1. OVERVIEW

Short Description
This course provides an intensive graduate-level introduction to archaeological theory and archaeological interpretation, as well as a global perspective on the discipline. Set readings will be used to review the modern history of archaeological ideas, and to explore and evaluate the major interpretative frameworks developed by different schools of archaeological thought and the range of approaches pursued in studying the archaeological record, material culture, social behaviour and long-term cultural change.

This handbook contains basic information about the content and administration of this course. If you have questions about the organisation, objectives, structure, content or assessment of the course, please consult the Course Co-ordinator.

Further important information, relating to all courses at the Institute of Archaeology, is to be found on the IoA website, in the general MA/MSc handbook, and in your degree handbook. It is your responsibility to read and act on this information. This includes information about originality, submission and grading of coursework, disabilities, communication, attendance and feedback, not duplicated here (see Appendix).

Week-by-week summary of seminar topics
1. 02/03 October: Archaeology, theory and practice.
2. 09/10 October: Culture history: objectives and assumptions.
4. 23/24 October: Processual Archaeology: pragmatism and retrenchment.
5. 30/31 October: Post-processual Archaeology: critique and re-directed optimism.
Reading Week
6. 13/14 November: Marxism: change, power and ideology.
7. 20/21 November: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and meaning.
8. 27/28 November: Social evolution, complexity and change.
9. 04/05 December: The diversification of Interpretative Archaeologies.
10. 11/12 December: Archaeological theory today: diversity, pluralism or chaos?
Basic Texts


Methods of Assessment
This course is assessed by 4,000 words of coursework, divided into two essays, one of 1,500 words (contributing 33% to the overall course mark) and the other of 2,500 words (contributing 67% to the overall mark).

Teaching Methods
The course is taught through seminars which have weekly required readings, which students will be expected to have read, to be able fully to follow and actively to contribute to discussion. The course is taught through discussion rather than lecture, so reading in advance of the seminar is absolutely essential.

Workload
There will be 20 hours of seminars for this course. Students will be expected to undertake around 80 hours of reading for the weekly sessions, plus 50 hours preparing for and producing the assessed work. This adds up to a total workload of some 150 hours for the course.

Prerequisites
This course does not have a prerequisite; however, if students have no previous background in archaeological theory, it may be advisable for them also to attend (but not be assessed for) the undergraduate and Diploma lecture course ARCL2028, *Current Issues in Archaeological Theory* (Tuesdays, 4-6pm, G03, 26 Bedford Way) to ensure that they have the background to get the most out of the Masters-level seminars in this course.

2. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

Aims
The course provides an intensive graduate-level introduction to archaeological theory, research approaches and reasoning, within a seminar framework based on set readings. It aims to review the recent history of archaeological ideas and to discuss and debate approaches and key general themes in current archaeology from historical, theoretical and comparative perspectives.

Objectives
On successful completion of this course a student should:
- have an understanding of current theoretical debates across a broad range of archaeology;
- understand the nature of the debates as a basis for developing their own theoretical position; and
- be able to use the knowledge to develop an innovative PhD proposal or carry out soundly-based research in their particular field of archaeology.
Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate:
- critical analysis of ideas;
- construction of a theory-based argument;
- application of acquired knowledge; and
- verbal discussion skills.

Coursework Deadlines
Essay 1 (1,500 words): Friday 1 December 2017.

Assessment questions
For Essay 1 (1,500 words; 1,575 absolute maximum), answer one of the following questions; be sure to address both parts of the question:

1. What do you consider to be the most important (ca. 2-3) foci of Cultural Historical archaeology, and in what ways are they still relevant to archaeology today? (Focus on theoretical underpinnings, not field techniques, which are generic to all archaeology.)

2. What do you consider to be the most important (ca. 2-3) new points developed in Processual archaeology, and in what ways are they still relevant to archaeology today?

3. What do you consider to be the most important (ca. 2-3) new points developed in Post-processual archaeology, and in what ways are they still relevant to archaeology today?

For Essay 2 (2,500 words; 2,625 absolute maximum), answer one of the following questions (please remember, if a question has multiple components, to address all of them):

1. What constitutes an explanation in archaeology?

2. To what extent does the political context of the emergence of archaeology in 19th century Europe still shape the character of the discipline? [Do not answer, if you answered Q1 for essay 1 in any way relevant to this question.]

3. In what sense(s), if any, is archaeology a science?

4. Did Cognitive-Processual archaeology, as defined by Colin Renfrew, address the principal Post-processual criticisms of Processual archaeology?

5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Marxist approaches to the past, considering the major interpretive goals of both Processual and Post-processual archaeologies?

6. What were the insights gained from considering ‘material culture as text’, and to what degree have these helped archaeologists to interpret past meanings of the material record?

7. What are the principal limitations of the neoevolutionary social evolution framework for archaeological explanations of the development of social complexity, and what alternatives are there to this conceptual framework?

8. How have archaeologists dealt with the relationship between structure and agency in past societies? Is it possible for Processualists and Post-processualists to find common ground in exploring this relationship?

9. Is it realistic to advocate plural perspectives to archaeological interpretation? Address in terms of one of the following three contested perspectives: alternative academic archaeological perspectives (e.g. Processualist, Marxist, Feminist, etc.), or the perspectives of different parties/stakeholders concerned
with the past (e.g. academics and the general public), or academic archaeologists and indigenous perspectives.

If you are unclear about the nature of an assignment, you should contact the Course Co-ordinator. The Course Co-ordinator will be willing to discuss an outline of your approach to an assessment, provided this is planned suitably in advance of the submission date. Students are not permitted to re-write and re-submit essays in order to try to improve their marks.

Coursework content
For this course your essays should examine theoretical issues rather than the archaeology of any particular period or area. The questions may be explored through whatever relevant examples are familiar to you, but the focus of your argument should address (and demonstrate your understanding of) the theoretical issues, not the case study per se. Bearing in mind that you cannot get credit for the same work twice, either in the same or different courses that are assessed as part of the same degree, you must avoid any significant overlap in your assessed work with that for other courses. If you have concerns about potential overlaps, please discuss this with the Co-ordinators of the relevant courses.

Like almost any satisfactory piece of academic writing, your essays should present an argument supported by analysis. Typically your analysis will include a critical evaluation (not simply summary or description) of concepts relevant to some subset of archaeology’s theoretical literature. You need to identify and evaluate the principal or most relevant previous ideas and arguments, and develop your own reasoned argument, supporting, critiquing, or combining elements of earlier scholarship, or developing a new perspective or synthesis. You should draw upon readings from multiple seminars (and potentially other courses), examine some of the primary literature in addition to secondary literature and use references to that literature to support your argument.

Some guidelines on academic essay writing will be circulated closer to the essay submission date, but two points relevant to all MA essay writing deserve mention now. First, express your arguments in your own words; your essay is meant to demonstrate your understanding of an issue. Some submitted essays are essentially just a string of quotations illustrating what others have said, but this does not demonstrate a critical assessment of those claims, or a clear understanding of the issues. The worst essays end up being little more than a paraphrase of Trigger, Johnson or another general source. These simply demonstrate that you have read those sources, not that you understand them. Use a range of sources to engage with different perspectives on a topic, and you will have something to critically assess and adjudicate between, or even pick and choose points from, and synthesise your own perspective. Second, do not rely on web sources. There is no vetting system on the web (unlike academic publications), so anyone can publish whatever nonsense they wish. You should be extremely cautious about relying on information from websites, and should not, normally, use them as sources for academic essays. The reliable information in them has almost invariably come from some other source, and if they are academically reputable sites, they should be properly referenced, so you can chase ideas back to their original source. If you feel information from a website is essential to your argument and you cannot track it back to an original published source, ask the Course Co-ordinator whether it is reputable, before relying on it.

Coursework production
General policies and procedures concerning courses and coursework, including submission procedures, assessment criteria, and general resources, are available in your Degree Handbook and on the following website: <http://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/archadmin>; see also the Appendix. It is essential that you read and comply with these. Note that some of the policies and procedures will be different depending on your status (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate taught, affiliate, graduate diploma, intercollegiate, interdepartmental). If in doubt, please consult the Course Co-ordinator.

For this course, please do not use fancy fonts or, for the text, a font size less than 11 point, and use 1.5 line spacing to allow the marker space to make comments on the text. A smaller font size (8-10) and 1.0 line height may be used for the bibliography (to reduce printing costs), as long as it is still readable, and two-sided printing is welcome (to save paper and trees). Please leave at least 1 inch/2.5 cm margins to allow room for comments. There is no need to use a separate title page for essays (why pay for the extra page), and please do not use plastic folders, covers, etc. (I just have to take them off to read it). Illustrations are welcome, but only if they are directly relevant to your argument (i.e. not as generic filler).
**Word counts:** the following should not be included in the word-count: title page, lists of references, captions and contents of tables and figures, appendices.

UCL imposes penalties for over-length submissions, so please do not exceed the upper figure in the following ranges: essay 1: 1,425-1,575 words; essay 2: 2,375-2,625 words. There is no penalty for using fewer words than the lower figure in the range; the lower figure is simply for your guidance to indicate the sort of length that is expected. Since there is always more that could be said, a short essay is likely to be a missed opportunity to develop your arguments.

**Coursework Submission**

All coursework must normally be submitted **both as hard copy and electronically**. You should staple the appropriate colour-coded IoA coversheet (available in the IoA library and outside room 411a) to the front of each piece of work and submit it to the red box at the Reception Desk.

All coursework should be uploaded to Turnitin by midnight on the day of the deadline. This will date-stamp your work. It is essential to upload **all parts** of your work as this is sometimes the version that will be marked.

Note that Turnitin uses the term ‘class’ for what we normally call a ‘course’.
1. Ensure that your essay or other item of coursework has been saved as a Word doc., docx. or PDF document, and that you have the Class ID for the course (35438030) and enrolment password (this is IoA1718 for all courses this session - note that this is capital letter I, lower case letter o, upper case A, followed by the current academic year).
2. Click on http://www.turnitinuk.com/en_gb/login
3. Click on ‘Create account’.
4. Select your category as ‘Student’.
5. Create an account using your UCL email address. Note that you will be asked to specify a new password for your account - do not use your UCL password or the enrolment password, but invent one of your own (Turnitin will permanently associate this with your account, so you will not have to change it every 6 months, unlike your UCL password). In addition, you will be asked for a “Class ID” and a ‘Class enrolment password’ (see point 1 above).
6. Once you have created an account you can just log in at http://www.turnitinuk.com/en_gb/login and enrol for your other classes without going through the new user process again. Simply click on ‘Enrol in a class’. Make sure you have all the relevant ‘class IDs’ at hand.
7. Click on the course to which you wish to submit your work.
8. Click on the correct assignment (e.g. Essay 1).
9. Double-check that you are in the correct course and assignment and then click ‘Submit’.
10. Attach document as a ‘Single file upload’
11. Enter your name (the examiner will not be able to see this).
12. Fill in the ‘Submission title’ field with the right details: **It is essential that the first word in the title is your examination candidate number** (e.g. YGBR8_G193_Essay1).
13. Click ‘Upload’. When the upload is finished, you will be able to see a text-only version of your submission.
14 Click on ‘Submit’.

If you have problems, please e-mail the IoA Turnitin Advisers on ioa-turnitin@ucl.ac.uk, explaining the nature of the problem and the specific course and assignment involved.

One of the Turnitin Advisers will normally respond within 24 hours, Monday-Friday during term. Please be sure to email the Turnitin Advisers if technical problems prevent you from uploading work in time to meet a submission deadline - even if you do not obtain an immediate response from one of the Advisers they will be able to notify the relevant Course Coordinator that you had attempted to submit the work before the deadline.

For this course, for a Friday submission, ensure your essay has been submitted to Turnitin by midnight on the specified due date. You can submit the hard copy on the following Monday. If you have a last-minute problem submitting your essay to Turnitin, contact the Turnitin adviser for help, but also e-mail a copy of your final version to the Course Co-ordinator, to ensure it is registered as submitted on time.

If any procedures or details are not clear, please discuss these with the Course Co-ordinator.

The Turnitin ‘Class ID’ for this course is **3543830** and the ‘Class Enrolment Password’ is **IoA1718**.
To accord with UCL regulations on anonymous marking, all coursework cover-sheets must be identified with student Candidate Numbers only, not names. This is a 5 digit alphanumeric code and can be found on Portico; it is different from the Student Number/ID. The filenames for all assessed work submitted through ‘Turnitin’, should include the student’s Candidate Number, not name as a unique identifier (e.g. YBPR6_G193_Essay_1). Please do this, as otherwise it is difficult to match the hard-copy of your essay with the Turnitin version on-line.

3. SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS

Seminars are held in the Institute of Archaeology building: Mondays 11:00am-13:00pm, 14-16:00pm and Tuesdays 14-16:00 pm; all in room 410. You will be asked to sign-up for one specific session, which you should normally attend. If, for a specific session, you cannot attend your normal session, please attend another, rather than miss that week. With nearly 40 students on the course, it is essential that we keep attendance balanced among the three sessions, so that none become too large, which inhibits discussion.

The Essential readings are those necessary to keep up with the topics covered in the course sessions, and it is expected that students will have read these prior to the seminar for which they are listed. They are prioritised in the order that it is recommended you read them, particularly if time is tight and you are unable to read all four. Pdfs of most individual articles and chapters identified as Essential readings are available from on-line journals, or held on-line (where permitted by copyright; with links from the course on-line reading list: <http://readinglists.ucl.ac.uk/lists/BC5BA17F-2AA9-D605-C9DB-EC4AFCC460EB.html>), or the volumes are in the reserve collection behind the Issue Desk in the IoA library. There are also often additional copies of the volumes available on the normal library shelves; you can find out what is available via UCL Explore. For recent publications, it is worth looking by author on the www.Academia.edu and Researchgate.net sites, where researchers increasingly make pdfs of their papers available to the public.

Recommended readings are listed as a starting point for students to follow-up particular issues in which they are interested and provide a range of references to start to explore for essay writing.

The ‘discussion focus questions’ listed are simply some of the issues which may be addressed during the seminar. It may be helpful to have these in the back of your mind when reading the essential reading.

Seminar 1. 02/03 October: Archaeology, theory and practice.
Since this course is focused on theoretical issues in archaeology, we begin by looking at several views of what constitutes archaeological theory and the role of theory in relation to archaeological practice.

Essential:


Recommended:

Discussion focus questions
What is theory? What represents theory in archaeology?
Is all archaeological theory borrowed from other disciplines? Is this a problem?
Are there any specifically archaeological theories? Should there be? Why?
What are the functions of archaeological theory: is it necessary? what does it do?
Can concepts have different degrees of theoretical content?
What is the role of archaeological theory in relation to archaeological practice?
What is archaeological interpretation and its relationship to archaeological theory?

Is interpretation different from explanation in writings on archaeological theory?

Do historical explanations differ in character from other types of explanation?

How has archaeological theory and interpretation supposedly changed over time?

Do new approaches to theory replace, or supplement earlier approaches?

Have there been any Kuhnian (T. Kuhn 1963 ‘The structure of scientific revolutions’) paradigm shifts in archaeological theory? Does it matter?

Seminar 2. 09/10 October: Culture history: objectives and assumptions.

Culture historical archaeology is often described (pejoratively) as atheoretical, descriptive and ‘normative’.

However, much of our enduring knowledge of past societies has been and still is generated within a culture historical framework, and the majority of archaeological research conducted world-wide has basic culture historical objectives. Therefore, archaeologists must develop a critical understanding of this approach: what constitutes culture history, what are the goals and assumptions employed by practitioners, what theory is embedded in culture history, and how are culture historical and subsequent archaeological frameworks conceptually related?

Essential:


Recommended:


**Discussion focus questions**

What are the goals of culture historical archaeology?

What constitutes archaeological understanding in this framework?

What are the conceptual and explanatory differences in the culture historical archaeologies practiced in the Americas and Europe?

What was the context of development of culture history in European archaeology?

Do differences in context account for differences in the nature of culture history in Europe and North America? How about in other (including ex-colonised) regions of the world?

What are the explanatory processes employed by culture historians?

Compared to today, why was there so little explicit discussion of theory in the first 60 years of the 20th century?

Why is culture history still the dominant framework for archaeology world-wide? Is this a problem?

What are the pros and cons of nationalist archaeologies, with their roots in traditional culture history?

**Seminar 3. 16/17 October: The New Archaeology: a new optimism.**

The beginning of the New Archaeology in the early 1960s has come to be regarded by many as the start of the modern era in archaeology because of its strident break with Culture Historical archaeology and its self-conscious concern to integrate archaeology more effectively with anthropology and to develop appropriate and effective theoretical and methodological frameworks for understanding the past through the archaeological record. Since the late 1970s its approach has been severely criticised, though. Additionally, in hindsight, many question the degree to which the New Archaeology was really all that new. The objective
of this seminar is to identify and evaluate the key concepts of the New Archaeology, and consider in what ways they were new, whether they were helpful, and to what extent they are still relevant to archaeology today.

**Essential:**


**Recommended:**


Discussion focus questions

What is the normative approach, and what were Binford’s objections to it?
What is the proper framework for creating knowledge according to the New Archaeology?
What does it mean to suggest that archaeology should be anthropology?
What is the significance of a systemic perspective on culture for archaeology?
What defines the limits of archaeological inference?
What is the role of generalisation in archaeological interpretation?
What are models of human behaviour? Are they relevant to explaining the past?
Is archaeology a science? All archaeology? Does it matter whether it is or not?
Is ‘being a science’ more than the application of scientific techniques?
Must all explanations follow a deductive structure? What is the role of induction?
Why was deduction and testing stressed by the New Archaeology?
What were the theoretical, methodological, and substantive advances in the New Archaeology?
Did the New Archaeology constitute a ‘paradigm shift’ in archaeology?
Does the New Archaeology have any relevance for Egyptian, Classical, Medieval or other text-aided/historical archaeological research traditions?

Seminar 4. 23/24 October: Processual Archaeology: pragmatism and retrenchment.
If the New Archaeology was characterised by a self-conscious concern with archaeological method and theory, its subsequent development was marked by an equally self-aware concern with the nature of the archaeological record and the problems this presents for the inferences which newly ambitious archaeologists wished to make. The object of this seminar is to examine different views about the nature of the archaeological record and its significance which emerged from these debates.

Essential:

11


**Recommended:**


**Discussion focus questions:**

What was the central problem recognised after the first generation of the New Archaeology?

Why was this recognised only then?
In what ways does Binford’s concept of Middle Range Theory differ from Schiffer’s concept of the Formation Processes of the archaeological record?

Is the purpose of archaeology to understand the archaeological record, or to use the archaeological record to understand past human behaviour?

Is the understanding of formation processes simply archaeological method? If so, does that make it any less important?

What are the implications of an understanding of formation processes, for the intuitive appeal of Hawkes’ Ladder of Archaeological Inference?

Is Binford correct that there can and must be logical independence between Middle Range and General Theory?

Is Hodder correct, when he claims such independence is impossible?

Are all observations, and hence all data, ‘theory laden’? If so, how does this affect the idea of objective research?

Is it possible to establish uniformitarian principles of human behaviour? What would these look like?

Binford eventually decided that Middle Range Theory could only be constructed in the present, tested, and applied to the past. Is this the case, and if so, why?

Why do archaeologists do their own ethnography (ethnoarchaeology); can’t we rely on ethnography and ethnographers?

What are the pros and cons of ethnoarchaeology for understanding material culture in its behavioural context?

What are the pros and cons of experimental archaeology for building middle range understandings of material culture and behavioural processes?

Does the use of analogy restrict us to simply discovering the present in the past/imposing the present onto the past?

What is the role of analogy in archaeological interpretation?

Wylie distinguishes between formal and relational analogies (as two ends of a scale). What is the difference, and why is it significant?

Analogy emphasises similarities; how do we use analogy to understand differences?

What distinguishes explanation from analogy?

Seminar 5. 30/31 October: Post-processual Archaeology: critique and re-directed optimism.

Since the early 1980s, Post-processual approaches have gradually come to dominate theoretical discussions in prehistoric archaeology, in Britain at least, and have had a significant but variable influence elsewhere. The seminar will examine the fundamental criticisms which make it post processual, its positive claims, the extent to which it can be considered as a unified approach, as well as the sustainability of its critical and more positive claims. This and subsequent sessions will consider whether in practice, it lived up to its optimistic rhetoric – a question worth asking of all ‘new’ perspectives.

Essential:


Recommended:


As with Processual archaeology before it, did Post
processual archaeology succeed in becoming
‘archaeology as usual’?

Discussion Focus Questions

Can archaeology be an objective science?
If no objectivity is possible, how are interpretations assessed?
Why do Post-processual archaeologists place so much emphasis on context?
What does it mean to say material culture is ‘active’?
Are archaeological data always ‘theory-laden’? Is this a problem?
Is archaeology inevitably political? All archaeology, all the time?
Is it possible to be a ‘neutral scientist’?
Must archaeological research always be considered within its disciplinary historical context?
What would characterise Post-processual fieldwork or data collection? Is it any different from Processual fieldwork?
Considering continuing developments within Processual archaeology during the 1970s, is the emergence of
Post-processual critiques surprising?
Was Post-processual archaeology really a significant departure, or the logical continuation of the
disciplinary critique initiated with the New Archaeology?
Does Post-processualism constitute a ‘paradigm shift’ away from Processualism?
Both the new Archaeology and Post-processual archaeology claimed to make archaeology more
anthropological – which is right, or were both claims correct?
Were the polemical debates about archaeology, or simply posturing and personal career development?
As with Processual archaeology before it, did Post-processual archaeology succeed in becoming
‘archaeology as usual’?
Seminar 6. 13/14 November: Marxism: social change, power and ideology.
The relationship between Marxist thought and archaeology/anthropology is long-standing. Marx and Engels were influenced by contemporary social evolutionary thought in the 19th century, while in the 20th century various schools of Marxism impacted upon the study of other cultures. The materialist and evolutionary focus of many Marxist perspectives resonated with the ecological materialism of much Processual theorising, though was rarely explicitly acknowledged, given the cold war context. While Neo-Marxism provided a foundation for the Post-processual interest in ideology and power in the past, this development also had roots in earlier processual studies of long-term change. Marxist thought has also been profoundly influential in non-Western archaeologies, particularly in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China, but also in Japan and Latin America. In this session we will explore a range of aspects of this rich and controversial tradition, including its recent manifestation in the relationship between agency and structure.

Essential:

Recommended:
Leone, M. 2010. Critical Historical Archaeology. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Discussion Focus Questions
Why has Marxism proved an attractive source of theory for archaeologists?
Why were Marxist perspectives not integrated into the materialist and evolutionary models of the New Archaeology?
Would they have provided relevant theoretical underpinning?
What are the differences between classical Marxism and neo-Marxism?
Is a Marxist perspective only applicable to class-based societies?
What is the scientific status of Marxism?
Does one have to be a political Marxist, to see value in Marxist understandings of the nature of society and the processes of social change?
What is ideology, and what is its role in social stability and change?
Why is material culture important to support ideologies?
How can we get at ideologies through the archaeological record?
What generates social structures?
What is the role of individual agents in change within society?
In Marxist conceptions of society, what is the relationship between individuals and classes?
Does everyone have agency?
What is agency?
What is structure?
What does ‘structuration’ mean?
To what degree do agents understand the structures in their own society?
Is the focus on agency merely a reflection of our own preoccupations with individualism in modern society?
Why is so much of the focus on agents, but less attention given to structure?
Often, claims of agency seem simply to document that ‘someone did something’. Is this enough?
We only rarely see individuals in the archaeological record. Can we do an agent-oriented archaeology, without direct access to the agents? Does it require the recognition of specific individuals in the past?
Does an agent-oriented archaeology reduce to a ‘great-man (sic)’ view of history?
A central strand of theoretical debate within Post-processual archaeology has been the quest for meaning in the past. One of the strongest influences on a range of scholars seeking ways of understanding meaning has been the structuralist tradition. Originally a theory of language, structuralism was applied to culture by anthropologists and then imported to archaeology, by which time post-structuralism was already flourishing in the disciplines of linguistics, literary and cultural studies. These ideas made their way into archaeology too, followed by the further developments of social theories influenced by a mixture of structuralism and Marxism, such as Giddens’ structuration theory. Post-processual archaeologists have drawn eclectically upon this tradition and in this session we will explore how successful this strategy has been.

Essential:


Recommended:

What is hermeneutics, and how do we understand such individual meanings, held by other individuals, in the present? Are meanings unique to each individual? If so, how can we get at them? Is it possible to generalise about meanings? Is it possible to study meanings without generalisation? Are meanings unique to each individual? If so, how can we get at them? Do we understand such individual meanings, held by other individuals, in the present? What is hermeneutics, and how do we employ it to recognise meanings in the past?

**Discussion Focus Questions**

Is all material culture always meaningful?
Are all archaeologically detectable patterns meaningful?
What is ‘structured deposition’, and does its identification tell us anything?
Is the meaning of artefacts in the past, identical with the meaning we can construct in the present? How would we know?
If everyone in the past was an individual with their own experiences, constructing their own understanding of the world around them, whose meanings are we trying to understand? Can we distinguish different individual’s meanings?
How applicable are structuralist and semiotic approaches to material culture?
What is meant by ‘structures’ in the structuralist tradition, and how are individuals accommodated within them?
How do structures change?
How do discussions of agency in archaeology relate to the structuralist and Marxist traditions?
What are the differences between structuralism and post-structuralism?
Is it possible to study meanings without generalisation?
Is it possible to generalise about meanings?
Are meanings unique to each individual? If so, how can we get at them?
Do we understand such individual meanings, held by other individuals, in the present?
What is hermeneutics, and how do we employ it to recognise meanings in the past?
Is hermeneutics, as some have asserted, equivalent to deductive reasoning?
In what ways is material culture like a text?
In what ways is material culture not like a text?
Has the 'text' analogy been useful in archaeology?

Seminar 8. 27/28 November: Social evolution, complexity and change.
The idea of ‘social evolution’ and neo-evolutionary typologies of socio-political complexity (e.g., band, tribe, chiefdom, state) have been the dominant framework for the archaeological study of social change from the work of Childe onwards and remain implicit even in many case-studies which attempt to escape from this framework. Is this framework simply an empirical generalisation, or does it carry explanatory value, and if so, how? This week’s readings consider some of the anthropological and archaeological concepts used to define and explain changes in cultural complexity and outline some of the criticisms. Given the historical perspective of archaeology, is an evolutionary perspective surprising, and are there any alternatives?

Essential:

Recommended:
Discussion focus questions
What is social, political, or cultural complexity? What are archaeologists trying to capture with these concepts? How do they differ?
‘Cultural complexity’ is often considered a patronising judgement on past (and present) societies? Does it need to be? Is there any value in the concept?
What does complexity mean?
Are there discrete stages in human social evolution?
Are there distinct types/configurations of human societies? What alternatives are there to conceptualise and organise our understanding of the variety of human societies?
All societies are unique, at any specific point in time; why is it necessary to group, classify and organise them?
What are the differences between uni-linear and multi-linear perspectives on social evolution?
Why did Service and Sahlins's neoevolutionary classification of societies have such resonance for New Archaeologists?
Is there any value in such a classificatory approach?
If we don’t use them, or similar classificatory concepts, what concepts would be more appropriate?
Why did this approach find it so difficult to explain social change?
This perspective had close connections with the systemic view of culture, but this in itself made the explanation of change difficult - why?
Are there any generalisations which can be made about patterns of complexity in the archaeological record?
About the patterns of development of different social formations?
What relationship, if any, is there between the neoevolutionary scheme, and the Marxist framework for social and political evolution?
What alternative concepts may be more productive than the neoevolutionary framework?
In what ways has the notion of progress been an implicit or explicit component of research on social evolution? Should it?
What might be relevant observations to make of the archaeological record if we are to explain changes in social, political, or cultural complexity?

Seminar 9. 04/05 December: The diversification of Interpretative Archaeologies.
Since the early 1980s, Post-processual theoretical approaches in Britain have come to dominate theoretical debate in prehistoric archaeology, and they have had a significant influence elsewhere. Post-processual archaeology encompasses a diversity of ideas and approaches that are now more often grouped under the term ‘interpreative archaeologies’. This diversity includes approaches derived from Marxism, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism, phenomenology, gender theory, post-colonial theory and post-modernism, and other sources. At the core of an interpretive archaeology stance is the view that any understanding of a human society must be sought in the society itself, thereby requiring a contextual perspective. Interpretative archaeology is characterised by consideration of issues such as social power, gender construction, ritual action, personal identity, meaning, agency, and the roles of ideology and cosmology in human understandings and constructions of their worlds. Interpretative archaeologies claim to recognise the valid coexistence of multiple/plural interpretative perspectives.

Essential:
Recommended:


Discussion Focus Questions

Why do interpretive archaeologists place so much emphasis on context?
Where does our archaeological understanding of context come from?
Is archaeology inevitably political?
Are interpretive archaeologies more concerned with theories than method?
Are interpretive archaeologies truly pluralist, or do they simply agree to differ?
Are particular approaches to theory more relevant or effective to address some questions, and can one pick and choose?
Many of the concerns of interpretive archaeologies align closely with concerns of western society today, in terms of the individual, individual action, identities, sexuality and bodily experience. Are these merely topical pre-occupations, or are they universal? Are they the principal questions archaeology should be addressing? Are we able to address them effectively through archaeological evidence?
Do all individuals have agency? The same degree of agency?
Do things have agency? If so, in what ways?
What do the perceptions and phenomenological bodily experiences of the modern analyst, tell us about the experiences and understandings of individuals in the past?
Do only emic perspectives have explanatory value?
Can we recognise or discuss an individual’s experience in the past? Whose experience?
Do we understand enough of the past individual’s context, mindset and concerns, to develop a truly emic understanding?
Can we evaluate alternative interpretations of the past?
Do archaeologists engage effectively with alternative, non-academic interpreters of the past?
Does anything distinguish our interpretations from theirs?
In a relativist, post-modern climate, is it possible to reject any interpretation as invalid, or inappropriate (e.g. racist)? How?
How do we reconcile alternative/opposed viewpoints/interpretations, in a real (as opposed to academic) context, where individuals’ understanding of their past and traditions really matter to them?
Does this require that we recognise and apply alternative bases for assessing interpretations? Is this justifiable? Is it patronising?

Seminar 10. 11/12 December: Archaeological theory today: diversity, pluralism or chaos?
In 1972, Mark Leone, reflecting on the first decade of the New Archaeology, rather prematurely claimed that ‘the rhetorical scene has gone quiet’. Forty-five years later, there are no longer the polarised slingings matches that characterised most of the 70s through 90s, at least in some quarters. This is certainly not the consequence of any one position ‘winning’ the theory wars, or any agreement on a unified perspective.
Does this represent an increasing maturity in discussion and debate, incompatible divergence, chaos or apathy? Is this a good thing or not? In this session we will discuss the current 'state of play' in archaeological theory including what archaeological theorists are currently doing and why, possible explanations for the historical development of archaeological theory we have thus far tracked, and consider where the field may head next.

Essential Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Discussion Focus Questions
Can any discipline claim any understanding in a post-modern climate, or is there only critique?
Is the differentiation of sciences and humanities an apt one in archaeology (or in other disciplines)?
Is there strength in diversity? Or merely confusion?
Are specific approaches to archaeological interpretation more or less appropriate to different questions?
How do we reconcile, juggle or balance plural perspectives on the past?
How does one advocate interpretations of the past which others, who claim a direct relationship with that past, have objections to?
Are all approaches to the past equally valid? If not, who decides which are and which are not? On what basis?
Do academic archaeologists have any exceptional authority to interpret the past? If not, why do we devote a lot of time and expense to academic training?

4. ONLINE RESOURCES

Further important information relating to all courses at the Institute of Archaeology is to be found on the Institute website and in your degree handbook. It is your responsibility to read and if relevant act on it.

Most of the essential readings for each session are available on-line via Explore or via UCL’s online reading list service as downloadable PDFs or on-line html pages, where permitted by copyright. For this course the link is: <http://readinglists.ucl.ac.uk/lists/35ABE61B-D6D9-0A79-ADF4-E729B45A7D47.html>, some of the readings on that list used last year have been replaced by new readings, for which links are noted in the reading lists above, or will be made available.

The on-line Moodle site for this course (accessed as ARCLG193) will eventually have the course handbook, a link to the on-line reading list, and any PPTs used in seminars.

Intercollegiate students should contact the Academic Administrator (Judy Medrington <j.medrington@ucl.ac.uk>; room 411a) to be registered for a college IS username and password to be able to access on-line resources.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Libraries and Other Resources
In addition to the Library of the Institute of Archaeology (5th floor), other libraries in UCL with holdings of particular relevance to this course are the Main Library (Wilkins Building) and the Science Library (D.M.S. Watson building) on the central UCL site. The University of London Senate House Library <http://www.ull.ac.uk/> also has holdings which may be relevant to this course.

Information for intercollegiate and interdepartmental students
Students enrolled in Departments outside the Institute should collect hard copy of the Institute’s coursework guidelines from the office of the Academic Administrator (Judy Medrington) 411a.

Tutor
The Course Co-ordinator is Todd Whitelaw (room 207; 020 7679 7534; t.whitelaw@ucl.ac.uk; e-mail for appointment). He prefers to be contacted by e-mail, NOT by telephone except in emergencies (he is in and out of his office, and e-mail provides a written reminder). Please use normal e-mail, not via Moodle, for communication with the Course Co-ordinator.
APPENDIX A: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 2017-18 (PLEASE READ CAREFULLY)

This appendix provides a short précis of policies and procedures relating to courses. It is not a substitute for the full documentation, with which all students should become familiar. For full information on Institute policies and procedures, see the IoA Student Administration section of Moodle: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=40867

For UCL policies and procedures, see the Academic Regulations and the UCL Academic Manual: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-regulations; http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/

GENERAL MATTERS

ATTENDANCE: A minimum attendance of 70% is required. A register will be taken at each class. If you are unable to attend a class, please notify the lecturer by email.

DYSLEXIA: If you have dyslexia or any other disability, please discuss with your lecturers whether there is any way in which they can help you. Students with dyslexia should indicate it on each coursework cover sheet.

COURSEWORK

LATE SUBMISSION: Late submission will be penalized in accordance with current UCL regulations, unless formal permission for late submission has been granted.

The UCL penalties are as follows:

- The marks for coursework received up to two working days after the published date and time will incur a 10 percentage point deduction in marks (but no lower than the pass mark).
- The marks for coursework received more than two working days and up to five working days after the published date and time will receive no more than the pass mark (40% for UG modules, 50% for PGT modules).
- Work submitted more than five working days after the published date and time, but before the second week of the third term will receive a mark of zero but will be considered complete.

GRANTING OF EXTENSIONS: Please note that there are strict UCL-wide regulations with regard to the granting of extensions for coursework. You are reminded that Course Coordinators are not permitted to grant extensions. All requests for extensions must be submitted on a the appropriate UCL form, together with supporting documentation, via Judy Medrington’s office and will then be referred on for consideration. Please be aware that the grounds that are acceptable are limited. Those with long-term difficulties should contact UCL Student Disability Services to make special arrangements. Please see the IoA website for further information. Additional information is given here: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/extenuating-circumstances/

RETURN OF COURSEWORK AND RESUBMISSION: You should receive your marked coursework within one month of the submission deadline. If you do not receive your work within this period, or a written explanation, notify the Academic Administrator. When your marked essay is returned to you, return it to the Course Co-ordinator within two weeks. You must retain a copy of all coursework submitted.

CITING OF SOURCES and AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: Coursework must be expressed in your own words, citing the exact source (author, date and page number; website address if applicable) of any ideas, information, diagrams, etc., that are taken from the work of others. This applies to all media (books, articles, websites, images, figures, etc.). Any direct quotations from the work of others must be indicated as such by being placed between quotation marks.

Plagiarism is a very serious irregularity, which can carry heavy penalties. It is your responsibility to abide by requirements for presentation, referencing and avoidance of plagiarism. Make sure you understand definitions of plagiarism and the procedures and penalties as detailed in UCL regulations: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism

RESOURCES

MOODLE: Please ensure you are signed up to the course on Moodle. For help with Moodle, please contact Charlotte Frearson (c.frearson@ucl.ac.uk).