AN INTRODUCTION TO THEORY IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Fall 2013

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Class location and time:
A222 Fowler, Thursday 2:00-4:50 PM

Office hours:
307 Haines, Friday 9:00-11:50
or by appointment
Office phone: 825-4614; lesure@anthro.ucla.edu
[I promise to read any e-mail with "Anthro 201A" or something similar in the subject line.]

A graduate-level introduction to theory in archaeology, this class is designed to be a theoretical “boot camp” for entering archaeology graduate students in the Anthropology Department and in the Program in Archaeology. It is also appropriate for students in Anthropology, NELC, Art History, or History who are interested in a graduate-level background in archaeological theory. Readings and discussions emphasize an historical perspective on theoretical debates in anthropological archaeology over the last 50 years.

Class time will be spent on student discussion of readings. The reading load is heavy (8-9 chapters or articles per week) and students are expected to not only have done the readings but to have thought critically about them before coming to class.

Requirements

Student evaluation will be based on general class participation, seminar leadership, and three written (typed, double spaced, 8-10 page) papers to be completed during the course of the quarter:

(1) You should attend all classes and demonstrate familiarity with the readings by actively participating in the discussion.

(2) One or two students will be seminar leaders each week. Seminar leaders will not give presentations on the readings but instead direct seminar discussion, posing questions and working to keep the discussion on track. Seminar leaders will be graded on their performance.
(3) Students will write three 8-10 page essays during the course of the quarter, each analyzing a different issue raised in course readings. In these essays, you are expected to display evidence of having done the course readings and thought critically about them. It is not necessary to do readings or research beyond the course readings for these papers, though you are of course free to draw in other sources you deem relevant. You may select any topics raised by the course readings. The discussion topics provided for each week—and of course the discussions themselves—should provide you with ideas. Feel free to discuss paper topics with me. The first essay is due Friday, October 18 by 4 PM in my box in 341 Haines Hall. The second essay is due Friday, November 8, at 4 PM, and the third essay on Tuesday, December 10, also at 4 PM. Feel free to turn in any of the essays early.

**Background Readings, especially for the archaeology students:**

If you are coming with little background in the history of archaeology, you might want to look at the following books:

Willey, Gordon R., and Jeremy A. Sabloff  

Trigger, Bruce G.  
2006 *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Second edition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  [Best in exactly what Willey and Sabloff are weak on, the intellectual history of archaeological understandings; world-wide coverage has both advantages and disadvantages]

**Class Readings**

Readings are each available and at least one of three locations:

(1) Many are available online through the UCLA library system. All of those are identifiable in the syllabus because I have inserted a link that will hopefully take you to or nearly to the paper itself. I do not guarantee that those will actually work. However, if there is a link there, then I was able to obtain the PDF through the library system, so you should be able to do so too. In several cases (Binford's articles are examples) the link is to an original publication whereas the syllabus cites a subsequent book in which the paper was republished. Sorry about that. This is a work in progress.

(2) Some of the readings are available in physical form in the graduate reserves (Young Research Library, YRL). Those are marked with an asterisk *.

(3) Other readings, along with some of those marked with the * are available as photocopies in the Commons Room of the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology (153 Fowler -- I will show you where to look on the first day of class).
Seminar Schedule

Part I: A Brief History through the 1980s

1. September 26: Introduction

Topics: How is archaeology divided institutionally and how do these institutional divisions affect archaeological practice? What is anthropological archaeology and how does it relate to other archaeologies? How is archaeology organized institutionally here at UCLA?

2. October 3: The "New" Archaeology, c. 1960-1975

Topics for discussion: What kinds of things can archaeologists learn about past cultures? What kinds of procedures should they use to seek that knowledge? We will address these questions from a historical perspective, with a particular focus on the rise of the “New Archaeology” in American anthropology during the 1960’s and early 70’s. How did “new” archaeologists represent what they did as different from what archaeologists had done before? How did they envision “science” and what role did they give it in archaeological inquiry? Finally, what was their vision of an “anthropological” archaeology and how it should differ from other archaeologies?

1. What Are the Possibilities and Limitations of Archaeology?

Hawkes, Christopher

*Binford, Lewis R.

Conkey, Margaret W.

2. Generalization before the New Archaeology:

*Childe, V. Gordon
3.  Archaeology and Science, c. 1965-70

*Binford, Lewis R.

*Watson, Patty Jo, Steven A. LeBlanc, and Charles L. Redman

Hill, James N.

Salmon, Merrilee H.

3.  October 10:  From Ecology to Politics in Processual Archaeology

Topics for discussion: As "new" archaeology developed into processual archaeology there were significant shifts of interest. A major development of the 1970s was the growing interest in politics. What is the difference between an ecological and a political emphasis? Should sociopolitical organization be explained primarily in social and political terms, or is an ecological analysis appropriate? What is missing in ecological approaches? Are these two actually compatible lines of inquiry for archaeologists? All these developments in processual archaeology yielded important conceptual and methodological debates; we will consider briefly discussions of societal taxonomies and regional analysis.

1. Ecological and Systems Perspectives on Chiefdoms and States, 1962-1972

*Service, Elman R.

Flannery, Kent V.

2. The Transition to Politics, 1975-1985

Earle, Timothy K.

Carneiro, Robert L.

Brumfiel, Elizabeth M.

3. Concept and Method: Societal Taxonomies and Regional Analysis

Feinman, Gary, and Jill Neitzel

Wright, Henry T.

4. Ongoing debate


Topics for discussion: We have read bits and pieces of postprocessual reactions to processual archaeology. Now it is time to put the pieces together to understand that critique. What was the postprocessual critique of processual archaeology? In what ways did processual archaeologists respond? What theoretical and methodological differences do you see between processual and postprocessual archaeology? How was the theoretical program of postprocessual archaeology manifested in concrete studies?

1. The Development of Postprocessualism in Britain, 1980-1990

*Hodder, Ian

*Shanks, Michael, and Christopher Tilley

*Hodder, Ian

2. Some Case Studies, American and British, 1985-1995

Leone, Mark P., Parker B. Potter, Jr., and Paul A. Shackel
http://www.jstor.org/stable/2743240

Tringham, Ruth E.

*Hodder, Ian

*Barrett, John C.

FIRST ESSAY DUE: Friday, October 18 by 4:00 PM in 341 Haines Hall

Part II: Archaeological Reasoning

5. October 24:  Formation Processes, Middle Range Theory, and Hermeneutics

Topics for discussion: The goal of archaeology is to study ancient people and societies, yet we have access to what interests us only indirectly, through the study of material remains.  How are we to go about constructing arguments about social process based on material remains?  In what ways should archaeology’s conceptual scheme be similar to or different from that of
geology? How is the archaeological record formed? What is “middle range theory” and how has it been conceptualized by different archaeologists? Finally, is there a hermeneutic alternative to the interpretive procedures developed by processual archaeologists? Does it differ fundamentally from “middle range theory”? How?

1. **Uniformitarianism in Geology**

Leet, L. Don, Sheldon Judson, and Marvin E. Kauffman

2. **Interpreting the Archaeological Record**

Schiffer, Michael B.

Schiffer, Michael B.

Binford, Lewis R.

Binford, Lewis R.

3. **The Hermeneutic Alternative**

*Hodder, Ian

*Hodder, Ian

4. **Synthesis?**

Kosso, Peter
6. October 31: Ethnographic Data and Archaeology: Analogy

Topics for discussion: This week we consider how analogies to living societies should inform archaeological arguments. Identify different stands taken on this issue. Of the readings for this week, the first four explicitly address this topic. The last three should be read as case studies. Pay careful attention to the structure of the arguments in the case studies. How have these authors incorporated ethnographic data in their arguments? How are their practices similar to or different from those recommended by the different theorists? Which arguments do you find more or less convincing?

1. Analogy in Archaeology

Ascher, Robert

Binford, Lewis R.

Schrire, Carmel

Wylie, Alison

2. Case Studies That Use Ethnographic Data

Solomon, Anne

Gillespie, Susan D., and Rosemary A. Joyce

Gilman, Patricia A.
Part III: Some Themes of the Last 25 Years

7. November 7: Agency, Materiality, and Embodiment

Topics for discussion: Agency, practice materiality, and embodiment have have become prominent terms in archaeological writings. Where do they come from and what do they mean? Should such considerations radically change our accounts of the past or are the changes required essentially cosmetic? For instance, maybe all we need to do is change verbs from passive to active tenses? We look first at agency and practice, then at some of the theoretical background on embodiment and materiality.

1. Background

Strathern, Andrew J.

Barrett, John C.

Joyce, Rosemary A.
2000 Read Introductory and concluding chapters. In Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica, University of Texas Press, Austin.

3. Case Studies

Joyce, Rosemary A.

Watkins, Trevor

Gamble, Clive
2004 Materiality and Symbolic Force: a Paleolithic View of Sedentism. In Rethinking Materiality: the Engagement of Mind with the Material World,
edged it by Elizabeth DeMarrais, Chris Gosden, and Colin Renfrew, pp. 85-95. McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

Review from week 4:
Barrett, John C.

SECOND ESSAY DUE: Friday, November 8th by 4:00 PM in 341 Haines Hall


Topics for discussion: Processual archaeology has recently been attacked from a new corner of the theoretical playing field: scholars who accuse processualism of being Darwinian in slogan but not in fact. Archaeologists, the scholars suggest, need to go "back to the book" on Darwinism and reformulate their field in more purely Darwinian terms. Is this critique justified? How does it relate to the postprocessual critique of processualism? Do the Darwinists and the postprocessualists have anything in common? Why are style and functions so important for Darwinian archaeologists?

1. Overview

*Shennan, Stephen

2. Style and Function

Dunnell, Robert C.

Bettinger, Robert L., Robert Boyd, and Peter J. Richerson

3. For debate

Bamforth, Douglas B.

Topics for discussion: Is it possible to draw together evidence from linguistics, genetics, and archaeology to produce a grand synthesis of the population history of humanity? What is the role of culture history versus culture process (as defined by the New Archaeologists) in such an effort? Is this a return to the concerns of traditional culture history? Or, instead, is this a realization of the ultimate goals of processual archaeology? What should the role of Darwinism be in such a synthesis? Is Darwinism the single appropriate source of theoretical unity for such work?

1. Language, Genes, and Archaeology: Early Works

Cavalli-Sforza, Luigi Luca, Alberto Piazza, Paolo Menozzi, and Joanna Mountain
http://www.pnas.org/content/85/16/6002.full.pdf+html

Renfrew, C.
Wylie, Alison

2. Language, Genes, and Archaeology: Elaboration and Debate

Renfrew, C.
2000 At the edge of knowability: towards a prehistory of languages, Cambridge Archaeological Journal 10, 7 – 34.  
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0959774300000019

Bellwood, Peter

http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0959774307000017
Richerson, P. J., R. Boyd, and R. L. Bettinger  

Zvelebil, M.  
2004  Who were we 6000 years ago?  In search of prehistoric identities.  In *Traces of Ancestry: studies in honor of Colin Renfrew*, edited by Martin Jones.  Cambridge, McDonald Institute, 41-60.

10. **December 5: Pluralism and Multiple Archaeologies**

Topics for discussion: What is pluralism? Are there different kinds of pluralism, and, if so, which is the most appropriate for archaeology? Can multiple archaeologies coexist and even contribute to a larger whole? Is making a contribution to a larger whole a good thing or a bad thing from the standpoint of pluralist archaeology?

1. **An Interesting Early Work by Trigger**

Trigger, Bruce G.  

2. **Some Philosophers of Science on Pluralism**

Mitchell, Sandra D.  

Wylie, Allison  

3. **Pluralism among the Archaeologists**

Hegmon, Michelle  

Kristiansen, Kristian

http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?decade=2000&jid=ARD&volumeId=11&issueId=02&iid=290679

Chapman, Robert


4. Archaeologists, Native Americans, and Indigenous Archaeology

White Deer, Gary

Whiteley, Peter M.


Atalay, Sonja

**FINAL ESSAY DUE: Tuesday, December 10, by 4:00 PM in 341 Haines Hall**