

## **Anthropology 103 Introduction to Archaeology**

### **II. Criteria for Perspectives Courses**

#### **Justification**

Please describe how the course will address criteria for Perspectives on the Liberal Arts courses. Be sure to include an explanation of the course's specific learning goals for students to make a connection between these and the general criteria for Perspectives courses.

#### **1. Be designed to introduce students to how a particular discipline creates knowledge and understanding.**

The archaeological record consists of the material remains produced by human activity, and the credo of the discipline might well be "by their works, you shall know them." Methods and concepts are consequently geared to making these material remains speak to the nature of the human societies that produced them. Given the deep time covered by human prehistory, archaeology shares stratigraphic methods with geology and employs dating techniques such as radiocarbon dating developed in the physical sciences. Archaeology also participates in the theoretical debates of general anthropology and contributes to these contentious issues by adding the perspective of deep time to the short-term observations that buttress much of social science. Additionally, by both complementing and moving beyond archival investigations of the past archaeology both broadens and deepens what counts as history.

#### **2. Position the discipline within the liberal arts and the larger society.**

To paraphrase Bob Marley, "if you know your history then you know where you're coming from." Archaeology spans millennia of human prehistory played on a global stage. It thus constitutes a bridging discipline between history and anthropology and is poised between the humanities and sciences. Archaeology plays a key role in saving the past from mere projection and thus liberates the past in order to offer a genuine critique of today's cherished notions. Archaeology is an excellent antidote to the following intellectual maladies: (1) a Primitivist Syndrome in which the human past is viewed as a paradise lost; (2) a Progressivist Syndrome in which history is treated as a moral success story or a "rise" from lowly or otherwise corrupt origins; (3) a Scientist Syndrome in which the variability encompassed by the human past is seen to be reducible to "laws" mimicking those of the physical sciences; and (4) the "X-Files Syndrome" in which the past is populated with lost continents, lost "races", or, as an ultimate extension, extraterrestrial visitors. Judging by the fact that archaeology articles are the second most common entry in the Tuesday Science section of the *New York Times* (behind health-related articles) and given the epidemic of pseudo-archaeology in television and film, an educated student and citizen could well use a bit of archaeological knowledge.

#### **3. Address the goals defined for the particular areas of knowledge the course is designed to fulfill.**

The specific goal is to identify the methods that archaeologists use to gain reliable knowledge about the past and to present the historical canvas resulting from application of such methods. This canvas is nothing less than a global culture history. At a more general level, students who have taken Anthropology 103 should be able to evaluate evidence and specific regimes of truth applied to a variety of scientific and political contexts.

**In addition, a Perspectives course will, where appropriate to its discipline(s) and subject matter:**

#### **4-5. Be global or comparative in approach and consider diversity and the nature and construction of forms of difference.**

As already indicated, Anthropology 103 targets *world prehistory* and is thus inherently global in perspective and thereby lends itself to comparative study over deep time and big space. Nor is such comparison simply of the "compare and contrast" variety: The trajectories revealed in the archaeological record clearly document the

absence of a universal scheme of cultural change. Nor does any “natural” progression of cultural forms emerge from a rigorous examination of the archaeological record.

#### **6. Engage students in active enquiry.**

Degree of such engagement, perforce, depends on size of the class. Hands-on laboratory or field-based courses are available in more advanced anthropology classes. In larger lecture classes students are expected to begin to wrestle with issues of scientific method, historical change, and with cultural difference.

#### **7. Reveal the existence and importance of change over time.**

Archaeology *is* the study of cultural change: Archaeology provides a unique means of moving beyond, as well as engaging with, written historical records and observations of cultural practices.

#### **8. Use of primary documents and materials.**

Primary archaeological materials are the artifacts themselves. Direct engagement with these materials is better reserved for later courses. With respect to primary documents in the ordinary sense, all good archaeological lectures are based on such sources, and students may be referred to appropriate site reports, journal papers, and other professional literature. The latter can take the form of class assignment if the section is of modest size. Additionally, in its engagement with the coupling of technological and social change the course engages with representations of primary source materials/site remains including pottery remains and stone tools.

### **III. Course Materials, Assignments, and Activities**

**Please provide an annotated list of course readings and descriptions of major assignments or exams for the course, as well as distinctive student activities that will engage students in working toward the course goals discussed in the course description and/or justification.**

**Please include the author and title for each reading or text, along with a short description providing information about how the reading will contribute to course goals.**

**Course Readings:** These will vary somewhat according to the persuasion of the instructor (see attached syllabi). The following are frequently or recently used books.

T. Douglas Price and Gary M. Feinman 2008 *Images of the Past*. McGraw-Hill, Boston.

There is no singular, satisfactory text. This volume provides a series of problem-oriented vignettes drawn from Paleolithic to recent times. The overall context comes from lectures.

Jared M. Diamond 1997 *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. W. W. Norton, New York.

A massively popular and intellectually provocative account of human prehistory as played out in terms of ecology, technology, and contingency. Students love it.

Daniel Lord Smail 2007 *On Deep History and the Brain*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

A controversial book that calls for a genuine “history” rather than the customary “prehistory” followed by ancient Sumer or classical Greece. The author writes in a lively way and cuts to core issues that spawn core debates.

James Deetz 1996 *In Small Things Forgotten*. Doubleday-Anchor.

A classic engagement between written documents and the evidence that archaeologists dig up. In addition, this little book is a pioneer attempt to infer the ideological heart of past social formations on the basis of the *small things* retrieved from the ground.

### **Student Projects and Activities:**

These vary according to size to size of class and instructor even as in all cases they emphasize issues at the core of PLAS guidelines. As the course involves world coverage, it is important that students be familiar with basic geography. As a remedy, a map test is administered the third or fourth week of class. Emphasis is placed on the key areas that figure in class lectures. An example of such a map test is included in the attached syllabi. And, as an example of the engagement with varying systems of literacy, one faculty member takes a class period to teach students to write their name in Maya hieroglyphs. Through this enjoyable exercise, students learn that writing systems can vary greatly from the commonly used alphabets of today; the exercise also introduce students to the difficulties of translating ancient texts in cases where the connection between text and spoken language has been lost.

### **IV-V. Assessment and Administration**

**Perspectives courses must be recertified every five years, and we are seeking ideas for how to best carry out this assessment. What forms of evidence that the course is meeting its goals as a Perspectives course would be appropriate to collect for this course during the next five years? How would you prefer assessment to be conducted? How might evidence of effective teaching and student learning be collected and evaluated?**

**What process will your department develop to oversee this course, suggest and approve changes, and conduct assessment? Who will be in charge of this process? Also indicate whether the course will be primarily taught by full-time or adjunct faculty, or by a combination of the two types of instructor.**

The department's approach to the assessment and administration of Anthropology 103 is integrated; consequently, both assessment and administration are considered together.

Regularly scheduled examinations during the course itself are one, longstanding form of assessment well-known throughout academia and non-academic circles. Additionally, our department has in place procedures to ensure that courses are taught in accordance with accepted guidelines. New instructors are given a package of materials from prior sections. They are required to discuss course content and their proposed syllabus with senior faculty members who teach the course on a regular basis. New faculty are also urged to attend at least one class session taught by a senior faculty member. As required by the college, we also conduct peer-reviews of, (and follow-up discussions with, all instructors.

Additionally, we propose that we test, via written assessment, all students entering our Anthropology 201 ("Essentials of Cultural Anthropology"—a core course taken by all majors). This will involved short answer questions on a number of concepts that we expect students to take away from an Anthropology 103 conceived of as a PLAS course that emphasizes Analysis of Social Structures while introducing students to the ways that anthropology produces knowledge, situating that knowledge production within the social sciences and liberal arts more generally, and addressing world cultures and pre-industrial societies.

### **VI. Syllabus**

**Please attach a sample syllabus (or set of syllabi, for courses on variable topics or courses that will be taught in variable formats).**

Please see attached