

**THIS SYLLABUS IS FROM FALL 2008.
IT CURRENTLY IS BEING REVISED. THIS YEAR'S SYLLABUS
WILL BE POSTED LATER OR PASSED OUT ON THE FIRST DAY
OF CLASS.
THE TWO BOOKS LISTED WILL BE USED IN 2013 AND ARE IN
THE BOOKSTORE.**

ARCHAEOLOGY
Early Societies and Cultures
V14.0003 – Fall 2008

Professor R. Wright

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Archaeology is the study of past cultures based principally on their material remains. Archaeology teaches people about unique cultures that are fascinating in their own right and allows them to gain a different, often more complete, perspective on cultures than those known from written history (even for the city of New York, as we shall see). Archaeology invites people to study important transitions in human history and to consider the processes of stability and change that affect human populations over the long term.

This course is divided into three parts. In the first part -- **archaeological methods and theory** -- our focus will be on basic field methods and technologies used by in attempts to understand the past. Specific methods (for example, excavations, surveys, typological and technical studies of artifacts, dating procedures, etc.) are related to interpretative approaches for understanding the archaeological record. Chapters in Archaeological Essentials cover some of the basics and other readings may be posted on Blackboard. I will use my own research on the Indus civilization in Pakistan and India to illustrate some of the points covered in the text and lectures. In the second segment of the course, we focus on a number of **cultural transitions** that cover a long span of human history involving significant changes as people developed increasingly complex technologies and social systems. These changes will be illustrated through the study of largely prehistoric cultures in the Old World (Mesopotamia in southwest Asia, Egypt in

north Africa, the Indus Valley in Pakistan and India), and the New World (the Maya and Aztec in Mexico and Central America and the Inka in South America). In the third part, we will study **North America cultures and the archaeology of New York City**. The book, Unearthing Gotham, is a primary source for this segment of the course.

How to Contact me or the Graduate Assistants:

Please come to our office hours or see us at other times by appointment. I'm especially interested in meeting you. We will be setting up a "Blackboard" account to make communication easier.

Course Requirements:

- 1) One research paper to be discussed after Exam I. Completing this assignment will require viewing New York City with a new set of eyes, guided by the book Unearthing Gotham. There also are museums in the city you might enjoy visiting to enrich your paper. Be sure to allow enough time for this assignment (25% of grade). See instructions below.
2. Attendance and participation in class, laboratories and two dialog Discussion Board sessions – This means attending lectures and laboratories, making informed contributions to discussions, i.e. raising questions about readings or material presented, reacting to other students' comments (25%).
3. Two in-class exams as shown on the schedule below. Each exam is 25% of your grade. The exams will include maps, one long essay and eight, three-sentence essays.

Required texts to be purchased [available at the NYU bookstore].

****Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (2007) Archaeology Essentials. Thames and Hudson**

****Anne Marie Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall (2001) Unearthing Gotham. Yale University Press.**

Other readings listed will be posted on the class Blackboard list under Course Documents.

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| Week 1 | Introduction to the Course – 9/8 – 9/10
Defining Archaeology
Cultural heritage, destruction of archaeological sites and stewardship
Richard Gould, "WTC Archaeology: What we Saw, What we learned, and What we did about it?"
<u>Archaeology Essentials</u> , Chapters 1, 10
<u>Unearthing Gotham</u> , Chapters 1 and 2 |
| Week 2 | How archaeology works – 9/15 – 9/17
Archaeological Methods: Survey and excavation
Guest Speaker: Covering Archaeology. Andrew Lawler, <u>Science</u>
"Boring no more, a Trade-Savvy Indus Emerges", 6 June 2008, Vol. 320.
<u>Archaeology Essentials</u> Chapters 2, 3, 4 |

- Excavations and survey in the Indus civilization
- Week 3 Organization of Societies – 9/22 – 9/24
 Finding people in the Indus civilization
Archaeological Essentials Chapter 5
- Week 4 Human Cognition: Symbolic Expression and Technology, Trade and
 Exchange – 9/29 – 10/1
Archaeological Essentials – Chapters 6, 7, 8
- Week 5 Peopling of the Old World – 10/6
- First Exam** – 10/8 – Covers Weeks 1 through 4.
- Week 6 Reconstructing subsistence – 10/15
 Reread chapter 6
 Premature Cities and Towns in the Old World
 Kent Flannery, “The ecology of Early Food Production in Mesopotamia”
 Melinda Zeder and Brian Hesse, “The initial domestication of goats
 (*Capra hircus*) in the Zagros Mountains 10,000 years ago” Science
 287:2254-2257.
- Week 7 Early States in the Old World: Ancient Mesopotamia – 10/20 – 10/22
 The Early Egyptian State
Reading to be announced
- Week 8 Peopling of the New World and Origins of Agriculture - 10/27 – 10/29
Reading to be announced
- Week 9 Early States in the New World: Teotihuacan, Aztec and the Maya – 11/3 –
 11/5
 The Inka State
Reading to be announced
- Week 10 The Inka – A Documentary Film. – 11/10
- Second Exam** – 11/12 – Covers Weeks 5 through 9
- Week 11 North American Cultures – 11/17 – 11/19
 Lecture: Dr. Kathy Ehrhardt, Illinois State Museum
Unearthing Gotham - Chapters 1 – 6
 Changes in the Land (W. Cronon 2003 reprint) Chapters 2,3
- Week 12 New York: Later Prehistory – 11/24 – 11/26
 Historical Archaeology
Unearthing Gotham - Chapters 7 – 10

Week 13 Exploring Lower Manhattan and Greenwich Village – 12/1 – 12/3
 Unearthing Gotham - Chapters 11 – 16

Week 15 Cultural Heritage and Ethics – 12/8 – 12/10
 Cultural Resources Management

Online Discussion 2

For this second online discussion we would like you to compare any 2 of the following 3 articles. Comment on how convincing you find their arguments and the extent to which their evidence supports their conclusions. In your evaluation explicitly cite two or three pieces of archaeological evidence for each article you choose. The articles can be found in the Course Documents section of the site, in the folder labeled “Online Discussion 2.”

Adovasio, J.M. and D.R. Pedler (2006) “Paleoindians, Perishable Artifacts, and Dying Paradigms Redux” Presented at the 71st Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 26-30 April 2006.

Brumfiel, Elizabeth (1996) “Figurines and the Aztec State: Testing the Effectiveness of Ideological Domination” in Rita P. Wright (ed.) *Gender and Archaeology*.

Pollock, Susan and Reinhard Bernbeck (2000) “And They Said, Let Us Make Gods in Our Image” in Alison Rautman (ed.) *Reading the Body: Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record*.

Your discussion posts should be at least 250 words. Students whose last names begin with L-Z will be required to begin the discussion by posting their responses to the discussion board by Friday the 31st at 5:00 p.m. Students whose last names begin with A-Z should post responses to these initial posts by Sunday the 2nd at midnight. Those in the second group should note that though they will be responding to the first group of students, it is still important to read the material provided in order to analyze the arguments presented. Students in the second response group should use the same criteria outlined below to evaluate their fellow students’ responses.

Again, please be thoughtful and respectful in your comments and debates.

PAPER TOPIC for Introduction to Archaeology, Early Societies and Cultures: A research paper of 8-10 pages based principally on the book, Unearthing Gotham. Papers are due on December 10th in class.

FORMAT - Papers must be double-spaced and typed at 250-words per page. I will only accept hard copy. Do not e-mail documents. Information sources (as well as direct quotes) must be acknowledged by citations in the text. The American Anthropological Association format for within text citations includes the last name of the author, date of

publication and page numbers enclosed in parentheses; for example (Wright 1996:10). References cited also must be included at the end of your paper. If you have any questions about how to format a bibliography, follow the style used in Unearthing Gotham.

Do not use internet sources, as many are not reliable. If you think you have found one that is, you must consult with Prof. Wright before including it in your paper.

ASSIGNMENT: Prepare a paper on the archaeology of New York city, using *Unearthing Gotham* or lecture, lab, assigned readings. One of these periods must be from the **prehistoric** and the other from the **historic**.

- The focus of the paper will be on some aspect of the archaeological record in the two periods you select.
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- Archaeological evidence, obviously, is time-sensitive. Environments, technologies, economic and social arrangements that worked for Paleo-Indians might differ for farmers, merchants and traders. In your discussion you must demonstrate your knowledge of the material record (i.e. architecture, city plan, artifacts) and ecofacts (faunal and floral evidence, environmental data) for the periods you choose.
- The questions below are guidelines that key you in to the environmental, economic and social/political issues relevant to the city's culture history and development.

. If you wish to explore places in the city (such as the Water Taxi for a view of the landscape, Staten Island for a visit to their prehistoric collections at Staten Island museum, Long Island for site exploration, Merchant's House and Tenement Museum or a Greenwich Village walk) as part of the paper, please include them but they are not required. Your focus will be on reconstructing the cultural history and processes of development for two periods in Gotham's history.

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE:

Having selected the two periods (for example, the Archaic or Paleo-Indian periods AND mid-17th century Dutch settlement), include information on the following:

- 1) Describe the types of human settlement and environmental adaptations during the time periods you are considering. Have there been **natural** forces such as decay, glaciation, wind and water movement, sea level changes, frost, rock slides, plant growth, and animal activity? What were they? Were there changes that occurred

as a result of **human** activity? How has the archaeological record been altered by such activity?

PAPER TOPIC for Introduction to Archaeology, Early Societies and Cultures: A research paper of 8-10 pages based principally on the book, Unearthing Gotham. Papers are due on December 10th in class. – page 2

- 2) What are the major diagnostic artifacts that define the time periods discussed? Where did the people you are discussing come from? Were they indigenous to the region or did they migrate from other places? What “traditions” did people bring with them from previous periods and/or places? What happened to the people you are discussing?
- 3) Are the differences between artifacts from one period or another mostly stylistic or the result of different activities, for example, life-styles, food preferences? Explain what differences can be inferred about subsistence patterns, the economy, and social and political organization for each period.
- 4) How did the archaeological record at the sites relevant to your time periods come to be recognized? Why were they chosen for investigation? As far as you know, has the archaeological record been recovered in its entirety? Why or why not? What remains to be known about the time periods you discussed?

Feel free to elaborate or add any additional information or questions you believe are relevant or of special interest. If you want to structure your paper in a way that deviates from this one, get in touch with Prof. Wright to determine whether it is acceptable.