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ANTY 458.01: Archaeology of Hunter Gatherers

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**ANTY 458:
ARCHAEOLOGY OF HUNTER-GATHERERS
SYLLABUS**

Professor: Dr. Anna M. Prentiss; Office: Social Sciences 205; Message Telephone (Anthropology Department) 243-2693. email: anna.prentiss@umontana.edu; Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9-11, or by appointment.

I. DESCRIPTION:

The course will provide an introduction to the archaeological study of hunter-gatherer societies. Primary emphasis will be on archaeological method and theory. The course is divided into several components. The course begins with an introduction to anthropological perspectives on hunter-gatherers. In subsequent weeks the course explores method and theory in the archaeology of hunter-gatherer subsistence, mobility, technological organization, and sociality. Students will emerge from the course with an enhanced understanding of archaeological methodology and anthropological theory. Put another way, students will gain the basic tools for recognizing and explaining variability in hunter-gatherer cultures from an archaeological perspective.

II. PURPOSE:

A. MISSION STATEMENT: This course is an elective for anthropology majors.

B. Objectives for the student:

1. To identify and understand the range of potential adaptations undertaken by the world's hunting and gathering peoples.
2. To develop concepts which aid in our understanding of the processes of culture change in hunter-gatherer societies.
3. To develop concepts and methods which aid in the interpretation of the archaeological record of hunter-gatherers.
4. To practice analytical skills in evaluating basic archaeological research.
5. 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 economy and social organization of hunter-gatherer peoples.
2. To develop ability to identify important analytical strategies for researching the archaeological record of hunter-gatherers.
3. To develop the ability to recognize archaeological signatures of past hunter-gatherer behavior.

4. To be able to use sophisticated theoretical concepts from anthropology to explain change and variation in hunter-gatherer societies.

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. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Prerequisites: None

B. Texts and readings:

Required Texts:

Bettinger, Robert L.

2009 *Hunter-Gatherer Foraging: Five Simple Models*. Eliot Werner Publications, Clinton Corners, New York.

Kelly, Robert L.

2013 *The Foraging Spectrum: Diversity in Hunter-Gatherer Lifeways*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Jones, Kevin T.

2012 *The Shrinking Jungle*. The University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

C. Grade Determination:

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

(1) Research Assignment: All participants will submit a 15 page (25 pages for Graduate Students), typed, double-spaced, research paper on hunter-gatherer archaeology (see handout). The paper is due on December 3 at 5:00 P.M. and is worth

150 points.

(2) Exams: A mid-term and final examination: short answer and essay questions worth 100 points each. Blue book required. A list of questions and terms will be provided in advance of the exam.

Sample Exam:

I. Please write a short essay (about 2 pages) on each of the following questions (25 points each).

1. Compare and contrast the "pristinist" and "revisionist" schools of hunter-gatherer anthropology. What have we learned about hunter-gatherers from this discussion?

II. Definitions: Please define and give the importance to hunter-gatherer archaeology of each (5 points each).

middle range theory
Nunamiut ethnoarchaeology
indigenist school
Richard Lee

(3) Participation: Good seminar discussion requires preparation and participation by all. Students are expected to be participants, that is, by completing their research paper presentation and providing thoughtful, questions, opinions, and critique during class seminars and discussion sessions. All students will provide a 10-20 minute presentation of the results of their research during the final week of regular class. Participation is worth 50 points.

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

Grading:

Exams	200
Paper	150
Presentation	50
Total	400

360-400 = A
320-359 = B
etc.

The professor retains the option to use + and – grades when final scores are close (i.e. within a point on a 0-100 scale) to an up or down transition.

D. Tests and Other Important Dates for Course

October 15	Mid-Term Exam
December 3	Assignment Due
December 14	Final Exam

E. Reading List and Schedule

AUGUST 27-31

COURSE INTRODUCTION; FILM: THE GREAT DANCE

SEPTEMBER 3

HOLIDAY

SEPTEMBER 5-7

WHAT ARE HUNTER-GATHERERS? VARIATION IN HUNTING AND GATHERING SOCIETIES

Required Reading:

Kelly, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-6)

Prentiss, Anna Marie

2014 Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherers. In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, edited by Claire Smith, pp. 3587-3592. Springer, New York.
Available online via the Mansfield Library:

<http://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2/page/38>

SEPTEMBER 10-21

HISTORY OF HUNTER-GATHERER STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Required Reading:

Kelly, Chapters 1 and 2

SEPTEMBER 24

FILM: DESERT PEOPLE

SEPTEMBER 24-OCTOBER 3

HUNTER-GATHERER SUBSISTENCE STRATEGIES

Required Reading:

Bettinger (2009) Chapters 1 and 3

Kelly, Chapter 3

Recommended Reading:

Broughton, Jack M.

1994 Late Holocene Resource Intensification in the Sacramento River Valley: The Vertebrate Evidence. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 21:501-514.

Chatters James C.

1987 Hunter-Gatherer Adaptations and Assemblage Structure. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 6:336-375.

Nagaoka, Lisa

2005 Declining Foraging Efficiency and Moa Carcass Exploitation in Southern New Zealand. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32, 1328-1338.

Prentiss, Anna Marie, Natasha Lyons, Lucille E. Harris, Melisse R.P. Burns, and Terrence M. Godin

2007 The Emergence of Status Inequality in Intermediate Scale Societies: A Demographic and Socio-Economic History of the Keatley Creek Site, British Columbia. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 26:299-327.

OCTOBER 5-12

HUNTER-GATHERER MOBILITY AND LAND-USE STRATEGIES

Required Reading:

Kelly, Chapter 4

Recommended Reading:

Binford, Lewis R.

1980 Willow Smoke and Dog's Tails: Hunter-Gatherer Settlement Systems and Archaeological Site Formation. *American Antiquity* 45:4-20.

Chatters, James C.

1987 Hunter-Gatherer Adaptations and Assemblage Structure. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 6:336-375.

Kelly, Robert L. and Lawrence C. Todd

1988 Coming into the Country: Early Paleoindian Hunting and Mobility. *American Antiquity* 53:231-244.

OCTOBER 15

MID-TERM EXAM

**OCTOBER 17-26
HUNTER-GATHERER TECHNOLOGICAL ORGANIZATION**

Required Reading:

Nelson, Margaret C.

1991 The Study of Technological Organization. In *Archaeological Method and Theory, Vol. 3*, edited by M. Schiffer, pp. 57-100. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. (on reserve)

Bettinger (2009) Chapters 4 and 5

Recommended Reading:

Beck, Charlotte, Taylor, A.K., Jones, G.T., Fadem, C.M., Cook, C.R. and S.A. Millward
2002 Rocks are Heavy: Transport Costs and Paleoarchaic Quarry Behavior in the Great Basin. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 21:481-507.

Kuhn, Steven L.

1994 A Formal Approach to the Design and Assembly of Mobile Toolkits. *American Antiquity* 59:426-442.

**OCTOBER 29– NOVEMBER 26
HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIALITY: LAND TENURE, GENDER, AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

Required Reading:

Kelly Chapters 5-8

Recommended Reading:

Dyson-Hudson, R. and E.A. Smith

1978 Human Territoriality: An Ecological Reassessment. *American Anthropologist* 80:21-41.

Mattison, Sioban M., E.A. Smith, M.K. Shenk, and E. Cochrane

2016 The Evolution of Inequality. *Evolutionary Anthropology* 25:184-199.

Prentiss, Anna Marie, Hannah S. Cail, and Lisa M. Smith

2014 At the Malthusian Ceiling: Subsistence and Inequality at Bridge River, British Columbia. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 33:34-48.

Prentiss, Anna Marie, Thomas A. Foor, Ashley Hampton, Ethan Ryan, and Matthew J.

Walsh

2018 The Evolution of Material Wealth-Based Inequality: The Evidence from Housepit 54, Bridge River, British Columbia. *American Antiquity* 83(4) (in press expected October 2018).

NOVEMBER 2-7

FILMS: LAND OF THE WAR CANOES and THE FAST RUNNER

NOVEMBER 21-23

HOLIDAYS

NOVEMBER 28-30

HUNTER-GATHERERS AND COLONIALISM

Required Reading:

Jones (entire book)

DECEMBER 3-7

PRESENTATIONS (ASSIGNMENT DUE DEC 3)

DECEMBER 14 (8:00-10:00 AM)

FINAL EXAM

ANTY 458 ARCHAEOLOGY OF HUNTER-GATHERERS ASSIGNMENT

This assignment asks you to imagine that you are a professional archaeologist who has excavated an important hunter-gatherer site. Your job now is to make sense of your excavated materials. The best archaeological research seeks to not only understand how the archaeological materials came to be positioned as found but also to address wider questions about ancient socio-economic and political organization. Research questions could be developed about subsistence behavior, mobility strategies, technological decisions, and many aspects of social relationships. Once we have our questions in mind we can then develop ideas about what the answers might be. The latter are called hypotheses or statements describing or explaining the actions of past occupants. In order to test hypotheses we then need to develop ideas about how they might be reflected in the archaeological record. To accomplish this we rely upon frames of reference, which consist of a series of statements about patterns of behavior and their implications for patterning in the archaeological record. Thus, in normal archaeological practice we develop alternative hypotheses about ancient cultural behavior followed by test expectations: "if this hypothesis (i.e. cultural behavior) then this pattern expected in the archaeological record."

Your test expectations (frames of reference) should tell you what data are needed from your archaeological site for evaluation of alternative hypotheses. For example, you are studying mobility type (other choices could be subsistence strategies, social status relationships, ritual behavior, etc.). Your frames of reference will take the form of test expectations for archaeological signatures of residential base versus logistical camp or non-camp field location. This will point you towards specific data needed to confirm one or the other. As discussed in class, measures of mobility type might include presence or absence of residential features, diversity in prey items and lithic tools, and formation of midden deposits. Then you just need to collect and evaluate archaeological data. What are the characteristics of the site? Do they match any of your expectations for alternative interpretations? Are there patterns that call for other interpretations than those you were expecting?

Assignment:

1. Pick out an archaeological data set. Ideally this will be an excavation report of a hunter-gatherer site. There are many choices in the Mansfield Library.
2. Briefly describe the site in terms of context, dating, and basic cultural materials.
3. Develop alternative hypotheses and test expectations (your frames of reference) regarding specific set of cultural practices that you think should be reflected in the site data.
4. Determine which alternative hypothesis gives you the best understanding of your site. Depending upon your site and research focus this may require that you examine various archaeological data sets: spatial arrangements of features and artifacts, variation in faunal remains, form/function of lithic artifacts, etc.
5. Write a 15 page (25 pages for grad. students) archaeological study in three parts.
(1) Describe your archaeological data set. (2) Describe your hypotheses and

test expectations (or frames of reference). (3) Review your archaeological data to evaluate alternatives for interpretation. How well do your site materials match predictions of your frames of reference? Draw general conclusions regarding your site and the utility of your frames of reference for archaeological use. Did they help you interpret your archaeological site? Explain.

6. Papers should be formatted in *American Antiquity* style. Students should plan to cite the most relevant primary literature in their paper.