

# Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: Pseudoarchaeology and Why It Matters ANT2149

Dr. Katherine Grillo  
University of Florida  
Syllabus Spring 2025

Tuesdays Period 7 (1:55-2:45pm) Turlington 2319  
Thursdays Periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50pm) Turlington 2319

Email: kgrillo@ufl.edu  
Turlington B121

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30am-12:30pm, Wednesdays 2-3pm, or alternate times by appointment  
Office hours via Zoom are available by request.

## Course 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

This course will provide students with the skills to do the following:

- Describe and explain how the past is reconstructed through archaeology
- Analyze how the past is presented in the media
- Critique narratives that privilege “alien” explanations for the achievements of indigenous peoples

## Required Text/Readings

DeCorse, Christopher. *Fringe Archaeology: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Past*. 2024, Cognella Publishing.

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

## Course Requirements

See course schedule (last three pages of syllabus) for exam dates and other due dates.

**1. Readings:** Reading assignments for the course are listed on the course schedule. Please note that readings are subject to change. You should complete each reading assignment PRIOR to the lecture for which it is assigned. All non-textbook readings will be found on Canvas.

**2. Quiz (50 points – 10% of total):** There will be one online open-book quiz that will cover materials presented in both lectures and the readings. The quiz will be worth 50 pts. Quizzes that are missed can only be made up with convincing evidence of a valid excuse (medical/emergency).

**3. Exams (250 points – 50% of total):** There will be two exams, each worth 125 points. Exams that are missed can only be made up with convincing evidence of a valid excuse (medical/emergency). They will cover all portions of this course (lectures, class discussions, and readings). In the event that you have a medical

emergency or serious personal problem on a scheduled quiz or exam day, you must make every effort to notify the instructor of your absence PRIOR to the scheduled class time.

**4. Shorter Written Exercises (100 points – 25% of total):** Students will be required to complete four short written exercises, each worth 25 points. These exercises may be discussion board posts, responses to videos watched in class, creative writing pieces, or other short assignments related to course material. At least three of the four shorter written exercises must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. Additional instructions will be given in class.

**5. Longer Written Exercise (100 points – 20% of total):** There will be one short paper worth 100 points which will cover pseudoarchaeology in the news. You must turn in the assignment on the assigned due date. Late exercises will not be accepted. Details on the exercise will be provided later in the term.

### Attendance Policy

You are expected to be in attendance, in person, each day. I will take attendance 5 times during the semester. These days will be chosen entirely randomly, but will not fall on exam days. Your presence in class during these days will determine whether you receive bonus points, or have points deducted from your grade. If you are absent for \_\_\_ days of the five attendance days I will adjust your semester total points according to the following table:

Days absent	Point Adjustment
0-1	+5 bonus points
2-3	No adjustment
4-5	-20 points

If you are feeling sick, please DO NOT COME TO CLASS. I will be more than happy to make accommodations for anyone who cannot come to class – please email me. Pdfs of Powerpoints will be provided prior to exams. Students are permitted to share notes with each other about the lectures, but posting any class Powerpoints or notes on publicly-accessible websites is NOT permitted. Course materials are my own intellectual property and cannot be distributed to the general public. Doing so will result in removal from the course.

### Grades and Grading Policies

Letter grades will not be given out during the semester for exercises or exams. Instead, points will be assigned for each exercise and exam. There will be a total of 500 points possible. Your final grade will be based on the total number of points accumulated, as a percentage of the maximum:

94-100%	468-500 pts.	A
90-93	448-467	A-
87-89	433-447	B+
83-86	413-432	B
80-82	398-412	B-
77-79	383-397	C+
73-76	363-382	C
70-72	348-362	C-
67-69	333-347	D+
63-66	313-332	D
60-62	298-312	D-
<60	297 or less	E

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

Current grade status is available under the “Grades” section of the e-learning site. For more information, see the undergraduate catalogue for grading policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

In the event that you have a medical emergency or serious personal or family problem, you must make every effort to notify me of your absence by email. If a valid emergency or medical situation prevents attendance during an exam, or prevents on-time submission of an exercise, an alternative assignment or deadline will be designated. Otherwise, late submissions will not be accepted.

### **Cell Phone and Laptop Policy**

All cell phones should be turned off during class, and laptops are only permitted for note-taking. Any other use of these technologies during class time (texting, emailing, social media-ing, etc.) is distracting and unprofessional. Please don't do this; I retain the right to penalize repeat offenders.

### **Students Requiring Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. I'm happy to make any necessary accommodations.

### **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. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). 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 [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

### **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” [The Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

### ***In-Class Recording***

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services.

A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## **Campus Resources**

### Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto: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>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

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

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

### Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learningsupport@ufl.edu](mailto: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, 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](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf) On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaintprocess>

**Course Schedule:** Please note that the schedule and readings are subject to change.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
<b>1 Welcome!</b>				
	Jan. 14	Class Introduction		
	Jan. 16	Introduction to Pseudoarchaeology	DeCorse, Chapter 1: Archaeology in Popular Culture	**Short Written Assignment 1 due Friday the 17th at 5pm, response by class next Tuesday**
<b>2 Crash Course in World "Prehistory"</b>				
	Jan. 21	The Scientific Method		
	Jan. 23	An Abbreviated Prehistory of the World	Canvas: Deresiewicz, "Human history gets a rewrite"	
<b>3 How Archaeology Works</b>				
	Jan. 28	Introduction to Archaeological Methods	DeCorse, Chapter 2: Relic Hunting as a Profession	
	Jan. 30	Archaeological Methods Continued	DeCorse, Chapter 3: Dinosaurs and Humans Living Together?	
<b>4 Ancient Aliens?</b>				
	Feb. 4	<b>QUIZ</b>		<b>QUIZ</b>
	Feb. 6	Ancient Aliens Video: Ancient Aliens	DeCorse, Chapter 6: The Mummy's Curse  DeCorse, Chapter 7: Gods from Outer Space? – last section only, starting p. 175  *Video: Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb (watch after class)	
<b>5 The Past as Propaganda</b>				
	Feb. 11	Archaeology as Propaganda	DeCorse, Chapter 8, "Raiders of the Lost Ark"	**Short Written Assignment 2 due before class**
	Feb. 13	Atlantis	Canvas: excerpt from Plato's Dialogues  The Rest is History podcast, "Atlantis: The Legend"	
<b>6 Big Rocks!</b>				
	Feb. 18	Stonehenge	DeCorse, Chapter 5: Megaliths, Druids, and Neolithic Complexity	
	Feb. 20	Video: Mystery of Easter Island	Canvas: A. Smith, "British Museum's Easter Island"	

			statue reignites debate about colonial plundering“	
<b>7</b>	<b>Conspiracy Theories</b>			
	Feb. 25	How to recognize them and what to do about them	Canvas: Turner and Turner, “I’m not saying it was aliens...”	
	Feb. 27	Who Was First?	DeCorse, Chapter 9: The Vanishing Past	
<b>8</b>	<b>Exam</b>			
	March 4	Exam Review		
	March 6	<b>FIRST EXAM</b>		
<b>9</b>	<b>Research Workshop, Mummies, Ethics, Etc.</b>			
	March 11	Research Workshop		
	March 13	Mummies and Giants and Ethics  Long Written Assignment Discussion	TBD	**Short Written Assignment 3 due before class**
<b>10</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>			
	Mar. 18	<i>No class</i>		
	Mar. 20	<i>No class</i>		
<b>11</b>	<b>North American Archaeology</b>			
	Mar. 25	Myth of the Moundbuilders	Canvas: Feder, “Chapter 7, The Myth of the Moundbuilders”	
	Mar. 27	Myth of the Moundbuilders continued  Video: Cities of the Sky		
<b>12</b>	<b>African Archaeology beyond Egypt</b>			
	April 1	Great Zimbabwe	Canvas: Koutonin, “Lost Cities #9, Racism and Ruins: The Plundering of Great Zimbabwe”	**Short Written Assignment 4 due before class**
	April 3	Archaeoastronomy and the Pillar Sites	Canvas: S. Kaplan, “This ancient burial ground tells a story of unity in a time of climate chaos”	
<b>13</b>	<b>Biblical Archaeology and Ancient Apocalypses</b>			
	Apr. 8	Biblical Archaeology	Canvas: Kersel et al., “When biblically inspired pseudoscience and clickbait cause looting”	
	Apr. 10	Ancient Apocalypses	DeCorse, Chapter 7: Gods from Outer Space? – first section, until p. 175	***Long Written Assignment Due***

<b>14</b>				<b>New Histories of Humanity</b>			
	April 15	New histories of humanity	Canvas: Graeber and Wengrow, Chs. 1-3				
	April 17	Wrap-Up and Exam Review					
<b>15</b>				<b>Last Day</b>			
	April 22	<b>SECOND EXAM</b>					