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ANTY 458.01: Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherers

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Anthropology 458:
ARCHAEOLOGY OF HUNTER-GATHERERS
SYLLABUS

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I. DESCRIPTION:

The course will provide an introduction to the archaeological study of hunter-gatherer societies. Primary emphasis will be on archaeological method and theory. The course is divided into several components. The course begins with an introduction to anthropological perspectives on hunter-gatherers. In subsequent weeks the course explores method and theory in the archaeology of hunter-gatherer subsistence, mobility, technological organization, and sociality. Students will emerge from the course with an enhanced understanding of archaeological methodology and anthropological theory. Put another way, students will gain the basic tools for recognizing and explaining variability in hunter-gatherer cultures from an archaeological perspective.

II. PURPOSE:

A. MISSION STATEMENT: This course is an elective for anthropology majors.

B. Objectives for the student:

1. To identify and understand the range of potential adaptations undertaken by the world's hunting and gathering peoples.
2. To develop concepts which aid in our understanding of the processes of culture change in hunter-gatherer societies.
3. To develop concepts and methods which aid in the interpretation of the archaeological record of hunter-gatherers.
4. To practice analytical skills in evaluating basic archaeological research.
5. To read primary and secondary sources and consider their significance to archaeological problems.

C. Goals for the student:

1. To develop a broad perspective on the economy and social organization of hunter-gatherer peoples.
2. To develop ability to identify important analytical strategies for researching the archaeological record of hunter-gatherers.
3. To develop the ability to recognize archaeological signatures of past hunter-gatherer behavior.
4. To be able to use sophisticated theoretical concepts from anthropology to explain change and variation in hunter-gatherer societies.

D. General Learning Outcomes for the student:

In addition to basic content-related objectives outlined above, the course has several general liberal-learning goals for developing basic academic skills. With successful completion of this course the student will improve ability in the following areas:

1. To develop the ability to manage data requiring the student to organize information and distinguish between empirical fact, inference, and theory.
2. To develop the ability to understand organizing principles to be used in sorting information.
3. To compare and evaluate arguments.
4. To organize thoughts and communicate these in written form.
5. To practice in synthesizing information during constrained time periods (as in exams).

III. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Prerequisites: None

B. Texts and readings:

Required Texts:

Bettinger, Robert L.

1991 *Hunter-Gatherers: Archaeological and Evolutionary Theory*. Plenum Press, New York.

2009 *Hunter-Gatherer Foraging: Five Simple Models*. Eliot Werner Publications, Clinton Corners, New York.

Kelly, Robert L.

1995 *The Foraging Spectrum: Diversity in Hunter-Gatherer Lifeways*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.

Jones, Kevin T.

2012 *The Shrinking Jungle*. The University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

Sassaman, Kenneth E. and Donald H. Holly Jr.

2011 *Hunter-Gatherer Archaeology as Historical Process*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

C. Grade Determination:

Grading will be accomplished via (1) preparation of two assignments; (2) one class presentation and (3) two examinations. Graduate students will also be required to present a ~30 minute

seminar on the issues associated with research assignment #1.

(1) Research Assignment #1: All participants will submit an 8-10 (15-20 pages for graduate students) page (typed, double spaced) research paper on hunter-gatherer ethnoarchaeology (see handout). The paper is worth 100 points. The paper is due October 10 at 5:00 P.M. The format shall be *American Antiquity* style.

(2) Research Assignment #2: All participants will submit an 8-10 page (15-20 pages for Graduate Students), typed, double-spaced, research paper on hunter-gatherer archaeology (see handout). The paper is due on December 1 at 5:00 P.M. and is worth 100 points. All students will provide a 10-20 minute presentation of the results of their research during the final week of regular class (50 points).

(3) Graduate student seminar: Graduate Students will lead a seminar on assignment #1. These presentations are worth 50 points.

(4) Exams: A mid-term and final examination: short answer and essay questions worth 100 points each. Blue book required.

Sample Exam:

I. Please write a short essay (about 2 pages) on each of the following questions (25 points each).

1. Compare and contrast the "pristine" and "revisionist" schools of hunter-gatherer anthropology. What have we learned about hunter-gatherers from this discussion?

II. Definitions: Please define and give the importance to hunter-gatherer archaeology of each (5 points each).

- middle range theory
- Nunamiut ethnoarchaeology
- indigenist school
- Richard Lee

(5) Participation: Good seminar discussion requires preparation and participation by all. Students are expected to be participants, that is, by completing their research paper presentation and providing thoughtful, questions, opinions, and critique during class seminars and discussion sessions. Participation is worth 50 points.

Deadlines are extended only in cases of illness or an emergency. Final grades are determined as follows:

Grading:

Undergraduate Students

Exams	200
Paper #1	100
Paper #2	100
Presentation	50
Total	450

Graduate Students

Exams	200
Paper #1	100
Paper #2	100
Presentation #1	50
Presentation #2	50

	Total	500
405-450 = A	450-500 = A	
360-404 = B	400-450 = B	
etc.	etc.	

The professor retains the option to use + and – grades when final scores are close (within a point on a 0-100 scale) to an up or down transition.

D. Tests and Other Important Dates for Course

October 10	Assignment #1 Due
October 15	Mid-Term Exam
December 1	Assignment #2 Due
December 10	Final Exam

E. Reading List and Schedule

(Aug 25-29) COURSE INTRODUCTION; WHAT ARE HUNTER-GATHERERS? VARIATION IN HUNTING AND GATHERING SOCIETIES.

Required Reading:

Kelly, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-6)

Prentiss, Anna Marie

2014 Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherers. In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, edited by Claire Smith, pp. 3587-3592. Springer, New York. Available online via the Mansfield Library: <http://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2/page/38>

Sassaman and Holly, Chapter 1

(Sept 3-12) HISTORY OF HUNTER-GATHERER STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Required Reading:

Bettinger (1991) Chapters 1-3

Kelly, Chapters 1 and 2

(Sept 15-26) HUNTER-GATHERER SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES

Required Reading:

Bettinger (1991) Chapters 3 and 4

Bettinger (2009) Chapters 1 and 3

Kelly, Chapter 3

Sassaman and Holly, Chapter 5

(Sept 29 - Oct 8) HUNTER-GATHERER MOBILITY AND LAND-USE STRATEGIES

Required Reading:

Bettinger (1991) Chapters 3 and 4

Kelly, Chapter 4

Sassaman and Holly, Chapters 4 and 9

(Oct 10-13) GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (PAPER #1 DUE OCT 10)

(Oct 15) MID-TERM EXAM

(Oct 17-24) HUNTER-GATHERER TECHNOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

Required Reading:

Nelson, M.C.

1991 The Study of Technological Organization. In *Archaeological Method and Theory, Vol. 3*, edited by M. Schiffer, pp. 57-100. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. (on reserve)

Bettinger (2009) Chapters 4 and 5

(October 27 – November 19) HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIALITY: LAND TENURE, GENDER, AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Required Reading:

Bettinger (1991) Chapter 6

Kelly Chapters 5-8

Sassaman and Holly, Chapters 2, 6, 7, 10

(November 21-24) HUNTER-GATHERERS TODAY

Required Reading:

Jones (entire book)

(Nov 26-28) HOLIDAYS

(December 1-5) PRESENTATIONS (PAPER #2 DUE Dec 1)

(Dec 10) FINAL EXAM (8:00-10:00 AM)

ANTH 458 ARCHAEOLOGY OF HUNTER-GATHERERS ASSIGNMENT #1 ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY

Hunter-gatherer archaeologists have played a leading role in the development of ethnoarchaeology. Much of this work has been stimulated by the need to better understand relationships between organized human behavior and the formation of the archaeological record in the remote past. Early ethnoarchaeology began with goal of expanding the range of ethnographic descriptions of material culture during the 1960s and expanded into the generation of so-called “middle range theory” as best exemplified by the work of Lewis Binford (e.g. 1978). To date there has been extensive ethnoarchaeological work among foragers around the world and in many areas research is still on-going. Many of today’s researchers operate under the paradigm of human behavioral ecology.

Ethnoarchaeology in the field is hard work! It requires not only doing traditional participant observation as is typical for most ethnographers, but it also requires the collection of archaeological data. Ethnoarchaeologists map living sites, collect and describe artifacts, monitor tool use and transport, record demographic information, and measure time and effort in economic activities, among many other things. However, ethnoarchaeological research can be undertaken in the library as well! Ethnographers have left us with extensive information on hunting and gathering societies from around the world. While it is no substitute for first hand ethnoarchaeological research, this literature can be used to develop ethnoarchaeological models.

This assignment asks you to develop an ethnoarchaeological model drawing ethnographic data from published sources. You will need to choose a particular group for which you can find adequate ethnographic information and then define one or more research questions to guide your study. You should emphasize development of archaeological correlates to specific organized cultural practices in that particular context. You should focus on elements of that culture with obvious archaeological signatures like subsistence strategies, mobility and land use, settlement permanence and group size, gendered activity variation, and wealth/status differentiation.

To get started you need to pick out an ethnographic group that has been adequately described in the ethnographic record in reference to the phenomena of interest. Two publications provide strong overviews of many groups and provide extensive literature cited sections to help get you started. Lee and Daly’s (1999) *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunter-Gatherers* provides good introductions to many groups and lists key ethnographic sources. Lewis Binford’s (2001) *Constructing Frames of Reference* is a massive compilation of ethnographic data on hunter-gatherers and has extensive sources cited on hundreds of groups. Lee and Daly is available as an e-book and Binford is on reserve in the Mansfield Library for your use.

Next, think about “the bear and the footprint”! Imagine yourself as an archaeologist trying to reconstruct this society from purely archaeological data. What are the material correlates of the subsistence strategy, the mobility system, or the social status relationships? Or, how could I measure variation in this behavior archaeologically? The goal of this assignment is to have you read the ethnographic literature of hunter-gatherers with the eyes of an archaeologist. It is a skill that will be very helpful to you in the future if you continue in archaeology. It will also be useful in any future endeavor where you are exposed to primary descriptive information on human cultures and need to make some sense of it.

Summary:

1. Pick out a single ethnographic hunter-gatherer culture.
2. Conduct ethnographic research from published sources to examine one major facets of how that society is/was organized. You can emphasize subsistence, mobility/settlement, gendered activity diversity, social organization (especially social status relationships), or some other topic.
3. Write an 8-10 page (15-20 pages for grad. students) mini-ethnography in two parts. (1) Describe the cultural practice and how it varies (by season, resource, social context, etc.). (2) Then describe how it is/was potentially manifested in the archaeological record. For example, if you are studying subsistence strategies, how will food remains be discarded and what will they consist of? Will they be different in different settlement contexts? Do the discarded proportions reflect the actual behavior? Could other formation processes affect the appearance in the archaeological record? It will be useful to look at some of the classic works of ethnoarchaeology (e.g. Binford 1978; Gamble and Boismier 1991; Yellen 1977) to get some idea how other researchers have approached this process.
4. Draw general conclusions regarding the utility of your model for archaeological use.
5. Feel free to be creative and include ethnoarchaeological maps of camp sites, hunting stands, kill sites, etc. or to add illustrations of other elements of material culture including artifacts or critical food remains.
6. Papers should be formatted for citations in *American Antiquity* style.

References Cited:

Binford, Lewis R.

1978 *Nunamiut Ethnoarchaeology*. Academic Press, New York.

2001 *Constructing Frames of Reference: An Analytical Method for Archaeological Theory Building Using Ethnographic and Environmental Data Sets*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Gamble, C.S. and W.A. Boismier

1991 *Ethnoarchaeological Approaches to Mobile Campsites: Hunter-Gatherer and Pastoralist Case Studies*. International Monographs in Prehistory, Ethnoarchaeological Series No. 1, Ann Arbor.

Lee, Richard B. and Richard Daly

1999 *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.

Yellen, John E.

1977 *Archaeological Approaches to the Present*. Academic Press, New York.