Overview

Our goal in this class is to try and learn to think about the past the way an archaeologist might. To that end, we’ll examine, in depth, several “cases” or issues that have attracted the close scrutiny of archaeologists. We’ll pay attention to how questions get framed, how research is carried out and how data from several sources are used in piecing together what often seems like a jigsaw puzzle. Along the way, we’ll also look at other ways of studying and interpreting the past from history to revelation to extrasensory cognition, so that we can more fully appreciate the unique perspective of scientific archaeology.

This is a seminar class where, as a group, we explore readings and films, teasing out, inductively, important general principles. There are specific procedures, outlined below, that explain how you will be able to contribute to the seminar. After each Case is completed, there will be a 15-point quiz. The Final Exam, while not comprehensive in the usual sense, does measure your understanding of important points in the class; it is an open book, essay exam. There are two short writing assignments and one oral presentation at the end of the semester.

Cases

The cases have been selected for some of the following reasons:

1. They showcase archaeology methods.
2. They deal with complex, multifaceted questions.
3. Good, well-written, contemporary written sources were available.
4. Film material was available related to the case.
5. The case dealt with some fundamental aspect of civilization.

The emergence of agriculture

Almost no one would disagree with the argument that civilization rests upon the creation of abundance, surplus commodities that permit a state authority of some kind to grow and flourish. Today, our government is supported by a variety of abundant commodities but, at the outset of civilization, the critical commodities were foodstuffs. Humans, in different parts of the globe, at different times, made the transition from foraging to agriculture. This process was complex, and far from straightforward. Furthermore, discovering how and why it happened has been extremely challenging.

Who built the pyramids?

Slaves? Aliens? Africans? Gods? Who were the workers who built the pyramids and what can we learn about how they lived? How were the pyramids built? We will see how “experimental archaeology” can help us sort out competing hypotheses about the construction methods. Another feature of this case will be the plethora of technologies now employed in addressing these questions.

The origins of writing

This multifaceted case will engage us for quite a while. We’ll look at pre-written forms of representation and at the precursors to early writing systems, including Sumerian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Mayan signs. Why did people write? Who wrote? How did writing change society? And, how was this ‘lost wisdom of the sages’ recovered by modern epigraphers?
New technology, old sickness

Anthropologists, as a rule, aren’t particularly ghoulish but the fact is that much of the material for analysis does come from graves. And, the most useful burials are those where the individual is preserved via mummification. In this case, we’ll review the kinds of insights into patterns of illness and injury that can be gleaned using modern medical technology to “autopsy” ancient mummies.

Beginnings and endings

Nothing captures the public imagination quite like the appearance—*de novo*—of complex civilization. Think of those vine and foliage wrapped ruins in the jungle. The decline or disappearance of a complex civilization also creates opportunities for archaeological detective work. We will pay particular attention here to research on Easter Island and the Mayan area.

Who won?

It is hard enough to piece together the story of what happened to a particular people when you have a few hundred year’s worth of stratigraphic deposits to make sense of. But think about the difficulty in recovering the story of a single event lasting, at most, a day or two. Battles in antiquity are often seen as turning points in history—hence their enormous attraction for scholars. At the battle of the Teutoburg forest in 9 C.E., the Romans and the “barbarian” Germans engaged in a clash that caused great loss of life and changed history. The battle was amply chronicled in succeeding years. But the authors were all Roman; the Germans hadn’t yet adopted writing. What happens to the story once archaeological investigation begins to add data and insights?

The curse of looting

There are many threats to our quest to recover the past through archaeology. Dams, highways and suburban sprawl all destroy or block access to sites. International conflict is often intense in areas whose past we are most anxious to learn about. Such conflict—i.e. the Iraq war—either destroys sites or undermines site security opening the way for rapacious looters. We will study the “market” that drives looting and the impact of looting on archaeological sites.

Back from the future

One of the great myths of our modern society is that human civilization inevitably moves forward. We are always making progress, or are we? A look at some of the current trends in society suggests that that may not entirely be the case. For this case, you will take center stage, individually. Try and imagine that you are an anthropologist years in the future looking back on the world in the early 21st century. We may have technological and scientific “advancements,” but where are we culturally and socially?

Readings

*(Books/Articles/Chapters/Websites/Timelines)*

**Required Texts**

*Emergence of Agriculture*
ISBN: 0756756103, Three copies on reserve in library or buy used from Amazon for $3+

*The Story of Writing (2nd edition)*
ISBN: 0500281564 , paper $16.47*

*Prices quoted are for new books at Amazon.com. Textbooks are available through the USU bookstore, and, alternatively, through Amazon.com as a fundraiser for Utah State University Museum of Anthropology (Old Main 252). Ordering through Amazon.com often nets students a better price on both new and used texts, and, if the link is made through the museum’s website, your books will be cheaper AND the Museum benefits as well, receiving a percentage of the price of everything purchased. http://www.usu.edu/anthro/museum/catalog/amafundmus.html

To facilitate buying books through Amazon.com, museum personnel have created links for all SSWA courses. Simply go to the website listed above, look up your course, click on the textbook(s) featured for your class, place them in your Amazon.com shopping cart, make your purchase, and voila—your textbooks are shipped to you and the museum automatically receives a commission on the sale. Shipping is free for orders of $25 or more.

Keep in mind, as well, that any time you plan to make a purchase from Amazon.com, if you go to their website via a Museum of Anthropology link (by clicking, for example, on any featured book, whether or not you plan to buy it), the museum will then receive a small commission on everything you buy—not just books related to your courses. It’s a nice way for the museum to fund outreach events here at USU, programs for Cache Valley families, and even undergraduate internships in the museum.

Other readings (articles, chapters, timelines, websites) can be assessed via the Blackboard Homepage by going to the “Case Readings” icon. You are to read all assignments before the class in which they’ll be discussed.

The emergence of agriculture


Who built the pyramids?

Ancient Egypt Timeline


**Origins of writing**

Origins of Writing Timeline


**New technology, old sickness**


Once you’re in the “Explore/Online Tours” website, scroll down to “Egypt,” then click on “Mummy: The Inside Story.”


Beginnings and Endings


Who won?

Ancient Rome Timeline


The curse of looting


Back from the Future


Discussion

This is a seminar, which means that, in lieu of lecture, members will collaborate in the creation of knowledge. The Instructor has laid the groundwork, in selecting reading material and in designing the class, but the area we'll cover is so vast, no single scholar can claim expertise.

To facilitate discussion and inquiry, 100% attendance and completion of reading assignments is expected. Any absence must be accounted for in writing. Further, each member is expected to bring insights to the discussion—there will be no on-lookers.
As a way of structuring this activity, each student must complete ten Five Main Point assignments (5MPs). These are brief written (typed) assignments that list the five main points in the particular reading assigned for a particular class. These will also serve as "sound bites" for you to refer to when called upon to contribute to discussion. Hence, although the 5MPs are designed to be brief, you must be prepared to defend your choices and elaborate on the points in discussion.

You will be randomly assigned to a group of readings you will do for your 5MPs. You will get 12 readings (spread out over the course of the semester) and only need complete 10, so you may skip or drop two. If you're absent on the day your reading is discussed, you may not hand in a 5MP. The 5MPs will receive 10 points each, if satisfactory, for a total of 100 points. The 5MP lists can be found on Blackboard under the "Writing Assignments" link.

**Quizzes/Final**

At the conclusion of each case, or every 2-3 weeks, there will be a 15-item quiz designed to insure you've read the assigned material and have used the class discussions to sharpen and deepen your understanding of that material. There will be 7 quizzes in all but the lowest score is dropped so, in theory, you could earn up to 90 points. All quizzes will be administered online. Check the calendar for quiz dates; they will be available one day only, from 7 am to 11 pm. If you miss a quiz, there will be no make-up, instead, that will be your dropped quiz.

The Discussion assignment (see above) is designed to zero in on the “main points” in the individual reading assignments and this exercise will answer the “what is covered” or “what should I study?” question.

For the Final, which will be scheduled to occur on May 1st in the regular classroom, you will watch a film about a “Case” and you will critique the arguments made in the film, using what you’ve learned during the semester. You may consult your notes as you write your response. The Final is worth up to 50 points.

**Museum Visits**

On your own, you’ll visit the Utah State University Museum of Anthropology to study the exhibits on the Origins of Writing and the exhibit on Otzi the iceman—both provide opportunities for Discussion.

**Writing Assignments**

_Museum Research assignment:_ Winter 2005 we visited the BYU Museum of Art to view a special exhibit on Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World. This semester we'll visit Falls (156 mi north of Logan on I-15) to see the exhibit “World of the Pharaohs.” [http://www.museumofidaho.org/Pharaohs.php](http://www.museumofidaho.org/Pharaohs.php) The artifacts presented in both the BYU and Museum of Idaho exhibits were all on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston. Your assignment will be to write a one-page paper about an artifact of your choice from the exhibit.

When you have chosen an artifact, your objective will be to do some research on it to answer the following questions:

- Describe the object, including physical details.
- What is known about the object? (age, religious significance, cultural affiliation, use, etc.)
- What questions still remain? (same examples as above)
- What identifying information does the object retain? i.e. Was it found in situ? Was it found alone? Was it found alongside other artifacts? What do we know about similar objects?
- What questions remain which we probably can never answer?

To select and research an object:

The exhibit will give you about 200 objects to choose from for your research. Select one of these artifacts that you find interesting and about which you will be able to answer the questions from above. When you
have selected your artifact you will need to “claim” it, so no other student chooses the same artifact. You will do this on our class website, in Blackboard.

Next, go to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts website to find out more information about your artifact. Search their Collections Database: http://www.mfa.org/collections/search_art.asp using the name of your artifact. You will be able to find the provenance and ownership history and other information on your object. Note: if the artifact you've selected isn't documented on the MFA web archive, select another that is but hasn't already been claimed by a classmate. You should find, read and utilize in your paper additional information on this or similar artifacts from a printed source. Make sure you cite these and any WWW sources in your paper.

Alternatively, you may visit a comparable exhibition on your own. Dr. Lancy would be happy to help you find a “live” exhibition. E-mail him with your out-of-state travel plans for the semester and he will match you up.

Before you do your research and write your paper you will need to post your chosen artifact on the class website by the date indicated on the class calendar. Alternatively, you can choose an artifact from an exhibition that you visit during the semester but the focus of your paper should remain the same.

You will submit your topic in the following manner:

1. Choose an artifact to research from the World of the Pharaohs exhibit.
2. Go to the “Writing Assignments” link on the homepage. There you will find a link for “Museum Research Assignment” and then a link for “Artifact Selection.” Click on this link and it will bring you to a forum where you will post your selection. Double check to be sure another student has not already selected your artifact.
3. Once you decide on an artifact from the list and determine that it is available, you will create a message to post it to the “Artifact Selection” forum. (If you need help using this tool, please go to Blackboard help/Discussion tool.)
4. Click “Create Message.” Enter the name and dates of your artifact as given on the museum website in the **Subject line** of the posting.
   * e.g. RED-FIGURE KRATER (c. 425 BC)
5. Enter the details of your artifact as the message body. (Posting the details given on the museum website will help clarify for objects with the same or similar names, such as the alabastron, of which there are several.)
   * e.g. Red-figure Krater
   Overall: 42.3 x 47 cm (16 5/8 x 18 1/2")
   Ceramic
   Attributed to the Kleophon Painter or his circle
   Greece, Athens

Each student must research a different artifact, so be sure you check the class website to see if your artifact has already been selected by another student. This shouldn’t be much of a problem; with 200 different artifacts to choose from you have plenty of options. This assignment is worth 30 points.

2. **Back from the Future writing assignment and oral presentation**

In modern American society, there is the expectation that we are “advanced” in comparison to past societies. By this we mean that we think that we have learned lessons from the mistakes of the past, and that we are more reasonable and educated in our behavior. A close look at some of the current trends in society, however, suggests that that may not entirely be the case. We have certainly made significant technological and scientific “advancements,” but where are we culturally and socially? According to Francis Wheen (article in “Back from the Future” Case Readings folder), irrational thought threatens the legacy left to us by Jefferson and his fellow “Founding Fathers.”
Will future scholars see the “Decline of Reason” in the late 20th early 21st century as the “beginning of the end” for our civilization?

Your assignment is to pick a popular trend in American society that you deem as irrational, or as an example of the current society failing to learn from the past’s mistakes. In a 3-page paper, detail your research (at least four authoritative sources, including, but not exclusively, internet-based). Discuss also some of the reasons why this particular behavior persists nonetheless. You will give a 5-8 minute presentation to the class on your findings.

As with the Museum Research paper, topics must be posted in advance, check the class calendar for the date. You will post your topic by going to the “Writing Assignments” link and selecting “Topic Selection” in the “Back from the Future” assignment folder. Each student must select a different topic, so post early! You may also want to submit an abstract of your ideas to Dr. Lancy (david.lancy@usu.edu) for consultation early in the game. This assignment is worth 70 points.

Here are some fruitful examples to help you get going.

- Child obesity is rapidly becoming a national problem costing billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs vs. Public Schools selling junk food.
- Wide agreement on what constitutes a healthy diet vs. endless diet fads.
- Proliferation of unproven, even harmful ‘supplements’ and other nostrums.
- An acute shortage of fossil fuels, widely acknowledged since at least 1973 and the Arab Oil Embargo vs. the popularity of gas guzzling vehicles and recreational motoring.
- A surplus of children without competent parents who are passed by for adoption vs. prospective parents (and insurance companies) spending billions on artificial and/or drug-aided reproduction.
- Individuals in typical suburbs or small towns arming themselves for ‘protection’ from criminals or potential attack by ‘foreign aggressors’ vs. the likely use of such weapons in domestic disputes, by children and in suicides.
- The ‘dummying down’ of the public school curriculum to placate unmotivated students vs. the rapid growth of an ‘information’ economy.
- The continual growth of T.V. & Video Game viewing by the young vs. their clear negative impact on school performance. One might ask: “Why bother with expensive national campaigns like ‘No Child Left Behind?’”
- Censorship (see initiative by Utah State Rep Chris Buttars) or bowdlerizing science curricula in schools vs initiatives like ex-Gov. Leavitt to increase Utah students/future workforce scientific and technical proficiency—to attract clean High Tech companies.
- Growing popularity of cult movements that rely on ‘revealed’ rather than scientific ‘truth.’
- The current Iraq war.
- ‘Reality’ (Whose reality?) T.V.
- Get rich quick schemes, proliferation of casinos, scam victims.
- Facing a future of scarcity vs. the ‘throw away’ society.
- Traffic jams, air pollution, destruction of farmland and forest vs. suburban sprawl.
- Severe social and economic stress related to population growth vs. government incentives for fecundity (e.g. increasing tax deductions for offspring).
- Rising health costs related to polluted water and air vs. government relaxing anti-pollution standards.
- Hydrogen as a “cheap” substitute for gasoline.
- Despite warnings, Americans continue to lose millions to Nigerian con artists.
- The sanctity of the “free market” vs. CEO’s of money-losing bankruptcy prone companies earning million dollar year-end bonuses.
- Belief in UFO’s.

Grades

5MPs = up to 100 points
Quizzes - up to 90 points
Museum Artifact Paper = up to 30 points  
Back From the Future = up to 70 points  
Final Exam = up to 50 points

If your total score=320+, grade=A;  
306-319=A-;  
296-318=B+;  
286-295=B;  
272-286=B-; etc.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Case/Class Activity</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<td><strong>Case#1 The Emergence of Agriculture</strong></td>
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<td>Lecture “The Origins of Agriculture”</td>
<td>Visit class website</td>
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<td>Discussion of readings</td>
<td>Smith text Chapters 1 &amp; 2 [5MP]#1</td>
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<td>Smith text Ch 4,5 [5MP]#3</td>
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<td>Smith text Ch 6, Robertshaw article from Archaeology, &amp; Powell article from Harvard, [5MP]#4</td>
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<td><strong>Case#2 Who Built the Pyramids?</strong></td>
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<td>Film: “Building the Great Pyramid”</td>
<td>[Online Quiz on Case #1]</td>
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<td>Ancient Egypt Timeline</td>
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<td><strong>Case#3 The Origins of Writing</strong></td>
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<td>Schmandt-Besserat chapter, [5MP]#15 Robinson text Ch 4, [5MP]#16</td>
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<td>Discussion of exhibits, readings</td>
<td>Visit Museum of Anthropology exhibits on Origins of Writing  [5MP]#17</td>
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**Case#5**

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**Case#6**

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**Case #8**

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**Case #7**

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