

ARKY615 – Topics In Archaeological Method and Theory

Dr. Peter Dawson

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Wednesday: 13:00-15: 50

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-5:00pm or by appointment)

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Abstract

This seminar course is designed to provide graduate students in archaeology with a firm foundation in the history and development of theory and method in archaeological research. An important objective of this course is to examine how events in society, the personal histories of individual scholars, and theoretical developments in other disciplines helped to shape the advancement of archaeological theory. Students will be expected to attend all classes fully prepared to discuss topics which will be assigned on a weekly basis. In addition, students will be required to do the following: a) submit a biographical and historic overview of a chosen archaeological theorist; b) lead class discussions on selected topics in archaeological theory; c) provide a detailed annotated bibliography and research paper on a particular theoretical and/or methodological approach in archaeology. In keeping with a practice first introduced by Dr. Richard Forbis, the biographical and historical overviews written by each student will constitute that student's archaeological "doppelganger" or alter-ego for the year. At any time during the course, the instructor may ask students to critique a particular theory or method from the perspective of their doppelganger.

Student Evaluation

- a. Biographic Overview – (Due February 25, 2009 - 20%)
- b. Annotated Bibliography - (Due March 11, 2009 -15%)
- c. Research Paper – (Due last day of classes - 40%)
- d. Class Discussion – 25%

Suggested Topics.

Evolutionary Ecology

Systems Theory

Style and Ethnicity

Gender

Marxism/NeoMarxism

Structuralism/Post-Structuralism.

Landscape Archaeology.

Visualization of Archaeological Data.

Ethnoarchaeology

Experimental Archaeology

Spatial Analysis in Archaeology
The Origins of Complexity.
Radical Constructivism.
Cognitive Archaeology.
Theory in Public Archaeology.
The Origins of Food Production.
Evolutionary Archaeology.
Human Agency/Identity.
Post-Colonialism.
Critical Theory.
Behavioral Archaeology
Cognitive Science.
Ethics in Archaeology.
Functionalism.

Assignments.

Paper 1. Profile of an Archaeologist. Describe the contributions of one of the following: what did the person research, dig, investigate, write? What were the person's philosophical and theoretical viewpoints? Did this archaeologist's work and approaches change through time? What did others write about this person? What did YOU find most important about his person's work, relative to your own research and career goals? Remember that at different times during the course, you may be asked to adopt the perspective of the archaeologist you profile in class discussion. 10-12 pages.

Lewis Binford James B. Griffin Ian Hodder David Clark Patty Jo Watson
Kent Flannery V.Gordon Childe Colin Renfrew Gordon Willey Kathleen Kenyon
Christopher Tilley Michael Schiffer, Randall McGuire, Christopher Hawkes
Grahame Clark Robert Dunnell.

Canadian Archaeologists you might want to consider: David Boyle; Harlan I. Smith, William J. Wintemberg; Diamond Jenness; Charles Borden.

Leading a Class Discussion. You will be required to lead at least one class discussion on a topic in archaeological method and theory. You will be responsible for selecting 5-7 articles that provide a solid overview of that topic. You will place copies of each article on reserve in the Archaeology reading room for other students to access. You will then lead the class discussion for that week.

Annotated Bibliography. You will be required to submit an annotated bibliography for your research paper. The bibliography should contain a minimum of 20 references. Each reference will be accompanied by a short description of the major points made in the article.

Paper 2. Research Paper. Choose a topic in archaeological method and theory and write a research paper in which you outline its basic tenets, major proponents, important case studies, and major criticisms leveled against it. I am interested in hearing your own thoughts on the topic you choose, as well as those of other archaeologists. 20-30 pages.

Readings for Weeks 1 and 2.

Week 1

Trigger, Bruce.

1989 A History of Archaeological Thought. Cambridge University Press, London.
Chapters 1- 5

Week 2

Trigger, Bruce.

1989 A History of Archaeological Thought. Cambridge University Press, London.
Chapters 6-10

Grade Scale:

95% = A+

90% = A

87% = A-

84% = B+

80% = B

77% = B-

72% = C+

65% = C

60% = C-

55% = D+

50% = D

Below = F