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ANTY 459.01: Archaeology of the Arctic and Subarctic

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ANTHROPOLOGY 459

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ARCTIC AND SUBARCTIC

Professor: Dr. Anna M. Prentiss

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Office hours: Monday through Friday, 10-12 AM or by appointment.

I. GOALS:

This course will provide the student with an introduction to the study of Arctic and Subarctic archaeology emphasizing the Pleistocene and Holocene prehistory of North America and eastern Siberia. Students will emerge from the course with an enhanced understanding of methodological problems associated with archaeology in a northern context, the evolution of Inuit, Eskimo, Aleut and Athapaskan cultures, and hunter-gatherer adaptations to northern interior and coastal environments.

II. PURPOSE:

A. MISSION STATEMENT:

This course is an elective for anthropology majors.

B. OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDENT:

1. To identify major events, cultures, patterns of change, and researchers significant in the archaeological study of Arctic and Subarctic prehistory.
2. To develop concepts and methods which aid in our understanding of the processes of culture change in the Arctic and Subarctic during the past 20,000 years.
3. To practice analytical skills in evaluating basic archaeological research.
4. 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 origins of today's Native American and Canadian First Nations peoples
2. To develop ability to identify important artifacts and other material markers of past cultures.
3. To develop the ability to recognize archaeological signatures of past hunter-gatherer behavior from the Arctic/Subarctic region.
4. To develop the ability to use data in evaluating archaeological inferences and explanations.

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. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. PREREQUISITES:

None (although very useful to have at least taken an Intro. to Archaeology course)

B. TEXTS AND READINGS:

Required Texts:

Hoffecker, John F. and Scott A. Elias
2009 *Human Ecology of Beringia*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Maschner, Herbert D.G., Owen W. Mason, and Robert McGhee
2009 *The Northern World A.D. 900-1400*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

McGhee, Robert 1996
Ancient People of the Arctic. UBC Press, Vancouver

Recommended Text:

Hilton, Charles E., Benjamin M. Auerbach, and Libby W. Cowgill 2014
The Foragers of Point Hope: The Biology and Archaeology of Humans on the Edge of the Alaskan Arctic. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Additional Readings: Reference section at the Mansfield Library.

Damas, David (editor)
1984 *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 5, Arctic*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

Helm, June (editor)
1981 *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6, Subarctic*, edited by J. Helm, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

Others listed in schedule below.

C. GRADE DETERMINATION:

Grading will be accomplished via (1) preparation of one major assignment; (2) one class presentation and (3) two examinations.

(1) All participants will submit one 15-20 (20-30 pages for graduate students) page (typed, double spaced) research paper over viewing research themes and issues in Pleistocene to Holocene Arctic and Subarctic archaeology (see list of questions on final page of course outline). The paper will summarize the importance of the issue, identify key debates, discussion, and issues, and offer suggestions for future research. The paper must cite at least ten sources not on the required reading list. The paper is worth 100 points. The paper is due May 2 at 5:00 P.M. The format shall be *American Antiquity* style.

(2) Students will present the results of their research project during week of May 2-6. These presentations are worth 50 points.

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

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

Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Exams	200
Paper	100
Presentation	50

Total **350**

315-350 = A

280-315 = B

etc.

Professor reserves right to use + or - marks as appropriate.

D. READING LIST AND SCHEDULE

JANUARY 25

COURSE INTRODUCTION

January 27-29

ARCTIC AND SUBARCTIC ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURES

Required Reading:

Damas (pages 1-22; 27-35)

Helm (pages 1-14)

**FEBRUARY 1
PALEOECOLOGY OF BERINGIA**

Required Reading:

Hoffecker and Elias (Chapters 1 and 2)

**FEBRUARY 3-5
BERINGIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: SIBERIA**

Required Reading:

Hoffecker and Elias (Chapters 3-7)

**FEBRUARY 8
GUEST SPEAKER (KRISTEN BARNETT): INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE
ARCTIC**

**FEBRUARY 10-17
BERINGIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: ALASKA**

Required Reading:

Hoffecker and Elias (Chapters 3-7)

**FEBRUARY 15
PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY**

**FEBRUARY 19-24
ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EARLY HOLOCENE IN ALASKA AND EASTERN
SIBERIA**

Required Reading:

Slobodin, Sergey

1999 Northeast Asia in the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene. *World Archaeology* 30:484-502.

McCartney, A.P. and D.W. Veltre

1996 Anangula Core and Blade Site. In *American Beginnings*, edited by Frederick Hadleigh West, pp. 443-450. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Recommended Reading:

Pitul'ko, Vladimir

- 1999 Terminal Pleistocene-Early Holocene Occupation in Northeast Asia and the Zhokhov Assemblage. *Quaternary Science Reviews* 20:267-275.

**FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 2
THE NORTHERN, SHIELD, AND MARITIME ARCHAIC PERIODS**

Required:

Esdale, Julie A.

- 2008 A Current Synthesis of the Northern Archaic. *Arctic Anthropology* 45:3-38.

Fitzhugh, William

- 1978 Maritime Archaic Cultures of the Central and Northern Labrador Coast. *Arctic Anthropology* 15:61-95.

Wright, J.V.

- 1981 Prehistory of the Canadian Shield. In *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6, Subarctic*, edited by J. Helm, pp. 88-89. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

Recommended:

Anderson, Douglas D.

- 1968 A Stone Age Campsite at the Gateway to America. *Scientific American* 218:24-33.

**MARCH 4-7
ARCTIC SMALL TOOL TRADITION IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC**

Required Reading:

McGhee (Chapter 3)

Recommended:

Anderson, Douglas D.

- 1968 A Stone Age Campsite at the Gateway to America. *Scientific American* 218:24-33.

Prentiss, Anna Marie, Matthew J. Walsh, Thomas A. Foor, and Kristen D. Barnett

- 2015 Cultural Macroevolution among High Latitude Hunter-Gatherers: A Phylogenetic Study of the Arctic Small Tool Tradition. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 59:64-79.

**MARCH 7-9
INDEPENDENCE I AND PREDORSET**

Required Reading:

McGhee (Chapters 3-5)

Recommended:

Prentiss, Anna Marie, Matthew J. Walsh, Thomas A. Foor, and Kristen D. Barnett
2015 Cultural Macroevolution among High Latitude Hunter-Gatherers:
A Phylogenetic Study of the Arctic Small Tool Tradition. *Journal
of Archaeological Science* 59:64-79.

**MARCH 9-11
DORSET**

Required Reading:

McGhee (Chapters 6-11)

Recommended:

Maschner et al. (Chapters 10-16)

**MARCH 14
MID-TERM EXAM**

**MARCH 16
LATE-MIDDLE HOLOCENE ARCHAEOLOGY OF EASTERN SIBERIA: THE RISE OF
WINTER VILLAGE PATTERN**

Required:

Workman, William B. and A.P. McCartney
1998 Coast to Coast: Prehistoric Maritime Cultures in the North Pacific.
Arctic Anthropology 35:361-370.

Recommended:

Lebedintsev, Aleksandr I.
1998 Maritime Cultures of the North Coast of the Sea of Okhotsk.
Arctic Anthropology 35:296-320.

Orekhov, Aleksandr A.

- 1998 The Development of Maritime Adaptations Among Early Populations of the Northwest Bering Sea Region. *Arctic Anthropology* 35:263-280.

Vasil'evskii, Ruslan S.

- 1998 Fishing an Early Form of Maritime Adaptation on the Pacific Coast of Northeast Asia. *Arctic Anthropology* 35:281-295.

MARCH 18-23

MIDDLE TO LATE HOLOCENE PREHISTORY OF THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, KODIAK ISLAND, AND SOUTHERN MAINLAND ALASKA

Required:

Clark, Donald W.

- 1998 Kodiak Island: The Later Cultures. *Arctic Anthropology* 35:172-186.

Davis, Richard S. and Richard Knecht

- 2010 Continuity and Change in the Eastern Aleutian Archaeological Sequence. *Human Biology* 82:507-524.

Dumond, D.E.

- 1998 Maritime Adaptation on the Northern Alaska Peninsula. *Arctic Anthropology* 35:187-203.

Maschner et al. (Chapters 3 and 4)

Recommended:

Maschner, Herbert D.G.

- 1999 Prologue to the Prehistory of the Lower Alaska Peninsula. *Arctic Anthropology* 36:84-102.

MARCH 25-30

MARITIME ADAPTATIONS IN THE BERING AND CHUKCHI SEAS: THE OLD WHALING COMPLEX, AND CHORIS AND NORTON PHASES

Required Reading:

Dumond, Don E.

- 2000 The Norton Tradition. *Arctic Anthropology* 37: 1-22.

Recommended:

Ackerman, Robert E.

1998 Early Maritime Traditions in the Bering, Chukchi, and East Siberian Seas. *Arctic Anthropology* 35:247-262.

APRIL 1-27

EVOLUTION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL COMPLEXITY AND EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN ESKIMOS AND INUIT: OLD BERING SEA/OKVIK, IPIUTAK, PUNUK, BIRNIRK, AND THULE PHASES

Required Reading:

Mason, O.K.

1998 The Contest Between the Ipiutak, Old Bering Sea, and Birnirk Polities and the Origin of Whaling During the First Millenium A.D. Along Bering Strait. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*: 240-325.

Maschner et al. (Chapters 5-9, 14-16)

Recommended Reading:

Hilton et al. (all chapters)

APRIL 29

MIDDLE TO LATE HOLOCENE INTERIOR SUBARCTIC PREHISTORY

Required Reading:

Clark, D.W.

1981 Prehistory of the Western Subarctic. In *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6, Subarctic*, edited by J. Helm, pp. 107-129. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

Wright, J.V.

1981 Prehistory of the Canadian Shield. In *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 6, Subarctic*, edited by J. Helm, pp. 89-96. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

MAY 2-6

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

TERM PAPERS DUE MAY 2 (5:00 PM)

MAY 11

FINAL EXAM (10:10-12:10 AM)

ANTY 459 Archaeology of the Arctic and Subarctic -Assignment Topics

1. Consider the implications of the Alaskan fluted point data for our understanding of the peopling of the Americas. Do Alaskan fluted point sites reflect the origin of the Clovis Complex? Conversely, could they Paleoindian populations expanding northward? What have we learned about human adaptations in northern Alaska at this time?
2. Compare and contrast the Nenana and Denali complexes. Consider dates, site contexts, features, artifacts, and interpretations of assemblage variability. Could they reflect fundamentally different adaptive systems operated by different socio-cultural groups or do they merely reflect different activities carried out by the same groups? Why?
3. Discuss the place of the Anangula site in Arctic/Subarctic prehistory? Overview patterning and interpretations of the lithic artifacts and feature data from Anangula. Consider, in particular, implications for assessing population movement and new marine adaptations. In your opinion, which inferences are best justified. Why?
4. How do archaeologists explain the Northern Archaic? Document the Northern Archaic in terms of basic artifact and feature types. Then consider possible explanations for its origin and success. Does it represent interior adaptation by originally coastal peoples, expansion to the north by Archaic foragers from the south, a new population expansion from eastern Siberia, or something else? How do you know?
5. Interpret the socio-economic system of the Maritime Archaic in comparison the archaeology of the Northwest Coast (British Columbia, Washington, southeast Alaska) during the last 2000 years of prehistory and/or the contact period. Could the Maritime Archaic reflect a complex hunter-gatherer system? Is it something organizationally different? Why?
6. Develop an evolutionary history of the western Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt). Consider first, just what is the ASTt? How do we recognize it and what does it reflect? Next, document its Siberian and Alaskan chronology. Finally, why did the ASTt become so widely distributed during the Middle Holocene?
7. What is Independence I? What have we learned about adaptations by Independence I peoples? What is its relationship to the ASTt? What happened to Independence I?
8. Consider the cultural and behavioral implications of the Pre-Dorset/Dorset sequence in the eastern Arctic. Did Pre-Dorset gradually evolve towards Dorset throughout the eastern Arctic or was the process more complex featuring numerous locally abrupt transitions or population replacements? What are the implications for our understanding of the cultural evolutionary process?
9. Provide an overview of the Dorset culture? Describe its characteristics and give a chronology of its evolution and ultimate disappearance. What could have caused such

a successful Arctic adaptation to go extinct?

10. Outline the evolution of complex hunter-gatherer culture on Kodiak Island. How does the sequence vary from that of the Aleutians and the Northwest Coast? Why?

11. Outline the development of the Aleut culture. Compare Aleut prehistory to developments to the north and east.

12. Describe the Norton Culture. Consider issues associated with emergence, geographic expansion, local adaptations and cultural practices, and possible relationships to descendant groups (e.g. Yup'ik people).

13. What does the Old Whaling Culture represent? How is it related to the Choris culture? Consider issues of archaeological history, methodology, and cultural process.

14. Describe the Ipiutak culture. What were the characteristics of Ipiutak communities? Consider issues of social organization, technology, economy, and inter-group relations. What happened to Ipiutak? How do you know?

15. Examine the Okvik, Old Bering Sea, Punuk, and Birnirk cultural phases. What do they represent? Consider historical, economic, cultural and military relationships.

16. Describe the evolutionary process leading to the emergence of the Thule tradition. What was the role of inter-community competition? What does Thule represent?

17. Document and explain the spread of the Thule tradition across the Eastern Arctic. Why did Thule peoples leave Alaska? What gave Thule competitive advantage outside of Alaska (or why did Thule flourish whereas Dorset disappeared)?

18. Construct a cultural chronology for the Middle to Late Holocene western Subarctic. When can we recognize the establishment of cultural patterns associated with the ethnographic Athapaskan peoples? How do you know?