

Department of Anthropology
ANTHRO 2229F: Principles of Archaeology
BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE
FALL 2026

Date: June 16th, 2026

Instructor and Course Information:

Instructor: Alec McLellan

Method of delivery: In Person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None

Prerequisites: None

Course Description:

This course is intended to introduce you to the practice of archaeology in its many forms, and how archaeologists apply their unique gaze on the objects, places and landscapes of the past to come to know ancient and recent human lifeways; a perspective that informs our understandings of shared and distinct heritages in place. Archaeology is a practice of meaning-making that arises from the material, temporal, and spatial dimensions of human-lived life. It is accessible beyond the detail and particularity of written accounts, the personal and community contexts of heritage known and understood in the present, and even beyond our own reckoning in living our lives. The archaeological record comprises the tangible, accumulated material of human life. This emphasis makes archaeological ways of knowing human life and environments, both in the past and in the present, distinct to this field of study, neither "better" nor "more accurate" than other ways of knowing that past, just unique to an archaeologist's way of thinking.

The questions that guide this course are foundational to understanding and doing archaeology: how do archaeologists come to know and infer human experiences through the recovery, identification and interpretation of the buried and surface material remnants left behind by all those past generations who came before us? How does our ability to place these remnants into a "deep time" context lead to unique, archaeologically-based understandings of human life? How does the practice of archaeology and the role archaeologists take in society today shape broader, popular understandings of what archaeology is, and does that, in turn, revise what we think it is we do? And what are the differences and commonalities between an archaeologist's values and ways of knowing, and the heritage values people identify with and value from the material record?

At the end of this course, you will have a deeper knowledge and appreciation of how archaeology accesses, organizes and interprets the ancient and recent belongings and leavings we find, the unique gaze archaeology brings to know a past beyond written records and distinct from oral ways of connecting past and present, and the many varied ways archaeology is practiced in society today.

A complete course schedule, including a week-by-week breakdown of topics, will be posted on the Brightspace course site at the beginning of the term.

Course Materials:

There is no course text assigned to this course. If you have had no previous coursework in archaeology, you may wish to review the following as a helpful accompaniment to the course content:

Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice, 9th edition (2024, Thames & Hudson) by Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, Elizabeth DeMarrais

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

- In-Class Exercises
- Making Meaning from Residential Waste
- Interviewing "Archaeologists"
- Final Exam (multiple-choice questions, true-and-false questions, and a short essay; will take place during the December exam period)

In-Class Exercises	25%
Making Meaning from Residential Waste	30%
Interviewing "Archaeologists"	15%
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%