Social Organization and Kinship Theory in Archaeology

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Objectives:

This graduate seminar will explore kinship theory as it applies to archaeological reconstructions. Although it has been reported that archaeologists cannot excavate kinship systems, our models of social and cultural development are based on constructs of consanguinity, descent, genealogy, alliance, exchange and residence. In other words, “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...” Moreover, where social formations conceptually are not based on kinship their definition typically is in apposition (e.g., Chiefdoms, Kings, States, Houses). The goal of this seminar is to explore patterns of social relations and their archaeologically detectable material correlates.

Format:

This seminar is a discussion of topics related to particular areas and themes. Weekly assignments of readings will be made and students are asked to produce a one-page summary of their reading for distribution to the rest of the class. Class participation is required, and the student is expected to discuss their reading in class. A ten-page paper on how kinship theory relates to their area of interest is the only other requirement.

Grading:

Grades are determined by class participation and the submission of the final paper. There are no exams.

Topics:

January
8 Introduction
15 Archaeology of kinship
22 Critiques of kinship theory
29 Kinship theory

February
5 Caribbean
12 Maya
19 Brazil/lowland South America
26 Ceramic sociology

March
5 Spring Break
12 House Societies
Northwest coast
Melanesia

April
Exchange
Summation
SAA meeting

Text:

**Recommended Readings:**


Joyce, Rosemary and Susan Gillespie, eds. (). *Beyond Kinship*.


Levi-Strauss, Claude (). *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.

Malinowski, Bronislaw (). *The Sexual Life of Savages*.

Murdock, George P. (). *Social Structure*. 


Rubel, Paula and Abraham Rosman (). *Your Own Pigs you May Not Eat*.


Schneider, David M. (). *Yap Kinship*.
