

Data Quality in Maya Zooarchaeology

ANG6930

Section 14GD

Spring 2015

Meeting Periods: Once per week, 3hrs, date/time TBA

Classroom: 114 Dickinson Hall

Instructor: Dr. Kitty F. Emery

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Overview and Objectives

In a recent paper, Dr. Steve Wolverton states that zooarchaeology does not adhere to a standard set of data quality controls or assessments during laboratory practice. This deficit leaves zooarchaeological results open to criticism, and reduces the potential utility of our data for comparative research in both the anthropological and biological sciences. In this class we will evaluate the practice of Maya zooarchaeology and its methods for data quality control and assessment. Students will be expected to explore the zooarchaeology methods literature and compare world-wide practice to reported methods in Maya zooarchaeology literature. Each student will develop a set of quality assurance standards suitable for Maya zooarchaeology and appropriate for their own future research activities. We will cover such topics as comparative collection standards; diagnostic criteria and identifying difficult-to-distinguish species; recognition and recording of secondary characters; standards in metric analysis; requirements for contextual data; implications of quantitative methods; standards in zooarchaeological reporting; and negotiating multidisciplinary collaborations.

Textbooks and Required Readings

There are no required texts for this course. It is highly recommended that the following texts be consulted throughout the course:

Emery, Kitty F. (ed.), (2004) *Maya Zooarchaeology: New Directions in Method and Theory* Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA.

Götz, Christopher M. and Emery, Kitty F., eds. (2013) *The Archaeology of Mesoamerican Animals*. Atlanta, GA: Lockwood Press.

Reitz, Elizabeth J. and Wing, Elizabeth S. (2008) *Zooarchaeology*. Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Other readings will be obtained online by the students or provided by Dr. Emery prior to each class.

Exams and Grading

Final Project (35%): Students will choose one issue within the course outline to investigate in detail and will provide the class a final written compilation of data, protocols, and quality assessment measures.

Presentations (35%): Students are responsible for compiling information on specific topics each week and for presenting their findings and assessments to the class.

Participation/Attendance (30%): Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to participate actively.

Policies on make-up work: All assignments are due on deadline, there is no make-up work.

Final Grades. Final grades are assigned on the basis of 100 points. A=93+, A-=90, B+=87, B=83, B-=80, C+=77, C=73, C-=70, D=60, E=<60

Course Policies and Procedures

Academic Honesty: Violations will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the [University's Honor Code](#) and the student conduct code.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please make any requests by the second week of class.

UF Counseling Services

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

1. [University Counseling and Wellness Center](#), 3190 Radio Road, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
2. [Sexual Assault Recovery Services](#) (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling
3. [Career Resource Center](#), Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling
4. [Reading & Writing Center](#), Broward Hall, 392-0791, writing assistance, study skills, test preparation

Course Outline

Critical Dates:

Presentations Due: **weekly**

Preliminary Project Data Due: **March 9**

Final Projects Due: **April 13**

Course Schedule [tentative topic list]:

week Jan 12 - organization

week Jan 19 - comparative collection standards - creating the "universe" of possible Maya species; pitfalls in the assumptive universe; quantifying and reporting comparative collection diversity/representation

weeks Jan 26, Feb 2 - diagnostic criteria and identifying difficult-to-distinguish species - creating standard diagnostic criteria for Maya fauna; separating difficult-to-distinguish Maya species; evaluating inter-analyst diagnostic character recognition; reporting diagnostic criteria and identification confidence

week Feb 9- standards in age/sex evaluation - standard methods/comparative data for aging/sexing Maya fauna, interpreting age/sex data from multi-analyst datasets, standards in reporting age/sex

weeks Feb 16, 23- secondary characters - recognizing and understanding butchery, burning, artifact manufacture, pathology marks on Maya assemblages; reporting secondary characters

week March 2 - break

week March 9 (preliminary project data due) - standards in metric analysis - creating a set of metric standards for Maya species; comparing metrics from multi-analyst studies; standards for reporting metric data

week March 16 - implications of quantitative methods - the NISP/MNI debate in Maya zooarchaeology; impacts of quantification on interpretation; statistical methods and understanding results; reporting quantitative methods

week March 23 - requirements for contextual data: provenience/chronology context and sample aggregation impacts; interpreting "functional" context definitions; context and taphonomic reconstructions; how to get contextual data from recalcitrant excavators; reporting contextual data

week March 30 - negotiating multidisciplinary collaborations: combining excavation data with zooarchaeological results; effective use of non-zooarchaeological data; appropriate collaborative reporting

week April 6 - wrap up

April 13 (SAAs, no class, projects due)