Overview of the Class

This course discusses archaeological mysteries and archaeological controversies. Mysteries are things that seem hard to explain and therefore tend to attract wild explanations. Archaeological controversies are serious debates between people that stake different claims to the past. These debates include preserving the past versus mining it for profit. Or, scientists who believe they have a right to study Native American graves versus Native Americans who do not want their ancestors’ graves disturbed.

The major learning outcomes are:

1) To be able to use social science methods to critically evaluate explanations of mysterious aspects of the past.
2) To understand struggles over who controls the past and why the archaeological past is relevant to so many different people.

Big Ideas in this Class

Often, people pay less attention archaeological accounts of ancient mysteries and more attention to unfounded speculation. In discussing the “mysterious” side of the past, this course asks why bizarre speculations about human life come about. Why do fringe ideas about lost civilizations, intergalactic interactions, and obscure technologies gain more popularity than scientifically supported ideas? Why should serious archaeologists and students pay any attention to such “wacko” ideas? The course explores the history and origins of fantasies about the past and why people believe in such fantasy interpretations. The course also provides an introduction to the methods of inquiry in archaeology so that students can confront archaeological mysteries with arguments based on carefully recovered evidence and coherent logic. As is true with most social sciences, archaeology does not have a dominant metaphysical paradigm. This means that mainstream archaeologists disagree about how to interpret the past. How, then, can we distinguish between arguments that some archaeologists merely disagree with (e.g. materialist versus idealist explanations of Stonehenge) and arguments that are unequivocally wrong (e.g. Stonehenge was built by aliens)?

Engaging with fantasy versions of the past is important for two reasons. First, such versions can be used to promote ideas that are harmful to various human populations. For example, fantastic archaeology of the origins of Germany lent credence to Nazi rhetoric in the 1930s. Furthermore, myths about the builders of mounds in the Ohio Valley encouraged racist
discrimination against Native Americans in the 19th century. A second reason to engage with fantastic stories about the past is that they have a broad audience in popular media. The American public’s love affair with popular though inaccurate (e.g. Raiders of the Lost Ark) representations of the past reveals a deep-seated fascination with prehistory. This course considers how scientific archaeology, rather than dampening such fascination, can redirect it to a concern for conservation of the remains of the past.

Conservation of the past, however, is not a straightforward matter. Debates arise regarding who owns the past (descendants of ancient people, archaeologists, government agencies), who should decide what to preserve, who should pay for conservation, and how archaeologists can partner with descendant communities and other groups that claim a stake in the past. The two topics of this class—mysteries of the past and debates in the present—underscore the relevance of archaeology to contemporary society. Archaeology is relevant because contemporary people build identities from the past, because preservation of heritage has become an urgent issue, because the materiality of the past helps correct historical misconceptions, because it gives a deep historical context within which we can consider our own lives, because archaeological tourism has become a multi-billion-dollar business, and more. The course synthesizes the multiple intersections between archaeology and society. This amounts, in the end, to answering the question of why we do archaeology in the first place.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**Analyze** different kinds of evidence and discern which kinds are weak and which kinds are strong.

**Apply** multiple interdisciplinary methods (archaeology, history, physical sciences, art history) to make inferences about the distant past.

**Demonstrate** a working understanding of the scientific method as it is used in archaeology.

**Detect** pseudo-archaeology when students see it.

**Judge and critique** rhetorical strategies and logical fallacies that underlie inaccurate portrayals of the past.

**Explain** why non-scientific and even downright wacky explanations of mysteries of the past continue to entice otherwise reasonable people.

**Appreciate** the multiple publics and multiple stakeholders that contend for control over cultural heritage.

**Develop** research skills that prioritize peer-reviewed knowledge and expose the shoddiness of what often passes for reliable information on the internet.

**Course Goals and Objectives**

Beyond the student learning outcomes stated above, this class has five major goals:

1) The first major goal is to provide students with an appreciation of archaeological research methods and the critical, scientific perspective required to evaluate evidence before drawing conclusions. Such a perspective is invaluable beyond the classroom since it equips students to evaluate evidence and make decisions in elections, professional careers, etc.

2) The second goal is to understand why and how pseudo-scientific explanations take root. Such an understanding promotes an impassioned rather than a dismissive viewpoint toward believers in fantastic accounts of the past. An impassioned viewpoint will help
students channel others’ excitement about the past into a concern for preservation of cultural heritage.

3) Closely related to the second goal, the third goal is to emphasize the importance of heritage preservation while at the same time providing an appreciation of the conflicts and controversies surrounding ownership of the past.

4) The fourth goal is to show students that some of the real discoveries in archaeology are as exciting as those in archaeological fantasies and that the truth about the past is often stranger than fiction.

5) The fifth goal is to show that fantastic archaeology must be taken seriously because it can have dangerous consequences when coupled with political and social movements.

**Required Materials**


2. **Articles**: There will be several articles available for free online. See the schedule at the end of the syllabus to determine when specific articles must be read. Articles or links to articles will be available via Canvas.

3. **Digital Device**: Students will be required to bring a digital device with access to the internet to some lectures. This might include a smart phone, tablet, or laptop computer.

**Outline of the Content**

The content of the class is outlined in great detail, week by week, in the “Course Schedule” at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading**

**Grade components:**

- Midterm Exam (March 2, 6:00 PM, Whitehall 343) 100 points
- Final Exam (May 4, 6:00 PM, Whitehall 343) 125 points
- Lecture Participation: 100 points
- Reading Quizzes 60 points
- Annotated Bibliography 115 points

*Midterm grades consists of the average of the Midterm Exam, Reading Quizzes, and Lecture Participation up to week 7 (February 23).*

**Final Grade Calculation:**

- A = 450 to 500 points
- B = 400 to 449 points
- C = 350 to 399 points
- D = 300 to 349 points
- E = 299 points or below

**Midterm Exam (100 points; March 2, 6:00 PM, Whitehall 343)**: The Midterm Exam will involve a variety of exercises. Material for the exam will be drawn from lectures, discussions, and readings.
Final Exam (125 points; **May 4**, 6:00 PM, Whitehall 343): The Final Exam will involve a variety of exercises. Material for the exam will be drawn from lectures, discussions, and readings.

**Lecture Participation (100 points):** Lecture participation consists of attendance (4 points) and participation (4-5 points) in discussions as well as group assignments. **Attendance is mandatory.** FOUR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES IN CLASS WILL LEAD TO A TOTAL SCORE OF 0 FOR YOUR FINAL LECTURE PARTICIPATION GRADE. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the professor within one week of an excused absence to make-up assignments. For the policy on what types of absences are excused, see the section below under Course Policies>Excused Absences.

**Reading Quizzes (60 points; **due before each lecture**):** A quiz covering the reading assignments will be given via Canvas. Students must take the quiz by 5:59 PM the day of the lecture. Each quiz is worth 5 points and will consist of 5 multiple choice questions.

**Annotated Bibliography (115 points):** Each student will write an annotated bibliography concerning an archaeological myth and/or controversy. Topics will be assigned on **January 19** by the professor. This assignment will be divided into four submissions and additional information on each of the submissions (below) may be found on Canvas:

1) **Research Statement and 2 Sources (15 points; **due February 9**):** Write an introductory paragraph that states the purpose of your annotated bibliography. Include citations and annotations for two sources. Annotations will follow a specific format, which will be provided under the assignment description on Canvas. All citations should follow the Society for American Archaeology style guide rules: [http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf](http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf)

2) **4 Additional Sources (6 total) [20 points; due March 9]**: Utilizing the professor’s feedback from the first assignment, find four additional sources that support the myth or controversy you are investigating. Provide citations and annotations for each source. Annotations will follow a specific format, which will be provided under the assignment description on Canvas. All citations should follow the Society for American Archaeology style guide rules: [http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf](http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf)

3) **4 Additional Sources (10 total) [40 points; due March 30]**: Utilizing the professor’s feedback from the first two assignments, find four additional sources that refute the myth or controversy you are investigating. These sources should be **objective** and **scientific**, and at least one needs to be peer-reviewed. Provide citations and annotations for each source. Annotations will follow a specific format, which will be provided under the assignment description on Canvas. All citations should follow the Society for American Archaeology style guide rules: [http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf](http://www.saa.org/Portals/0/SAA/Publications/StyleGuide/StyleGuide_Final_813.pdf)

4) **Final Annotated Bibliography (40 points; due April 20)**: The final version of your annotated bibliography should include corrected citations and annotations for all 10 sources as well as a research statement and concluding remarks. Concluding remarks should be one page single-spaced and analyze the validity of the sources as well as reflect the author’s conclusions regarding the myth or controversy being investigated.
Extra Credit (10 points): There are two opportunities for students to earn a total of 10 points extra credit during the semester. Each opportunity is worth 5 points and details will be announced during lecture and posted on Canvas. All extra credit will be due on April 20.

Policy on academic accommodations due to disability

Students with disabilities should contact the professor as soon as possible as well as Disability Resource Center. The Disability Resource Center is the appropriate office “to request specific assistance so that the required medical or psychological documentation can be reviewed and reasonable accommodations can be provided from the beginning of class work in order to achieve the greatest benefit” (Quoted from DRC url: http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/index.html)

The Disability Resource Center is located in Room 2 of the Alumni Gym. The phone number and email address are: 257-2754 and jkarnes@email.uky.edu. The Disability Resource Center will provide you with a Letter of Accommodation. Present a copy of the letter to the professor.

Dead Week

No tests or unscheduled assignments will be due during dead week (April 27).

Course Policies

1. Attendance: ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Students who do not attend class regularly will jeopardize their class participation grade (see above under Grading> Lecture Participation) and may be in danger of failing the class. Four or more unexcused absences will result in a final Lecture Participation grade of 0.

2. Excused Absences/Verification: The only excused absences are those that result from 1) serious illness, 2) death in the family, 3) University-related trips, or 4) major religious holidays. Evidence that verifies an excused absence must be presented no later than one week after the absence or there will be no make-up opportunity (see below). IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTACT THE PROFESSOR CONCERNING EXCUSES AND MAKE-UP WORK.

3. Makeup Opportunity: If you have an excused absence that causes you to miss a class, you will be permitted to arrange a make-up opportunity as long as you provide documentation of your excused absence no later than one week after the absence. Please give sufficient advanced notice whenever possible. IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTACT THE PROFESSOR CONCERNING EXCUSES AND MAKE-UP WORK.

4. Verification of Absence: In the case of University-related trips and major religious holidays, an absence will only be excused if the student notifies the professor before the anticipated absence. A medical absence does not require notification prior to the absence, but will later require medical documentation (a date-stamped form from the University Health Services or some other doctor). Any absence requires paper copies of official documentation. For a death in the family, the appropriate documentation consists of an obituary or program from a memorial service. Documentation of serious illnesses or deaths in the family must be submitted no later than one week after the day of the missed class. If a single illness causes you to miss more than one class, you need to turn in a note from a doctor explaining this.
5. **Submission of Assignments:** Assignments must be submitted via Canvas the day on which they are due. If students are unable to submit their assignment via Canvas due to a technical issue, they are expected to email their assignment to the professor (vanessahanvey@uky.edu).

6. **Academic Integrity, cheating, and plagiarism:** All work must be your own work, expressed in your own words, and organized under a plan of your own devising. If you submit work that was copied from another student or from an already published source such as a book or a website and fail to fully acknowledge the source, you will receive an automatic 0 for the assignment and may suffer **broader repercussions**. For guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism, see [http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf](http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf). For the University Senate Rules regarding procedures and penalties for academic offenses, please see [http://www.uky.edu/USC/New/SenateRulesMain.html](http://www.uky.edu/USC/New/SenateRulesMain.html).

7. **Classroom Behavior, Decorum and Civility:**
   a. We are all required to respect the rights of others in the classroom. Please come to class on time, and if you must be late, enter the room quietly and take the first available seat. Please do not read newspaper, Facebook, Instagram or other media not related to the course during class time, and do not chat with your classmates – this is disruptive to others. **Students who are perceived to be using their cell phones, smart watches, laptops, or other digital devices in ways not related to the class may be asked to leave and will receive a 0 for Lecture Participation.**
   b. This instructor, department, college and university respect the dignity of all individuals and we value differences among members of the academic community. We also recognize the importance of discussion and scholarly debate in academic discovery, and understand that differences of opinion will be expressed from time to time, including differences among students and between students and instructor. In this classroom, we will conduct **ALL discussions with respect, civility and responsibility. Personal attacks or any other acts of denigration will not be tolerated, and anyone acting in this manner or any other manner detrimental to the atmosphere and function of the class will be asked to leave the room. THERE CAN BE NO DEVIATION from this rule. Persistent problems will be reported to the Dean of Students. We are all responsible for creating a safe space for the healthy exchange of ideas, as well as maintaining proper classroom decorum.**

8. **Canvas:** Important class announcements will be posted and emailed through Canvas, so every student must affirm that the email account listed on Canvas is the right one. Canvas will also contain lecture material, certain weekly readings, the syllabus, and other materials. All assignments will be submitted via Canvas. To get to Canvas, go to [https://www.uky.edu/canvas/](https://www.uky.edu/canvas/)
Course Schedule (subject to change)

WEEK 1: January 12, 2017
Introduction

WEEK 2: January 19, 2017
Science and Pseudoscience
Evaluating Claims

WEEK 3: January 26, 2017
Archaeological Methods

WEEK 4: February 2, 2017
Fakes, Frauds, and Hoaxes

WEEK 5: February 9, 2017
Who Discovered North America?

WEEK 6: February 16, 2017
Lost People and Places

WEEK 7: February 23, 2017
The Mysterious Maya

WEEK 8: March 2, 2017
Midterm Exam (6:00 PM, Whitehall RM 343)
WEEK 9: March 9, 2017
Ancient Egypt and the Pyramids..........................Feder Chapter 10; “Egyptomania!”:
http://archive.archaeology.org/0401/abstracts/egypt.html; “How to Build a Pyramid”:
http://archive.archaeology.org/0705/etc/pyramid.html; Review Egyptian artifacts for sale
at the Sadigh Gallery: http://www.sadighgallery.com/egyptian.html

Annotated Bibliography (6 Total Sources) Due [via Canvas]

WEEK 10: March 16, 2017
NO CLASS! (Spring Break)

WEEK 11: March 23, 2017
Ancient Astronomy and Aliens..........................Feder Chapter 9; Feder pages 340-
353 (8th edition) or 347-360 (7th edition); Von Daniken (1969) [Canvas]; “The Henge
Builders”: http://archive.archaeology.org/0801/etc/henge.html; “The French Built
Stonehenge?”: http://archive.archaeology.org/9707/newsbriefs/stonehenge.html;

WEEK 12: March 30, 2017
NO CLASS! (Society for American Archaeology conference)
Annotated Bibliography (10 Total Sources) Due [via Canvas]

WEEK 13: April 6, 2017
Archaeology and Belief..................................Feder Chapter 12; Reece (2006)
[Canvas]; Fuentes (2011) [Canvas]

WEEK 14: April 23, 2017
Archaeology at the Service of Nationalism........&McGuire (2008: 22-28, 151-157)
[Canvas]; Arnold (1990) [Canvas]

WEEK 15: April 20, 2017
Looting of Our Cultural Heritage......................Fagan (1988) [Canvas]; Fagan
(1993) [Canvas]; “Facing the Crisis”: http://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/loot/
Annotated Bibliography Final Version Due [via Canvas]
Last Day to Submit Extra Credit Assignments [via Canvas]

WEEK 16: April 27, 2017
Who Owns the Past?...................................... Thomas (2002) Chapter 21 and 22
[Canvas]; “Conversations: Redeeming Archaeology”:
http://archive.archaeology.org/0607/etc/conversations.html; “Insider: Who were the
Anasazi?”: http://archive.archaeology.org/0911/etc/insider.html

WEEK 17: May 4, 2017
Final Exam (6:00 PM, Whitehall RM 343)