ARCH 0666  CULT ARCHAEOLOGY: FANTASTIC FRAUDS AND MEANINGFUL MYTHS OF THE PAST

Class Meetings:  Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00-1:50pm
Location: List Art Center, Room 120

Instructor:  Michelle Berenfeld
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Office hours:  Wednesdays 3-5pm, and/or by appointment.

Teaching Assistants:
Sarah Dawson (sarah_dawson@brown.edu)  Office Hours:  Wednesdays, 2-4pm
Claudia Moser (claudia_moser@brown.edu)  Office Hours:  Thursdays, 11am-12pm and 1-2pm
Teaching Assistant office hours are held in Room 016 of Rhode Island Hall (lower level), unless otherwise arranged.

Class wiki page:  http://proteus.brown.edu/cultarchaeology10/Home
Password for wiki page and readings:  myths10

Course Overview:
Why does archaeology—which can be defined as the exploration of human history through the study of physical objects made and used by people in the past—inspire endless theories about aliens, lost civilizations, dark conspiracies, apocalyptic predictions, and mysterious technologies?

While archaeological investigation is in many ways about solving ancient “mysteries,” and while archaeologists do sometimes get chased through the jungle by killer bees and crawl around in caves in the desert, archaeology is, first and foremost, a social science grounded in rigorous methodologies, careful accumulation and analysis of data, and scientific method.  So where do the aliens and other ideas come from?  Why do they gain such enormous popularity?  It can’t all be Indiana Jones and The Da Vinci Code...  This course seeks to answer these questions and introduce students to the (exciting!) realities of archaeology by exploring the weird wide world of “cult archaeology,” also known as pseudo, fantastic—or as we will sometimes call it—wackadoo archaeology.  We will investigate the origins of so-called alternative archaeological theories, look at the types of “evidence” used to create them, and examine the reasons and rationales that lead people to invent, disseminate, and believe them.  From the lost city of Atlantis to alien astronauts to the idea that we are all descended from a mysterious ancient Antarctic civilization, we will explore the many different forms of cult archaeology and its impacts on society and history.

Why go through the trouble to learn about cult archaeology when the short answer to all of this is no, aliens did not build the pyramids (etc.)?  Well, because alternative archaeology is not only a source of entertaining websites and goofy reenactments.  It can and has been used in much more powerful, and sometimes sinister, ways to influence modern ideas about the past and the present.  The use and misuse of archaeology and history has supported nationalistic agendas, racial biases, and religious movements, which can have huge impacts on society.  By looking at archaeological ideas—especially the wacky ones—we can also learn a great deal about our more recent past and how modern thinking has informed and is informed by ancient history.

The goals of this course are to provide students with a wide-ranging introduction to archaeological methods and scientific inquiry through the entertaining lens of cult archaeology.  Students will develop critical thinking skills and analytical tools to evaluate evidence and “diagnose” pseudoarchaeology and pseudoscience when they see it—skills that will be useful to them throughout their academic career.  This course also seeks to engage students with larger questions about uses and meanings of history and the evolution of political and religious ideologies that are built on historical and archaeological ideas.  Along the way, students will learn about who really did build the pyramids, what happened to Atlantis, and if the world will end in 2012....
Prerequisites: None.

Course requirements:
All students are expected to attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, complete all of the readings and assignments by the dates outlined in the syllabus, and take exams on the dates that they are given. There will also be one opportunity for an extra-credit assignment.

Grade percentages:
Class attendance and participation (5%)
Midterm exam (40%)
Short writing assignments (2 x 5% = 10%)
  - Short writing assignments are very short (1 page) and grades will be credit/no credit.
Final exam (45%)

Required reading:
Available at the Brown Bookstore and on reserve at the Library:
  NOTE: If you want to buy an earlier edition, you are welcome to do so, but anything before the fifth edition will be missing the chapter on Egypt.

Additional Required Readings are listed below and available for viewing/download on the class wiki page.

Additional recommended text available at the Brown Bookstore:

COURSE CALENDAR
Note: All readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned.

Week 1 (Jan. 27, 29)
INTRODUCTION
Cult Archaeology and the Cult of Archaeology

Read for Jan. 29:

Week 2 (Feb. 1, 3, 5)
LOST CITIES, LOST MINDS? THE MANY LIVES OF ATLANTIS
The myth of Atlantis and archaeological realities.

Read for Feb. 1:
- Feder, Chapters 1 (Science & Pseudoscience) and 7 (Atlantis).
- Peruse http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_10.htm (a one-stop shop for all things wackadoo) and http://library.thinkquest.org/25245/atlantology/index.html
Read for Feb. 3:
Plato, *Timaeus* and *Critias* (especially descriptions of Atlantis and its history).

Read for Feb. 5:
- Feder, Chapter 2 (Epistemology).

**WEEK 3 (FEB. 8, 10, 12)**

**RIGHT PLACE, WRONG TIME; RIGHT PEOPLE, WRONG PLACE...**

*Losing civilizations and finding people. How archaeologists do and don’t “look for” ancient societies, what they find, and how they know. And...ALIENS!*

Read for Feb. 8:
- Rose, C. Brian. “Troy and the Historical Imagination,”

Read for Feb. 10:
Review these websites (in this order):
- [http://www.troy-in-england.co.uk/trojan-war/trojan-war-0.htm](http://www.troy-in-england.co.uk/trojan-war/trojan-war-0.htm)
- [http://www.therealskeptic.com/column07-06.html](http://www.therealskeptic.com/column07-06.html)
- Read: Thompson, D. “Transmission of Troy Stories to the Middle Ages,” in *The Trojan War: Literature and Legends from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Chapter 8). p. 126-137.

Read for Feb. 12:
- Feder, Chapter 8 (Alien Astronauts).

**WEEK 4 (FEB. 15, 17, 19)**

**ALIENS AND ANCIENT ASTRONOMERS**

*Aliens and other creatures as creators, inventors, and stand-ins for the ancients. Ancient people and the stars.*

Read for Feb. 15

Read for Feb. 17
Read for Feb. 19

Guest Presentation and Q&A: Prof. Stephen Houston on the Maya Long-Count Calendar and 2012
- Look on line for information/theories about the 2012 end-of-the-world prediction and its origins.

**Short writing assignment due in class Feb. 19 (two parts, one page):**
- Write a brief summary and response to something you find on the internet about 2012, which you think represents a “cult archaeology” approach.
- Prepare a written question pertaining to the Aveni reading (and/or about the Maya long-count calendar, 2012, other questions about the Maya) for Professor Houston.

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**WEEK 5 (FEB. 24, 26) NO CLASS FEB 22 (BROWN LONG WEEKEND)**

COMING TO AMERICA
*Who came before Columbus, what did they find, what did they leave behind.*

Read for Feb. 24
- Feder, Chapter 5 (Who Discovered America).

Read for Feb. 26

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**WEEK 6 (MAR. 1, 3, 5)**

PYRAMID POWER!
*As many wacko theories as there are sands in the Sahara...Pseudoarchaeology and Egypt.*

Read for Mar. 1:
- Feder, Chapter 9 (Mysterious Egypt)
- For aliens and other theories about building the pyramids, see...endless stuff on the internet. But you can start with: [http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_2.htm](http://www.world-mysteries.com/mpl_2.htm) (mathematical!) and [http://www.outerworlds.com/likeness/aliens/aliens.html](http://www.outerworlds.com/likeness/aliens/aliens.html) (aliens) and [http://health.learninginfo.org/pyramid-power.htm](http://health.learninginfo.org/pyramid-power.htm) (pyramid power)

Read for Mar. 3:
- On Omm Sety: [http://www.mysteriouspeople.com/Omm_Sety.htm](http://www.mysteriouspeople.com/Omm_Sety.htm)

Read for Mar. 5:
WEEK 7 (MAR. 8, 10, 12)

BY THE BOOK

Truths and fictions of Biblical archaeology, part I.

Read for Mar. 8


Read for Mar. 10

Presentation: Claudia Moser on ancient sacrifice.

- Reading TBA

MIDTERM MARCH 12 (on material through week 6)

WEEK 8 (MAR. 15, 17, 19)

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

More Biblical archaeology, now with knights!

Read for Mar. 15


Read for Mar. 17


Read for Mar. 19

Guest Lecture: Prof. Susan E. Alcock on the archaeology of Noah’s Ark.

- Reading TBA

WEEK 9 (MAR. 22, 24, 26)

EARNEST DELUSIONS: NEW AGE ARCHAEOLOGY AND CREATIONISM

Archaeology as spiritual resource, as religious agenda. Studying ancient religion versus religious study of the ancients.

Read for Mar. 22:

- Feder, Chapter 11 (Old Time Religion—New Age Visions)
- Genesis 1-2:8 (King James version on line at: http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=KjvGene.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1; Revised Standard version also available there)
- Peruse the website of the Creation Museum: http://creationmuseum.org/
- From the Onion: http://www.theonion.com/content/news/sumerians_look_on_in_confusion_as

Read for Mar. 24:

Read for Mar. 26:
Guest Lecture: Dr. Morag Kersel on the James, Brother of Jesus, Ossuary.

WEEK 10 (MAR. 29-APR. 2) NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11 (APR. 5, 7, 9)
INDIANA JONES WAS ON TO SOMETHING
The use and abuse of archaeology in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and other manipulations of archaeology for political purposes.

Read for Apr. 5:
  • Arnold, Bettina. “Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany,” in Histories of Archaeology: A Reader in the History of Archaeology. (2008), p. 120-144.

Read for Apr. 7:

Read for Apr. 9:
Presentation: Sarah Dawson on Volkerwanderung.
  • Reading TBA

WEEK 12 (APR. 12, 14, 16)
OOPS AND WHOPPERS
Out Of Place (OOP) Artifacts and Fantastic Hoaxes. The search for ancient “technologies,” how archaeologists know that’s not an ancient Egyptian light bulb, and how “archaeologists” convinced themselves and others to believe, and why.

Read for Apr. 12:
  • Read introduction at: http://www.kmatthews.org.uk/cult_archaeology/out_of_place_artefacts.html and peruse the list of OOP artifacts in right-hand column.

Read for Apr. 14:
  • Feder, Chapters 3 (Archaeological Hoax—Cardiff Giant) and 4 (Piltdown Man).

Read for Apr. 16:
  • Read “Bogus! An Introduction to Dubious Discoveries” at http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/hoaxes/intro.html and follow link to “more hoaxes” (link at bottom of the page).
Short writing assignment due in class April 16 (one page):
- Choose a real archaeological find or site and write your own pseudo-archaeological interpretation of it for a public audience. In developing your idea, consider the tactics and types of arguments used by pseudoarchaeology that we have learned about in class as well as real evidence that you may want to use or discard to make your case. Be prepared to talk about your idea in class.

**WEEK 13 (APR. 19, 21, 23)**

I SEE (AND HEAR) DEAD PEOPLE...
Psychic archaeology, dowsing, and other “alternative” methodologies...

Read for Apr. 19:
- Feder, Chapter 10 (Psychics, Dowsers).
- On realities of remote sensing and archaeology: [http://mysite.du.edu/~lconyer/](http://mysite.du.edu/~lconyer/)

Read for Apr. 21:

For Apr. 23:
- “Playing” pottery to hear sounds from antiquity (with video!): [http://tenser.typepad.com/tenser_said_the_tensor/2006/02/pottery_recordi.html](http://tenser.typepad.com/tenser_said_the_tensor/2006/02/pottery_recordi.html)

**WEEK 14 (APR. 26, 28)**  **READING PERIOD BEGINS APRIL 30**

STILL LOOKING
*Real mysteries in archaeology today, and the future of science and pseudo-science.*

Read for April 26:
- Feder, Chapter 12 (Real Mysteries)

Read for April 30:

**FINAL EXAM: DATE AND TIME TBA**