

ANT 2149
Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Pseudoarchaeology and Why It Matters
Spring 2024



Instructor

Whittaker Schroder
Turlington B129
(352) 294-6396
[wschroder@ufl.edu](mailto:w Schroder@ufl.edu)

Description

This course examines claims, popularized in the media, that mysterious archaeological sites, statues, etc. were influenced by outer space visitors. Case studies to be discussed include Stonehenge, various pyramids, Easter Island, Atlantis and Mu, the Nazca Lines, and other archaeological “mysteries.” Emphasis will be placed on understanding how and why pseudoscientific beliefs proliferate, and on understanding the real archaeological histories of ancient peoples.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- 1) be able to assess critically narratives about the past.
- 2) know how to analyze how the past is represented in various forms of media.
- 3) have an understanding of the use of the scientific method in archaeology.
- 4) be able to critique conspiracy theories.
- 5) identify how diverse perspectives can actually revolutionize the field of archaeology and drive the discipline forward.

Class Meetings

Tuesday, Period 3, 9:35–10:25 am

Little Hall 0113

Thursday, Periods 3–4, 9:35–11:30 am

Turlington Hall L011

Office Hours

Wednesday 1:00–3:00 pm
Turlington B129

Required Book

Feder, Kenneth
2019 *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*. Oxford University Press, 10th Edition.

Additional Required Readings

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas. These readings are listed in *italics* on the course schedule.

Grading

A 93-100%	B+ 87-89.9	C+ 77-79.9	D+ 67-69.9	E <60
A- 90-92.9	B 83-86.9	C 73-76.9	D 63-66.9	
	B- 80-82.9	C- 70-72.9	D- 60-62.9	

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies>

Attendance and Participation	15%
Short Written Exercises (4 total)	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Longer Written Exercise	20%
Final Exam	25%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is mandatory and crucial to get the most out of this course. If you must miss a class meeting, please let me know by email or in person before class. Frequent absences (excused or unexcused) will directly impact your final grade. I encourage you to discuss what you missed with another student or attend my office hours. Participation includes engagement during lectures and contributions to discussions. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies>).

Short Written Exercises

Students will complete 4 short written responses or discussion board posts based on readings or videos. All assignments are due by the start of class on the due date.

Exams

This course will involve a midterm and a final exam based on lectures, readings, and class discussions. The format will be a mix of short identification and short essay questions. The final

exam will be the same format as the midterm exam and will not be cumulative, although it will build on concepts introduced earlier in the course.

Longer Written Exercise

The longer written exercise will discuss pseudoarchaeology in the news and other media.

Late Work

Late work is only accepted with prior permission from the instructor before the due date. Permitted late work will only be eligible for half credit.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Please be familiar with the University of Florida's Student Honor Code:
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code>

Special Accommodations

The process for requesting special accommodations is described at <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started>, including registering with the Disability Resource Center in Reid Hall and requesting an accommodation letter to be presented to the instructor.

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

Campus Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or (352) 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, (352) 392-1575.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS) Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1161.

University Police Department, (352) 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
<http://www.police.ufl.edu>

E-learning technical support, (352) 392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu>

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, (352) 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio>

Student Complaints Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf

On-Line Student Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaintprocess>

Anthropology 2149

Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Pseudoarchaeology and Why It Matters

Spring 2024

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1 January 9	Course Introduction
January 12	Introduction to Pseudoarchaeology Required readings: Feder, Ch. 1 <i>Moshenska</i> “Alternative Archaeologies” <i>Wade</i> “Belief in Aliens”
Week 2 January 16	The Scientific Method Short Written Assignment 1 Due Required reading: Feder, Ch. 2
January 18	An Abbreviated Prehistory of the World Required reading: <i>Deresiewicz</i> “Human History”
Week 3 January 23	Introduction to Archaeological Methods Required reading:

	Feder, Ch. 11
January 25	Archaeological Methods Continued Required reading: Feder, Ch. 4
Week 4 January 30	Ancient Aliens Required readings: <i>Von Daniken "Chariots of the Gods?"</i> <i>Lovecraft "Call of Cthulhu"</i> <i>Colavito "Cult of Alien Gods"</i>
February 1	Video: Ancient Aliens Required reading: Feder, Ch. 9 <i>Bond "Pseudoarchaeology and Racism"</i> Video: Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb (after class)
Week 5 February 6	Archaeology as Propaganda Short Written Assignment 2 Due Required reading: <i>Woodard "Mystery of Bosnia's Ancient Pyramids"</i> <i>Lewis "27,000-year-old Pyramid?"</i> <i>Hilman et al. "Gunang Padang"</i>

<p>February 8</p>	<p>Atlantis</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <p>Feder, Ch. 8 <i>Plato "Dialogues"</i></p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>February 13</p>	<p>Stonehenge</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <p>Feder, Ch. 10</p>
<p>February 15</p>	<p>Video: Mystery of Easter Island</p> <p>Required readings:</p> <p><i>Smith "British Museum"</i></p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>February 20</p>	<p>Conspiracy Theories: How to Recognize and What to Do About Them</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <p><i>Turner and Turner "I'm Not Saying It Was Aliens"</i></p>
<p>February 22</p>	<p>Who Was First?</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <p>Feder, Ch. 5 <i>Gugliotta "When Did Humans First Come to the Americas?"</i> <i>Magnani et al. "Evaluating Claims"</i></p>

Week 8 February 27	Midterm Review
February 29	Midterm
Week 9 March 5	Research Workshop Before the Columbian Exchange Required reading: Feder, Ch. 6
March 7	Mummies, Giants, and Ethics Written Assignment Discussion Short Written Assignment 3 Due Required reading: Feder, Ch. 3
Week 10 March 12	Spring Break
March 14	Spring Break
Week 11 March 19	Myth of the Moundbuilders Required reading: Feder, Ch. 7 <i>Colavito "Mound Builder Myth"</i> <i>Trigger "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian"</i>

March 21	Myth of the Moundbuilders Continued Video: Cities of the Sky
Week 12 March 26	Great Zimbabwe Short Written Assignment 4 Due Required reading: <i>Hubbard and Burrett "A Clash of Ideologies"</i>
March 28	Archaeoastronomy Required reading: <i>Kaplan "Ancient Burial Ground"</i>
Week 13 April 2	Biblical Archaeology Required reading: <i>Kersel et al. "Biblically Inspired Pseudoscience"</i>
April 4	Ancient Apocalypses Longer Written Assignment Due Required reading: <i>Hancock "America Before"</i> <i>Schmidt and Frank "Silurian Hypothesis"</i>

<p>Week 14</p> <p>April 9</p>	<p>New Histories of Humanity</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <p><i>Graeber and Wengrow Chs. 1–3</i> <i>Fagan and Durrani “Dawn of Everything”</i> <i>Joyce “Dawn of Everything”</i> <i>Sahlins “Original Affluent Society”</i> <i>Smith “Early Cities”</i></p>
<p>April 11</p>	<p>Student Presentations</p>
<p>Week 15</p> <p>April 16</p>	<p>Student Presentations Continued</p>
<p>April 18</p>	<p>No class</p>
<p>Week 16</p> <p>April 23</p>	<p>Exam Review</p> <p>Longer Written Assignment Due</p>
<p>April 25</p>	<p>Reading Day</p>
<p>May 2</p>	<p>Final Exam, 5:30–7:30 pm</p>

Course Bibliography

Bond, Sarah E.

2018 Pseudoarchaeology and the Racism Behind Ancient Aliens. *Hyperallergic*. November 13.
<https://hyperallergic.com/470795/pseudoarchaeology-and-the-racism-behind-ancient-aliens>

Colavito, Jason

2005 *The Cult of Alien Gods: H.P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture*. Prometheus, Buffalo.

Colavito, Jason

2020 *The Mound Builder Myth: Fake History and the Hunt for a ‘Lost White Race.’* University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Deresiewicz, William

2021 Human History Gets a Rewrite. *The Atlantic*. October 18.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/11/graeber-wengrow-dawn-of-everything-history-humanity/620177>

Fagan, Brian and Nadia Durrani

2021 The Dawn of Everything: A New History. *Reviews in Anthropology* 50:3–4, 80–99.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00938157.2022.2026612>

Graeber, David and David Wengrow

2021 *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York.

Gugliotta, Guy

2013 When Did Humans Come to the Americas? *Smithsonian Magazine*. February.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/when-did-humans-come-to-the-americas-4209273>

Hancock, Graham

2019 *America Before*. Coronet, London.

Holen, Steven R., Thomas A. Deméré, Daniel C. Fisher, Richard Fullagar, James B. Paces, George T. Jefferson, Jared M. Beeton, Richard A. Cerutti, Adam N. Rountrey, Lawrence Vescera, and Kathleen A. Holen

2017 A 130,000-year-old archaeological site in southern California, USA. *Nature* 544:479–483.

Hubbard, Paul and Robert S. Burrett

2012 “A Clash of Ideologies: Zimbabwean Archaeology at the Fringe.” In *From Archaeology to Archaeologies: The ‘Other’ Past*, edited by Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw and Eleni Stefanou, pp. 45–55. BAR International Series 2409, Archaeopress, Oxford.

Joyce, Rosemary

2022 The Dawn of Everything. *American Anthropologist* 124(4):911–912.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13770>

Kaplan, Sarah

2018 This Ancient Burial Ground Tells a Story of Unity in a Time of Climate Chaos. *The Washington Post*. August 20. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2018/08/21/this-ancient-burial-ground-tells-story-unity-time-climate-chaos>

Kersel, Morag M., Meredith S. Chesson, and Austin “Chad” Hill

2021 When Biblically Inspired Pseudoscience and Clickbait Cause Looting.
<https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/tall-el-hammam>

Lewis, Dyani

2023 A 27,000-year-old pyramid? Controversy hits an extraordinary archaeological claim. *Nature*. 28 November. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-03546-w>

Lovecraft, H.P.

1928 The Call of Cthulhu. *Weird Tales*. February.

Magnani, Matthew, Dalyn Grindle, Sarah Loomis, Alexander M. Kim, Vera Egbers, Jon Clindaniel, Alexis Hartford, Eric Johnson, Sadie Weber, and Wade Campbell

2019 Evaluating Claims for an Early Peopling of the Americas: Experimental Design and the Cerutti Mastodon Site. *Antiquity* 93(369):789–795.

Moshenska, Gabriel

2017 “Alternative Archaeologies.” In *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology*, edited by Gabriel Moshenska, pp. 122–137. UCL Press, London.

Plato

1998 *Timaeus*, translated by Benjamin Jowett. Project Gutenberg.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1572/1572-h/1572-h.htm>

Sahlins, Marshall

1968 The Original Affluent Society. *Stone Age Economics*.

Schmidt, Gavin A. and Adam Frank

2018 The Silurian hypothesis: would it be possible to detect an industrial civilization in the geological record? *International Journal of Astrobiology* 18(2):142-150.

Smith, Alexander

2018 British Museum’s Easter Island Statue Reignites Debate About Colonial Plundering. *NBC News*. November 25. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/british-museum-s-easter-island-statue-reignites-debate-about-colonial-n939301>

Smith, Michael E.

2022 Early Cities in The Dawn of Everything: Shoddy Scholarship in Support of Pedestrian Conclusions. *Cliodynamics: The Journal of Quantitative History and Cultural Evolution*, pp. 1–13.

Trigger, Bruce

1980 Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian. *American Antiquity* 45(4):662-676.

Turner, Derek and Michelle Turner

2021 “I’m Not Saying It Was Aliens”: An Archaeological and Philosophical Analysis of a Conspiracy Theory. In *Explorations in Archaeology and Philosophy*, edited by Anton Killin and Sean Allen-Hermanson, pp. 7–24. Springer, New York.

Von Daniken, Erich

1968 *Chariots of the Gods?* Putnam, New York.

Wade, Lizzie

2019 Beliefs in Aliens, Atlantis Are on the Rise. *Science* 364(6436):110–111.

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.364.6436.110>

Woodard, Colin

2018 The Mystery of Bosnia's Ancient Pyramids. Smithsonian Magazine.

December. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-mystery-of-bosnias-ancient-pyramids-148990462>