost Franklin Vessels

Amazing Achievements in the Ancient World: Stonehenge, Easter Island, and Palaeolithic Cave Paintings

Readings: Text, Chapter 13

Film Review Assignment:

Purpose:

Everybody loves to review films, right? Just check out the Imdb comments section – argh... everyone's a critic. The purpose of this assignment is to review and critically assess the claims of an in-class film. Specifically, you will have to use Carl Sagan's keys to identifying pseudoscience and Ken Feder's quick start points to discuss why or why not the claims of a particular film about the past are legit. These guys make a lot of points, you may not be able to cover them all, so you can focus on at least three of your choosing. Please be creative! Oh, and you can choose the film you would like to review from three key films I will show in class.

Instructions:

Length: 2 double spaced pages (~500 words)

Your assignment must be typed.

Your assignment is due at the end of class on June 18th.

*****LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED*****

Sections should include:

- ***Synopsis*** (Summary of the plot and goals of the film; what happens, what is the evidence presented?)
- ***Critical Assessment*** (Discussing faults and merits based on Sagan's and Feder's points)
- ***Recommendations*** (What legitimate evidence would have to be provided to strengthen the claims the film makes? Would you recommend this film to a friend, or is it garbage and should be buried in the desert?)
- ***Bibliography:*** At least three sources. 1 legit internet source; 1 Book; 1 Article

Grading:

This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade. It will be marked out of 20 points. Here is how the point system is broken down:

- **5 pts. *Synopsis*** (e.g., Again, a summary of the plot and goals of the film; what happens, what evidence is presented?)
- **5 pts. *Critical Assessment*** (e.g., Clearly applying Sagan's and Feder's points; hammering points home, or supporting your arguments with evidence)
- **5 pts. *Recommendations and Discussion*** (e.g., Again, what legitimate evidence would have to be provided to strengthen the claims of the film, or does the film make sound arguments? Would you recommend this film to a friend, or is it garbage and should be buried in the desert?)
- **5 pts. *Overall Presentation*** (e.g., Bibliography, Grammar, Spelling, Organization, Coherence, Clarity)

Film Review D2L Discussions:

Students will discuss each of the three films presented in class on the D2L discussion forum. Participation will account for 10% of your final grade. Please be constructive and respectful in your discussions.

Overall Grading:

- A+ 95% +
- A 90-94%
- A- 85-89%
- B+ 80-84%
- B 74-79%
- B- 70-73%
- C+ 67-69%
- C 63-66%
- C- 60-62%
- D+ 57-59%
- D 50-56%
- F 0-49%