ANTY 459.01: Archaeology of the Arctic and Subarctic

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ANTHROPOLOGY 459
ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ARCTIC AND SUBARCTIC

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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

   Maschner, Herbert D.G., Owen W. Mason, and Robert McGhee

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

   Recommended Text:

   Hilton, Charles E., Benjamin M. Auerbach, and Libby W. Cowgill 2014

   Additional Readings: Reference section at the Mansfield Library.

   Damas, David (editor)

   Helm, June (editor)

   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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)
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

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

Recommended Reading:
Pitul’ko, Vladimir  

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

**Required:**

Esdale, Julie A.  

Fitzhugh, William  

Wright, J.V.  

**Recommended:**

Anderson, Douglas D.  

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

**Required Reading:**

McGhee (Chapter 3)

**Recommended:**

Anderson, Douglas D.  

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

**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  

Recommended:

Lebedintsev, Aleksandr I.  

Orekhov, Aleksandr A.

Vasil'evskii, Ruslan S.  

**MARCH 18-23**  
**MIDDLE TO LATE HOLOCENE PREHISTORY OF THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, KODIAK ISLAND, AND SOUTHERN MAINLAND ALASKA**

Required:

Clark, Donald W.  

Davis, Richard S. and Richard Knecht  

Dumond, D.E.  

Maschner et al. (Chapters 3 and 4)

Recommended:

Maschner, Herbert D.G.  

**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.  

Recommended:

Ackerman, Robert E.

**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:


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:


**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?