

**ANT 324L, AFR 322****Fall 2018****INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN PREHISTORY****PROFESSOR: DR. JAMES DENBOW**

OFFICE HOURS: T and Th 11-12 and by appointment.

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**Course Overview**

This course provides an overview of human biological and cultural evolution in Africa. The roots of humankind go back almost 6 million years on the continent. This is an enormous time when one considers that human history in the New World only began less than 17,000 years ago. In addition, the African continent makes up over 20% of the earth's landmass and is more than three times the size of the continental United States!

Today there are more than a thousand languages spoken in Africa and cultural and ecological diversity is great. Apart from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Swahili and Mediterranean coasts, however, written sources only document the last few centuries of the continent's history.

The first few weeks of the class will present an overview of the physical, environmental, cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. The course will then focus on the evolution of humankind from its early beginnings over 3 million years ago up to the beginnings of early civilizations in Africa. (The following semester the Archaeology of African Thought (ANT 324L) will look more closely at the development of the ancient civilizations of Ancient Egypt, Axum, Ghana, Kongo and Great Zimbabwe. The relationships between religion, gender, culture and power will be more fully addressed in that second course.)

Your books have been selected to discuss different aspects of Africa's long history. Barham and Mitchell focus on a detailed archaeological presentation of the early history of the continent. John Reader presents a more generalized overview of the continent's history that extends from earliest times into the present. The Reader book will be used for both semesters. The Reich book presents in a readable fashion the results of very recent ancient DNA studies that promise to revolutionize our understanding of the human past and migrations. The work also points up the need for more intensive collaboration between archaeologist, linguists, and geneticists.

The lectures will not follow the readings directly, but rather expand on them to bring material up to date and include discussions of African peoples, cultures and languages. Students are encouraged to raise questions during the lectures in order to ensure that topics *of interest to you* are discussed—it is your class after all. No prior knowledge of Africa or of archaeology is expected.

The course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. Therefore, a

substantial portion of your grade will come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of non-U.S. cultural groups, past and present.

**Prerequisites:** None.

**Required Textbooks:**

1) Lawrence Barham and Peter Mitchell. 2008. *The First Africans: African Archaeology from the earliest toolmakers to the most recent foragers*. Cambridge World Archaeology. ISBN-10: 0521612659. Parts of this text will be updated in lecture.

2) John Reader. 1999. *Africa: biography of the Continent*. Vantage Press. ISBN 067973869x. While it does not focus only on archaeology, many will find this book easier to follow than Phillipson. It provides a very readable, if slightly dated, account of Africa's history and prehistory. It also provides a useful summation of geology, climate, health, languages and many other details not covered in depth in Phillipson. This is a book you would probably keep if you have a general interest in Africa.

3) David Reich. 2018. *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past*. Pantheon Books. Isbn 978-1-101-87032-7. This book explores new approaches to human prehistory, integrating them with, while challenging, other archaeological interpretations.

**Evaluation:** The grade will be based on a map quiz (15%); class attendance and participation will be measured by [Arkaive](#) (5%), enrollment code is **6P4Z**; a short 5-page mid-term essay (30%); and a **15 page** research paper (50%) due at the end of the semester. Grading will be on a +/- basis.

Because lectures will often include material not found in the text, or bring text materials up to date through discussion of new findings, class attendance is important and will be spot-checked using "attendance quizzes." Please don't think that you will be able to skip class and simply do the readings. You will only be cheating yourself. The research paper is due in class, Tuesday, December 4th.

The weekly timing of course topics below are only an estimate because I want to have time to discuss any questions you may have from lectures or readings as they arise.

## **Course Topics** (Dates are **approximate**)

### **Weeks 1, 2 & 3:**

### **Introduction to Africa, Physiography and Cultures**

- 1) You should read my account of the social and political aspects of doing archaeology in Africa (*Finding Bosutswe*, Denbow et al. 2008a), included as a pdf in the course documents on the canvas site.

- 2) Barham & Mitchell: Chapters 1 & 2. Introducing the Africa Record and Frameworks in Space and Time
- 3) Reader: Chapter 1, Building a continent; Chapter 4, Origins & Climate
- 4) Reich: The deep history of our species, Chapters 1-3.
- 5) See also  
<http://cosmiclog.nbcnews.com/news/2012/08/13/13265954-did-humans-and-neanderthals-do-it-some-experts-doubt-it>

### **MAP QUIZ: Thursday, Sept. 27**

#### **Weeks 4 & 5**

##### **The Emergence of early Hominins 2.5mya-400k**

- 1) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 3: First tool-users and – makers.
- 2) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 4: Early Pleistocene technologies and societies.
- 3) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 5: Mid-Pleistocene foragers.
- 4) Reader: Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
- 5) Film section from:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/evolution/dawn-of-humanity.html> sections 2-10

#### **Weeks 6 & 7**

##### **Homo heidelbergensis, Neanderthals and early Homo: 400k-100k**

- 1) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 6: Transitions and origins
- 2) New Scientist, April 2017: [Homo naledi is only 250,000 years old: here's why that matters.](#)
- 3) [A Neanderthal-like "ghost population" in Africa?](#)

#### **Week 8 & 9**

##### **Homo sapiens and human behavior: 100k-20k**

- 1) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 7: The big dry: archaeology of marine isotope stages 4-2
  - 2) McBreaty & Brooks, 2000. (pdf on blackboard)
- Film clip from : [The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey](#) (view from 9 min to 31 min.)
- Reich, Chapter 9: Rejoining Africa to the Human Story.

#### **Paper 1: (Due Tuesday, Oct. 24)**

*Use the archaeological record to discuss and critique the "Sudden/late" or "Rubicon" hypothesis of Richard Klein, Spencer Wells, and others that modern human cognition, language abilities, and the ability to construct and use symbols appeared suddenly around 60-70 thousand years ago and well after the first appearance of physically modern-appearing Homo sapiens in Africa between 160 – 200 ka. From the Reich book,*

*how has the use of ancient DNA dramatically revised this perspective? What are some of the benefits and limitations of interpreting human history through the genome?*

**Weeks 10: The Later Stone Age: 20k-5k**

- 1) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 8. Transitions: from the Pleistocene into the Holocene
- 2) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 9: Hunting, Gathering, Intensifying: the mid-Holocene record
- 3) Reader, Chapters 13 -15
- 4) Reich, Chapter 9: Rejoining Africa to the Human Story

**Week 11 & 12:**

**Rock Art and Transitions from foraging to food production**

- 1) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 10. Foragers in a world of Farmers.
- 2) Reader, Chapters 16-18
- 3) Denbow 2017. "Interactions between Precolonial Foragers, Herders, and Farmers in Southern Africa." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, pp. 1-30.

**Recommended for those with a deeper interest, you can read:**

- 4) Macholdt et al. 2014. Tracing Pastoralist Migrations to Southern Africa with Lactase Persistence Alleles (pdf on Canvas)
- 5) Güldeman, T. 2008. A linguist's view: Khoe-Kwadi speakers and the earliest food-producers of Southern Africa. *Southern African Humanities* 20: 93-132. (pdf on Canvas)

Film clip of Trance Dancing by John Marshall

**Weeks 13 & 14:**

**Farmers and States, and African Archaeology and Heritage**

- 1) Reader. Chapters 19-23.
- 2) Denbow et al. 2015. The Glass Beads of Kaitshàa.
- 3) Barham & Mitchell: Chapter 11. The Future of the First African's Past.
- 4) Reich. Chapter 11: The Genomics of Race and Identity.

**TERM PAPERS: (DUE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4TH). THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM**

**OTHER INFORMATION**

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the

Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### **Q drop Policy**

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231: “Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”

### **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- \* Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- \* If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- \* In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors. Do not reenter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.