

Department of Anthropology
ANTHRO 2256B-001: Ruins and Ruination
BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE
Fall 2026 (Winter 2027)

Date: June 26, 2026

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Trish Markert

Method of delivery: in person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: None.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

Course Description:

When you hear “ruin,” what comes to mind? This course examines ruins (material traces) and ruination (processes of decay) through an anthropological and archaeological lens. We will discuss themes of heritage, memory, haunting, nationalism, and abandonment, paying attention to the myriad and contested ways ruins exist in a meaningful present. We will also examine, and in some cases experiment with, methodological approaches to understanding ruins and ruination. How do we record a landscape? Preserve a structure? Trace the processes that lead to decay? Research the life history of a building? Understand how ruins are memorialized as monuments to the past, romanticized as places of intrigue, reused and reinvented, neglected or forgotten, or erased from view? Use digital approaches to map ruins for research or share findings with wide audiences? Through a combination of lecture, readings, and hands-on exercises, this course explores these themes/questions and asks how ruins, as material traces of time and change, bring both past and present into sharper focus.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course’s OWL Brightspace site before the first day of class.

Course Materials:

There is no required textbook for this class. Most weeks, we will focus in-depth on one peer-reviewed academic paper. Some weeks I may assign supplemental material along with your reading (e.g., videos, podcasts, fiction or popular media, virtual exhibits). You are expected to complete readings before class and be prepared to discuss or analyze them during class activities. Active note-taking during lectures is encouraged, since lecture content will be included on the final exam.

All readings will be available under the weekly “Content” modules on our Brightspace page.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

- In-class exercises x 10 (weekly, lowest dropped) 30%
- Online reading quizzes x 5 (biweekly, lowest dropped) 20%
- Landscape photo essay 25%
- Final exam (in-person during exam period) 25%

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