

DIGGING THE PAST: INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY

ANTH 1400/CLAS 3210 Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:30-10:45 am

Codes 10286 and 11311 James Hall Room 5305

Information

Prerequisite: None

Location: in person

Instructors: Prof. Kelly M. Britt (she/her)

Email: kellym.britt@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Office/Class: in-person

Student Hours (formerly Office Hours):

Thursdays: 12:30-3:30 pm in Ingersoll Hall Ext. Room 538 or by Zoom and/or appointment.

Class Format

A class discussion with lectures on weekly topics in reference to specific themes will be the main format of the class. Students are expected to do all required reading and contribute to in-class discussions.

Important Dates

Tuesday, Aug 26 First day of classes
 Saturday, Aug 30-31 and No Classes
 Monday, Sept 1 College Closed
 Monday, Sept 1 Last Day to Add/Swap a Course
 Monday, Sept 22-24 No Classes
 Wednesday, Oct 1-2 No Classes
 Monday, Oct 13 College Closed
 Tuesday, Oct 14 Conversion Day - Monday schedule
 Monday, Oct 20 No Classes
 Friday, Oct 24 Conversion Day -Monday schedule
 Thursday, Nov 6 Last day to withdraw from a course-W
 Thursday, Nov 27-28 and College Closed
 Saturday, Nov 29-30 and No Classes
 Monday, Dec 15 Last Day of Undergraduate Classes
 Tuesday, Dec 16-22 Final Exams/End of Fall Semester

Assignment Due Dates:

Reading Reflections-Each Class-see weekly schedule

Quiz 1: 9/9

Quiz 2: 9/25

Quiz 3: 11/4

Quiz 4: 12/2

Quiz 5: 12/9

Object Biography Zine

Part 1: 10/28

Part 2: 12/11



Course Description

How do we know what we believe to know about the past?

This class will dive into this question by introducing students to archaeology, a sub-discipline of anthropology that explores the human past through materiality. An overview of archaeological method and theory and current approaches to the practice in a postcolonial lens will be central to the course. Topics will include history of the discipline, how societies were organized, subsistence patterns, technology and trade, and analytical approaches. In addition, the course will explore some of the present issues within the field of archaeology such as site stewardship, professional ethics, activism, relationships between archaeologists and stakeholders of the past, as well as the display of culture to the general public. Class will use lectures, class discussions, reading materials, visual media, and guest lectures to explore the topics discussed above. This class will *not* be a survey course of archaeological sites.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrates understanding of anthropological concepts of human diversity, past and present.
2. Demonstrates critical thinking in writing and communication.

Anticipated Outcomes for this Course:

- Students will be able to identify key terminology, theories, theoretical orientations, methods, and perspectives in archaeology.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast scientific knowledge with other ways of knowing and be able to apply scientific knowledge to the study of the past.
- Students will be able to discuss the development of archaeology and the fundamentals of human history.
- Students will be able to identify the principles of archaeological investigation and discuss the theory and method of excavation.
- Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking in writing and communication about the main ideas of archaeological method and theory through a postcolonial lens that draws on readings, exhibits, and class discussions.

Requirements & Expectations

Attendance and participation are mandatory. Students must notify via email PRIOR TO CLASS for their absence to be excused. In case of religious holidays, student must inform professor ahead of time about classes missed, and arrangements will be made for make-up work or alternative assignments.

Required Texts

This is an Open Educational Resources Course and all the required readings are online.

<https://diggingthepast.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

Advising for Anthropology Majors and Minors

Professor Schiller is the advisor for anthropology majors and minors. If you're an anthropology major or minor or are interested in becoming one, you can make an appointment to meet with Professor Schiller here: https://brooklyn-cuny.campus.eab.com/pal/VUZRo_yqfq or by email, nschiller@brooklyn.cuny.edu. She has open advising hours every Tuesday and by appointment. Her email is nschiller@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

Grading

Class Requirements:

Reading Reflections	20
Object Biography-Part 1	10
Object Biography-Part 2	20
Quizzes (5 10pt/each)	50
Total points:	100

- Specific requirements for assignments will be discussed in class and posted to BrightSpace.
- We will have a **Grading Contract** for portions of the assignments based on the labor of your work. Complete the work satisfactorily receive credit. This will be discussed more in class and on BrightSpace.
- Options for revisions of written assignments available-requirements will be discussed in class and posted on BrightSpace.
- Extra credit will be given and instructions discussed in class and posted to BrightSpace.
- **Guidelines of Engagement and Classroom Etiquette will be created together democratically during first class and posted to BrightSpace**

Grading scale will be as follows:

Letter	Percentage
A+	above 98
A	98-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-67
D	66-63
D-	62-60
F	59-0

Attendance and Participation Policy: This is an introductory course and attendance and participation are required and is worth a total of 20 points. This will be assessed through your reading reflections. I will grant an excused absence only in the case of a documented medical emergency (i.e., intake form from a medical professional). Please see the [Brooklyn College Undergraduate Bulletin 2025-26](#) pg. 67 in reference to the state law regarding non-attendance because of religious beliefs. **Two unexcused absences** will be allowed for the semester with no credit reduction (the first week will not count toward the grade). **After that, I will reduce your final grade by 2 points for each unexcused absence.**

Special Needs: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability (physical or mental condition which substantially limits one or more major life activity) are invited to call the Center at (718) 951-5538 or visit us in 138 Roosevelt Hall. If you have already registered with the CSDS and submitted necessary forms, you will receive your course accommodation letter to provide to your professor and these specific accommodations can be discussed when appropriate.

Academic Honesty and Integrity: Your academic honesty is assumed, which means that I expect all of your submitted work to have come from your brain and your hand. If you've submitted the work of someone else or something else (AI sources), in whole or in part and without proper citation, I will not accept the assignment. **Within academic communities, plagiarism represents a serious breach of trust and can carry severe consequences, including disciplinary action.** With that in mind, we'll go over the proper ways of summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and citing your materials so you can avoid pilfering information, even accidentally. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for policy implementation can be found at www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. All work done in this course must be your own. The use of generative AI (GAI), like Chat GPT, will be permitted for some assignments as indicated on the syllabus, but not for all. Whenever GAI is used, it must be cited appropriately. It may be used for refining your ideas, fine-tuning research questions, or drafting an outline of your topic. However, you are responsible for any work you submit based on an AI query. Such use may not violate intellectual property laws or contain misinformation or unethical content. Failure to use GAI properly and ethically may result in failing the assignment, the course, or being reported for academic dishonesty.

Student Bereavement Policy: Please see [here](#) for BC Student Bereavement Policy.

Trauma Exposure, Self-Care, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Some of the material presented in this course—and some of the ways in which it is presented—may be upsetting or temporarily overwhelming at times. It is well-documented that indirect exposure to trauma narratives may put people at risk for developing trauma reactions, particularly those who have a personal trauma history or limited clinical experience. Self-awareness and good self-care go a long way in recognizing and minimizing distress and bouncing back from it. Be sure to do periodic self-checks on how the material in the course—and the ways in which the material is delivered and discussed—are affecting you.

Anti-Racist Pedagogy: I believe that Black Lives Matter and I teach from this perspective. However, as a white middle-class woman I am in a position of privilege and power. If you have any questions or issues with class material or my presentation of that material, please do not hesitate to bring them to my attention. I welcome your input. I hope that we can all be open to frank and honest discussions of racism and privilege.

Immigration status: As an educator, I support the rights of undocumented students to an education. If you have any concerns in that regard, feel free to discuss them with me, and I will respect your wishes concerning confidentiality. For resources and support, please check-out Brooklyn College's Immigrant Student Support Office, website: ImmigrantStudentSuccessOffice@brooklyn.cuny.edu email: isso@brooklyn.cuny.edu Instagram: @issobc or visit: <https://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/DACA>.

Sexual And Gender-Based Harassment, Discrimination, and Title IX
Brooklyn College is committed to fostering a safe, equitable, and productive learning environment. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, on or off campus, can find information about the reporting process, their rights, specific details about confidentiality, and reporting obligations of Brooklyn College employees at the Office of Diversity and Equity. Gender-based harassment is unwelcome conduct of a nonsexual nature based on an individual's actual or perceived gender, including conduct based on gender identity, gender expression, and/or nonconformity with gender stereotypes. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature—such as unwelcome advances and requests for sexual favors. Bullying, intimidation, and harassment based on actual or perceived sexuality is discriminatory. Brooklyn College encourages individuals who have experienced sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, or sexual violence to report the incident(s) to campus authorities, even if they have reported it to outside law enforcement and regardless of whether the incident(s) occurred on campus. Students may seek resolution through the Student Affairs office, Dean of Students, the Diversity and Equity Office, the Title IX Coordinator, or Public Safety. Confidential resources on campus include the Office of Personal Counseling, The Women's Center, and the Health Clinic. Appropriate action can include formal disciplinary action, including termination of employment, and suspension or expulsion of students.

Support for Student Wellness and Welfare:

• **Personal Counseling Center** (0203 James Hall) provides individual and group counseling, emergency support, and other services to all Brooklyn College students. Call 718.951.5363 or email BCPersonalCounseling@gmail.com. • **LGBTQ+ Resource Center** (219 Student Center) is both a welcoming space and supportive network for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and other LGBTQIA+ identities, and allied students, staff, and faculty at Brooklyn College. Call 718.951.5739 or email LGBTQCenter@brooklyn.cuny.edu. • **Women's Center** (227 Ingersoll Hall Extension) expands on the conventional direct services approach of traditional women's centers, which focuses on solving immediate crises through referrals and/or counseling, adopting a wide range of multidimensional needs-driven program activities that address the emotional, intellectual, physical and financial well-being of the whole person. Call 718.951.5777.

WK	Dates	Theme	Before Class	In Class
Unit 1-Introduction to Archaeology and The History of Archaeological Thought				
1	8/26	Introductions and Overview	Required Readings: NONE	Takeaways: - What is anthropology? - How does archaeology fit into anthropology? Activities: - Break into Groups. - Introduce yourselves - Review Syllabus
1	8/28	What is Archaeology?	Required Readings: Chapter 1 <i>Digging into Archaeology</i> Nelson, Peter and Sara Gonzalez 2023. <u>What do Archaeologists do?</u> Watch: <u>Solving Mysteries with Archaeologists!</u> (4.36 minutes)	Takeaways: - What is archaeology? - How do YOU define archaeology? - What do archaeologists do? Activities: - What do archaeologists study activity
2	9/2	The Beginnings	Requires Readings: Trigger, Bruce 1984 "Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist" Suggested Reading: Lydon, Jane and Rizvi, Uzma, "Introduction: Post-Colonialism and Archaeology"	Takeaways: - In what context did anthropology begin? - What is decolonization and postcolonialism? - What are of the early and critical developments in archaeology? - Who are some of the key people? Activities: - Readings Reflection
2	9/4	History of Archaeology	Required Readings: Chapters 2 and 3 <i>Digging into Archaeology</i>	Takeaways: - Who were some of the key players in the beginning of archaeology as a discipline - What and when were the speculative phase in archaeology? - What marks the beginnings of modern archaeology? When was it? Activities: - Readings Reflection
Unit 2-Archaeological Methods				
3	9/9	Archaeology Basics	Required Readings: Chapter 4 <i>Digging into Archaeology</i> Watch: What is archaeology: Understanding the archaeological Record (6.44 minutes) Context in Archaeology: More than Just a Pretty Face (4.06 minutes)	Takeaways: - What is the archaeological record? And how do we 'read' it? - What is stratigraphy? - What is classification? - What is association? - What is provenience? - What is the soil matrix? Quiz 1 on Unit 1 Activities: - Readings Reflection

WK	Dates	Theme	Before Class	In Class
3	9/11	Prof. Britt-Talk in Tanger Auditorium-11 am-possibly	How are Archaeological Artefacts Preserved in the Ground? (6.35 minutes) Required Readings: Dante et al 2021. "Private Struggles in Public Spaces: Documenting COVID-19 Material Culture and Landscapes"	• How are artifacts preserved? Takeaways: • What is contemporary archaeology? • What methods are used to study contemporary archaeology? Activities: • N/A
4	9/16	Time and Depth-1	Required Readings: Chapters 5 -8 <i>Digging into Archaeology</i>	Takeaways: • What is the scientific method? • What are the four stages of research design? • What is the difference between a survey and an excavation? • How do we decide where to dig? • What is a typology and why are they so important to archaeology? • What is relative dating? • How do relative and absolute dating techniques differ? • What is the Law of Superposition? Activities: • Readings Reflection
4	9/18	Time and Depth-2	Watch (at least 4): How Do Archaeologists Decide Where to Dig? (4.22 minutes) Doing an Archaeological Field Survey (2.06 minutes) A Day in the Life of the Archaeological Dig at James Fort (4.19 minutes) Typology in Archaeology (3.15 minutes) Earth Science: Crash Course History of Science #20 (13.43 minutes) Principles of Stratigraphy (4.13 minutes) Dating in Archaeology (10.01 minutes) The Scientific Methods: Crash Course History of Science #14 (13.03 minutes) Earth Science: Crash Course History of Science #20 (13.43 minutes)	Takeaways: • What is the scientific method? • What are the four stages of research design? • What is the difference between a survey and an excavation? • How do we decide where to dig? • What is a typology and why are they so important to archaeology? • What is relative dating? • How do relative and absolute dating techniques differ? • What is the Law of Superposition? Activities: • Readings Reflection • Cookie Excavation
Unit 3-Thinking from Things (Part 1)				

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5	9/23	NO CLASSES		
5	9/25	Object Biography-Part 1 Workshop	Required Readings: Martin, Ann Smart 2001 Magical, Mythical, Practical, and the Sublime (19 pages) Object Biography Prep Choose an object from the NYC Repository's Website: https://archaeology.cityofnewyork.us/ Bring laptop, tablet, or smart phone for online research	Takeaways: - Knowledge of the NYC Archaeology Repository website - The object for your Object Biography Activities: Quiz 2 on Unit 2 - Readings Reflection - Object selected for biography and formulate research questions/ideas - Smart-Martin's Worksheet
6	9/30	Overview of Artifact Biography-Part 2	Required Readings: How to Make a Zine: https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk/support/read/how-to-make-your-own-zine	Takeaways: - What is a zine? - How do you make one? Activities: - Learn more about zine making and library's resources
6	10/2	NO CLASSES		
7	10/7	Subsistence	Watch: Chapter 10 in <i>Digging into Archaeology</i> Archaeobotany Excavations at Durham University (2.48 minutes) Archaeology 1010: Zooarchaeology-Reading Bones (17.04 minutes)	Takeaways: - What information can we gather from studying subsistence patterns of the past? - Where and how do we get this data? - What can this data tell us? - What is zooarchaeology? - How do we "read" bones and teeth? - What is the difference between MEALS and DIET? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Version of Tooth Wear Lab
7	10/9	Technology and Trade	Watch: Stone Tool Technology of Our Human Ancestors (5.41 minutes) Trade and Exchange: From Jacksonville to Cahokia (36.55 minutes)	Takeaways: - What are some types of material used by ancient people? - How do we source material? - What can source material tell us about trade and exchange? - How are tools manufactured? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Tool Activity

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				• What is the difference between function and use? • What is Characterization? • What is Distribution?	
8	10/14	CONVERSION DAY-FOLLOW MONDAY SCHEDULE			
8	10/16	Bioarchaeology and Ethics	Required Readings: Chapters 12 and 16 in <i>Digging into Archaeology</i> Watch: AnthroBiology Podcast: History of Race/The State of Race in Biological Anthropology, February 2020.	Takeaways: • What is bioarchaeology? • What is the difference between sex and gender? • What are the ethical considerations when working with human remains? • How can policy support/not support ethical interactions?	Activities: • Readings Reflection
9	10/21	Object Biography Workshop	Required Readings N/A but come with your object you selected for the object biography. Bring laptop or iPad, etc. to be able to do research and Zine exploration.	Takeaways: • How to make a Zine? • How to conduct research?	Activities: • Researching object biography
9	10/23	Research Methods Meet in the Library	Required Readings N/A but come with your object you selected for the object biography	Takeaways: • How do I formulate a research Question? • How do I do research at the library on a particular topic? • How to I compose a Reference Cited Section? • What's the difference between a References Cited section and a Bibliography? • What is plagiarism? • How is using AI plagiarism?	Activities: • Researching object biography
10	10/28	African Burial Grounds	Required Readings: La Roche, Cheryl J., and Michael L. Blakey. "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground." <i>Historical Archaeology</i>, vol. 31, no. 3, 1997, pp. 84-106, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03374233. (22 pages)	Takeaways: • Can we see slavery in the archaeological record? If so, How? • What is the difference between slavery in urban versus rural contexts?	Activities: • Readings Reflection • Lower Manhattan African Burial Ground Video/Website in class Part 1 of Object Biography Zine Due

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			Lower Manhattan African Burial Ground Flatbush African Burial Ground Website	
10	10/30	Identity/ Identities	Required Readings: George, Diane F., Bernice Kurchin, and Kelly M. Britt. 2019. Introduction. In <i>Archaeology of Identity and Dissonance : Contexts for a Brave New World</i>. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brooklyn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5645968. (18 pages with citations). Online in library. Pearson and Mullins Domesticating Barbie (35 pages-with citations). Online in library.	Takeaways: - How do we look at identity? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Barbie Lab
Unit 4-Thinking from Things (Part 2)				
11	11/4	Social Archaeology	Required Readings: Chapter 11 <i>Digging into Archaeology</i>	Takeaways: - What is social archaeology? - How do we analyze societies? - What is ethnoarchaeology? Activities: Quiz 3 on Unit 3 - Readings reflection
11	11/6	Cognition	Required Readings: Renfrew, Colin and Paul Bahn, Chapter 10 in <i>Methods in Archaeology</i> Watch: Aspects of Archaeology: Cognitive Archaeology (10.18 minutes)	Takeaways: - What are symbols are how do they relate to cognitive archaeology? - What are some of the ways people of the past measured their world? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Symbol Activity
12	11/11	Environmental Archaeology	Required Readings: Reitz, Elizabeth J. and Myra Shackly 2012 "Chapter 1 Introduction to Environmental Archaeology" Watch: What is Environmental Archaeology? A-Z Archaeology Advent Calendar History of CRM (1.18 minutes) Environmental Archaeology / Paleoclimate - Hiroo Nasu, SOKENDAI: The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (15.51 minutes)	Takeaways: - What is environmental archaeology? - How can we use archaeological techniques to reconstruct past environments? - What contributions do you think environmental archaeology can make to modern society? - What does sustainability mean to you? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Climate Crisis Activity
12	11/13	Collecting, Repatriation and Reparations	Required Reading: Atalay, Sonya. 2017. NAGPRA Comic 1. Website: https://nagpracomics.weebly.com/?fbclid=I	Takeaways: - How do objects shape our understanding of history and culture? Activities: - Readings Reflection The British Museum is Full of Stolen Artifacts (9.42 minutes)

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			wAR0Y9XwkCtompZI14xVY7oNG70ZfmCgbnW5QFa1atNpD9HTDQ38MGc3Lr-o Nayari, Farah (2023)A 'Digital Heist' Recaptures the Rosetta Stone Watch: Kennewick Man The Ancient One and Repatriation (1 hour 2 minutes)	- What are some ethical considerations archaeologists should think about when working with objects from any culture? - Museum Policy Activity
Unit 5-Field Work				
13	11/18	Mock Excavation	Watch: How to lay out a 1 x 1 M Unit (2:55 minutes) How to take measurements (2:38)	Takeaways: - How do you layout a unit? - How do you take field notes? - What information can soil tell you? Activities: - Learn to take field notes and complete field forms - Mapping
13	11/20	Mock Excavation	Watch: How to lay out a 1 x 1 M Unit (2:55 minutes) How to take measurements (2:38)	Takeaways: - How do you layout a unit? - How do you take field notes? - What information can soil tell you? Activities: - Lay out a 1 x 1 m unit - Learn to excavate in natural soil levels - Learn to take field notes and complete field forms - Mapping
14	11/25	Lab Methods	Watch: Archaeology in the Lab (3.15 minutes)	Takeaways: - How do you process artifacts? - What information can be gathered from objects? Activities: - Readings reflection - Process artifacts
14	11/27	THANKSGIVING BREAK		
Unit 6-Communities, Heritage, and Heritage Management				
15	12/2	CRM, Tourism, and Heritage Management	Required Readings: Renfrew, Colin and Paul Bahn, Chapter 14 in <i>Methods in Archaeology</i> Watch: What is Cultural Resource Management? (4.34 minutes) Optional: Destruction of Memory, Icarus Films, Director Tim Slade (1 hour 22 minutes-located through BC library online)	Takeaways: - Who owns the past? - Can we decolonize the practice of archaeology? If so, how? - Why are historic sites targeted in times of conflict? - How can sites be protected from acts of violence or climate change? Activities: Quiz 4 on Units 4 & 5 - Readings Reflection

WK	Dates	Theme	Before Class	In Class
15	12/4	Community-Based Participatory Research	Required Readings: Atalay, Sonya Chapter 3 from <i>Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities</i>. Online in library. Britt, Kelly M. 2019 "Collaborating on the Federal Level: Moving beyond Mandated Consultation in the Section 106 Process"	Takeaways: - What is community-based research? - What makes it different than other forms of research? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Building a Community Activity
16	12/9	Indigenous Archaeology	Required Readings: Laluk, Nicholas C. 2020 "Changing how archaeology is done in Native American contexts: An Ndee (Apache) case study" Optional Watch: Contemporary Native Issues: Indigenizing Archaeological Thought and Practice	Takeaways: - How do we Indigenize archaeology? - How is this different from decolonizing it? Activities: Quiz 5 on Unit 6 - Readings Reflection - Map Comparison Activity
16	12/11	Pseudo-Archaeology and Archaeology Futures	Required Readings: Feder, Kenneth L.(2019) Ch 9: Prehistoric E.T. from Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology Questions Worth Asking Symposium 2023 "Advocating for Archaeology's New Purpose"	Takeaways: - What is pseudoarchaeology and why is it so problematic? - How will social media, fake news and social aspects affect what and how archaeology is done? - What will the archaeology of the future look like? - How do shows like Ancient Apocalypse contribute to systematic racism? And/or other forms of social inequities? Activities: - Readings Reflection - Design the Future Activity - Share Zines Part 2 of Object Biography Zine Due

* Note syllabus subject to change.

Resources and Organizations:

[Arhpodnet](#)

[Society of American Archaeology](#)

[Society of Black Archaeologists](#)

[Archaeological Institute of America](#)

[Society of Historical Archaeology](#)