

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**ANG 5110 (9723)**

**2006 Fall term**

Lecturer: Dr. Augusto Oyuela-Caycedo  
Lecture sessions: W 3-5 (9:35-12:35)  
Location: Turlington B357  
Office: T: B131  
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**DESCRIPTION:**

The objective to this course is to create a solid foundation for the development of anthropological archaeological research. The course gives the basis for the understanding of where theories come from, how they are developed and how they succeed. The course looks at the epistemological basis of the major trends in the field indicating the critical issues that each raises and what are their problems. This course will help in developing critical thinking on theory formulation and evaluation. This goal will be accomplished by evaluating the different trends that have driven American archaeology in the last 100 years. The first part of the class will focus on the different epistemological approaches that exist. We will look at the kinds of questions asked and the methodologies employed to answer them. In this process we will examine the epistemology of archaeology, as well as its relationship to other disciplines. We will look at where the theories come from and critically examine their power of explanation. We will look at how the theories are evaluated and what factors favor their success or failure. The second part of the course will be developed around current theories utilized in the last 6 years. This will be accomplished with a review of topics that are under discussion in archaeology. This second part will be developed in agreement with the students on the identification of "hot" topics, as well as on the bibliography to be studied and analyzed. Each week a "new" topic will be presented that focuses on theoretical explanations that answer questions that are of interest today at the beginning of the 21st century (for example origins of social inequality, the ideological basis of power, and other topics). In the class we will discuss such explanations as well as the epistemological basis and the history of the questions and how they have changed through time. In the seminar we will discuss how archaeology can answer such questions by presenting avenues for future research, and by recognizing the problems that such approaches face.

## REQUIRED READINGS:

Hodder, Ian and Scott Hutson. 2004. *Reading the past*. Third edition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

O'Brien, Michael J. R., Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer. 2005. *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its Progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City.

Trigger, Bruce G. 1989. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Willey, G. R. and P. Phillips. 1958. *Method and Theory in American Archaeology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Wiley, Alison. 2002. *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

**EVALUATION:** Two review papers of the two sections (each 15%), at least one review paper of a week in class (15%). Preparation on a "hot" topic in theory (15%), a final paper (15%), class presentation of the paper (10%), and class participation (15%).

**The topic of the final paper should be discussed with the professor in advance. REMEMBER IT IS A RESEARCH PAPER, NOT A REVIEW PAPER. The paper should be 20 to 25 pages in length, double-spaced including bibliography.**

There is a large amount of literature to be covered in this class and each student must be able to discuss each of the articles. You are responsible for all of the readings. Every week the instructor will select 5 reviews of the students to be graded. It always helps to write a review on each article or chapter that you read, and have notes on the topics that are relevant for the discussion, as well as questions on the aspects that you do not understand.

**Disclaimer:** Some adjustments may be made in the schedule and course requirements during the course of the semester. All changes will be announced.

**ATTENDANCE** is required.

## GRADE SYSTEM:

A= 90-100 %

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 60-69

F= Below 59

## **PART I : GENERAL APPROACHES TO ARCHAEOLOGY**

Week 1, August 23: Introduction.

Week 2, August 30: Origins of theories and methods in archaeology.

Week 3, September 6: Cultural particularism.

Week 4, to be defined the date probably September 8: Cultural particularism continued.

Week 5, September 20: New and processual archaeology.

### **REVIEW PAPER DUE ON MAJOR TRENDS OF ARCHAEOLOGY WEEKS 1-4**

Week 6, September 27: New and processual archaeology continued.

Week 7, October 4: Post-processual archaeology.

Week 8, October 11: Post-processual archaeology.

## **PART II: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORIES OF THE BIG QUESTION: WHY**

Presentation, discussion and reading assigned by the team group on topics in agreement with the professor. To be defined by Week 5.

Week 9, October 18: Hot topic in theory.

### **REVIEW PAPER DUE ON MAJOR TRENDS OF ARCHAEOLOGY WEEKS 5-8**

Week 10, October 25: Hot topic in theory

Week 11, November 1: Hot topic in theory

Week 12, November 8: Hot topic in theory

Week 13, November 15: Hot topic in theory

Week 14, November 22: Fall Break

Week 15, November 29: Hot topic in theory

Week 16, December 6: Hot topic in theory

**Week 17, DECEMBER 12: FINAL PAPER DUE.**

## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

By A. Oyuela-Caycedo  
2006 - Fall

### Week 2.

#### Origins of theories and methods in archaeology.

Archaeological theory is rooted in different sources from geology to biblical history. The methods developed are derived from other fields (example stratigraphy from geology). However, most of the interpretations of the origins of the field seem to agree on some basic aspects. There is also agreement that the contexts of the rise of archaeology are also very diverse. Please read the following chapters and make a comparison between the explanations of the origins of archaeology. Ask what the authors have in common and what are the differences in their explanations? What kinds of data do they use for their arguments? How do they sustain their arguments? Are their conclusions the same? What problems do you recognize with the four histories of the discipline? How would you approach the subject if you wanted to understand the origins of theories and methods in archaeology?

#### Readings:

Willey and Sabloff. 1974. *A history of American archaeology*. Freeman. **Chapters 3 and 4.**

Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press. **Chapters 3 and 5.**

O'Brien, Michael J. R. Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer. 2005. *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City. **Chapter 1.**

Wyley, Alison. 2002. *Thinking from Things*. **Chapter 1.**

## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

By A. Oyuela-Caycedo

Week 3.

### Cultural - Historical Particularism.

The development of American archaeology has been characterized by the formation of concepts that have permitted the creation of typologies. Typologies allow for the development of sequences and the building of relationships between sites to create cultural areas as units of analysis (example Southwestern archaeology). Two of the cornerstones for building a spatial and temporal sketch have been based on the works of McKern and especially the works of Krieger. What were their contributions? What concepts do they introduce to American archaeology? How much influence of these concepts do you recognize up to today? Walter Taylor in his dissertation made a critique of the development of archaeology up to 1948, influenced by Clyde Kluckhohn. What was the critique of Taylor? Do you think that such a critique would be valid today in American Archaeology (think of the cases that you know)? How did Taylor support his critique? Gordon Willey has been characterized as the great synthesizer of American Archaeology. His invaluable experiences of field work have helped to build basic knowledge in the construction of historical sequences from the Virú valley in Peru, to the Southeast of the United States. His work with Phillips was a cornerstone in the way that American archaeology was done. Can you explain why his work was so important? What conceptual contribution does his work make in theory and methodology? Do you think that the sequence of the title of the book "Method and Theory" indicates an epistemological orientation? What is the orientation that they have? Do you think that Willey and Phillips took Taylor's critique into consideration? In the way that American archaeology is done today, do you see the relevance of Willey and Phillips' work? What about the critique of a Post-modernist like Alison Wyley? How does Wyley see the issues?

McKern, William C. 1939. The Midwestern Taxonomic Method as an Aid to Archaeological Study. *American Antiquity* 4:301-313.

Krieger, A. D. 1944. The Typological concept. *American Antiquity* 9:271-288.

Taylor, Walter. [1948] 1983. **Chapter 3.** *A Study of Archaeology*. Souther Illinois, University at Carbondale.

Willey, G. R. and P. Phillips. **Introduction, Chapters 1 to 3.** 1958. *Method and Theory in American Archaeology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. University of Alabama (2001).

Wyley, Alison. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. **Chapter 2.**

**Optional:** Lyman, and Michael J.O. Brien. **Introduction.** *Method and Theory in American Archaeology* University of Alabama (2001).

Willey and Sabloff. **Chapter 4.** *A history of American Archaeology*. Freeman.

Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. **Chapter 5.** *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press.

## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

A. Oyuela-Caycedo

Week 4.

### Cultural - Historical Particularism

Several authors argue that after the Second World War American archaeology can be characterized as functionalist archaeology (1940-1960) (Willey and Sabloff 1978 and Trigger 1989). This stage in archaeology is different from the previous one that was characterized as being focused on typology and classification. Do you agree with such characterizations? What elements do you see that justify such periodization? Do you think that the highlights of innovation in archaeological research, as for example the works of MacNeish and Willey in settlement pattern studies of the Viru project or the origins of agriculture, should be used to characterize the development of American archaeology? Why? Do you really think that the fieldwork of archaeology and the day to day work in archaeology changed radically after such innovations in American archaeology? Do you think that the so-called functionalist approach to archaeology is still relevant today? Why and where do you see it?

The explanation given by Willey and MacNeish on how they developed their projects should give you an idea of how such innovation in methodology developed. What is the common process in both projects? In terms of theoretical contributions, what patterns do you observe between both authors? In one of his last theoretical contributions in *American Antiquity*, Willey published a work on the issue of the rise of complex societies. How much does he change from his early proposals? Do you think that his approach is still valid for consideration today? Are the concepts that he employed in his article in use today? Do you find them useful? In conclusion do you think that the theoretical approach of historical particularism and functionalism that began to develop in the 1930's is relevant today in American archaeology? How about its conceptual basis and methodology?

Willey, G. R. and P. Phillips. [1958]. *Method and Theory in American Archaeology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. University of Alabama (2001). Skim through. Please focus on the concepts and definitions. **Chapters 4-8.**

MacNeish (1974). Reflections on my search for the beginnings of Agriculture in Mexico. In *Archaeological Research in Retrospect*, edited by Gordon Willey, pp.207-234. Winthrop Publishers, Inc, Cambridge.

Willey, Gordon (1974) The Viru valley settlement pattern study. In *Archaeological Research in Retrospect*, edited by Gordon Willey, pp.149-176. Winthrop Publishers, Inc, Cambridge.

Willey, Gordon R. (1991) Horizontal Integration and Regional Diversity: An Alternating Process in the Rise of Civilizations. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 56, No. 2: 197-215.

Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. **Chapter 7.** *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press.

*Optional:* Willey and Sabloff. **Chapter 5.** *A history of American Archaeology*. Freeman.

**SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**A. Oyuela-Caycedo**

**Week 5**  
**Functionalist or New Archaeology**

One of the works that was very influential in the development of the new archaeology was the critique of Taylor. Why was his conjunctive approach a point of departure that broke away from the historical cultural particularism? What was the methodology of his approach? Even though his work is more recent, how different is it from the arguments given in the works of Willey and Phillips?

Binford's works created a new paradigm. In his early article of 1964 his approach is established. How different was it from previous works in terms of his theoretical perspective and methodology? Do you think that his "research design" strategy is valid today? What is your critique to his approach, even if almost forty years have passed? His 1968 article argues in detail about the aims of archaeology and what he thinks is theory in archaeology. What is his view in relation to the use of induction and deduction as a way to approach the archaeological record? What problems or limitations does he see? What is your critique of his arguments?

Coe and Flannery in 1964 published an article that takes into consideration the variability of the environment. How do you classify their perspective? Do you think their work was an example of "new archaeology"? What is the contribution of the article in terms of theoretical and methodological innovation? Also what are your thoughts about the article of Sander, published two years before?

When you compare all of these articles, what common ground do you see in terms of theory? What differences do you observe? What are their proposed methodologies? What are their differences and similarities?

What do you think of the historical evaluation of such approaches expressed in the works of Wyley and O'Brien et al.? Do you see a common ground of discussion?

Taylor, Walter [1948] (1983) **Initial pages of chapter 6 (152-159)**. *A Study of Archaeology*. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Binford, Lewis (1964) A Consideration of archaeological research design. *American Antiquity* 29:425-441.

Binford, Lewis (1968) Archaeological perspectives. In *New Perspectives in Archaeology*, edited by Binford and Binford, pp 5-32. Aldine Publishing Company.

Coe, M. D. and K. Flannery 1964. Microenvironments and Mesoamerican Prehistory. *Science* 143:650-654.

Sanders, W. T. (1962) Cultural Ecology of Nuclear Mesoamerica. *American Anthropologist*. 64:34-44

O'Brien, Michael J. R. Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer (2005) *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City. **Chapters 2, 3 and 4.**

Wyley, Alison. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. **Chapters 3 and 4.**

**Optional:** Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. **Chapter 7.** *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press.



## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

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Week 6

### Processual Archaeology

After Binford's contribution on how to do archaeology, two alternative proposals developed that have had a strong impact on the discipline in what can be called processual archaeology. One is rooted in a British archaeologist, David Clarke, and the other in the United States at the Universities of Michigan and Chicago. What are the characteristics of Clarke's theoretical approach? What makes his work different from previous theoretical proposals, especially in relation to the US trajectory of Binford and Sanders? How far have we moved away from the systems approach in archaeology to the practice of field archaeology today?

Kent Flannery's archaeology has been a landmark in terms of his criticism of archaeology as well as for his theoretical contribution to the field. What are the main characteristics of his approach that have defined a school of archaeology ("The Michigan School")? Do you think that his research approach to archaeology is different from Binford's or Clarke's or do they more or less have the same objective? What is that objective? Do you think that this last perspective derived from Binford and Flannery is an advance in the field in contrast to the historical-cultural approach? Why do you think that the historical-cultural approach has survived and is still robust in the practice of archaeology after the strong critique of processual archaeology and the postulated changes in theoretical and methodological approaches?

Clarke, David (1968) **Chapters 1, 2 and 3.** *Analytical Archaeology*. Methuen and Co.

Flannery, Kent V.(1972) The Cultural evolution of Civilizations. *Annual review of ecology and systematics* 3: 399-496.

Flannery, Kent V.(1976) Research strategy and Formative Mesoamerica. In *The Early Mesoamerican Village* (edited by Kent V. Flannery). Pp. 1-8. Academic Press.

Flannery, Kent V. (1986). **Chapter 1.** The Research Problem. *Guila Naquitz*. Academic Press Inc.

O'Brien, Michael J. R. Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer (2005) *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City. **Chapter 5. Optional Chapter 6.**

**Optional:** Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. **Chapter 8.** *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press.

Flannery, Kent V. (1982) "The Golden Marshalltown": A Parable for the Archaeology of the 1989's. *American Anthropologist* 84: 265-278.

## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

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Week 7

### Processual Archaeology: Explanation of Why

One of the main contributions of processual archaeology was to work with research oriented problems and, more importantly, to pursue answers to the questions of why. The kinds of questions addressed also demanded a new epistemology that used science in general. Can you explain the meaning of this approach? Why was it a break from the previous epistemologies? Do you think that such a pursuit of universal answers in archaeology is valid? What are the problems that archaeology has to confront in terms of its epistemology in order to make it more robust in dealing with the question of why?

The articles of Binford and Sabloff discuss what such changes mean in terms of epistemology. Are you persuaded by their views? Renfrew reviews the issue of explanation, especially by looking at the philosophical role in science of induction and deduction. What are their main points? Do you think that inductive interpretations are valid in archaeology? The positivist philosopher Salmon in an unusual article addresses the issue of casual explanation in archaeology. What light does he offer to the discussion? Finally, should archaeology due to its nature of dealing with ecofacts, material culture, cross cultural comparison, and temporal view be expected to have more scientific rigor than the field of cultural anthropology, or are such differences a myth? After all, it is argued that archaeology should be anthropology. Does the critique of Hodder on Processualism help in dealing with these issues? At the end what do you think should be our approach in archaeology, and what kinds of explanations can we offer? What about the critique of Wyley and the historical analysis of O'Brien et al.? Do you think that they have clarified the path that archaeology should follow, now that we see the problems, and in what ways?

Binford, L. R. and J. A. Sabloff. (1982) Paradigms, sytematics, and archaeology. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38(2):137-153.

Renfrew, Collin. (1982). Explanation revisited. In *Theory and Explanation in Archaeology*. Academic Press. Edited by C. Renfrew, M. J. Rowlands and B. A. Segraves.pp. 5-22. Academic Press inc.

Salmon, W. (1982). Causality in archaeological explanation. In *Theory and Explanation in Archaeology*. Academic Press. Edited by C. Renfrew, M. J. Rowlands and B. A. Segraves.pp.45-56, Academic Press inc.

Hodder, Ian and Scott Hutson. *Reading the Past*. **Chapters 1 and 2.**

Wyley, Alison. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. **Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

O'Brien, Michael J. R. Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer (2005) *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City. **Chapter 7.**

**Optional:** Trigger, Bruce, G. 1989. **Chapter 9.** *A history of archaeological thought*. Cambridge University Press.

## SEMINAR: ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY

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Week 8

### Post-processual archaeology

The development of post-modernism as a critique to the establishment in literature, architecture, history and other fields did not fragment archaeology or anthropology. The leading proponent of the critique in archaeology was Ian Hodder. However, the critique seems to be less relevant in archaeology than in cultural anthropology. Furthermore, the impact seems to be limited geographically to British archaeology. However, the fact is that Hodder has had some impact in American archaeological theory. Please analyze the articles assigned for the reading, and think in terms of the kinds of explanations and epistemology of processual archaeology.

What is the contribution of post-modernism and its critique to American archaeology today?

Timothy Earle stands for cultural evolution. He criticizes the issues of post-modernism. What are the positions that he addresses? In what sense are you convinced by the arguments? What do you think is the future of post-modernism? Do you think that archaeology is a multi-voice business of rereading texts and interpretations? Please explain.

O'Brien et al. see the process in a different tone and very pragmatically. Do their views help us to understand what such competing epistemological approaches to archaeology are all about?

Hodder, Ian and Scott Hutson (2003). *Reading Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press. **Chapters 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10.**

Hodder, Ian (1991). Interpretive Archaeology and Its Role. *American Antiquity* 56(1): 7-18.

Wyley, Alison. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. **Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16.**

Timothy K. Earle; Robert W. Preucel (1987) Processual Archaeology and the Radical Critique. *Current Anthropology* 28(4): 501-538.

O'Brien, Michael J. R. Lee Lyman and Michael Brian Schiffer (2005) *Archaeology as a Process, Processualism and its progeny*. Utah University Press, Salt Lake City. **Chapters 8 and 9.**