

Department of Anthropology
ANTHRO 3308G: Archaeology Theory and Practice
BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE
Winter 2027

Date: June 16th, 2026

Instructor and Course Information:

Instructor: Alec McLellan

Method of delivery: In Person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None

Prerequisites: Anthropology 2229F/G

Course Description:

When we think about archaeology, we tend to think about collecting and analyzing things, places, and time, and what we can learn “about the past.” But the practice of archaeology is less about discovering that past and more about the ways we reason and empathize with the material record to shape what we think we know about the past. In this course, we will explore how we practice archaeology, and how we variously conceptualize/theorize the material record we document – that distinctive way we, as archaeologists, conceive, study, and make meaning from things and places - and how we can ever “know” about materially lived human life in place and time from this very imperfect record. In doing so, we will get a sense of how archaeology in practice today is as much or more about us as practitioners, and our own notions of how we fit and strive for a better/different world to live in, as it is about the knowledge we advance about human lived pasts from things.

Course Materials:

Required textbook: The Oxford Handbook of Archaeological Theory, edited by Andrew Gardner, Mark Lake, and Ulrike Sommer

This book is available online via the library. All other readings, videos, and podcasts will be available without cost through the course site on Brightspace.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

- In-Class discussions (group work and in-class discussions on readings)
- Interpreting an artifact assemblage (developing understandings of archaeological materials)
- Assessing representations of the past (critically evaluating a depiction of human history)
- Final exam (short answer questions based on course materials; will take place during the exam period)

In-class discussions	30%
Interpreting an artifact assemblage	15%
Assessing representations of the past	25%
Final exam	30%
Total	100%